

April 9, 2023

KIBC Sunday Worship Service (Easter Worship)

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "The Lord of Resurrection Gives You Hope"

—The Grace of God—

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:3-10

15:3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

15:4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

15:5 and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve.

15:6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

15:7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,

15:8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

15:9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

Introduction

Happy Easter, everyone!

We would like to celebrate "The Resurrection Day" of Jesus Christ and give thanks to God. The whole world celebrates His Resurrection at the same time. He is the One who defeated death and has risen from the dead. Therefore, Jesus Christ is the Savior (the Messiah) of all humanity.

By the way, we have various **desires** in our hearts. Many people **want** to change themselves or to be changed, but it is not easy to do. If they could easily change by themselves, then they wouldn't change any conflicts.

Paul writes as below,

1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am,

My friends, Paul changed, and he said, **“I am what I am.”** He also said it was, **“by the grace of God.”** How was he changed? The secret and the answer is hidden in today’s text.

We would like to study in *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, Chapter 15, which is called **the Chapter of the Resurrection** of Jesus Christ.

We are going to study the following 2 points.

Main Points

1. Paul Before He Met Jesus Christ

Acts 9:1 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest

9:2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

9:3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.

9:4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

9:5 “Who are you, Lord?” Paul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied.

Paul, who had persecuted Jesus, was greatly changed after he met Him. It all started when he met Jesus.

Corinthians 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

He was honest before God because he stood before God who sees everything.

This was Paul before he became a Christian.

Paul met the resurrected Jesus Christ and was greatly changed. The resurrection of Jesus changed his life. Then, how was he changed?

2. Paul After He Met Jesus Christ

1) The fact and witnesses of the Resurrection

15:3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that

**Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
15:4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the
Scriptures,**

Paul teaches three facts here.

1. Jesus died for our sins.
2. Jesus was buried.
3. Jesus was raised on the third day.

It is said the core part of Paul's confession of his faith.

Paul writes further as below,

15:5 and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve.

15:6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

15:7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,

Paul describes five groups of witness for proving the facts.

- ① *Cephas* (Peter in Hebrew)
- ② The twelve disciples
- ③ More than five hundred of the brothers and sisters
- ④ James
- ⑤ All of the apostles

© **The Fact of the Resurrection**

My friends, as we read the Bible, we come to realize that the important points are the very facts of Jesus' crucifixion, burial and resurrection and there were people who had witnessed all of these. This is the good news (the Gospel).

The heart of the message of the Christians of the early church was:

⇒ the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Paul persecuted the church violently. But he suddenly changed into an evangelist. The adversary changed into a supporter. What is the reason for his sudden change?

The only one reason was:

⇒ the fact that he had met Jesus after the Resurrection.

The Resurrection of Christ made James, who was brother of Jesus, and other people believe, who hadn't believed Him before. On top of that, Paul said that most of witnesses were still alive.

{It is said that *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* was written 25 years after Christ's death.}

Paul writes further.

2) Paul's sincere confession

15:8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

"One abnormally born" (*Ektroma* in Greek. There is no good translation in Japanese.)

The term does not refer to premature infants born prematurely. It means "**an infant whose whole body is crippled, deformed, or imperfect from the time of conception,**" even before birth. From the Hebrew perspective, such an infant is spiritually dead.

He was an infant with no value at all, and therefore, he was worthless. Paul was a very elite person who had received instruction in Jewish theology under the guidance of Gamaliel, an authoritative scholar of the time. He said that he was, "abnormally born."

Paul called himself, "**one abnormally born,**" who was a secretly aborted child, who had no hope. When he met the resurrected Jesus and was blinded by a bright light, he realized how worthless he was.

Paul wrote this epistle to the saints in Corinth, Greece. The people of Corinth were materially wealthy. They were filled with pride, as if they were at the height of Japan's bubble economy. Many of them were living as if they were kings. Then, Paul who met the resurrected Jesus, described what he was like.

15:9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

He said,

- ① He was the least of the apostles.
- ② He did not deserve to be called an apostle, because
- ③ "I persecuted the church of God."

He caught Christians and persecuted them. He was standing beside Stephen who was killed by stones. Knowing the fact he said as below,

15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

God's grace changed Paul amazingly. Like this, if we believe in Jesus Christ and His Resurrection we are changed.

3) The Beginning of the Blessed Life

Then, how can we change our lives? We should honestly admit our own selves before God. What kind of life have you been living before God the Creator? Are you standing before God in your thoughts, in your deeds, and in your daily walk? Paul was illuminated by the light of the resurrected Lord, and he clearly understood his own existence. ⇒ He knew that he was a sinful being.

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ on the cross was to save us from our sins. Jesus took upon Himself the debt of all our sins. All we have to do is to believe in Him. This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are saved only by trusting in Jesus. How blessed we are!

My dear friends, God is rich in grace. There is one message (the Good News) that runs throughout the Bible.

⇒ God gives grace to a thousand generations.

Do we really believe in this God of the Bible? What image do we have of God the Heavenly Father?

The "ideas" in your mind produce "thoughts" and "actions".

Paul experienced the love of God the Heavenly Father by believing in the resurrection of Jesus. He experienced a great change in his life.

That Paul said as below,

15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am,

How about today's message? Jesus who appeared to Paul will also appear in our lives. And He gives us the hope of living in the Kingdom of Heaven. What do you think about today's message?

Those who believe in Jesus Christ are blessed, for they will be changed into imperishable just as Jesus Christ has resurrected.

1 Corinthians 15:51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed

15:52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

Those who believe in Jesus Christ are given the hope that **they will be raised imperishable**. This is the privilege of Christians.

Conclusion

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—The Grace of God—

We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ today. Paul who believed in Jesus' resurrection was greatly changed. He was changed as if he were a different person. If we believe in the resurrection of Jesus, we also will be changed because Paul's God and our God are the same. And we will receive God's abundant blessing and the faith of our inner selves will be strengthened.

We are allowed to come close to God and receive blessings to a thousand generations. Our faith will grow. Paul said, "**It is the grace of God.**" Let us, like Paul, receive "**God's grace.**"

1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

* God bless you!