

July 9, 2017

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Messenger: Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "How Great it is for us to live in His Grace!"

—A Principle of the New Covenant—

Text: Hebrews 8:7~13

8:7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.

8:8 But God found fault with the people and said: "The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

8:9 It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord.

8:10 This is the covenant I will establish with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

8:11 No longer will they teach their neighbors, or say to one another, 'now the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

8:12 For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

8:13 By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.

Introduction

- The Bible is recorded based on the culture of *contracts*. The Old Testament records the days before Jesus came to this world. The New Testament records the days during and after Jesus came to this world. The Old and New Testaments are generally called *the Bible*.
- By the way, the Bible doesn't contrast *the old contract* and *the new contract* but it means the old part and the new part of one contract. Therefore, these two books discuss *one contract*.
- That is to say that the Old Testament records Jesus Christ, the Mediator who is the central figure of the Bible, through prophecies. On the other hand, the New Testament records the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament.

The author of the Epistle records as below—

- **8:7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.**

"That first covenant" refers to the law that God gave the Israelites through Moses on Mount Sinai, that is called the Sinai Covenant (the Ten Commandments). However, the Israelites couldn't follow the Sinai Covenant. A contract should be fulfilled with both sides (a bilateral contract). It means the people and God. However, the Israelites couldn't fulfill the law, God's commandments. In that sense, the contract wasn't completed, so it became *imperfect*.

- We should understand that God didn't make an unreasonable demand of Israelites knowing that they could hardly follow the Law. The purpose of the law was to make them realize how helpless they were to follow it.
- Human beings are sinners so they can not fulfill the law and commandments. It is impossible for the imperfect beings to make a contract with the perfect one(God). However, God made the imperfect contract valid through Jesus Christ. This is a principle of the new covenant. It reveals God's deep love.

- Then what is the principle of the new covenant like?
Let's study the following three points from today's Scripture.

Main points

1. The Covenant Is Written on People's Hearts.

8:10 This is the covenant I will establish with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

- God writes the law in people's hearts. This means that they come to follow God's law and His will. It means that God makes peoples' old hearts into new ones
- Ezekiel, the prophet, records, **Ezekiel**
11:19 I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and gave them a heart of flesh.
11:20 Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.
- When God writes the law on people's hearts He gives them a new heart so that they are able to follow His law. It is surprising that prophets of the Old Testament had already prophesied it. God gives people new hearts and they are saved. It depends on their faith.
- God gave the Ten Commandments (the Sinai Covenant) to the Israelites. God forbade them to worship idols. However, the Israelites didn't follow God's command so He sent prophets to point out their sins and tell them to repent and return to Him. However, the Israelites didn't listen to the prophets. In fact, they even persecuted Jeremiah.
- Jeremiah kept speaking God's Word and His amazing covenant of salvation even though he was persecuted as if he was a betrayer. He said that God was merciful and gave the Israelites, who were against God, new hearts so that they could return to God.

8:10 This is the covenant I will establish with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

- * **The first characteristic of the new covenant is that the law of God is put in their minds and written in their hearts.**

2. The Covenant that All People Come to Know God

8:11 No longer will they teach their neighbors, or say to one another, 'now the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

- It is not easy for pastors or evangelists to let all people know God. Of course, it is possible to carefully explain and make them gain an intellectual knowledge, but it is difficult to make them really understand God. Even though they worked ever so hard to give a testimony about God and Christ, most of people don't believe in God. On top of that, those who finally come to have faith sometimes disappear without knowing.
- However, when God gives a man a new heart, some different things happen. The new covenant is not given by making an intense effort. God makes his heart new and changes his life completely. God speaks directly to us and makes a covenant with us. ⇒ It is a personal relationship.
- However, even if God Himself guides us, it doesn't not mean that we don't need to give a testimony. I would like to emphasize that we should expect God who changes our hearts completely than our effort.

* **The second characteristic of the new covenant is that God works directly to each of us personally.** God spoke to people through chosen people (prophets and special people) in the days of the Old Testament, but in the days of the New Testament, God directly comes to each of us as individual people. We live in the days of grace.

{Illustration}

• **I have heard the following story in USA.**

When a certain Catholic sister (85-year old) was alone in a convent, she was shut into an elevator for 4 days. The light was out. She tried to open a door of the elevator, but she couldn't. She had a cell phone but the cellular signal didn't reach there. Fortunately, she had a pitcher, a few stalks of celery and several cough drops.

• **She thought first, "That can't be true!" It is no wonder that she got into a**

panic by an unexpected happening. My friends! A person sometimes reveals their true nature in such an accidental case. She first made herself calm down. Then, the space in the elevator gradually became her personal prayer room.

• **After she was rescued, she had an interview with CNN.T.V. She said, "I had to choose to get in a panic or to devote myself to prayer. I gradually came to understand that the situation was a gift from God. God's presence gave me power and joy. I felt God's presence there. I believe that God led me into a better fellowship with Him."**

• My friends, God changed the unexpected event in an elevator for her to understand God's presence and have fellowship with Him. God directly approaches us as an individual person. How thankful!

3. The Covenant for Forgiveness of sins

8:12 For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

• I said that the contract should be fulfilled with both sides (a bilateral contract). However, the Israelites couldn't fulfill their responsibilities, rather, they broke the contract. (This is the real nature of human beings.)

• The new covenant that the Bible teaches is not a bilateral contract that is based on an agreement of both sides.

Yes, the new covenant that God has given to us is **an unilateral contract. An unilateral contract is a contract in which only one party assumes debts.**

It means that God executes the covenant even if the Israelites (we) are not able to pay our debts. God covers people by the unilateral covenant even if they are not able to pay debts or even if they break the covenant.

• Then, why did God prepare a unilateral covenant for us?

⇒ Because, God is love.

3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John

God's nature is agape love.

* **The third characteristic of the new covenant is to be forgiven of sins through God's agape love.**

• Buy the way, the term covenant is *diatheke* in the original language and it is *testament* in English. Therefore, the Bible is the new testament. And the term *diatheke* also means will.

• The new covenant that Jesus Christ has given is also the covenant of His will. Then, what is his will like? It is God's promise that those who believe in Him are

saved through the death of Jesus on the cross. Those who believe in the cross of Christ are forgiven of their sins according to His will and also become children (a prince and a princess) of the Kingdom of heaven. This is the New Testament.

The Gospel of John

10:9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.

- Therefore, we don't need to try hard to follow the old law. We don't need to think that we should lead a virtuous life and go up stairs to heaven. I encourage you to forget it. We are given the unilateral covenant if we only believe in Jesus Christ. It is the covenant that we are forgiven of sins only by faith in Him. What an amazing contract we are given! His will is to give the new covenant that cleans away our sins by His blood shed on the cross. God's will is valid forever.

Conclusion

Title of the Message: "How Great it is for us to live in His Grace!"

—A Principle of the New Covenant—

- What is a *principal of the new covenant* that God the Creator has given like?
The following three points were demonstrated today.
 1. The covenant that is written in our minds and hearts
 2. The covenant that all humans know God
 3. The covenant that gives forgiveness of sins
 - People of the Old Testament couldn't get these three privileges. On the contrary, we are blessed that we are able to lead a life in God's grace.
 - How about today's message? How much do we give thanks to God for giving us a life to live in His grace? Let's consider His grace and examine our lives
- * God bless you !