

October 3, 2021

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "Where Is Your Viewpoint of Faith?"

— The Attitude of Faith —

Text: 2 Peter 2:15,16

**2:15 Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing,**

**2:16 but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.**

#### Introduction

Four weeks have already passed since I preached a sermon from the Second Epistle of Peter, Chapter 2. Therefore, let us review the points that we have studied last time and then I would like to preach today's message.

Firstly, Peter taught about **the real image of heretics** from the second epistle, who have gone astray. In those days, the Gospel of Christ was preached over Asia Minor; however, the teaching of heresy was taught so that number of the believers were caught by it and gave up their faith. Peter taught that the heresy was of the power of Satan, and we studied that heresy is not just in the distant past, but it continues raging over the world even today.

For this reason, Peter wrote to Christians to connect to God firmly so that they would not be enticed by the false prophets and the false teachers.

Peter records two points of the attitudes of the false prophets and the false teachers as below.

#### ① They seek pleasures

**2:13 suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in**

**their deceptions, while they feast with you.**

They should do works of God in the daytime (John 9:4), however the heretics drank and made merry during that time and became like blots among a love fellowship of the saints.

② **They indulge themselves in adultery**

**2:14 They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!**

Peter taught them when they lived in such society, it was **important to have a viewpoint of faith**. We are like sheep that go easily astray and get off the path. We should not forget that we immediately stray when we take our eyes off Jesus Christ who is the Good Shepherd.

The society around us is not so simple. We should not underestimate the power of evil. We should not make light of the work of the spirit. The important attitude of living life is recorded in Hebrews, Chapter 12, verse 2 as below,

**Hebrews 12:2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith,**

We studied these things by the last sermon. Let us continue studying today.

Today's Scripture also advises us that Christians should be careful not to get off the path. Let us study the following two points today.

#### Main Points

### **1 . Teachings that are Different from the One that Saints Teach**

In the days of the first churches, there were people who made objections to Christian life that the apostles preached and taught. And many saints were strongly influenced.

Peter teaches in his first epistle that Christians are asked to live as below,

**1:13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**

**1:14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,**

**1:15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 1:13**

The believers who trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ and were saved have the responsibility to start new lives by throwing away the old garments

Paul records,

**1 Corinthians 6:20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.**

### 1) People who want to live unrestrained lives

On the other hand, there are people who do not like to live as Peter taught and choose to live freely. They continue to live in **the futile ways that inherited from their forefathers** and **were conformed to the passions of their former ignorance**. It means that they did not like to follow the Gospel even though they accepted it.

They were delighted to hear the message about God's love, forgiveness of sin and salvation of souls. However, they did not consider that how to live as the ones who were loved and were forgiven by God and how to live as if in God's image.

They kept overlooking their former ways of life and evil habits.

There are people who have the same way of thinking around us. They once believed in God and received God's love. However, they hardly separated from the former way of lives and their evil habits. They let pleasure rule their flesh. They cannot overcome the flesh.

### 2) People who want to change others

One truth of human natures is that people do not want to change themselves, rather they want other people to change. How about us? We come to realize that the other person will not change so easily. We often experience this in our human relationships.

Like this, when people cannot follow the Gospel of Christ, they try to change the Gospel itself.

Peter records as below,

**1:20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.**

He records in Chapter 3,

**3:16 ... which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.**

Peter wants to teach this point.

Peter called them the false teachers. They might be leaders of society because they were called teachers. It was regrettable that they taught young Christians by their own interpretations so that they made young believers to give up the right way. They became obstacles to people who wanted to faithfully follow the Lord.

Peter could not overlook this problem so he said as below,

**2 Peter 2:15 Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray.**

In fact, those who walked the wrong way by following the false teachers, they also went astray. Then, Peter quoted an example from the Old Testament.

Let us study the following point according to the example.

## **2. Learning A Lesson from Other People's Mistake**

**2:15 Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing,**

**2:16 but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.**

### **1) The Way of Balaam**

We do not know what **the way of Balaam** is. On top of that, it records that a speechless donkey spoke with human voice. We come to be more puzzled. However, it was an understandable story to the Jewish people. They knew that the way of Balaam was the way of separating from God. It means a typical example of the false teachers.

The Old Testament records about Balaam in Numbers, Chapters 22~24.

Telling the story briefly, Balaam worked for the convenience of a king of Moab. However, he **loved gain from wrongdoing** and did not follow God's word even though God spoke to him. He was a man whose **words and heart were separated**.

God sent an angel and repeatedly advised and showed him the way. God spoke to him through a donkey's mouth, in a supernatural way. The last days of Balaam were truly miserable.

Numbers, Chapter 31 records as below,

**31:8 They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of their slain, Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. And they also killed Balaam the son of Beor with the sword.**

It is the example of a miserable end for a false teacher.

## 2) The Way of Christians

Now, let us think about today's world. In this day and age, AI becomes has greatly advanced and science has progressed, and humans' knowledge has surprisingly increased. Compared to the situation of just a little while ago, there has been a been a notable change from then.

