

August 6, 2017

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Messenger : Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message : "We Never Become Slaves of Sin"

—We Are Weak, but We Are Strong—

Text: Hebrews 9:15~28

9:15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance — now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

9:16 In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it,

9:17 because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living.

9:18 This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood.

9:19 When Moses had proclaimed every command of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people.

9:20 He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep."

9:21 In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies.

9:22 In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

9:23 It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

9:24 For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

9:25 Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own.

9:26 Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

9:27 Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

9:28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Introduction

- You may know an institution called *the Red Cross*. It was founded by Henry Dunant, who was a Swiss and the first recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. The institution was founded on the principles that Dunant advocated, "To respect human lives and save those who are suffering without discrimination between friends and enemies." *The Red Cross* serves in 190 countries in the world and performs astonishing work .
- By the way, do you know the Blue Cross? It is an institution to support people who become alcohol addicts, drug addicts and gambling addicts. The Blue Cross,

Blaues Krez in German, has been engaged in relief and supporting activities in Germany more than 40 years.

- Every summer vacation, the Blue Cross reserved the building of the theological seminary where I graduated. At first, I didn't understand who they were. Later I understood that they came to do their ministry. They invited alcohol addicts, drug addicts and gambling addicts to have counseling to be freed from addiction. It is a great work.
- It is said that there are approximately 2,300,000 alcoholic patients in Japan. (Actually, it is much more like several times of the official record.) In recent years, female alcoholic patients are increasing rapidly. The number of patients grew by 1.5 times in the last 10 years. (As of March, 2017) They started drinking just a cup and then two cups, three cups... When they finally realized it, they were already addicted to drinking. They became a slave of alcohol. There are many people who enjoy drinking but eventually they became addicted. There are many people who can no longer control themselves.
- Worldly pleasures take them back to the old selves. At the same time, gambling is said to be a great temptation. Human beings are weak. They look strong but they are really weak.
- What does the Bible teach? Paul says as below—
“For when I am weak, then I am strong.” 2 Corinthians 12:10
 What he said was strange, but it is true! We can become strong even if we are weak. Why could Paul say such a thing? We all are helpless toward temptations. The secret to be strong is Jesus Christ.
- John who was Jesus' beloved disciple records as below—
“Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.” 1 John 5:5
- We are able to become strong in Jesus Christ, even though we are weak. Why was Christ crucified? He was killed because He was weak, wasn't He? This is the paradoxical truth that the Bible teaches. It teaches as below—
9:26 But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.
- Let's listen to the voice of God about Jesus Christ, today.

Main Points

1 The Blood of the New Covenant that Was Sprinkled

1.) The Bible is the book of the covenant.

- The Bible refers to both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The term *testament* means a covenant. Some people think that two testaments are an old translation and a new translation. But they are not.
- Not all people, but some people think that the Roman Catholic Church, the old religion, uses the Old Testament and the Protestant Church, the new religion, uses the New Testament. Both Churches use the Old and New Testaments as the Books of the Canon.
- As a certain difference, the Roman Catholic Church adds 12 Apocryphal books to the Old and the New Testaments. The Protestant Church believes 66 volumes of books of the Old and the New Testament as the Books of the Canon written by the inspiration of God.

- As I mentioned previously, the important thing is that the Bible demonstrates one covenant. It doesn't mean two covenants like the old and the new covenants, but it means one covenant that was made by Jesus Christ who was crucified.
- People in the days before Christ looked towards Christ's cross ahead of them. The ritual regulations that they followed were a mere *example* and *shadow* of Christ. However, Christ Jesus came to this world and He fulfilled the God's plan for salvation through Jesus' death on the cross. Since then, the New Testament that is the new covenant has begun by His coming.

2. The characteristics of God's covenant

- ① **The covenant is not a bilateral covenant but a unilateral covenant.**

The covenant that the Bible teaches is **not a bilateral one that is made by mutual agreement**, but the covenant that God made was **a unilateral covenant that is a contract in which only one party assumes debts.**

- That is that even if I can't meet my obligations or I break the covenant, God Himself keeps the covenant according to the unilateral covenant.
- Then, why did God make the unilateral covenant?

⇒ **The reason is that God is love.**

God's love has already been shown by the Abrahamic Covenant.

Genesis

12:1 The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

12:2 I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

12:3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

- **God's nature is love (agape love). Those who became God's people are God's children.**

Therefore, they are given the promise that is never broken because of God's agape love (the unilateral covenant). How thankful!

- ② **The covenant is a will.**

- *The covenant* in verse 15, is *diatheke* in Greek, and *a will* in verse 16 **is** the same word. (Both terms are testament in English.)

