

Can You Hear Me Now?

“So, faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” - Romans 10:17

Adoniram Judson has long been regarded as the first American missionary. In the early 1800s he brought the gospel to the country of Burma (now Myanmar). His most lasting work, however, was the Bible translation into Burmese that he gave to the Burmese people. His life's work was so blessed by God that there are now more than half a million Christians in the once unreached population.

A hundred years or so later, on the other side of the mountains in China, James Fraser began to do gospel work with the Lisu people in Yunnan Province of western China. Similarly, he translated the Bible into the Lisu language and gave the Lisu people God's Word in their own language. His life's work also bore much fruit by God's grace. The Lisu church in China is estimated to be more than 100,000 people strong today while living under strict government surveillance.

I often wondered how much Judson and Fraser's work would have been hampered if they hadn't taken the time to produce God's Word in the language of the people. The work was certainly not easy. And surely, there have been many revisions since the first edition. But ultimately, having God's very Word in their own language must have made the ministry more effective and the maturing of Christians more evident when they had the ability to read God's Word for themselves.

Having the Bible in our own language is something we often take for granted. We probably have multiple copies at home, in the car, in our office, and on our phones. However, easy access doesn't always translate to a deeper love for God's Word. The encouragement we can take away from Bethany Ingram's presentation on Sunday is to rejoice! We rejoice that we have God's Word so easily and freely available.

Bethany also shared that only 717 of the over 7000 languages have a completed Bible. The challenge to us then is to pray for more laborers, more funding, and more awareness of the need for this work. Most of this work is done in closed and hostile countries. We can also pray for the health and safety of the workers.

If we believe that God's Word is important, then this task of praying for the work of Bible translation would be important to us as well. I leave you with this quote from James Fraser: *“We are, as it were, God's agents – used by Him to do His work, not ours. We do our part, and then can only look to Him, with others, for His blessing. If this is so, then Christians at home can do as much for foreign missions as those actually on the field. I believe it will only be known on the last day how much has been accomplished in missionary work by the prayers of earnest believers at home. And this, surely is the heart of the problem.”*