

February 4, 2018

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "Faith to Focus on the Blessing of the Kingdom of Heaven"

—By Faith—

Text: Hebrews 11:33~40

**11:33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions,**

**11:34 quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.**

**11:35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection.**

**11:36 Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.**

**11:37 They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated —**

**11:38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.**

**11:39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.**

**11:40 God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.**

### Introduction

• We learned an important point last Sunday that we should boast about human weakness, not boast about human strength.

**2 Corinthians 12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."**

• The problem is that we can't show our weakness or we don't want to accept our weakness. Last week, we learned about six courageous forerunners who lived by faith. They are our examples. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews writes that he did not have enough time to write about all the people who walked by faith.

• In today's text, the author records many lives of people that we should know. They are saints who walked through the storm of trials, persecution, hardship and martyrdom. Suffering and persecution are closely related to the days of the Old Testament and also the New Testament (about 2000 years of Christian history).

• Jesus Christ who suffered and was persecuted said as below—

**Luke 17:25 But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.**

• However, Jesus finally defeated death and gained victory even though He was persecuted. Therefore, the saints who believe in God have hope of victory in the future even though they also have hardship. This is what the Bible teaches. The author of the Epistle teaches *the faith to focus on the blessing of the Kingdom of Heaven*. Let's study the following two points today.

### Main Points

#### **1. The Saints Who Walked by Faith**

##### **1) Courageous Saints**

• **11:33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions,**

• **“Conquered kingdoms”** probably means that they defeated kings who ruled Canaan the Promised Land and founded a kingdom there. The kings who had faith feared God administered justice. **“Gained what was promised”** means that God gave them the Promised Land and at the same time it means that they were given God’s promise of the Savior who came from the descendants of David.

• **“Who shut the mouths of lions,”** refers to Daniel who was taken to Babylon with the Israelites. After Babylon was conquered by King Darius of Medo-Persian Empire, Daniel became one of three administrators of the Empire.

• As the God’s Spirit abode in Daniel, he so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps. They begrudged Daniel and tried to entrap him. They made a proposal to the king to issue an edict and enforced the decree that anyone who prays (worships) any god or human beings except the king should be thrown into the lions’ den. So King Darius put the decree in writing. They knew that Daniel got down on his knees and prayed to God three times a day. They came to the king and complained the conduct of Daniel.

• When the king heard it, he was greatly distressed. He tried to rescue Daniel and made every effort, but it was impossible. Daniel was thrown into the lions’ den. The king spent the night without eating. He could not sleep. At the first light of dawn, he hurried to the lions’ den and he found Daniel was quite safe and fine.

**Daniel 6:21 Daniel answered, “May the king live forever!**

**6:22 My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty.”**

## **2)The Saints Who Became Courageous Warriors**

**11:34 quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword;**

• **“Quenched the fury of the flames”** speaks of the experiences of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who were also taken to Babylon with Daniel. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon made an image of gold and he commanded to his people to worship the image at the dedication ceremony.

• Whoever did not fell down and worship would be thrown into a blazing furnace. These three Jews didn’t worship the image. They were brought before the king and severely interrogated. They confessed faith in true God who were alive and they said that He was able to deliver them from the blazing furnace, therefore, they wouldn’t worship the image.

• King Nebuchadnezzar was furious with them. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual and commanded some of the strongest soldiers to tie up them and throw them into the blazing furnace. The furnace was so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up three Jews.

• However, the three Jews in the furnace weren’t burnt. They were walking around in the fire. On top of that, the king saw four men and the fourth looked like a son of the gods. The King couldn’t deny that their God was the true One.

• **11:34 “... escaped the edge of the sword”** refers to the events concerning Jezebel, a wife of Ahab, who tried to kill Elijah. Also, there was Jehoram ,king of Israel, who planned to kill Elisha before he could run away.

• **11:34 “...whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.”** The verse refers to Moses, the judges and the prophets. Moses hesitated to work for God while Gideon the judge and Jeremiah the prophet were afraid. However, they **“became powerful in battle”** by faith. No one was courageous from the first

time. However, when they had to fight, they became unbeaten and routed foreign armies.

### **3) The Saints Who Experienced Resurrection**

#### **• 11:35 “Women received back their dead, raised to life again.”**

The verse above refers to two women: a poor widow of Zarephath and a well-to-do woman of Shunem. The former woman’s son was raised to life by prayer of Elijah the prophet and the latter woman’s son was raised to life by Elisha the prophet.

