



BY REV. PAUL CHOO

20 Precious for Asian Christians

THAT WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE
ENGLISH EDITION

20
PRECIOUS
LESSONS
FOR ASIAN
CHRISTIANS

That will change your life!

English Edition

Rev. Paul Choo

INTRODUCTION

This book is written for 21st Century Asian Christians who live in the fast-paced progress and excitement of this age but find themselves in a faith that seems stuck in the past.

This book is not written to promote any church or denomination, but to help us to know and love Jesus more.

This book is not a theological book for theologians, but a book about Jesus for every Christian.

Bible verses are used to support concepts that may be difficult to understand or seldom taught.

However, Bible verses are not used to support every lesson taught in this book because most Asian Christians already understand and believe many Bible principles.

This is done out of respect to our readers and to prevent the book from being filled with Bible verses and becoming another unreadable theological book.

Enjoy this book and enjoy your journey with Jesus!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rev. Paul Choo was born in Singapore in 1947. He graduated as a Medical Doctor from the University of Singapore (now renamed National University of Singapore) in 1971. He received his Doctor of Divinity from Bob Jones University (USA).

In 1973, he founded the Shenton Medical Group which became one of Singapore's largest medical groups. In 1995, he sold the Shenton Medical Group to the owners of Mt Elizabeth Hospital, who then renamed it Parkway Shenton.

In 1987, he founded Gospel Light Christian Church which grew to a congregation of over a 1000. When Rev. Choo was 60 years old, he retired from pastoring the church and went into full-time missions.

He has preached in hundreds of churches and Christian conferences in Asia, USA, Europe, Australia and Africa.

For his services to the poor in Asia, he was selected by Channel News Asia in 2012 as one of the Asians of the Year.

He is married to his high school sweetheart Nancy and God has blessed them with 3 sons and 1 daughter and 4 grandchildren.

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A Successful Failure

By the time I was 33 years old, I enjoyed much success. I had a beautiful wife and 2 wonderful children. The Shenton Medical Group that I had founded was the largest medical group in Singapore. I represented my country in tennis. However, I felt very empty in my heart! I found no human explanation for this because I had so much success and had no problems. At that time, I didn't realize that I, as a human, had a spiritual nature that couldn't be satisfied by worldly success. In other words, though I was fully satisfied physically and mentally I was empty spiritually. I was like a person who had everything that he could desire except food to satisfy his empty stomach.

I tried to satisfy my emptiness by accumulating more and more worldly treasures. I got houses, cars, paintings, and even a 14-meter motor boat. I travelled, I tried all types of pleasures and hobbies. I smoked, I drank alcohol and I gambled. But my empty spirit could not be satisfied by these. I was like a fool trying to fill an empty stomach with pieces of gold and silver instead of food. At that time, I did not know that only God could fill my empty spirit! As it is easy for a doctor to obtain sleeping pills, I began to take sleeping pills each night. My wife realized that I was becoming an addict and began to keep the pills from me.

I was desperate! I didn't know what to do. I had become successful in so many things that didn't matter but wasn't successful in things that mattered. Outwardly I looked happy but I was really a 33-year-old SUCCESSFUL FAILURE!

The world is full of such people.

They are admired by most people.

They pretend to be happy.

And many people like you, are deceived and aim to be like them.

A good definition of a failure is one who succeeds in things that don't matter.

Don't be a failure!

Religion Cannot Satisfy

I had tried every worldly way to be happy but failed. So, I figured out that maybe religion would help me to fill my empty spirit. I was born in a Christian family. I went to church from childhood. I attended the finest Christian school in Singapore, the Anglo-Chinese School. At school, I heard Bible devotions daily on the intercom and attended weekly chapel. I attended Religious Knowledge classes and did well in this subject. After I became a teenager, I got bored with religion and stopped attending church. However, I still considered myself to be a Christian though I only attended church on special occasions (like Christmas and Easter).

At the age of 30, I had found no satisfaction in my Christian faith so I decided to study other religions. I bought religious books. I sought religious teachers. I tried to obey what these religions taught me to do. I soon realized that most religions taught similar values – be humble, be kind, help the poor, be faithful to attend religious services.

My friends noticed that I was no more seeking material success and self-pleasure but had become a serious religious person who spent time reading religious books and helping the poor. They said that I was now a good man. This made me feel worse because I now felt like a hypocrite because I knew that though I had changed outwardly, in my heart I was still the same proud, selfish person. I knew that though people were impressed with my outward change, God looked at my heart and saw the same ugly heart in me. I realized that I could easily impress people by being religious but I could not impress God.

I had hoped to find satisfaction in religion but I felt emptier.

If you think that Christianity is a religion, you too will find only emptiness!

A KTP Christian!

At the age of 33, I had to be admitted to a hospital for a minor operation. In the bed-side cupboard was a Bible. Out of boredom, I decided to read the Bible. I had not read a Bible for many years. I cannot remember all the details of what happened because it is such a long time ago but I will try to recall as much as possible.

I opened the Bible to the book of John (probably because it was a familiar book). And I began to read – and by the time I finished chapter 3 my life was changed! I'm writing this book 35 years later and the changes that happened that day have continued until today – and will continue through all eternity.

Please read the following verses because they are so important to many of us who think that we are going to heaven. John 3:1-5

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ² This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” ³ Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

As I read John 3:1 I could identify with Nicodemus. He was proud to be a Jew because his ancestors had worshipped God for many generations. I, too, was proud because I came from a Christian family. He was proud that he was a Pharisee because the Pharisees were respected as Bible scholars. I, too, was proud because I went to the top Christian school in Singapore and we were respected as the Christian elite of Singapore. He was proud to be a religious leader of the Jews. I, too, was proud that my uncle was the leader of the Christian community in Singapore.

Nicodemus had seen Jesus' many miracles and was sure that He was sent from God. As he was confident that he too belonged to God, he confidently went to meet Jesus (John 3:2) – expecting a hearty welcome from Him. To his dismay, Jesus rebuked him with these words “except a man be

born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

He had come to bring greetings to Jesus but was confronted with these seemingly “rude” words. Needless to say, Jesus, who is the perfect, sinless Son of God, never uttered any rude words in His life. On the contrary, these seemingly “rude” words came from Jesus’ heart of love – and were meant to shock Nicodemus and help him to realize that he was merely a “KTP Christian”!

As Nicodemus was probably about 60 years old at this time, he replied with these words “How can a man be born when he is old...” (John 3:4). He expected Jesus to back down and apologize but instead Jesus replied with greater emphasis that unless Nicodemus was born-again, he could not “enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

As Nicodemus was shocked by these words uttered 2000 years ago, I too was shocked by these words when I read it 35 years ago. If super-religious Nicodemus could not enter the kingdom of God unless he was born-again, then how could I?

