

November 1, 2020

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Pastor Teichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "Do Not Be Caught in a Vortex of Vengeance"

—Obtaining a Blessing—

Text: 1 Peter 3:8~12

3:8 Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

3:9 Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

3:10 For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit.

3:11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.

3:12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

Introduction

In this world, we sometimes have pain without reason. You must have some painful experiences that you misunderstood. If you try to correct them, it can sometimes become even worse. Then, you are caught in a dilemma and becomes so stressed and mentally unhealthy. How do you relieve your stress in such a time?

Now we live in the days of constant stress. Last week, I visited Yonago Christian Church. Tottori Prefecture was selected as the No.1 Low-Stress Prefecture. Tottori Prefecture was selected No.1 three times and was in the top 10 for five straight years. There are mountains, seas and lots of nature, and a rich environment. It is said that people who want to move to Tottori and live low-stress life are increasing.

All people live with some stress to some degree. When our stress exceeds the allowed range, it becomes a burden and if it keeps exceeding, we become mentally exhausted. We need to live a low-stress life as soon as possible so that we may not become sick.

By the way, Peter taught the Jewish Christians of those days that when they lived as exiles and strangers, they would have unreasonable sufferings. There was a very heavy burden on them as below.

1:6 They may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials for a little while.

2:12 They accuse you of doing wrong.

2:18 masters who are harsh

2:19 unjust suffering

2:20 suffer for doing good

In fact, Peter takes up problems of overstress in earnest in Chapter 3, Verse 8 and the following. Peter teaches two important points today.

Main Points

1 . A Christian's Basic Attitude of Life

1) Among Christians

3:8 Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

Firstly, Peter teaches the basic attitude of a Christian's life, who lives under the suffering of this world. Their way of life in an unjust situation is expressed by five adjective words as below.

① "to have unity of mind"

Jesus said in John Chapter 17,

17:22 ...that they may be one even as we are one.

It was the last prayer of Jesus for the disciples. It is very difficult for us **to have unity of mind** and **become one**. Therefore, Jesus prayed for God's help.

② "to have sympathy"

It means to be considerate of people who are suffering. It is to get close to his/her heart.

③ "to have brotherly love"

1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.

Whoever does not love abides in death.

To love brothers and sisters in the Lord is the proof that we are saved.

④ "to have a tender heart"

The phrase also translated to **be compassionate**. The attitude becomes Christians.

⑤ "to have a humble mind"

Christians should not be imprudent. To be humble is a befitting attitude of Christians. Looking these 5 points, Christians who have **love, compassion, and sympathy** ultimately have **a tender heart and a humble mind**.

We should not overlook the word '**all**.' It does not mean only church leaders, or church deacons, but **all of you**. Peter writes,

3:8 Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

However, we by nature hardly live in such way of life. Only the Holy Spirit changes our heart who became Christians so that we are able to do it. Then, we become humble and are considerate to other people and love each other and eventually we come to have unity of mind among brothers and sisters. It is not easy to do, however, it is a very important attitude among Christians.

Then, how about non-Christians who do evil against us?

2) The Attitude Towards People Who Do Evil Against Us

3:9 Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

This is the most difficult thing to do. It is our flesh, our nature to maliciously plan to repay evil with evil. We wait for an opportunity and think, "I will get even for this someday." However, the Bible teaches, "**but on the contrary, bless.**"

Jesus taught through the Beatitudes, "**But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.**" (Matthew 5:44) Paul taught, "**Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.**" (Romans 12:17) He also taught, "**Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil will good.**"

My, friends. Why is such high hurdle is set for us? The reason is that **we may obtain a blessing.** Therefore, we should not be involved in revenge. Taking revenge gives rise to the chain of vengeance. You may feel fine if you take revenge on someone, however, the problem becomes bigger and you may suffer more and more.

On top of that, even if you do not take revenge on someone, but if you keep hating, you cannot resolve the problem. Your heart becomes wild and loses peace. Hatred makes us unhappy.

