

May 9, 2021

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "Be Sober-minded; Be Watchful."

— A Christian Life—

Text: 1 Peter 5:8~11

5:8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

5:9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

5:10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

5:11 To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Introduction

Last Sunday, we studied the importance **of being humble**. It is very difficult for us to be humble. We studied how we can become humble from the words of Peter.

We want to become important! Unfortunately, if we get promoted and gain high social status, we may become arrogant. Because we easily become arrogant, we have a spiritual battle to be humble. Peter taught and encouraged that Christians have spiritual battles in their daily lives, so they should remember to consider this as they live.

{Illustration}

The Hanshin expressway runs through Osaka city. There is Higashikoraibashi entrance ramp near our church. Before the entrance ramp, there is an intersection with traffic signals. I have often seen traffic accidents occur there.

One of the causes of accidents there is that it is difficult to see approaching cars. Therefore, a driver, who knows its dangerous environment, drives slowly and carefully.

I also drive a car slowly and carefully. Then, I come to realize that as I get used to driving through there, my sense of tension decreases, and I begin to drive carelessly. I think that many of accidents come about because of "being careless."

Let us not become **careless** in our Christian lives.

Today, let study the following two concrete points about a Christian life.

Main Points

1. Be Watchful.

5:8a Be sober-minded; be watchful.

Be sober-minded means **not to drink** or to **stay clear-headed**. **Be watchful** means **to keep the night watch**. It means that we should always be cautious; **not to be careless**. Then, what should be we watchful of?

5:8b Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Our adversary that we should be watchful of is the devil. The devil is a real being and attacks the children of God. Peter says that the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Peter felt the existence of the devil strongly, even though he is invisible. Peter must have foreseen that persecution of believers in the Roman Empire would become more severe.

Peter must have heard from the Lord Jesus that He had been tempted by the devil in the wilderness. He watched various things during the time that he followed the lord Jesus. He must have watched many times how fearful life of a demon possessed man was. Therefore, he knew the power of the devil. He himself was once tempted by the devil.

Peter must have remembered the word of the Lord Jesus many times.

Luke 22:31 “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat,

22: 32 but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.

Peter seemed to have a strong awareness of the existence of the devil. He even denied the Lord Jesus three times. Fortunately, he came back to Him. On the contrary, Judas, one of Jesus’ twelve disciples, was given a fearful idea to betray Jesus, by the devil. He could not deny the idea and finally betrayed Jesus. Therefore, Peter understood the reality of the devil very well.

My friends. Paul also realized the power of the devil.

Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

We also need to understand the reality of the evil. However, we should not be obsessed by **the** idea about the devil, and we do not need to fear it unnecessarily. If we do so, that is just what the devil expects.

On the other hand, if we think little of the devil, it is very dangerous. The devil, who is devious, really exists and would attack the children of light.

However, when something bad occurs, we sometimes do not admit our fault and say, **“It was because**

of the devil.” Yes, he who really understands that is was because of the devil, may assert it. However, it is very difficult to judge what is caused by the devil. The devil is very clever, so he hardly reveals his true self.

In the beginning of 1990s, Christians were very confused because they took a great interest in the devil. At the same time, there were some churches that went to the quite other way. Then, what should we do?

We should not think little of the devil. At the same time, we do not need to fear the devil excessively. We should always realize these two points and it is important to be sober-minded and be watchful. Then, how should we walk every day?

2 . A Christian Life that Resists the Devil

5:9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

First of all, we should understand that it is impossible for us to resist the devil by ourselves. The devil is the fallen angel, so it has the same power as an angel. The devil is more powerful than a human being.

Knowing that, Peter taught the following three points.

1) Firm in Your Faith.

5:9 a Resist him, firm in your faith,

The most important thing is to **be firm in faith**. It does not mean **to stand firm in the faith**. They are slightly different, but both are important. Peter is not talking about how strong our faith is. The important thing is to keep having faith. It does not depend on our power, feeling or confidence which are easily shaken. The important thing is to keep standing in God’s love and the unfailing salvation of Christ.

When we think about a life to overcome the temptation of the devil, let us remember that the Lord Jesus was tempted three times in the wildness in the beginning of His public life. His temptation was a very severe one as below,

Matthew 4:1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

4:2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

The first temptation

4:3 And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”

4:4 But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.””

4:5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple

The second temptation

4:6 and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you,’ and “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.”

4:7 Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.”

The third temptation

4:8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

4:9 And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”

4: 10Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.”