Can any of you be more religious than Nicodemus?

If we cannot enter the kingdom of God, then we will go to hell!

Humans Need Two Births

Nicodemus is shocked by Jesus' insistence that he needed to be born-again. This seemed very strange to him because everything in nature needs to be born once.

Please read the following verses because they explain our need to be born again. John 3:6-9

⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."⁹ Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?"

Jesus, the Son of God, can read the confusion in Nicodemus' mind about the need to be born again, and immediately gives him the reason why he needed to have 2 births. Jesus said *"that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit"* (John 3:6). In other words, Jesus was reminding Nicodemus that humans are unique among God's creation because they have both a body and a spirit. (Because of this, men readily eat the flesh of animals but have much greater difficulty eating the flesh of men because they instinctively know that men also have a spirit.)

Jesus was telling Nicodemus that humans needed 2 births because they have 2 natures – physical and spiritual. At our first physical birth we are born by our mothers into this physical world; but if we want to enter God's spiritual world, then we need to be born again by the Holy Spirit into God's world.

This explanation seemed to satisfy Nicodemus – who went on to imagine how he could be born again. Possibly, he began to think about the religious rites that he had undergone. Was Jesus referring to the need of baptism? Was Jesus referring to the need for catechism classes? Or was Jesus referring to some supernatural phenomena like tongue-speaking? Again, Jesus, the Son of God, reads Nicodemus' mind and answers the unspoken question in his mind.

Jesus tells Nicodemus that the second birth is *invisible* like the wind (see John 3:8). Unlike baptism, catechism and tongue-speaking which are visible (and can be photographed or videoed), the second birth by the Holy Spirit is invisible (and cannot be photographed or videoed).

Jesus then goes on to explain the effects and benefits of wind. When winds blow we can hear the sound of leaves rustling and see the smiles of people enjoying the cool breeze, but no one can see the wind. Life will be so unpleasant without a breeze or an electric fan. A life that is not born again will be an unpleasant joyless life.

This describes how the second birth makes life more pleasant and make men happier. Though we cannot see the second birth, we can see the effects of the second birth. Men who have experienced the second birth become better husbands, better fathers, better workers, better neighbours and better church members. Ladies who have experienced the second birth become better wives, better mothers, better house-keepers, better neighbours, better church members. Young people who are born again become better children, better students, better classmates and better youth group members. All who have been born again will also have greater peace and joy.

Nicodemus desires to be born again. He had diligently followed his religion but it was boring, burdensome and joyless. He yearned for a “cool spiritual breeze” to cheer him up from his cheerless religion. He yearned to be born again by the Holy Spirit so that he could leave the world of religion and enter God's kingdom but did not know how.

Has your religion been boring, burdensome and joyless so far?

Blind Leading the Blind

John 3:9-14

⁹ Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

Nicodemus can hardly wait to find out how to be born again so he asked “*How can these things be?*” (John 3:9). This is the most important question that Nicodemus ever asked. And the most important question that any of us can ever ask is “**How can I be born again?**” because if you don't know the answer to this question, Jesus says that you “*cannot enter the kingdom of God.*” As Nicodemus was a religious man, he was probably thinking that the way to be born again was to be more religious.

He had been born a Jew and attended all the religious ceremonies of the Jews. So, did he have to be more diligent in attendance?

He had diligently studied and obeyed the Old Testament as a Pharisee. So, did he have to be more studious and more obedient?

He had diligently led Jewish religious services as an Elder. So, did he have to work harder to be a better leader?

What more could he do? Should he fast more often? Should he give more offerings? He was already so tired, bored and joyless with so much religion. Could he bear more of it?

He was expecting Jesus to answer his question of how to be born again, instead Jesus rebukes him (John 3:10-13). Jesus first rebukes him, as a “*master of Israel*” (John 3:11) for not knowing how to be born again.

He was a blind leader who was leading the blind Jews!

Jesus then rebukes his lack of faith (John 3:12). Jesus had clearly explained the need to be born again spiritually because men have a spiritual nature. This is a simple understandable concept but he is reluctant to believe this and instead wanted to cling to his religious concepts. Nicodemus had heard of Jesus' miracles and knew that He was not an ordinary man but was clearly from heaven, and yet he found it difficult to accept His teachings.

Like Nicodemus, there are many Christian leaders who spend their life studying the details of religious ceremonies. Like Nicodemus, there are many Christian leaders who believe being religious and obedience to these ceremonies will get them to heaven. But Jesus tells us that what's important is not obedience to religious ceremonies but to be born again.

Have you asked yourself this question: "How can I be born again?"

This is the most important question you can ever ask in your life.

Ignorance of the answer is a sure way to go to hell!

One Solution Only

John 3:14-16

¹⁴ *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,* ¹⁵ *that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.* ¹⁶ *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

After rebuking Nicodemus for being a blind faithless leader (John 3:10-13), then Jesus said “*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness...*” (John 3:14). Nicodemus must have perked up when he heard the name of Moses. As a religious Jew, Nicodemus must have been familiar with this story of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness.

For us who are not familiar with this story, please read the following passage in Numbers 21:4-9.

God had raised Moses to lead the Jews out of slavery in Egypt. God enabled Moses to do 10 amazing miracles. The final miracle was the parting of the Red Sea which enabled the Jews to escape from Egypt. As the Jews walked through the wilderness to the Promised Land, God miraculously provided daily bread from heaven (Exodus 16:35).

Obviously, the Jews should have been thankful for all these wonderful provisions. Instead, the Jews complained against God for the “boring” diet of manna. God hates unthankfulness. So, God sent poisonous snakes and many Jews were bitten by the snakes and died. (The serpents in this wilderness are so poisonous that people who are bitten die about 5 seconds after being bitten).

The people realized that they had sinned against God because of their complaints and they begged Moses to pray that God would kill the snakes. However, God told Moses to make a snake of brass and to mount it on a pole. The serpent was to be lifted up and that anyone who was bitten by a serpent had only *one solution* – namely, they had to immediately look at the serpent on the pole.

This solution was against the conventional wisdom of tightly tying the affected limb proximal to the site of the bite to prevent the poison from flowing to the heart. This solution involved faith in God's promise that “*whoever looks*” on the brass snake will live.

This was the only solution to escape death and have a “second life.” There was no other solution for them.

Nicodemus probably wondered what this story of poisonous snakes had to do with him, until Jesus finished the sentence (“*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up*” John 3:14). Then Nicodemus probably realized that Moses' lifting up the brass serpent to remove snake poison from their bodies was related to Jesus Christ having to go to the Cross to remove our sins!

Just as there was only *one solution* to the serpents' poison, there is only *one solution* to our sin problem. Nicodemus probably realized that all the religious acts that he had done could not wash away one single sin.

Being born a Jew could not remove one sin.