The Scripture says, "**Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling,**" (3:9). If we follow God's word, we are blessed. It is impossible for us, who are selfish, without help of the Holy Spirit. It is a particularly important attitude of Christians to receive victory. There is conflict and difficulty in the way of life, however it is not difficult at the same time because we can achieve it by following the Scripture.

2. Trusting in God's Promise

Peter quotes Psalm 34:12~16 of the Old Testament to support his advice. (Please read the Scripture.)

1) Psalm of the Israeli Wiseman

3:10 For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit.

3:11 let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.

Peter records three important points as below.

① "**Let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit.**"

It is not difficult to find flaws of other people and blame them. It is exceedingly difficult to control our tongues. We also should be careful to **make a mistake** to exaggerate evil of people who do evil to us. We should avoid evil to cover up our errors.

③ **Let him turn away from evil and do good.”**

King David who is the author of Psalm had an opportunity to kill King Saul if he wanted to. However, he would not do it, “Who can put out his hand against the Lord’s anointed.” And not only that, but David also blamed Abner for not keeping watch over his lord. David did good for King Saul. (1 Samuel 26)

④ **“Let him seek peace and pursue it.”**

David wrote a poem not only to seek peace but also pursue it. King David had many wars, and many people were killed so he could not help uttering the hope for peace.

We can hardly make peace without working hard to pursue peace between nations, or persons, or family. Human relationships within the church is the same.

However, the problem is, how can we leave the person be, who does evil and causes us pain. What attitude should we adopt toward them? The following Scripture answers it.

3:12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

The Lord watches for us to do good. He listens to us, who give prayers to Him suffering from unreasonable things. If that person should be punished, the Lord Himself punishes him. Paul teaches as below.

12:19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God.

Then, why was Psalm 34 quoted?

2) The Reason that Psalm 31 Was Quoted

Let us think a little. Peter was a fisherman of the Sea of Galilee. He was not a biblical scholar. However, being a Jew, he was familiar with the word of the Bible and was taught since he was a child. Why did he quote Psalm 34?

I understood the reasons as below.

① **Psalm 34 is written in the form of alphabetic poetry.**

The alphabetical poetry is the one that a head letter of each verse changes in the order of 22 alphabet letters of the Hebrew language. **The alphabetical Psalm** is a peculiar one among many Psalms.

② **Many of the alphabetical poetry have the instructive content.**

Psalm 34:11 Come, O children, listen to me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

The above is the beginning part of Psalm 34. It is a word that a wise teacher of Israelites used to admonish young men. It is the poetry where the wiseman instructs children (young men) where God’s grace is. Psalm 34 was the one that the wise of the 2nd temple days called, “Come, O children, listen to me.” As a side note, **“the fear of the Lord”** means to follow the law.

③ **The poetry is written the wise man’s personal experience**

The wise man did not teach ethical teaching but told of his experiences to the young men.

Therefore, Psalm 34, **the alphabetical poem**, is one of the unique Psalms. There are other alphabetical poems. (Psalm 37, 111, 112, 119, etc.)

I have no doubts that the Holy Spirit led Peter to write the epistle and the unique **alphabetical Psalm** must have been engraved in Peter's heart.

Like this, Peter encouraged the saints, who were under suffering, to trust in God's promises. The secret to receive the power to live is hidden there even though they were in pain.

Conclusion

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Today, we were taught a particularly important thing from God's word. An evil power tries to involve us into the evil spiral that is **the chain of vengeance**. If we are involved in it, our situation gets worse.

On the contrary, we should seek love, sympathy, humbleness, and peace.

Let us keep doing good in our church, our family and in society. It is impossible for us, however. Let us ask the Lord to control our heart and the Holy Spirit, our Helper, gives love.

Let us conclude today's sermon by reading the following Scripture.

3:8 Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

* God bless you !