

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

July 9, 2023

Theme : 'He Who Really Grows' 「ほんとうの成長をする人」

—Before and After—

Text : Galatians 3: 2 3 – 2 6

3:23 Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed.

3:24 So the law was put in charge of us until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.

3:25 Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of. the law.

3:26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.

#### Lead

- **Good morning.**

- One of the difficulties we have in our daily lives is how to have good communication with each other. We often have misunderstandings because of mishearing.

Sometimes, I also have difficulty communicating with my wife. She said something to me, but I said I didn't hear. It is difficult to communicate well even between husband and wife!

- When ten people pass on some information from one person to another in whispers, that information often ends up different from the original.

Therefore, 'rumors' are troublesome and hurtful!

- God has His plan (the master plan) for human beings. Then, how did God convey His plan to them?

God's ways of communicating ⇒

- ① Revelation through the Bible
- ② Revelation through the Jews, the chosen people
- ③ Revelation through Jesus Christ

- If we learn from these three revelations, we will come to know God's will.

But we are quite unlearned in these three means of communication. One of reasons for our ignorance is that we have never heard and have never been taught.

For example,

Japanese people don't know the Old Testament. The Bible consists of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Of course, they know that the Old Testament writes about the previous record of Jesus Christ and the New Testament does about the record after Jesus Christ. But they don't know why they are put together into one book, the Bible.

- The Old Testament consists of 39 books and the New Testament has 27 books. The Old Testament is three fourths of the New Testament; the New Testament is a quarter of the Old Testament.

- The Old Testament has many more books than the New Testament. But many people read the New Testament more often than the Old Testament, because they think that the Old Testament is difficult to understand.

- My friends, which part of Bible did Jesus Christ use? ⇒ It was the Old Testament. The New Testament was written after Jesus Christ's death on the cross and His Ascension. So Jesus Christ always told the story related to the Old Testament. Therefore, it can be said that the Old Testament has a profound influence on the New Testament.

- My friends, the first Christians were the Jews and they knew the Old Testament and had studied it. They were the offspring of Abraham and were raised learning the Old Testament: they can be called 'the people of the Bible'.

- However, many Japanese don't understand the Bible. They also don't understand the New Testament, today's Scripture. [3:23 Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed.](#)

- It means that we don't understand the New Testament, because we don't understand the Old Testament. Now, we would like to learn the following two points.

### Important Points

#### **1. The Jews, the People of the Bible**

##### **1) The Jews live according to the law.**

- The Jews are the people with whom God made a covenant. They had been slaves in Egypt. Then, God made the covenant with them through Moses and gave the law (the Ten Commandments). God told them if they followed the law, He would bless them. Since then, the Jews keep reading the Old Testament,

the book of the law and following it.

- In the time of the prophets, the Jews recorded the events and incorporated them into the Old Testament. We can not discuss the Jews' history or their lives without it. They were taught to memorize the Old Testament since their childhood and were disciplined according to it. Everything in their daily lives was connected with the Old Testament.

- Concretely speaking, they cannot do this or they should do that, because it is the Sabbath Day (the day to take a rest) today. On Friday, it is the day before Saturday (the Sabbath Day); it is 'the Day of Preparation.' And they had been taught many things to do during 'the Day of the Preparation'. In addition, there were lots of commandments derived from the Bible. They were bound to them.

{Example} 39 classes of work prohibited on 'the Sabbath Day'

Plowing, sowing, reaping, thrashing, winnowing, grinding, kneading, baking, shearing, breaching, spinning, dyeing wool, weaving, cutting, writing, kindling, extinguishing fire, building...etc.

- These laws, commandments and rules were derived from 'the Ten Commandments of Moses'. In the New Testament we find the following story.

{Example} The rich young man and Jesus Mark 10:17-22

One day, a man came to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" Jesus replied, "What did the law command you?"

- The young man immediately answered, "Honor your father and mother, do not murder, do not steal...etc." He gave various commandments. He must have given 'the Ten Commandments of Moses' fluently. Every Jewish people could tell it. For, they memorized the law.

- Even though he had learned the law, he came to Jesus expecting another way to get eternal life. He said, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" He had kept the commandments, but he knew he couldn't be saved by them. So, he was expecting that the Savior (Messiah) was coming soon according to the teaching of the Old Testament. These were the Jews.

- Like this, the Jews kept following the Old Testaments and the commandments. They were bound to them.

## 2) The law was a supervision (or nurturer)

3:24 So the law was put in charge of us until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.

- "A supervision" (nurturer) is a tutor or a private teacher. A rich Jewish

family engaged a tutor for their children by custom. The tutor was in charge of the children and taught the law since their childhood. They were trained to be righteous and pure children.

- When a Jewish boy reached 13 years old celebrates 'Bar Mitzvah' (Religious Coming-of-Age Ceremony). He goes to the temple or synagogue at that day and recites a part of the law before people. He says in public that 'I know the law. I promise to keep the law.' People accept him as an adult; 'son of the commandment.'

- The Jews were raised learning this law. They say that the law is the tutor that trained and raised them. Until then, they were kept under guard by the tutor and led a life without freedom.

- However, when they reach 13 years old, they will be released from the tutor. The tutor played a role in helping them become adults. It means that the law helps them until they become adults.