Studying the Bible could not remove one sin.

Attending religious services could not remove one sin.

The only solution to remove our sins was by Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross.

Shortly after this meeting with Jesus, the Bible tells us that Nicodemus was at the Cross (John 3:39) when Jesus was crucified. When he saw Jesus hanging at the Cross, he must have remembered what Jesus said to him at his first meeting: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.”

I believe that I will see Nicodemus in Heaven – not because he was a religious man but because he believed that Jesus died on the Cross to pay for all his sins!

How do you expect your sins to be paid?

Can any of your religious acts wash away sins?

The Deadliest Traffic Jam

I can't exactly remember what happened 35 years ago when I read John chapter 3 but I believe 2 words caught my attention. The first word was “*believe.*” “*That whosoever **believes** in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever **believes** in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*” (John 3:15, 16).

I had known John 3:16 since I was a little boy. I had memorized it. I believe that many of you have memorized this verse too. On that day 35 years ago, I realized that though I had *known* and memorized John 3:16, I had never *believed* it.

All the Jews in Moses' time had been informed that if they were bitten by a serpent, then they had to immediately look at the brass serpent. I am sure that this was broadcast to all the Jews in the wilderness. I am sure that every mother reminded her children over and over to look at the brass serpent if they were bitten. But I am also sure that not everyone looked at the brass serpent when they were bitten. In fact, I am pretty sure that the majority looked at the poisonous serpent when they were bitten and tried to kill it. In other words, all knew that they had to look at the brass serpent but few believed that just looking at it was enough to save them, so they did not look at the brass serpent. And they died.

I too *knew* that John 3:16 told me that the way to everlasting life was by believing. Like the Jews in the wilderness, I too thought that *knowing* John 3:16 was enough. So instead of just believing in Jesus, I thought that by adding some religious works, I would go to heaven. But the Bible tells us that merely *knowing* the promise in John 3:16 is useless. What is important is *believing* John 3:16.

On that special day, God opened my eyes to see the word “*believe.*” I realized that “*knowledge*” is what I have in my head, while “*believe*” is what I have in my heart. And there is only a gap of about 15 cm between my head and my heart.

For the Jews in the wilderness the gap between their head and their eyes was only 1 cm. Yet those who only *knew* that they had to look at the brass serpent in their head died. But those who *looked* at the brass serpent with their eyes lived.

On that special day 35 years ago, I realized that I needed to clear the traffic jam between my head and my heart. I had the knowledge of John 3:16 in my head for almost 35 years but unless I believed the promise in John 3:16 in my heart, my sins would not be removed and I would not have everlasting life.

The Jakarta traffic jam prevents many people from reaching their destination in time. But this spiritual traffic jam that has stopped millions in church from ever entering the Kingdom of God - this is the deadliest traffic jam!

Be sure that you *believe* that “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life”

It's a Gift

Besides the word “*believe*,” the other word that caught my attention 35 years ago was “*gave*.”

I had always thought that we had to *earn* our way to heaven by being good and religious. I had thought that we had to make our way (through religious works) to reach God. But when I read John 3:16, it said “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...*” Instead of me trying to reach up to God, God was reaching down to me by giving me His Son. In my mind, I pictured religion to be depicted by a man striving to climb up to Heaven while I pictured God's plan of salvation to be depicted by God giving His Son.

Religion teaches us that we need to reach God by our good works. Salvation teaches us that God sent His Son for us. Religion and salvation are not only different but they are opposite. God did not give us another religion with its set of commandments, rules and religious rituals but He gave us the gift of His Son. It is sad that many Christians think that God has given them “another” religion that is merely superior to other religions.

I am an opportunist by nature. I cannot refuse a good offer – especially when it is from someone who is great. So how could I refuse an offer of everlasting life from God?

On that special day 35 years ago, I opened my heart and received this amazing offer of everlasting life from God. I had known John 3:16 for almost 35 years but it was mere knowledge that was stuck in my head. In my head it was knowledge that was useful for Religious Knowledge examinations and for showing off. However, when I opened my heart that day and believingly said to God: “*God I'm a sinner. Thank you for your GIFT of your Son Jesus Christ who went on the Cross to take all my sins. I receive Him as my Saviour*” - my life changed from that day.

The life changes have lasted till now. Ever since that day, I have peace in my heart – peace that my sins are all settled on the Cross. I have joy that I'm a child of God and that my Father watches over me. I have assurance that I have everlasting life. These have not only lasted for the past 35 years but have grown since then.

There are many religions to follow. But there is only ONE SAVIOR to receive.

Are you following a religion? Or have you received a Saviour?

Have you believingly said to God “Thank you God for your Son. Thank you, Jesus, for dying for all my sins. I receive you as my Saviour”?

If a King Became an Ant

At that time 35 years ago, I did not fully understand how Jesus paid for all my sins on the Cross. I simply believed it by faith. John 3:16 promises that “*whosoever **believes** in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.*” So, though I didn't fully understand the miracle of the Cross, it did not matter.

Since then I've had a better understanding of the *perfect Saviour* and his *perfect work* on the Cross. This has not made me “more saved” but it has made me love and adore God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit more.

We all celebrate Christmas and Easter. But most of us go through these yearly celebrations with little understanding of God's perfect plan of salvation. At Christmas 2000 years ago, God the Father sent God the Son into the womb of Mary. The little baby Jesus that was born was 100% God and 100% man. No one can fully understand how the little child could be both 100% God and 100% man. According to mathematics principles, the correct answer should be 50% of each. But this is *Divine Mathematics*. This birth is a miracle – a great miracle of God!

It is also a great sacrifice of God the Son. God the Son is co-existent with God the Father. He was with God the Father from the very beginning. God the Son is co-equal with God the Father. He is totally equal with God the Father. God the Son lived in Heaven surrounded by holiness and perfection but willingly came into the womb of the Virgin Mary to be born as the Infant Jesus – a little helpless baby. The limitless God the Son who created the Universe willingly became God-man living in a human body.

If a king chose to help his subjects by becoming an ant, it would be a great sacrifice. But who can fully understand what it means for God the Son to be God-man?

I hope that the next time we celebrate Christmas Day we will not just celebrate a traditional religious event but that we will stand in awe at the love and sacrifice of God the Son who willingly became God-man!

Jesus willingly became a man for you.

Are you willing to be an “ant” for God?

Can you imagine yourself as an ant crawling around for the rest of your life?

No Computer Can Calculate These Numbers!

Why did our Saviour have to be born on Christmas Day as 100% God and 100% man? Could anyone who was not 100% God and 100% man be our Saviour?

