

March 18, 2018

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message By Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "How to Get to the Goal"

—To Be Strengthened—

Text : Hebrews 12:12~17

**12:12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.**

**12:13 "Make level paths for your feet,"so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.**

**12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.**

**12:15 See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.**

**12:16 See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.**

**12:17 Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done.**

#### Introduction

- Even if marathon runners start running a race in the best condition, they gradually become tired. When they reach the 20km and 30km point, the distance between the leading group of runners and other runners behind becomes greater. And finally, those who fall behind cannot catch up with the leaders.

- We compare our Christian lives to a marathon race. The readers of the Epistle gradually became weak in their spiritual lives. Their arms became feeble and their knees began to shake. They ran wearily as if they were ill. They seemed to be a far cry from real marathon runners. Then, they began to feel pain as they ran.

The author of the Epistle encourages them as below—

**12:12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.**

- My friends! What should we do in such a situation? Our Christian lives are not like the marathon race that competes in speed but it is important for us to complete the race of a Christian life. We should strengthen our feeble arms and weak knees. Therefore, we go to the One who gives us power to do so and receive new power from Him again. At that time, we are able to finish the marathon race, our Christian lives.

- Let's study how the Christian life is like the marathon race according the following two points today.

#### Main Points

##### **1. The Lord Heals Runners. Hebrews v.12~13**

**12:12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.**

**12:13 Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.**

- The terms "**feeble**" and "**weak**" mean almost same things. It refers to the arms and legs of the body that become paralyzed on one side. It is very difficult to recover from. One needs to begin rehabilitation as soon as possible. It is the same in our Christian lives.

- Last time, I mentioned that the wise parents put good obstacles before their child, not take every obstacle away. Do you remember it? You may think that the Scripture above contradicts what I said. However, let's look the following verse.

## **12:13 Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.**

- They don't contradict. We need good obstacles, however, too many obstacles hinder our ability to run. The verse above points to things that block our race. It is very important that we do not give up our Christian lives, like some may do in the marathon race. We should finish it. Therefore, if we have obstacles to the race, they need to clear so that we don't give up and quit the race too early.

### **1. The Obstacles**

- Then, what are the obstacles to the race? They are the pagan and worldly things that seem attractive at first sight. Our selfish nature is also an obstacle that leads us to only think selfishly and only about ourselves. It is quite contrary to God's will.
- We may put their desires before God's will. Therefore, when something bad happens, we just reject it and don't think whether it is God's will or not. We may hold a grudge against other people and we can hardly forgive them. These things are obstacles to our Christian lives. We all need to clear them away so that *we all reach the goal together*.

### **2. A Harvest of Righteousness**

- When the obstacles in our Christian lives are cleared away and we are disciplined by God, our lives produce a harvest of righteousness. We also experience personal healing. The hands that were involved in doing evil are changed to do good things. The knees that could not struggle against sin are changed into strong knees that fight against sin. The feet that walked a wrong path are changed to walk a correct path.

- Let's think about the story of Mary Magdalene. (John 8:1~11)

Mary was an unclean woman who committed adultery that was punishable by stoning.

However, when she was saved by Christ, her life was greatly changed. Jesus said,

**John 8:11 "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared, "Go now and leave your life of sin."**

She was allowed to be the first to meet the resurrected Jesus. How greatly she changed!

- We need to be healed of the damaged part of us that is attacked by sin. We are able to live positively by focusing on the goal only after we are healed by the Lord. How about you? What weakness do you have in your Christian lives?

### **1. To Become Runners Who Are Able to Avoid Danger Hebrews v. 14~17**

- God wants us to have good fellowship with other Christians.

**12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.**

#### **1. Seek Peace**

- We sometimes can't use spiritual power and get tired in our Christian lives. In that situation, our human relationships don't go very well. Therefore, it is very important to make every effort to live in peace with everyone. We are encouraged to do so.

- This world is controlled by the principle of competition. When we compare our Christian lives to the marathon race, some people argue that we should not drop out of the competition. However, from that point of view, everyone else looks like an opponent. Such a life is a really lonely one.

- The principle of Christian life is not competition but it is to live close together and to love each other. It is a life to help each other, not to defeat other people. Therefore, we need to make every effort to live in peace with everyone.