However, we come to know various superstitions, perverted asceticism and hear crying out for liberation. As a reaction to them, don't we go the exact opposite way? There are various problems such as chaotic situations, moral degeneration, a decline paternal authority, corruption of art, an abortion problem, free sex, school violence, homosexual problems, and so on.

How should we live in this world where these problems become common?

⇒ We should live by the authority of the Bible and the Holy Spirit. We should live as the newly born Christians who have the qualities of grace.

Peter already taught the following qualities in 2 Peter, Chapter 1, verses 5~7.

**1:5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge,**

**1: 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness,**

**1:7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.**

Let us look carefully at the qualities of the seven graces.

● **The qualities of the seven graces**

① **Faith with virtue**

Virtue is the **greatness of morality**. It is the virtue that is revealed in the Lord Jesus, which is the nature of God. When Christians keep walking with the Lord Jesus and supplement their faith with virtue, they are transformed into the image of the Lord Jesus and learn holiness, humbleness, gentleness, and the meekness of the Lord.

② **Virtue with knowledge**

We should make effort to increase **our knowledge** for the purpose of learning the nature of God. However, we should not seek only knowledge, because we may become Christians in name only. We can learn many negative examples of this in the Christian history of the past.

We need to be guided by knowledge in practicing Christian lives. We need a way to judge things correctly, and that is developed by the God's word. And wisdom protects us together with that knowledge. Therefore, increasing our knowledge is important.

③ **Knowledge with self-control**

Self-control is to control ourselves correctly. In the days of Peter, Christians were facing various kinds of immorality in a pagan society. Their environment was full of temptations even though they tried to live righteously. The same may be said of this day and age.

Even though our hearts burn, we easily lose sight of God's will. We have a weakness to be attracted to our desires. The important thing is how much we realize our weakness.

God fulfilled His salvation for us who have weakness. God provides us with the way of escape and the way of salvation so that we will not go toward eternal destruction.

**1 Peter 1:4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.**

We know that the law was abolished by the cross of Christ, and we are made free. However, the point is how to use that freedom, for what purpose we use it, or if we use it to make ourselves rejoice or God. It is important to control ourselves. We are asked how we control that freedom and lead lives as Christians. For that purpose, self-control is important.

Self-control is also involved in managing things, for example managing our time. He who is busy needs wisdom to manage his time. We think we don't have enough time in our busy lives. However, it is said that we should control our time.

Let us control our time and create time to do God's righteousness and love since we are very busy. In that sense, we need to have self-control.

In addition, we need to control our health that God has given us. We should be ready to do our work and activity according to the energy we have. It is important to control everything that God has entrusted to us including our health. Like this, it is natural that we should control ourselves in our daily lives,

#### ④ Self-control with steadfastness

1Peter repeatedly records about steadfastness. The steadfastness does not refer to patience, rather refer to trust in God absolutely and expect God's guidance. It does not mean to endure without any reason.

#### ⑤ Steadfastness with godliness

Godliness refers to living by fearing God. It means to love God.

Jesus said,

**Matthew 22:37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.**

**22:38 This is the great and first commandment. ◦**

It means that we honor God's sovereignty and live with love for Him with true humbleness. That is godliness.

#### ⑥ Godliness with brotherly affection

Of course, brotherly affection means love between not only brothers but also love between sisters. Godliness, the former love, is for God and this brotherly love is for people. This is also given to Christians who stand on God's grace.

#### ⑦ Brotherly affection with love

The last one is love (agape) that sums up the mentioned qualities. It begins with faith and completes with love. They are seven virtues, the qualities of the seven graces.

When Christians grow in these qualities of grace their Christian lives become active and bear fruit. It is an amazing life to accumulate such experiences. If we acquire these qualities in an increasing measure, we come to lead Christian lives in earnest.

Peter advised his readers to [make every effort \(1:5\)](#) to lead such lives. In particular, our faith is gradually fulfilled by acquiring six qualities that begins with virtue. It is God's grace that is given to Christians.

### ● Let us sort out the qualities of grace now.

God provides us with **seven wonderful qualities of His grace**.

Peter taught Jewish Christians, who were experiencing persecution, sufferings and trials, that God had provided the saints **with these seven qualities**. It is for those who believe Jesus as Christ (the Messiah). It means that we become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption in this world. It is 100% God's grace.

- ① **Each quality of the grace** grows in the soil of **the preceding quality of grace**. It means that the personality of Christians grows by God's grace.
- ② **The quality of the grace** molds the character of the Christian by becoming compatible with the others, being in harmony and being linked together as in a chain. He who is rich in the first, faith, will become one who is rich in the last, love.

Like this, he who was newly born in Christ is prepared with an amazing life. Therefore, we should be very careful about the false teachers.

#### Conclusion

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—The Attitude of Faith—

In the days of Peter, the false teachers preached the Gospel from their own interpretation. It is the power of evil that continues until today. As the world becomes more and more confused, Christians can be deceived by the many false teachers. How should the newly born Christians live? ⇒ They should become the believers who receive **the qualities of the seven graces**. For that reason, they should live by turning their viewpoint to God.

Let us read Hebrews, Chapter 12 again and close the sermon.

**12:2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.**

\* God bless you!