As God on the Cross, Jesus knew all men – all men from Adam till the last man on earth. As God on the Cross, Jesus knew each of us though we were born 2000 years after the Cross. As God, He sees the past, the present and future because God is not limited by time. As God on the Cross, Jesus saw every sin of every man – the sins in our mind, the sins in our eyes, the sins on our tongue, the sins in our hearts, the sins in our hands. As God on the Cross, Jesus saw all our sins – our past sins, our present sins and our future sins.

We are often shocked to hear that on the Cross Jesus has already paid for our future sins. Our human minds reason that since we have not yet committed these sins, how can he already pay for them? But we forget that as God, He already knew us 2000 years before we existed. And as God, He already saw every sin that we will commit 2000 years before we committed them. And Jesus has already paid for all the sins of all men 2000 years ago. As God on the Cross, Jesus remembered all the sins of every man – though each of us has committed billions of sins and there are billions of people on earth. As God on the Cross, Jesus could carry all the sins of all men. If each sin were the size of an atom and all the sins of each man were gathered together they would form a mountain that would reach up to the skies. But as God, He had the strength to carry all those sins.

God cannot suffer pain, but as man on the Cross, Jesus suffered the pain that each of us should have suffered in Hell. Each of us deserve to burn in Hell for eternity. All the punishments that we should each have suffered for eternity were concentrated by God the Father and poured upon Jesus (Lamentations 1:13) in the 3 hours of darkness on the Cross (Matt 27:45)

No computer can calculate the magnitude of these punishments. No computer can calculate eternity.

God cannot bleed, but as man on the Cross, Jesus shed His blood for every man. And the Blood of Jesus has the power to wash away the sins of every man.

And the Blood that was shed 2000 years ago has the power to continue to wash away our sins (1John 1:7) No computer can calculate such power.

God cannot die but as man on the Cross, Jesus died precisely when he had finally suffered for the very last sin. No computer is able to calculate this precise moment.

There are some things that we cannot fully understand. We cannot understand the Holy Trinity. How can there be One God but Three Persons in One God? We cannot understand the Incarnation of Jesus. How can Jesus Christ be 100% God and 100% man? We will never be able to fully understand the extent of Jesus' sacrifice on Christmas Day nor His sacrifice on Easter Friday.

But we must continue to appreciate and adore these things more and more each Christmas Day and each Easter Friday.

Christians are often looking for a miracle. The Greatest Miracle happened 2000 years ago on the Cross and is available to all men now!

Do you know the greatness of this miracle?

Have you received this Great Miracle?

Or are you satisfied with looking for miracles of health and wealth?

Sudah Selesai!

All the sins of every man were carried by Jesus Christ on the Cross – as if they were His sins. All the pain that every man would suffer in Hell was experienced by Jesus Christ on the Cross – as if He was the sinner. All the pain that we would suffer in eternity in Hell was condensed and poured on Jesus in His 3 hours of sufferings on the cross.

And when Jesus Christ had suffered for the very last sin of men, He said “*It is finished*” (John 19:30). The mission that He had come to do on earth was accomplished.

Jesus proved that He had indeed paid for all our sins by rising from the dead on the third day. If the sins that He had carried on the cross were not fully paid and He was still carrying some of those sins, then He would not be able to rise to heaven because there can be no sins in heaven.

Our Perfect Savior did a Perfect Work on the Cross!

Because of these beautiful words “*Sudah selesai*” we are confident that all our sins have been paid by Jesus at the Cross. Because all our sins have been paid by Jesus at the Cross, then we can be confident that we are ready for eternal life in Heaven.

Other religions do not promise everlasting life, they give rules and rituals that they say will help us to obtain everlasting life. If you ask their followers where they will go when they die. The usual answer is “I hope that I will go to heaven”

But God did not give us a set of rules and rituals to follow, so that we may try to earn eternal life. God the Father gave us His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. God the Son, Jesus Christ, gave His life on the Cross for our sins. God the Holy Spirit, inspired the Bible writers to write 1 John 5:13 (“*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life....*”).

All who have believed that Jesus Christ died for all their sins and rose from the dead can be sure that we have everlasting life! And if it is everlasting then it *lasts forever*.

In other words, the moment we believe in Jesus' perfect work on the Cross, then from that *very moment* we have everlasting life – which lasts forever. If “everlasting life” can be lost, then it is NOT everlasting!

Some people believe that they will lose “everlasting life” when they fall into sin. These people believe that when they receive Jesus as their Savior, only their past sins are forgiven. And they believe that if they subsequently commit a sin, then they will lose their salvation. They cannot believe that Jesus on the Cross paid for all their sins – their past sins, their present sins and their future sins. To their human mind, they cannot understand how Jesus can pay for their future sins, since they have not yet committed them. They forget that when Jesus was on the Cross 2000 years ago, they were not yet born and had not yet even committed even one sin. Yet Jesus on the Cross said “Sudah selesai” when He had paid for every sin of every man that will ever exist on earth!

Because Jesus paid for all our sins, we are ready to meet our Holy God. When we take our last breath on earth, we can be sure that we will take our next breath with God because Jesus promised us that if we believe in Him we will “not perish” (John 3:16). Our bodies will perish, but we will not perish. All who have received Jesus as their personal Savior will never experience death – they will just go from this life to the next. Indeed, all who have received Jesus as their personal Savior will have everlasting life – the first part on earth and the next part in Heaven. There will be no interval between the 2 parts.

Our salvation is not based on how good we are.

Our salvation is based on the perfect work of a perfect Savior

Are you sure that you will not perish?

Can My Sin Cause Me to Lose Everlasting Life?

People who think that they have to maintain their “everlasting life” after believing in Jesus by not sinning probably do not understand what sin really is.

Most people (including probably Nicodemus too) believe that sin is an act of evil. Many will say that they are good people because they have not killed anyone, hurt others, stolen or committed adultery. They think that sin is an act of evil against another person.

This is understandable because this is the world's understanding of sin. Therefore the laws of the world prescribe punishment against acts that hurt or harm others. According to the standards of these worldly laws, most of us have not committed evil. I am sure the majority of you have not been charged by legal courts as criminals.

However, we must not forget that God is Holy and obviously His standards are higher than man's. He not only is angry if we do evil but He is also angry when we do not do the good that we should.

James 4:17 says “*So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is **sin**.*” For example, we are told in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to “pray without ceasing”. In other words, we should always be in the attitude of prayer. If we are not, then we have SINNED!

We all know that the 5th Commandment commands us to “honor our parents” (Exodus 20:12). If, at any time, we fail to honor our parents then we have sinned. Have you been rude or impatient to your parents? If we have a biblical understanding of sin, then we will not be so arrogant to think that we can maintain our salvation by not committing sin.

We must also not forget that, unlike policemen and judges who only see our visible acts of evil, God sees the thoughts in our head, the lusts in our eyes, the subtle lies in our words, the pride of our hearts and the unseen evils that we commit in private. Matthew 5:28 says “*But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*”

If God considers all these as sin, then how can we preserve our “everlasting life” by not sinning?