4:11 Then the devil left him.

Like this, Jesus was tempted three times by the devil.

We think we are strong, but in fact we are weak and helpless. We are easily overcome by temptation. Then, we think we should become stronger, but it is quite the opposite idea. We should accept our weakness honestly, and trust in the Lord. We should hold the word of Jesus tightly.

John 10:28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

10:29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.

The Lord protects us eternally, who trust in Him. How blessed we are! The Lord says that we **are greater than all**.

The life that trusts in the Lord is the blessed one. Let us believe in God and be **firm in faith**.

Then, what attitude should we have to overcome the power of the devil?

2) Sharing Suffering with Brothers in the Same Faith

5:9b ...knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

The world we live in is corrupt with sins. The devil works shrewdly so Christians cannot avoid experiencing sufferings. What did Jesus say at the Last Supper?

John 16:33b In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

The devil makes us think, "Why is this happening to me?" Then, we wail in self-pity and have a sense of being victimized. The devil makes us think, "God is unfair. He is unjust." And finally, he makes us lose trust in God. We should be careful. If we think, "Only me!" we isolate ourselves from others. Therefore, it is important to share a problem with believers.

{Illustration}

Approximately 40 years ago, a certain psychologist did an experiment on rats known as "Rat Park". He built enclosures for two groups of rats; one for rats that were kept in isolation in each enclosure and the other for a group of rats that lived in it together in a good environment. He gave them water and water with morphine.

He kept observing the behavior of rats and found an interesting fact. The rats that were isolated kept drinking water with morphine and finally got addicted. The other rats that lived together did not drink water with morphine at all.

My friends, Dr. Matsumoto Toshihiko, the authority of studying and treatment of the drug-dependent, said that the reason why some people become the drug addicts was hidden in this experiment.

Last year, 887 teenagers were arrested for possessing marijuana, which is the highest number of cases so far in Japan. Now they easily can get drugs through social networking sites. They are anxious about increasing risk of addiction through coronavirus pandemic.

By the way, an interesting story was reported about the experiments above. When the addicted rats were moved to the "Rat Park" that had a good environment, they came to drink the ordinary water, even though they did exhibit some minor withdrawal symptoms. It means that if the rats are put in a good environment and are not isolated, they live by drinking the ordinary water.

It is important that we are put in a good environment and share hardships with brothers and sisters who have the same faith.

3) We Should Expect that God Himself Will Strengthen Us

5:10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

5:11 To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

In the end of the epistle, Peter records what is the God like, whom we believe in.

① First, He is **the God of all grace**. He is the God who sent Jesus Christ His Son to this world, who was crucified, and fulfilled salvation. The salvation of the cross is the grace that forgives our sin unconditionally.

God's grace is immeasurably great. The Bible refers grace (charis) in three ways. It is **unilateral** (God to human beings), **a gift** (we cannot buy it) and it is given **equally** (to believers). God is filled with grace and the One of abundance.

② Secondly, God is the One **who has called you to his eternal glory.**

Those who would perish eternally, were called to God's eternal glory. He gave Jesus Christ for this purpose.

③ God is the One who **restores you after you have suffered a little while.**

Sufferings continue for a little while, but they do not last forever. God has His timetable according to His master plan. He restores us after we have suffered, and sufferings will be beneficial to us. Then, **God will confirm, strengthen, and establish you.**

We may be buffeted with sufferings and sink into grief. However, we never lose God's protection during that time. We may be disturbed for a while, but God **confirms us, strengthens us, and establishes us** in His proper time. God makes a promise with us.

As we understand the God we believe in, we pray to Him, **"To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen." (5:11)**

How about today's message? Do we trust in the wonderful God?

Our level of peace depends on how much we trust in God. The devil makes us doubt, give up, and fall into self-pity. He makes us not to look up to God.

No matter what happens, we are all right. The devil has power, but our Lord has greater authority than he. Therefore, those who are with the Lord never fall into the hand of the devil and fall completely. The devil can do nothing greater than the Lord the Creator. Therefore, we, being Christians, do not lose joy. Looking at God who makes us these wonderful promises, let us be sober-minded and watchful even though we may suffer.

Conclusion

Title of the Message: "Be Sober-minded; Be Watchful."

— A Christian Life—

5:9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

Today we studied three very important points for Christians.

- 1 . Standing firm in Faith
- 2 . Sharing sufferings with Christians who have the same faith
- 3 . Trusting God who makes us strong

* God bless you!