- Peace doesn't mean a mere peaceful situation but it means a fellowship of love: spiritual harmony, unity and cooperation. This love is the one of self-sacrifice that Jesus showed on the cross. Such love can avoid struggle and can heal division.
- Love is the center of peaceful fellowship of brothers and sisters. Only love makes us unite and have a peaceful fellowship.

**Ephesians 2:14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 2:15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, 2:16 and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 2:18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.**

- We seek peace.

### **1. Seek to be Holy.**

**12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.**

- We are asked to *be holy*. However, we are exposed to strong power of evil and its temptation. The Bible teaches us to seek a holy life. It is important to try to get along with other people. We easily lead lukewarm lives. We tend to find other people's faults. Meanwhile, we over look our own sins and weakness. *Seeking to be holy* teaches us to be strict ourselves.

**12:15 See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.**

- The Bible, the New Interconfessional Translation records as below —

**12:15 Make sure that no one misses out on God's grace. Make sure that no root of bitterness grows up that might cause trouble and pollute many people.**

- When we are made holy, we come to understand what people around need and their problems. And we realize that we should help people, who are exhausted, to complete the race of the Christian life.
- "Bitter root" means negative feelings and thoughts against God' will that make people drop out their Christian lives. Such negative thoughts against God infect people around and become very dangerous. As for me, I should be careful not to miss out on God's grace. If we don't have strong fellowship with God, Satan finds an empty place in our heart and cleverly infuses thoughts against God. It is very important for us to live in fellowship with God and focus on the Lord Jesus.

**12:16 See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.**

The Bible gives us a warning that "No one is to be sexually immoral..." Sexual temptation always seems attractive to everyone. It disguises as an attractive thing and approaches us hiding its sin. Clearly, Satan hides behind it. We should be very careful so that we don't fall for the lie.

**12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.**

### **2. Esau's Interest**

**12:16 See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.**

**12:17 Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done.**

- The author of the Epistle took a story of Esau in the Old Testament. He was interested in only worldly things. He didn't pay any attention to faith. We should be not like him. He regretted later, but it was too late. Those who are interested in the worldly things don't believe in the reality of heaven. They are indifferent to faith.
- Then, what should we be interested in? We can't despise Esau. Our human nature is indifferent to faith. They seek only what they desire.
- They don't seek God's will rather they prefer to think by themselves. They pray to God but their prayer is a superficial one, so they don't make an important decision in prayer. Actually, when we pray to God we struggle to make the most important decisions in life. We make important decisions when we pray to God, such as concerning our jobs, choosing what school, our friendships, and so on.
- Those who don't understand it make their Christian lives useless even though they are saved through God's grace. Therefore, they enter heaven without any reward even if they get a good evaluation in this world. It is too late to have regrets. How about our Christian lives? Is everything going well? Let's listen to the Word of the Lord again.
- Then, how can we reach the goal of our Christian lives? How can we become like *the holy one*? We are aware, but we easily have bitter feelings. We should give a lot of care to ourselves, or we will easily commit sin. Even a pastor fails when he is distracted. A single sin can ruin his or her life.
- What are the secrets of victorious life? They are as below—
  - ① To overcome sin and get victory by the blood of Christ on the cross
  - ② To trust in authority of the Word of the Bible
  - ③ To pray to the Lord
- Let's remember Peter after Pentecost in Acts Chapter 2. His first sermon is recorded as below—

### **Acts 2**

**2:36 “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”**

**2:37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”**

**2:38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

**2:41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.**

- We understand the Lord's amazing work through Peter's life. He was a fisherman until a few years before this. However, he became a fisherman able to fish for people. As Jesus said, his life was completely changed.
- How about today's message? What do we take interest in? We should not take interests in worldly desires but we should focus on the One who payed the precious price for us and keep walking toward the goal of the Christian life.

### **Conclusion**

Title of the Message: “How to Get to the Goal”

—To Be Strengthened—

- We sometimes may feel weak in our long Christian lives. However, the Scripture encourages us as below—

**12:12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.**

- Then, what do we need to run toward the goal after we received new power?
  - 1 . To throw away obstacles
  - 2 . To seek to be holy

\* God bless you !