The Apostle Paul clearly describes his struggles with sin in Romans 7:15-23 ¹⁵ *For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.* ¹⁶ *Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good.* ¹⁷ *So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.* ¹⁸ *For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.* ¹⁹ *For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.* ²⁰ *Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.* ²¹ *So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.* ²² *For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,* ²³ *but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.*

This is what every honest Christian experiences as he struggles against sin.

Remember, we have everlasting life because of the perfect work of a perfect Savior. We cannot earn nor preserve everlasting life by our efforts.

O wretched man that I am!

Licensed to Sin?

To some people, the promise of everlasting life to one who receives Jesus as his personal Savior sounds like a license to sin. They reason that if we are sure that we already have everlasting life, then many will take advantage of this assurance and commit sin.

Such people forget how wise God is. They also forget that a Holy God will never encourage sin.

When we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior, we do not only receive a promise of everlasting life. Gal 2:20 tells us that “Christ lives in us” In other words, when we receive Jesus as our Savior we not only receive a promise of everlasting life but at the same time we receive the presence of a Jesus (in the Person of the Holy Spirit) in our life.

1Corinthians 3:16 *“Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?”*

1 Corinthians 6:19 *“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,...”*

In other words, when we receive Jesus as our Savior, we not only receive Jesus as our Savior who paid for all our sins but we also receive the Holy Spirit who helps us to overcome sin in our lives. We have not only received a Passport to Heaven but also a Partner to help us to live our lives as children of God.

The Holy Spirit will trouble our conscience when we sin. A person who has truly received Jesus as His Savior, will have no peace in sin. He will enjoy the pleasures of sin in his flesh but will not have peace in his heart. It is like a person who has an allergy to a certain type of food that he likes. He will enjoy the taste of that food but will also suffer the effects of the allergy. A person who has not received Jesus as His Savior will enjoy the pleasures of sin in his flesh and will not be really troubled in his heart (unless he is caught and embarrassed or affected by his sin).

The presence of the Holy Spirit will also give us the strength to overcome our sin. A person who has not received Jesus as his Savior will not have the strength to overcome sin.

Rom 7:18-19 *“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.”*

Before we are born again, we are like a cripple man who wants to run in a race but is unable to do so. Spiritually we are all crippled by sin– ever since Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden. We, his descendants, have all inherited his sinfulness and are spiritual cripples!

God's plan of salvation does not give us a license to sin.

On the contrary, it gives us the strength to overcome sin!

Blessed Holy Trinity! Blessed God the Father – who loves us and gave us His only Son.

Blessed God the Son – who sacrificed His life for us on the Cross.

Blessed God the Holy Spirit – who lives in our hearts to be our daily Partner.

Can any other “god,” other than the Holy Trinity ever do this amazing work of salvation?

Have you adored the Holy Trinity?

Jesus' DNA

When I first read the term “born-again” I did not really understand nor appreciate this term. However, as I studied medicine and understood the importance of DNA, I began to appreciate what it means to be “born-again.” Our DNA determines many of our characteristics.

Bataks inherit their parents Batak DNA and have Batak characteristics – their looks, their strong character, their love for singing and their love for saksang. At their first birth, a Batak inherits Batak DNA.

When a Batak person receives Jesus Christ as his Savior, Jesus Christ enters his heart (Gal 2:20) through the Person of the Holy Spirit. From that very moment, this Batak person has both Batak DNA and Jesus' DNA. He does not lose his Batak DNA. On the other hand, the DNA that he receives from Jesus improves and advances the non-sinful qualities of his Batak DNA. After being born again, he becomes a better Batak – a Christ-like Batak. He now likes to sing not only for his own pleasure or to show off his skills but now likes to sing to glorify God and to use his singing to tell others about Jesus. He not only is strong in character to further his own desire but uses his strong character to glorify God and help others.

(Even in Heaven we do not lose the characteristics of our first birth which are not sinful. The Bible tells us that many tongues will worship God (Revelations 7:9). There will be choirs singing in Bahasa Batak, Karo, Simalungun, Java, etc. However, the sinful parts of our character are removed because there is no sin in heaven.)

When Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:3 that unless a man is “*born-again he cannot see the kingdom of God*,” He was telling Nicodemus that unless Nicodemus was born-again with God's DNA, he would never fully appreciate God's world. As a Jew, Nicodemus appreciated the Jewish world in which he lived in. He loved the Jewish synagogue, he loved the religious services in the synagogue, he loved the literature in the Old Testament. However until he was born-again he could never really appreciate what God loved – mercy, love, holiness, charity, etc. To Nicodemus, mercy, love, holiness and charity are good but not something very special.

Let me give an example.

I have many Batak friends. Whenever they gather they look forward to eating saksang. Because I like to eat tasty food and I like meat, I like saksang. But I know that I cannot appreciate saksang the way that Bataks do. To them it is not just another tasty meat dish but is is very special. This is an imperfect example but I believe that it helps us to understand how DNA helps us to appreciate things in special ways.

Before we are born-again, we think that God's kingdom is the church – with its buildings, organizations, programs, music. After we receive Jesus as our Savior and have Jesus' DNA, we begin so see the real kingdom of God. We begin to see that the kingdom of God is not buildings, organizations, programs or music but that it is about love, forgiveness, helping others, sharing the Good News, mentoring new believers.

Another thing about DNA is that once it is in a person, it remains in that person forever. A child who is born with Batak DNA will continue to have that DNA in him for the rest of his life. A Batak can study in Bandung, then work in Batam, then live in Kalimantan and then marry a Dayak lady but he can never lose his Batak DNA. Once we have received Jesus as our Savior, we cannot lose Jesus' DNA – even if we stray away from God and do sinful things.

It is God who gave us our first birth, so must be proud of our first birth – whether we are Bataks, Javanese, Dayaks, etc. However, we are not complete until we are born-again by believing that Jesus Christ died for all our sins. We then become better Bataks, Javanese, Dayaks, etc.

Have you received Jesus' DNA?

Many Taufik Hidayats

One of my favorite badminton players is Taufik Hidayat. He won the Olympic gold medal and World Cup gold medal for Indonesia. He obviously had God-given DNA to be a world champion but he also trained hard.

Having good DNA does not guarantee that a person will be a good person. For example, a person who has the DNA to be a good badminton player does not automatically become a good badminton player. A good DNA provides the potential only. He must make a conscious choice to discipline himself and train hard to achieve his full potential. I believe that Indonesia potentially has many world-class badminton players but the vast majority of these potentials either do not know their potential or they do not discipline themselves to optimize their potential.

Similarly, a born-again Christian has Christ's DNA to be like Christ. In other words, every born-again Christian has the potential to be a world-class good person. However, the vast majority do not know their potential and of those who know, most do not make the conscious choice to optimize their potential.

