

March 21, 2021

KIBC Sunday Worship Service (Open Church Worship Service)

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "I Am Weak, But I Will Be All Right!"

—Your Life Will be Changed—

Text: 2 Corinthians 12:7~10

12:7 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

12:8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.

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 of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

12:10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Introduction

In general, our standard valuation is not stable.

For example, Japanese products used to be sold in every part of the world by riding the wave of high economic growth. People thought that Japanese products in foreign countries were low in price and broke down easily. However, things are now quite different.

The Japanese products are now said to be excellent. They say that a Japanese car is almost free from troubles so customers can drive it without worry. It is said that people trust in Japanese electrical products. It is said that parents give Japanese baby formula to their children with peace of mind and some people even come to Japan to buy it. Japanese researchers, technical experts and workers continued to make significant efforts and consequently people have come to highly evaluate Japanese products.

By the way, people all over the world have come to use facemasks during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, before COVID-19 pandemic, there were almost no people that used facemasks in Europe and America. When I put on a facemask in an airplane, people gave me a strange look. The facemask is said to be helpful to prevent the common cold virus, but most of the people did not accept it in those days. However, today is different from those days. These days, fewer people do not use a facemask. On top of that depending on the country, they may have to pay a fine.

My friends, our evaluation changes like this. There may be a person whose appearance looks

solid, and they may be strongly built but they are inwardly weak. On the other hand, there may be a person who looks weak, but they are mentally strong. What about our society's opinion? They are encouraged and spurred on with, "Be strong! Get first place!" However, it is impossible for them to be strong even though they are told to be strong.

Then, what should we do?

The Bible teaches as below,

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 of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

My friends. Paul, the author of the epistle, said a strange thing when he said that he would boast in his weakness.

- ① Why did he say, "boast in my weakness?"
- ② Why did he speak paradoxically?

If someone can boast his/her weakness, he/she is a strong person. Then, where is the secret? How can we say, "**I am weak, but I am all right!**" It begins with understanding ourselves.

Let us study the following three points today.

Main Points

1. Self-Observation

1) God's Grace that Paul Received

Human beings can hardly see their own selves. They can see others' faults, but they cannot see themselves. Or they may not want to see themselves. Many people do not see themselves even though they appear to see themselves.

However, someone who can say, "I am weak, but I am all right," is a person who can see himself. By the way, Paul was brought up to paradise by God's special grace. It has been humanity's desire to see it and Paul experienced it. No one could see it like him. At that very moment, God gave a thorn to Paul as below,

12:7 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

2) A Thorn

Paul said that a thorn was given him in the flesh to keep from him becoming conceited. Here the Bible focuses on the relationship between **a thorn** and conceit. **Thorn** is "skoropus" in the original language and it means "a stake." A stake is pointed at the end be able to be driven into the ground. God drove the **thorn** into the Paul's body.

We feel terrible pain when we get just a little injury at the tip of our finger. Like that, he was in

pain. The Bible does not record about Paul' **thorn**, but biblical scholars interpret the **thorn** as below,

- ① Excessive myopia
- ② Epilepsy, a chronic disease
- ③ He was very short

Paul understood that the thorn was a messenger of Satan. What do you think about the thorn?

We may have a **thorn**. It is painful, but it may be necessary thing for us to see our real selves. The thorn may be hidden from other people, but we understand it. What should we do? We should be honest with ourselves and face up to our **thorn**.

The Bible is a mirror that reflects our heart. Now, let us put ourselves before the mirror, the Bible.

Romans 3:10,11: "None is righteous, no, not one; 11no one understands; no one seeks for God.

The Bible teaches us that there is no righteous man before God. None is righteous before God. Therefore, I am not righteous either, too. We should understand this first. (Self-observation)

2. Self-Acceptance

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 of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

The Scripture above shows that Paul accepts his weakness, his thorn. He said that the thorn was given to keep him from becoming conceited.

Paul pleaded with God three times to take away the **thorn**.

12:8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.

The number three is a special number for Paul, who was a Jew (who view three as the perfect number), so we understand how seriously he pleaded with God. However, his plea was not answered.

The thorn was his weakness. He must have thought about what he could do without **the thorn**. However, he needed the thorn from God's viewpoint. He accepted **the thorn** to keep him from becoming conceited.