9:16 In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it,

- It means that the death of Jesus Christ on the cross made the covenant of salvation effective.
- In the days of the Old Testament, people were cleansed by the blood of animals that were offered. The high priest entered the Most Holy Place once a year taking blood of an animal and made atonement for the Israelites. It was *the example* of the eternal redemption that showed death of Jesus Christ, who was the Son of God and was coming to this world in future. Jesus Christ died on the cross for us so that our sins were forgiven and cleansed.
- By the way, some Japanese criticize that Christianity is a bloody religion. However, that bloody smell comes from our sins. We need blood that is a ransom for forgiveness or we must die.

- If we don't need to die even if we are sinners, someone must die in place of us. In the days of the Old Testament, animals were killed to take their places. However, it was just a symbolic work. Jesus, the Son of God, died for us so that we were saved and made free from sin.

9:26 But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

- This is *the blood of the new covenant that was sprinkled*. It was not a bilateral covenant, but a unilateral covenant. It is completely unilateral, because the nature of God is agape love. Another important thing is that the covenant is a will. The covenant of God's salvation became effective as of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

2 The Second Coming of Jesus Christ

1) The blood of Jesus gives forgiveness and freedom.

- The author of the epistle *continues*.

9:27 Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

- The verse above teaches that everyone dies. Nobody avoids death. However, it refers to the natural death of a human body. It doesn't mean the death of punishment. Those who are created have their beginning and end. They end in death.
- On the top of that, the verse records that people are destined to die and after that they must face judgment. Those who believed in God and were forgiven of sin go to heaven, but those who deny God and reject Him go to hell and are judged. These are very severe remarks.
- Then, why do Christians go heaven and Non-Christians go to hell? God Himself decided by His authority to judge people and send them to Hell as long as they are sinners. On the same time, God is the One of agape love, He sent His Son to the world and judged Him and punished Him instead of human beings.
- God has revealed through the prophets and regulations according to the law. And Christ really died on the cross by taking our places. This is the salvation of God.

9:26 But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

9:27 Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

- Jesus must no longer sacrifice Himself, because He doesn't take individual sins away, but He took away the sins perfectly. Sins have no power in Jesus. Therefore, we never have to become slaves of sin.

- Jesus said as below—

The Gospel of John

8:31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

8:32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

8:33 They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"

8:34 Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.

8:35 Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever.

8:36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

2. The second coming of Jesus gives us joy.

- By the way, the Bible teaches that Jesus comes again. (His second coming) He doesn't come to redeem people. He will come again to fulfill salvation that He achieved on the cross.

9:28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

- The term *salvation* (soteria) refers to the following three meanings.
 - ① To be spiritually saved forever
 - ② To experience God's power of salvation
 - ③ To perfectly become free from spiritual sin, death, Satan and the past
⇒ It means *God's blessing*.
- By the way, what does *salvation for Christians* mean here? Christians are already saved, aren't they? Yes, indeed. When they believed in Jesus as their Savior, they were saved. However, they just started Christian lives. It means that God's work of salvation just started at that time. Therefore, those who don't grow as Christians are said to be same as those who don't have faith in God.
- They are still bound by the old habits and nature, even though they became Christians. They easily get angry, envy others, fight with people, complain and sometime tell a lie. They hurt someone's feelings, sometimes judge people. They worry about what others think of them. They are lacking of love. On the contrary, it is difficult for them to forgive others.
- My friends! When we think about our Christian lives, we feel as if we are not growing. Then, we come to worry about our future as Christians. However, we gradually learn by reading the Word of God, giving prayers and testimonies that is a fellowship with the living Lord.
- Those who learn to follow Him faithfully, keeping church life, experience various things in God and at the same time, they are getting mature. Yet, they are not perfectly freed from an evil thinking and they may have struggle to lead moderate lives.
- However, Scripture teaches here when Jesus comes again, those who are imperfect become perfect like Christ. Some may think that they don't need to strive to grow if salvation will be fulfilled for every Christian sooner or later. However, it is important to try to become mature. We are not able to grow enough in this world but we should live to become mature.

{Illustration}

- **You may know Hymn No.687 *Shall We Gather at the River*. It is one of my favorite praising songs. Let's sing together.**

Lyrics :

- ① *Shall we gather at the river,
Where bright angel feet have trod,
With its crystal tide forever
Flowing by the throne of God?*

Conclusion

Title of the Message : “We Never Become Slaves of Sin”

—We Are Weak, but We Are Strong—

- We all are weak. However, those who are weak are made strong by Christ Jesus.
“Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”
1 John 5:5

- Therefore, we should never return to our old selves.

We studied two important things today.

1. Jesus’ blood gives us forgiveness and makes us free.
2. The second coming of Jesus gives us joy.

- The reason is that those who are imperfect are made perfect when Jesus comes. We meet Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of Heaven and rejoice in the Lord.
What a precious grace (privilege) we are given!

* God bless you !