- It means that the law works until the Savior (Messiah) comes, when the time of God is fulfilled. Jesus Christ is that Savior. He came to this world and crucified to shed His holy blood. He has accomplished his work as Messiah. They are not under the tutor anymore. Having faith in Jesus Christ means to start walking as an adult.

- Therefore, Paul said , ["we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed."](#) (3:23)

### 3) **Don't they need the tutor anymore?**

- Then, don't they still need a tutor? ⇒ Yes, they do. If they had had no tutor, they wouldn't have become an adult. If they had had no Old Testament and the law, could the Jews come to Jesus? Yes, the tutor took a significant role.

- God has chosen the Jews and shows us the model of relationship between God and human beings. And He said, "Behold, the people of Israel!" God has brought up the Jews for a long time in history. That was God's master plan. We open the Old Testament and can find many descriptions; here, this is it and that is in the Old Testament, too!

{Example} What happened on the Day of Pentecost?

- Peter experienced the Day of Pentecost 10 days after Jesus' Ascension. We come to know what is written in the Old Testament through Peter's

preaching soon after he was filled with the Holy Spirit. People who were filled with the Holy Spirit began to speak in other tongues (languages). Many people said, “What happened? They have had too much wine.”

- At that time Peter said, “No, we didn’t, fellow Jews and other friends. This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.” The prophecy of Joel that Peter had read before must have come to his mind immediately.

Joel 2:28 “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.

2:29 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

- He began to speak to people, “Yes my friends, this is what is written in the Old Testament!” Like this, Jewish Christians were deeply related to the Old Testament. So, they could lead a Christian life based on the word of the Old Testament. They were bound with the law, but just now they believed in Jesus as Christ (Messiah) they were released from it. They realized the real freedom and salvation in Him. MJ (Messianic Jews) are those Christians.

- 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

- So, they rejoice very much. They said, “We are not slaves anymore. We are free in Jesus Christ.” They kept giving thanks to God. This is the Jews.

## 2. The Gentiles who don’t know the Bible

- The Jews were given the law. When their children reach the age of ‘Bar. Mitzvah’ they hold a lavish ceremony. The children come to be released from the tutor who had trained them. They are considered as adults in the religious viewpoint. The Bible teaches us,

3:25 Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

It is easy to understand if we put ‘**of Jesus Christ**’ after the word, faith.

They will be set free from the tutor only after Jesus came to this world to be

crucified and resurrected. Jesus' coming to this world is very significant event. Therefore, the faith (before) where they have not met Jesus yet and the faith (after) they have met Jesus are quite different. In that sense, the Jewish people now are divided into two groups.

But then, the Gentiles weren't given the law. So, we the Gentiles are fundamentally different from the Jews.

### 1) What did God give the Gentiles? ⇒ Conscience

• Everyone has 'conscience'. Definition of 'conscience': **'work of mind' to tell us the things is morally right and wrong and to try to do right things.**

• The Jews were given the law and 'conscience', and the Gentiles have basically judged things according to their conscience. There were respectable persons who had lived on their conscience in Japanese society before the Gospel of Christ had been brought.

• And there are good people today, too. A sound 'conscience' isn't shaken and is a firm foundation. If we make a mistake or commit a sin our conscience will bother us.

Hebrews 13:18 Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear **conscience** and desire to live honorably in every way.

① **one of the roles of 'conscience' ⇒ Judging right and wrong**

② **one of the roles of 'conscience' ⇒ Man has heart to seek for God**

Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has also set **eternity** in the hearts of men.

Only God has eternity, and it is limitless. Man who is a limited being doesn't have it. Therefore, there are no races, no countries, and no man without having faith.

• God has sent Jesus Christ and speaks quietly to the 'conscience' of everyone.

⇒ **God speaks to the heart (conscience)**

• In fact, we don't have the law, but don't we have something to bind us? As the Jews were bound with the law, aren't we the Gentiles bound with something?

• For example, they are old customs, traditions, idolatries. Don't we give way to the temptation to do immoral things or aren't we bound to the temptation to do it? They all speak to our conscience which examines us.

• **Jesus came to this world to free us.** 'Bar Mitzvah' means release from the tutor (the law), release from the long binding. Encountering Jesus Christ means being released and becoming free.

### 2) Then, what should we do?

⇒ **to believe in (receive) Jesus as Christ (the Savior).**

Now, please put your hand on your bosom and take a moment to ask your 'conscience;' am I released from restraints and am I free? God asks your heart. Let's reply to Him honestly.

God wishes you will be free from restraints by faith in Jesus Christ.

⇒ and you will lead 'your real life.'

To live life like this means that you grow up. The Bible tells you ⇒

"Like newborn babies, crave spiritual milk, so that by it you may **grow up** in your salvation. 1Peter 2:2

**Growing up means making progress and hope!**

**We can see the people growing!**

• We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because. **your faith is growing more and more**, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. 2 Thessalonians 1:3

We don't see faith. However, the Bible tells us, "your faith is growing more and more," ⇒ "the love every one of you has for each other is increasing."

This is faith that we can see.

Conclusion

Theme : 'He Who Really Grows'

— Before and After—

• A Jewish boy who reaches 13 years old celebrates 'Bar Mitzvah' (the Religious Coming-of-Age Ceremony) in the Jewish society. He becomes a member of society and keeps growing. Today we studied 'He Who Really Grows.'

3:25 Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

1. Having faith in Jesus Christ (Release & Freedom)
2. We keep growing ⇒ making progress ⇒ having hope.

- God bless you!