God teaches us truth and commands us to to obey His truths. However, His does not FORCE us to obey His commandments. If He did so, then we would be God's robots and our obedience would not be because we love Him.

God commands all Christians to “**work out** their salvation” (Philippians 1:12). Many misunderstand this verse to mean that we have to “**work for** our salvation.” This is impossible because no one can work for his salvation because “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Furthermore, if we could work for our salvation then there was no need for God to give His only begotten Son. Jesus on the Cross said “It is finished.” The work of salvation is complete. It has been earned by Jesus on the Cross. Our job is not to earn our salvation but to “work out” our salvation.

Let me give an imperfect example.

I studied hard to earn my medical degree from the University of Singapore. From the day I was conferred with the degree as a medical doctor, I could not lose that degree. I had earned it and it was mine. However, I have stopped practising medicine for over 20 years and all the medical knowledge and experience that I have are presently unused. I am blessing no one with my medical skills. In fact, many people who know me as a preacher do not know that I am a doctor because I have not “worked out” my medical skills.

Many Christians are like this. Jesus has earned for them their salvation and lives in their heart. However, they are not “working out” the potential that they have. They are not glorifying God with their lives, nor blessing others. They live wasted unpotentially lives. However, in spite of this they cannot lose their salvation because Jesus has already earned it for them.

It will be such a sad day when we go to heaven and realized that we could have been world-class spiritual Taufik Hidayats but we settled for being kampong badminton players.

Do you know that you have the DNA to be like Jesus Christ?

It's Impossible to be Alone

When we receive Jesus as our Savior, we not only receive the promise of eternal life but we also receive the presence of the Savior in our hearts. In Galatians 2:20 we are clearly told that “Christ lives in us”

In strict theological definition, Christ lives in us through the Person of His Holy Spirit. 1Cor 3:16
“Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?”

There is no contradiction because the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit) are One God. Though we, as man, cannot fully understand the Trinity, we can believe this. Therefore, if we have received Jesus as our Savior 20 years ago, then Jesus has been in our hearts for the past 20 years. In fact, He has been present in our hearts every day, every hour and every second for the past 20 years. In other words, we have had a VVIP Guest in our hearts for 20 years.

How have we been treating this VVIP Guest who came from Heaven to visit us, to fellowship with us and to help us? Most of us have been very rude to this VVIP.

We have ignored Him from the day that He came to visit us till now.

We have never acknowledged His presence.

We have never thanked Him for leaving heaven to live in us.

When we have needs, we by-pass Him and ask others for help.

When we praise God, we by-pass Him and praise a god who is far from heaven.

Almost all religions build places, organizations and programs for men to go to worship God in these places at special times. In other words, these religions attempt to restrict our relationship with God to these places and times. And since almost all religions do these things, Christians often influenced to do the same.

We forget that our God loves us so much because God is love. And because God loves us so much, He wants to be close to us.

And because God loves us so much, He wants to be close to us all the time. So He comes to live in our hearts.

This is so amazing that others, who do not know God, cannot believe that the Great God who created the universe is also the Personal God who lives in us.

Though Christ lives in every one who has received Jesus as his Savior, we live as if He is absent.

When Christians pray, they often think of God as a faraway God.

When Christians want to be close to God, they think that they have to go to church.

When Christians want to praise God, they think that they have to do so by singing in church.

When Christians feel sad, they feel that they are alone.

When Christians face challenges, they feel that they need to do so with their own strength.

When you have received Jesus as your Savior, it is impossible for you to ever be alone. Even if you dive to the deepest sea or climb the highest mountain, you cannot be alone. Your Savior is your constant Partner.

Remember you have a VVIP from Heaven in your heart.

When you wake up in the morning, the first person you must greet is this VVIP.

When you have something to share with someone, share it with your Best Friend.

When you need help, seek help first from your Personal Helper.

Colossians 1:27 says, *“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of the mystery among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory.”*

The greatness of our faith is that God is in us! How can anyone imagine that God who created the universe lives in us! Others have a religion. We have a relationship. We have a very intimate relationship. We have a very intimate relationship with God!!

He has chosen to live in us so that He can be our constant Partner as we go through life on this earth.

Are you enjoying your relationship with Jesus who lives in you?

Super Partnership

After reading the previous chapter, I believe many will be asking these questions:

- (1) If Christ lives in us, then why are most Christians so different from Christ?
- (2) If Christ lives in us, they why are most Christians so weak and sinful?

These are logical questions to ask. If you told me that your Partner is the richest and most powerful person in Indonesia, I would definitely expect you to be rich and powerful too. So why are we so weak and sinful? The problem is that Christ who lives in us does not work in us automatically. We must first put our faith in Him before He works in us. This is similar to Christ on the Cross. Christ on the Cross is of no benefit to us until we trust in Him. God wants us to live a life of faith because it is faith that connects us to God. Romans 1:17b “...the just shall live by faith” It is the constant need to trust in God that keeps us close to God.

Have you noticed how quickly we forget God when all is well? It is usually when we are desperate that we remember God. And when we think of God, we think of Someone in Heaven. We forget that Christ lives in us and we by-pass Him and appeal to the God in Heaven.

So we need to remind ourselves that we have a relationship with God – a very intimate relationship. And the way to do this is to learn Gal 2:19b well. Gal 2:19b says “I am crucified with Christ”

What does this mean? How can we be crucified with Christ as He was already crucified 2000 years before we were born? Though we cannot be physically crucified with Christ, we can learn to do so in our minds. We can do this by reminding ourselves that from the day that we received Jesus as our Savior and Jesus came into our hearts, we can no more be “I” because we now have a Partner. From that day, “I” was crucified and ceased to exist. From that day, we are no more “I” but “we” (Christ and I). Gal 2:20 describes in in this way: “...nevertheless I live yet not I but Christ lives in me”

From the time that we received Jesus as our Savior, we must learn to think in terms of “we” not “I.” From that time, we should learn to face every challenge of life together with our Partner.