{Illustration 1} A Son of Jakob Esau - Russia

I have good friend with whom I was greatly impressed. From in my 20's to 30's I met various saints, God's tools who were greatly used. In those days, I did not know how great they were. I came to understand how they were used by God 50 years later.

Among of them, Jakob Esau was a world renown evangelist. Let me skip some of his testimony. He was arrested 4 times as an evangelist in the Soviet Union and was sent to the labor camp in Siberia for more than 25 years. I cannot listen to his life story without tears. Please read my book entitled "God Who Creates Things out of Nothing" for the details, (Only in Japanese).

God took him out from the Soviet Union to Germany through a miraculous way. As a chaplain, he spent his rest of his life preaching the love of Christ to convicts in a jail.

One day, I visited him in Paderborn. He welcomed me warmly and we had an enjoyable time. He had ten children. He and his children came to Germany and one of their children lived in Russia.

Rev. Jakob Esau began to speak about his son. When he went to Moscow, Russia, his son called him at the hotel. He did not know how his son knew the place where he stayed. Anyway, he could talk over the telephone for the first time in several years.

Rev. Esau said that his son left God and became a member of Russian mafia. Every parent works hard raising his/her child. And the life of Rev. Esau in Siberia was not a common thing. Even still, God allowed his son to become involved with the Russian mafia and worked in the underworld.

Rev. Esau said with tears, "God gives me this trial to keep me from becoming conceited." I could not refrain from tears. I was shocked and deeply moved by his story. God gave a thorn to even Rev. Esau who was God's great instrument. He just accepted it. (Self-Acceptance)

I don't know what happened to him after that. Rev. Esau said that there wasn't a day that he did not pray for his son. He quietly accepted his sorrowful situation. That is one of my unforgettable memories.

It is not easy to accept the reflection of the mirror that directly shows a fact as it is. However, Paul said as below,

12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Paul completely trusted in God. Now, we understand Paul who accepted himself as he was.

3. Self-Recognition

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 of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Paul continues teaching about **his thorn**, his weakness. He experienced that the power of

Christ rested upon him by recognizing his weakness. As he came to understand how amazing the experience was, he said, **“I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses.”**

My dear friends. We all have weaknesses to a greater or lesser degree. However, the weakness does is not always utterly useless. Yes, God says, **“... for my power is made perfect in weakness.”** The life of trusting God is to experience the power of God that covers our weakness.

If God covers our weakness, He also protects us. We are given His peace, comfort, courage, and encouragement. Paul referred to these things as **the power of Christ**. How blessed we are!

{Illustration 2}

This is a story about Fanny Crosby, an American woman. When she was six months old, she had a cold, and had an eye infection. Her home doctor was out of town and another doctor was called. The doctor made a medical error, and she lost her eyesight.

She became a woman with a physical disability, totally blind. Normally, there would be cause for her to be hopeless and disappointed. However, she met Jesus Christ and became a Christian and her life was changed. She found peace and joy in her heart. Until the age of 90, she wrote 8000 lyrics of hymn songs.

She says the reasons that God used her even though she was the handicapped:

“I did not have a single grudge against the doctor, because I have believed God's, unfailing love since I was young. I was blessed than anyone else and my soul was full of happiness, and how should I grumble about my life?”

My friends. What can we learn from Fanny Crosby? We study the blessed life of people who trust in God. She also said, **“Those who lose their eyesight can achieve almost anything that those who can see achieve.”** What a powerful word she said! She is the very woman **that is all right, despite any apparent weakness**. It is the life where Jesus Christ works on our weakness and reveals **the power of Christ**.

Jesus said,

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28

We live only once. It is a very precious life. We have misfortunes, trials, and hardship in our lives. Sometimes, we even fall down. However, the Bible teaches the life that will be all right.

Then, what should we do to live such life?

Conclusion

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—Your Life Will be Changed—

There are three important things in our lives as below,

- 1 . Self-observation
- 2 . Self-acceptance
- 3 . Self-recognition

These three points are the secret to live a stable life.

Paul looks back his life and says,

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 of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Let us live a life where we can boast in our weakness like Paul.

* God bless you!