

February 14, 2021

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "I Send Words to You Who Are in Suffering"

—Jesus Christ—

Text: 1 Peter 3: 19~22

**3:19 in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison,**

**3:20 because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.**

**3:21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,**

**3:22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.**

#### Introduction

Let's listen to the voice of the Lord from the 1st Epistle of Peter, the epistle of suffering. Graduation season is fast approaching in Japan. We exchange farewell words. Then, we have a graduation ceremony. We exchange words of congratulations. Schools in Japan hold ceremonial events and at each of them a word of greeting is exchanged. We speak various kinds of **words to send** during our lives.

If our lovely friend has hardship, what do we tell him/her? It is very difficult to send perfect words to people in the midst of suffering.

Peter encouraged people in verse 17 as below,

**3:17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.**

He said that suffering produces good things, and it is blessing. We are saved by God through the cross of Jesus Christ. Being saved, we are in God's grace, therefore we all are safe even if we are face hardship and suffering, because we take the yoke of Jesus and walk with Him, who is the winner.

The most blessed thing is that suffering does not end up as just suffering, but it produces glory and victory. God has His plan there. Peter continues to teach Jewish Christians in the Diaspora God's blessing of those who believe in God. Let us study the following two points from today's text.

#### Main Points

### 1. The Proclamation of Christ Who is the Winner

#### 1) The Spirits in Prison

**3:19 in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison,**

Verse 19 is one of the most difficult parts of the New Testament to understand. The keyword is, '**the spirits in prison.**' Biblical scholars are divided on what they are. There are three interpretations for this verse.

◎ Who are **the spirits in prison**?

1. **They are the spirits of the dead, the spirits of people who already died.**

According to this interpretation, there is a possibility that Christ went to the dead and taught the Gospel. It means that there is a chance to hear the Gospel after death. It is called '**the second chance.**'

**The second chance** used to be a very big issue in Japan. Some people really believe that they have the chance to hear the Gospel after death even though they could not listen to it when they were alive. If so, we do not need to speak the Gospel now, because they will have the chance later.

However, we do not find this teaching throughout the Bible, that there is a **second chance**. Therefore, the interpretation seems to be extraordinary.

◎ Who are **the spirits in prison**?

2. **They are the spirits of the days of Noah, who did not obey. (verse 20)**

According to verse 20, Christ, who came to this world in a shape of man approximately 2000 years ago, spoke to the people of the days of Noah (Genesis 6~9). However, the idea that Christ, who had not yet taken the shape of man, suddenly appeared in the days of Noah is an absurd interpretation. There is no description in the Bible that Christ appeared before the spirits of the days of Noah and spoke the Gospel.

◎ Who are **the spirits in prison**?

3. **They are the evil spirits that try to pull us human beings from God.**

The word spirit can refer to **God's spirit** (the Holy Spirit), **a human's spirit** and **an angel's spirit**. The spirits in prison here refers the **evil spirits** that are judged by God and their works are restricted. I think that the interpretation ③ is understandable.

It means that Christ went to the evil spirits that are judged by God and driven from heaven.

And Christ proclaimed to the spirits in prison. What does that mean?

2) **Christ Proclaimed His Victory**

**3:19 in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison,**

When we read the Scripture carefully, we see that it does not record exactly what was proclaimed. However, many biblical scholars interpret that Christ proclaimed His **judgement and victory**.

Jesus Christ was crucified. He was quite helpless. He seemed absolutely powerless at that point. **The evil spirits**, which did not obey God, seemed to have **the victory**. However, that was not the case.

Christ went to **the spirits in prison** and proclaimed God's judgement and His victory to **the evil spirits** that fell down from heaven.

Peter records as below in the end of Chapter

**3:22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.**

Those that are subject before Jesus Christ are not only the evil spirits but also every authority (**angels, authorities, and powers**). It means that Christ holds authority and controls a spiritual world and He proclaimed there. Christians belong to that Christ. Therefore, they are all right even though they are in hardship and suffering because Christ is the winner who defeated death and was resurrected. And Christians belong to Him who holds all authority. How blessed we are! It is only God's grace.