Gal 2:20 says; “nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the **faith** of the Son of God...” In other words, though Christ lives in us, He is not actively helping us until we place our faith in Him. The faith that is mentioned here is not referring to the faith that we had when we first believed in Jesus Christ as our Savior. That faith in Jesus on the Cross gave us eternal life and Christ as our Partner. That faith in Jesus on the Cross is exercised once and does not need to be repeated because the moment we exercised that faith, Jesus became our Savior and Partner. *That faith is in Jesus Christ on the Cross.*

The faith that is mentioned in Galatians 2:20 refers to the faith that we **now** must have as we live our daily lives. This faith is required repeatedly as we face each of life's challenges. *This faith is in the Christ who lives in our hearts.* For example, if you lack understanding when we read the Bible, you must immediately ask our Partner for understanding. (“Lord Jesus, I lack understanding but you understand everything. Please give me your understanding so that I can understand this passage that I'm reading. Thank you.”) If you lack wisdom to make a decision, then go to your Partner (“Holy Spirit of God, I lack wisdom to make the right decision. You are all-wise so please give me your wisdom now as I make a decision. Thank you.”) If you are falling into temptation, then go to your Partner for help (“Lord, I'm falling into temptation and I don't have the strength to resist this temptation. Please give me your holiness and strength. Thank you.”) If you lack patience when dealing with a person or situation, then go to your Partner (“Jesus, I lack patience but you have much patience. Please give me patience. Thank you.”) If you lack courage to share the Gospel with someone then ask for courage. If you lack words to say, then ask your Partner to give you the words.

He is a faithful Partner and will not let us down if we trust Him.

Most Christians know of the need to have faith in Jesus on the Cross for eternal life. But very few Christians know of the need to have faith in Jesus in their heart, for a victorious holy life.

Christians trust Jesus to pay for the sins on the Cross. But many of these same Christians do not trust Jesus to help them to overcome their sins as they live their daily lives.

Are you living a lonely losing life?

You should be living a victorious Christian life with Jesus.

Holy ATM

Gal 2:20 says, *“The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loves me and gave himself for me.”*

When I read this verse it seems that my life is going to be quite simple.

All I have to do is to live by faith in Jesus who loves me and lives in me.

It seems so similar to what happened 35 years ago when I simply trusted in Jesus on the Cross and how my life was changed from then till now. Jesus was the One who did all the work on the Cross. And all I did was believe in Him and His amazing work became mine. It was not about how deserving I was, how strong I was, how religious I was, how sincere I was. It was not about me. It was all about Jesus and what He had accomplished on the Cross for me.

So as I read Gal 2:20, I realized that it is still about Jesus not me. It is all about the wonderful perfect Jesus who lives in me, not me. And all that I need to do is to believe that He still wants to do amazing things for me, if I will only trust Him. It is not about how deserving I am, how diligent I am, how sincere I am. It is not about me. It is all about Jesus who lives in me so that His life can be seen through mine.

The Christian who lives by faith does not just hope that Jesus will help him but believes that Jesus will help him when he needs help. The Christian who lives by faith does not have to wait to see some evidence of Jesus' work before making a move but makes a move expecting that Jesus will help him as he steps out in faith.

For example, if I see someone whom I hate coming towards me and I know that I lack love for this person. I know that God has commanded me to love my enemies (Matt 5:44) so I believingly ask Jesus for His love so that I can love this person. I do not need to feel any feeling of love before I make a move to greet this person. As I have already believed that Jesus will give me His love to love this person, I move forward and greet the person. And as I take the step to move forward to greet the person, Jesus gives me the love to love that person. In other words, Jesus meets me as I step forward in faith.

Let me give an example.

When we go to the ATM we expect to get our money. The moment we have keyed in the amount we want and our PIN number, we expect the money to be dispensed by the machine. We do not beg, hope or hit the machine. We simply put out our hand and expect the notes to drop into our hand. There's no need to beg because the money is ours. There's no need to hope because we trust that the bank promised to give us our money when we key in the amount and our PIN number.

Similarly, we do not need to beg for Jesus' love, holiness, wisdom, strength because Jesus already lives in us. Of course we cannot ask for things that Jesus does not have. We cannot ask for Him to make us more proud and materialistic. Neither can we ask Him to make us less like Him. So we cannot ask Him to make us rich and beautiful so that we can feel superior to others.

So the victorious Christian is one who realizes that the way to success is not try harder but to trust more.

The victorious Christian is not exhausted from trying to imitate Jesus but excited from watching what Jesus is doing through him.

Have you learned to use the Holy ATM of Jesus?

A Personal Love Letter

Christianity is just not another religion. God did not send Jesus to bring a super religion to us. God sent His only Son so that we could enjoy a relationship with Himself through Jesus.

Religions are boring and burdensome. Relationships are exciting and enriching. Loving relationships are most exciting and satisfying. Having a loving relationship with God is the ultimate goal of men.

Relationships are strengthened by communication. A husband and wife can be legally married but unless they communicate with one another, their relationship is only a legal one. But if there is healthy communication, their relationship will grow. Our relationship with God begins when we received Jesus as our personal Savior. This relationship is strengthened by communication. He talks to us through His Word (the Bible). We talk to Him by prayer.

When we trusted Jesus as our personal Savior, He came to live in us and we received His DNA. When we were born-again with Jesus' DNA we received His spiritual eyesight and can “see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Before we were born-again we could see the words in the Bible and know the stories in the Bible, but we could not really understand the spiritual meaning in the Bible stories.

Before we were born-again we could read the Bible but it was boring because we didn't really see the spiritual beauty of the Bible. (1Co 2:10) However, after we were born-again we could see beautiful truths and lessons in the Bible and it becomes understandable and exciting. For example, before I was born again I had probably read John chapter 3. I probably understood that Nicodemus met Jesus and Jesus scolded Nicodemus. However, I didn't really understand why Jesus scolded Nicodemus nor what Jesus was really trying to teach Nicodemus. It was just a story to me.

After I was born-again, I began to see many interesting lessons in this story. First, I learned that I was like Nicodemus. Then I learned that Jesus loved Nicodemus and wanted to teach him the importance of being born-again. Then I learned that we can be born-again by simply trusting Jesus on the Cross.

After being born-again, I've read John 3 many times and have enjoyed learning more and more from this chapter.

A dog can see what I'm doing but can't really understand why I'm doing it. He does not have the DNA to understand man. However, if it's possible to put human DNA into the dog, he will begin to understand humans. When we receive Jesus as our personal Savior, we have the DNA to understand God.

As we grow up we learn from books that are appropriate for our age and understanding. For example, when we are in SD we learn from SD textbooks. When we're in SMP we learn from SMP books. However, God has given only 1 book for all Christians. The Bible is suitable for all Christians from baby Christians to matured Christians.

This is possible because the Holy Spirit reveals only the things that are relevant to us from the Bible. For example, 35 years ago when I read John chapter 3 as an unbeliever, God showed me that I needed to be born-again and I needed to receive Jesus as my personal Savior. God only showed me these truths at this time because this is what I needed to know. Later when I read the same passage, I learned that John 3:6 taught that men had 2 natures – flesh and spirit. God showed me this truth because as a growing Christian I needed to know that I had to take care of my flesh and spirit. Later when I read the same passage, I learned from John 3:8 that the effects of the Holy Spirit on a person are like the “wind.” God knew that I needed to know that the importance of the Holy Spirit in my life.