#### **• 11:35 There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection.**

The verse reminds us of Elazar, who was the teacher of the law and became a martyr at the Maccabean Revolt for the sake of faith in God. His mother and seven brothers were also martyred. They would not have been tortured or killed if they had forsaken God’s law. However, none of them did. They were willingly martyred because they believed that they would resurrect at the end of the days and enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

### **4) The Saints Who Were Persecuted**

**11:36 Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.**

**11:37 They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated –**

**11:38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.**

• The verses above might refer to Jeremiah. He really experienced what the following verse records.

**11:36 Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.**

• **“Put to death by stoning” ( 11:37 )** refers to Zechariah the priest and prophet, who was a son of Jehoiada the priest. After the death of Jehoiada, King Joash who had been faithful to God began to worship idols. When Zechariah severely spoke the Word of God to the king, became angry and put him to death by stoning.

• **“The world was not worthy of them”** means that they didn’t think this world was worthy to live for them.

• **11:37 “They were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword,”** refers to people who seemed to be cut exactly in two by a saw in the days of King Manasseh. And there were many prophets who **“were killed by the sword”** , especially in the days of Elijah and Jeremiah. James the apostle was killed by the sword by King Herod Agrippa in the days of the early church. (The Acts 12:2)

• **11:37 “They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated – “**

When King Epiphanes in Syria reigned, faithful believers were severely persecuted so they had to flee the country without taking their property. Therefore, they went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

• The believers in the days of the Old Testament lived like this. The author records as below –

### **5) The Saints Who Walked by Faith**

**• 11:39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.**

The following verse records the more blessed thing as below –

• **11:40 God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.**

**The author records *something better*. What is it then? It is to be saved by the cross of Jesus Christ and His resurrection.**

It means that the saints of God who lived before Christ are saved by the cross of Christ and His resurrection. The author records the forerunners of faith in the days of the Old Testament for the purpose to teach the truth.

## **2. The Faith to Focus on Blessing of Heaven**

• Now let's think about the term *by faith* that appears 20 times in Chapter 11.

### **1) Worldly Evaluation**

• First of all, let's think why the forerunners of faith experienced such great hardships. And today, those who keep faith experience hardships, too. We sometimes think that those who do not have faith can walk easier.

• Why did they experience hardships when they kept faith? Some people may think that if they have hardship, they have no reason to have faith.

• The Bible gives the answer to those questions. The reason is that there is a battle between the light and the darkness. Those who believe in God become the children of the light and the darkness hates the light. This world is filled with evil. We are born and live in the world of the darkness. We are under control of this world. It means that we live in the sense of value of this world and its evaluation. However, God wants to bless us as the children of the light, not the children of the darkness. God is the One who is the light.

• The Bible decisively records that the darkness never overcomes the light.

**John 1:5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.**

The light and the darkness keep fighting in this world.

### **2) God's Evaluation**

• My friends! God prepared something amazing for the saints of the days of the Old Testament and of the New Testament. It is the right to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Those who were saved by the cross of the Jesus Christ and His resurrection can enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

• People of the days of the Old Testament were forgiven by sacrificing animals before God. However, Jesus Christ who is the Son of God was sacrificed only once in the days of the New Testament. Those who accept the secret become the children of God and the children of the light.

• The Kingdom of Heaven is so wonderful that it won't compare with the things in this world. John records some of the Kingdom of heaven by revelation from God as below—

**Revelation 7:13 Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes – who are they, and where did they come from?"**

**7:14 I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**

**7:15 Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them.**

**7:16 'Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them,' nor any scorching heat.**

**7:17 For the Lamb at the center before the throne will be their shepherd; 'he will lead them to springs of living water.' 'And God will wipe away**

### every tear from their eyes.'

- Yes, indeed! *They were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might enter the better world* . They could endure hardship without receiving anything in this world. It was *by faith*.
  - When we understand how wonderful the Kingdom of Heaven is, we can easily endure hardship in this world.
- Let's focus on the Kingdom of Heaven and expect it and walk forward.

### Conclusion

Title of the Message: "Faith to Focus on Blessing of the Kingdom in Heaven"

— By Faith —

- Today we studied *faith to focus on blessing of the Kingdom of Heaven*. When weak human beings trust in God, they are given amazing power. The courageous believers of God could exhibit tremendous power in this world, in which the innocent people were killed, the rulers were corrupted, adultery prevailed and people led evil lives.
  - They became powerful by accepting the Word of God *by faith*. This world is limited and everything is changing. However, the Word of God is infinite and eternal. Those who believe in God become the saints before God by the blood of the Lamb. They are given the promise to enter the Kingdom in Heaven.
- What should we do, who live as believers of God today?
    1. We should trust in the eternal God's Word.
    2. We should walk *by faith* following the examples of our forerunners.
  - It is important for us to have devotion time to receive power and encouragement from the Lord every day.
- \* God bless you!