

Inspiring Moments

God The Master Restorer

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Meichi Matsuura The Master Watch Repairer

Meichi Matsuura is a master watch repairer in an island in Japan. He repairs watches (and clocks) other watch repairers refuse to repair because they are either too difficult to repair or 'beyond repair'. Two reasons why he accepts these broken watches. First, the owners have a sentimental attachment to these watches. Secondly, it is challenging to repair these watches.

One day he received a broken watch with a note from the owner. It said: "I have sent this watch for repair to several watch repairers. None of them can repair it. If you cannot repair it, it is ok. Just throw it away". The thought that the watch may come to the end of its life motivated Matsuura to take up the challenge. Intrigued, Matsuura started to open the watch but he could not because it was rusted inside. He refused to give up. After spending long strenuous hours, he managed to salvage the watch, cleaned it up and restored it back to its original working condition again. It was as good as new. When the watch was handed back to the owner, the joy on his face said it all.

God The Master Restorer

Our lives are like watches. Like watches, our lives may also be 'broken'. They need to be salvaged and repaired, so that they may be restored to their original working condition. Some lives are 'broken' because of divorce. Some are 'broken' because of health, financial difficulties, family problems or death of loved ones. Some lives may be 'broken' because of crime. Whatever the reasons, if your life is 'broken', you need God because he is the 'master restorer'. He is the only one who can salvage and 'repair' your life and make it work again. And, unlike some of the watch repairers, God does not reject any one (no matter how badly 'broken') because each life is precious in God's sight. They are as valuable to the watch owners who sent their watches to Matsuura for repair.

Ramalingam, The Gangster Chief: From Prison To Mission

One such shining example of a restored 'broken' man is my friend (and partner in the Lord's ministry), Ramalingam. Mr Ramalingam was a

gangster chief in Singapore some years ago. He controlled several areas of Singapore. He committed all sorts of crimes. He was one of Singapore's most 'Wanted Man'. He was a threat to society. Eventually he was caught and sentenced to long term imprisonment. All he could think of everyday was how to escape from prison. He even thought of breaking out of prison with the other prisoners. One day he was sent to 'maximum security' ward. Being alone with nothing to do, he asked the prison warden to give him something to read. The warden asked him: "What book do you want?" He replied, "Give me the thickest book." Why the thickest book? So that he can read from cover to cover to kill time. He knew he will be locked up in this cell as punishment for a long time. So the warden gave him a Bible.

How God Restored Ramalingam In Prison

(i) Confronted by Genesis 1:1

He took the Bible and started to read from Genesis. The first verse in the first chapter of the Bible shocked him. Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...". He was so offended by this verse that he threw the Bible away in the cell. Ramalingam came from a staunch Hindu family. His grandfather (a priest) helped to build one of the Hindu temples in Singapore. As a Hindu, he was taught in Hinduism that in the beginning there was no God. How can the Bible say that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth..."? That means that God pre-existed creation. That directly contradicts his teaching in Hinduism. So he did not get very far with the reading of the 'thickest book' he asked for.

(ii) Confronted by Mathew 16:26

Although Ramalingam was angry with the Bible, he continued to read it, page by page, because there was nothing else to do. That is why prison makes such good sanctuary for learning of God's Word. He continued to read into the New Testament. He came to an abrupt halt when he read Mathew 16:26 "For what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeit (lose) his soul".

He found this verse very disturbing, discouraging and disgusting. He said: "My personal aim and goal was to gain the whole world if it was possible. Here the Word of God is asking me a negative question, which to me is disturbing. I knew about the importance of the soul which lives forever. If I gain the whole world then my soul would be a prosperous soul. Why does the Bible say that even if I gain the whole world, my soul would be lost? I got so discouraged and

disgusted, I said to myself that I would not want to read the Bible again". So Ramalingam threw the Bible in his cell

(iii) Confronted by Mark 8:26

He was so depressed that even the prison guards noticed the change in him. They asked him, "why?", he refused to answer them. Since there was nothing else to do, soon he picked up the Bible and read from where he stopped. He decided to skip the rest of Mathew chapter 16, and re-start reading from Mathew 17 (skipping those "offending" words). He was beginning to enjoy reading the Bible again until he came to the next gospel, Mark 8:36. He got the shock of his life when the same offending words appeared again: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the world and lose his own soul!" He could not believe his eyes! So, again, he took the Bible and threw it away in his cell (for the third time). Ramalingam was not prepared to acknowledge his guilt and sin before God. He never saw himself as a sinner because he was a religious man.

(iv) Confronted by Luke 9:25

However, he was still keen to continue to read the Bible because of the miracles Jesus performed. So, like before, he "cleverly" skipped the offending part of Mark chapter 8:36 onwards and went straight to Mark chapter 9. Soon he was on his way enjoying reading the Bible again. Until he came to Luke 9:25. He could not believe his eyes when he saw the same offending words for the third time: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul". As before, he got so angry, he threw away the Bible in his cell (for the fourth time).

(v) Ramalingam convicted of his sin

However, this time it was different. Something unusual happened. His violent objection to these 3 verses in the scriptures brought him into direct confrontation with his sinful condition which he was not prepared to acknowledge. In his own words, "Things became serious and I became terribly sad, sickening and fearful. My body got so cold, never before such thing happen. I was breathing heavily and sweating profusely. All my sins were clouding and crowding on my mind and in my heart. For the first time, I realized and recognized my awful sins and the wretchedness of my sins. Now I know why I am separated from my Holy God. My sins were rehearsed for hours in my mind (back and forth). I began to weep like a child (hardcore

gangster like Ramalingam would never weep). I could not control my tears. So I cried out to God, 'Please forgive me and help me!' Right at that moment, I felt the presence of our true and living God in me. I was comforted and counseled by the Holy Spirit to confess my sins to God and to invite Jesus Christ into my life to be my Lord and Saviour. My separated life from God was brought into a spiritual relationship with God in Christ Jesus my Lord."

This truly demonstrates the power of God's Word. As stated in Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword. It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

Prison guards saved by God's Word.

The transformation in Ramalingam was so obvious that even the prison guards noticed it. He continued to enjoy reading the Bible. By now he had reached the book of Revelation. God brought his attention to Revelation 1:3 "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein: for the time is at hand." Ramalingam wondered how could it be possible for him to read and hear the Word of God at the same time? God answered him: "Read aloud!"

In that part of the prison which housed maximum security cells (solitary confinement) there were 4 guards on duty each time (6 hours each shift). So, on each day, there would be a total of 16 guards on duty. Next to Ramalingam's cell, there were other fellow prisoners. So, each day when Ramalingam read the Bible aloud (he has a "booming" voice, he can speak in an auditorium without a microphone), the prison guards heard the Word of God. His neighboring prisoners also heard the Word of God. It was like attending chapel service everyday, the whole day! You could say that Ramalingam had a 'captive audience' (literally). When Ramalingam was released from this maximum security cell, at the end of 3 years, almost all of the prison guards had accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour!

From Prison To Mission

So Ramalingam began his evangelism ministry in the prison itself. Today, he is a missionary greatly used by God in India, Sri Lanka, Middle East, Indonesia and many other countries.