There is no book like the Bible. It is God's personal love letter to each of His children. It is alive and strong (*Hebrews 4:12 “the word of God is living and powerful”*) and has the power to change each of us personally.

The Bible is not written for theologians, it was written by your Heavenly Father for you. The Bible is not full of theological lectures, it is 70% stories so that all of us can enjoy it. Many of us love Korean dramas but few of us love stories in the Bible. The main reason for this is because we start with a wrong attitude to the Bible. We are told from the beginning that it is a serious book that is written for us to study and most of us do not like to study.

Nobody told us that though it is a serious book, it is also an interesting book to enjoy and learn from.

Read the Bible knowing that it is full of interesting stories.

Read the Bible with the expectation that God wants to say something to you as you read it.

Read the Bible with Jesus your Partner and ask Him for His understanding as you read.

Though the Bible is not a boring textbook to be studied out of duty, it is important to set aside time each day to read it. Do so as if you're setting aside time to spend with a loved one so that you can enjoy time with that person. Discipline is important if we want to succeed in anything – sports, courting a girl, learning a new skill. Discipline to set aside time is important if we want to enjoy our relationship with God, or with anyone else.

Read and re-read your personal love-letter from God.

He has a new message for you today!

A Holy Facebook

Most religions have special places to pray in, special prayer postures and special times to pray. So for many, prayer is a religious duty to be fulfilled to please God.

God has not given us another religion, but has restored His relationship with us through Jesus Christ. A relationship is characterized by communication. When we enjoy a nice relationship with a spouse or friend, we love to communicate with them. There is no need to go to a special place, or have a special program or time to communicate with a spouse or friend. It is not a duty but a pleasure to communicate with someone who loves us and whom we love. Let us learn to communicate with God not because it is a duty but because He loves us and we love Him.

Of course, we must remember that God is not an ordinary friend. We Asians have all learned to respect our parents and when we communicate with them we do so respectfully. We are careful to address them by their proper titles and we are careful not to speak disrespectfully. However, this does not stop us from wanting to communicate with them. This should be the attitude when we pray.

Most religions teach that God is faraway in heaven. This is logical because God is huge and holy, therefore Heaven is the suitable place for God. However, the Bible teaches us that Christ lives in those who have received Jesus as their personal Savior (Gal 2:20). This is unthinkable to our limited human minds. But for God it is possible to dwell in Heaven and in our hearts.

Why would Jesus want to live in us? Surely, heaven is better. But the Bible teaches us that God is love (1John 4:8 “God is love”). And we know that one of the characteristics of love is the desire to be close to the one we love. And the Bible tells us that God loves us (John 3:16), so God wants to be close to us.

Another reason, why we go close to someone is so that we can enjoy intimate communication. It is definitely nicer to talk to a friend face-to-face than to talk over the phone. This is why we see so many coffee shops and meeting places in every city where people gather to talk to their friends.

Christ lives in us, so that we will talk to Him freely and continuously. We do not usually call our friends on the phone to tell them about little matters but when we are having a coffee chat with our friends we talk about everything.

The Bible tells us to “pray without ceasing” (1Thess 5:17). Jesus wants us to communicate with Him about everything. We should share our joys with Him when we enjoy the breeze that He gives us. We should thank Him for the angkut that arrives on time. We should confess our sins when we sin. We should tell Him our fears when we face challenges. We should ask for help when we attempt to face those challenges. We can pray anytime, anywhere, anyway – with words or without words.

Many religions teach us that we pray to inform God of our needs. This is wrong because God knows everything. He doesn't need us to inform Him.

Many people pray hoping to change God's mind. They pray hoping that it will make God more kind and generous to them This is wrong because God is kind and generous and does not need us to make Him more generous. He knows what is best for us and wants to give the best to us. Then what is the main reason for praying? It is for our good.

Prayer makes us realize that we need God. Prayer humbles us and reminds us that we are weak and need a Partner. Most of us are arrogant and believe that we can survive without God. We are so arrogant that we need the constant reminder of prayer to humble us.

Prayer reminds us how good God is. It reminds us that He is near and that He cares about us. This is important because most of us have the idea that God is far away and only cares about us when we have serious problems.

Most of our friends are busy or far away. We cannot be communicating with them all the time. We try to maintain constant communication by FaceBook. Christ lives in us. We can have constant communication with Him all the time.

God invented instant communication long before FaceBook but few of His children know how to use this Holy FB.

Conclusion

Religion is invented by men.

Relationship is invented by God.

Relationship with God was lost by Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden.

Relationship with God is restored by Jesus at the Cross.

Jesus did a perfect salvation work at the Cross.

We can receive this perfect salvation by faith in Jesus' perfect salvation work.

When we receive Jesus as our personal Savior we receive both eternal life and the presence of Jesus in our heart. We also receive Jesus' spiritual DNA.

We must strengthen this relationship with Jesus by communication.

God talks to us through the Bible and we talk to God in prayer.

The Bible is God's personal love-letter to each of us.

Read this love-letter with joy and expectation.

Prayer is not a duty, it is communicating with our Best Friend.

Prayer will not change God but it will change us.

Treasure your relationship with God. The greatest thing in this life and in the next life is to know God and to enjoy Him forever. John 17:3 *“And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”*

Memorize the following verses and share them with your friends so that their lives will be changed:

John 3:16

Gal 2:20

1 John 5:13

GLOSSARY

Angkot/ Angkut is a public transportation in Indonesia that has a van-like feature.

Batak Tribe is the largest known ‘Christian’ tribe in Indonesia of which majority of them lives in North Sumatra, Indonesia in the calderas of Lake Toba. The Bataks are divided into diversified sub-tribes namely: Toba, Karo, Simalungun, Pakpak-Dairi, Angkola-Mandailing and Nias. As mentioned, ‘*saksang*’ is one of their famous specialty served in almost any kind of occasion.

Dayak is one of the major tribe in Indonesia.

Jakarta is the capital city of Indonesia, the world’s 4th most populous country in the world. It is Indonesia’s center of politics, economy, trade, culture and education.

Javanese is one of the world’s biggest tribe located in Java Islands, Indonesia.

KTP is the national ID acquired by every Indonesian in their legal age. Religion is indicated in this ID as every Indonesian is obliged to be affiliated to a certain religious group.

SD stands for ‘Sekolah Dasar’ in Indonesia which means primary school.

SMP stands for ‘Sekolah Menengah Pertama’ that is an equivalent to a middle school.

Sudah Selesai means, ‘it is finished’ in Bahasa Indonesia. Conveying the truth that Jesus’ redemptive work on the cross paid our debt in full.

Taufik Hidayat is a retired but widely known Indonesian badminton player who gained 6 consecutive championships in Indonesia Open Tournaments and a gold medallist in World Cup and Olympic Games.

VVIP refers to ‘very very important person’