By the way, Peter records about Noah's flood. Why did he suddenly take the story of the Noah's flood here? Let us study the next point.

## **2. Noah's Flood and Baptism**

**3:20 because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.**

### **1. The People of the Days of Noah**

Peter refers to Noah's story here. Genesis Chapter 6 records as below,

**6:5 The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**

**6:6 And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.**

**6:7 So the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them."**

God saw that people were corrupted before God and the earth was full of violence. He told Noah and his wife and his three sons and their wives to make an ark. He also told Noah to bring into the ark two of all living creatures. Then, God sent a flood for forty days and wiped away the evil. (Please read Genesis Chapter 6~8).

However, unfaithful spirits towards God did not only exist in the days of Noah. There are **evil spirits** in all ages. Why did Peter intentionally bring up the days of Noah?

That is that Noah and his family was a type of people who suffered because of the faith that I have mentioned before. Noah said to people to repent, fear God and leave a sinful life. However, they mocked and despised him and his family.

As a result, Noah and his sons and their wives went into the ark and survived. On the contrary, a large number of people were corrupted. God chose Noah and patiently warned people through Noah, but they did not obey Him. Their hearts were hard and cold. It was **the evil spirits** that controlled people. Christ went to the evil spirits and proclaimed victory and judgement.

Like this, Noah and his family are the type (model) that are saved from the suffering of the flood. And Christ proclaimed His judgement and victory to the evil spirits that did not subject themselves to the word of God.

Let us study what we learn here.

## 2. Salvation Through Water

**3:21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,**

1. Noah and his family were saved **through water**. It refers to **the type** who receive baptism by water. He who believes in God receives a baptism by water as a sign of faith. They have something in common, that is **water**.

2. Peter teaches an important thing that is **"Baptism ...not as a removal of dirt from the body."** Baptism is not a passport for entering into heaven. The salvation of Christ is given to those who believe God's word as God's promise (witness). Baptism refers to one's appeal that they believed in Christ. Peter records, **"as an appeal to God for a good conscience."**

Like this, Noah's ark and flood are types that refer to the salvation of Christ in the coming ages. The important thing is that Christ, who suffered, came to proclaim judgement to **the evil spirits**. On top of that, Christ proclaimed **Christ in glory** and **Christ in victory**.

**3:22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.**

## 3. Christ in Suffering is the True Winner.

The Bible testifies that Christ in suffering who were crucified, is Christ in glory and Christ in victory.

**Philippians 2:6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,**

**2:7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.**

**2:8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

**2:9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,**

**2:10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,**

**2:11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

My friends. Like this, the epistle was sent to encourage the saints who were under suffering. What

words did Peter send to them?

→ He sent the idea that suffering does not end up as just suffering. Suffering leads to glory and victory.

The names of people who believe in God are already written on the Book of Life in heaven. It is the grace of being with Jesus Christ.

**Revelation 3: 5 The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.**

What an amazing situation saints are given, who believe in God! It is only grace of God. Peter records the authority of Christ in the end of Chapter 3.

**3:22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.**

Peter already wrote the God's secret in 1 Peter, Chapter 1 as below.

**1Peter 1:6 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,**

**1:7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**

### Conclusion

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Christ, who was crucified and buried, went to **the spirits in prison**. He, who has absolute authority, proclaimed to them His **judgement** and **victory**. Every authority is subjected to Him. Jesus Christ is the King and wears the crown of glory.

In the days of Noah, Noah and his family, who believed the word of God, were saved from the flood. It is a type, model, for people who believed in God by faith and receive baptism. It was God's plan of salvation.

Peter sent the blessed words to the Jewish Christians who were under suffering (hardship) in the diaspora. It is a privilege that was given to people who believed in Jesus as Christ. It is quite valid today. Those who believe the words of Jesus Christ by faith are saved. What an amazing grace it is!

Let us read the following Scripture and close the message today.

**1Peter 1:6 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,**

**1:7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**

\* God bless you!