The Gospel, Living Worthy of the Gospel

[The Book of Romans]

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Contents

Introduction	4
"a servant of Christ" (1:1-7)	5
Paul's heart (1:8-15)	8
Let us not be ashamed of the gospel. (1:15-17)	12
The wrath of God (1:18-32)	21
God's judgment (2:1-16)	22
Who are the true Christians? (2:17-29)	24
May it never be! (3:1-18)	29
We are justified by faith alone! (3:19-31)	33
The happiness of those who are credited	
as righteous by God (1) (4:1-8)	38
The happiness of those who are credited	
as righteous by God (2) (4:9-17)	41
Faith that hopes against all hope (4:18-25)	45
Having been justified by faith (5:1-5)	48
God's love poured into our hearts (5:5-11)	52
The gift that came by the grace of Jesus Christ (5:12-21)	55
Living worthily as recipients of the best gift (1) (6:1-11)	59
Living worthily as recipients of the best gift (2) (6:1-14)	63
Slaves to obedience (6:15-23)	66
A life that bears fruit to God (7:1-6)	70
The function of the law (7:7-13)	73
"What a wretched man I am!" (7:14-15)	78
Those who are in Christ Jesus (8:1-11)	81
Past, present, and future blessing (8:1-2, 14-18)	83
A debtor (1) (8:12-17)	89
A debtor (2) (8:12-17)	92
The glory that will be revealed to us (8:18-25)	95
Those who love God (8:26-30)	99
"If God is for us" (8:31-39)	103
Inseparable love (9:1-13)	107
"What then shall we say?" (9:14-29)	111

'The stumbling stone' (9:30-33)	115
'The word of faith we are proclaiming' (10:1-15)	118
Jesus who has stretched out His hands all day long (10:16-21)	121
"By no means!" (1) (11:1-10)	126
"By no means! (2) (11:11-24)	130
"Who has known the mind of the Lord?" (11:25-36)	134
Worship-witnesses (12:1-2)	137
Transformation (12:1-3)	143
'According to the grace given us' (12:3-8)	148
Causes of church conflict (12:6, 16)	152
Community of love (12:9-13)	154
'You will heap burning coals on his head' (12:14-21)	158
We must submit ourselves to the governing authorities. (13:1-7)	162
Let us love each other (13:8-10)	166
Do you know the time? (13:11-14)	171
Let us seek the maturity of faith. (14:1-12)	176
Service that pleases God (14:13-23)	182
May we be of the same mind. (15:1-6)	187
"Accept one another" (15:7-13)	192
'A minister of Christ Jesus' (15:14-22)	195
Sharing is caring. (15:22-29)	199
Please join me in prayer in my fight	202
Recommendable people (16:1-2)	205
Those who serve together (16:21-23)	209

Conclusion

Introduction

The time has already come. The time has come when we Christians do not put up with "sound doctrine." Now we prefer to listen to the words of pastors who say what our itching ears want to hear (2 Tim. 4:3). Even in such a situation, we pastors are supposed to teach the saints by saying only what is in line with sound doctrine (Tit. 2:1), but we are not doing so faithfully. Perhaps the reason is because we are afraid that the saints will be bored and even hate it if we speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. Perhaps the reason is because we do not know sound doctrine and do not stand firmly on sound doctrine. But we must keep in mind that the Bible tells us to speak and teach sound doctrine (v. 1). Also, the Bible tells us to hold fast sound doctrine (1:9). At the same time, we must teach sound doctrine to our church members (2:1). Therefore, we must be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict (1:9).

The Book of Romans is a very important guideline for sound doctrine and living a life worthy of that sound doctrine. The reason is that looking at the structure of Romans, chapters 1-11 tell the "doctrine" and chapters 12-16 tell the "application". In other words, because the structure of Romans is the doctrinal part from chapters 1 to 11 and the practical application part from chapters 12 to 16, the Book of Romans is a very important guideline for living a life worthy of sound doctrine. In particular, since the core of sound doctrine is "the gospel" and the application of sound doctrine is "conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ," the Book of Romans is very important book for all of us.

So, I chose the Book of Romans, meditated on it, preached it, and then meditated on it again and wrote it like this. As a pastor serving a church, I wanted to know more about the gospel of Christ, and to live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ. I also wanted to preach the gospel to the saints entrusted to me by the Lord and teach it with my life. So, I chose the Book of Romans and proclaimed it to our church members every Sunday. Then, after a few years, I was given an opportunity to organize and revise the meditation manuscripts of the Book of Romans again like this. May the Lord use this meditation manuscripts to help all of us to understand and know the gospel of Christ more deeply and to live a life worthy of the gospel, so that it will be an opportunity to be established ourselves as the gospelcentered Christians even a little more.

Pursuing a life centered on the gospel of Christ,

James Kim

(August 20, 2015, Earnestly praying to be established as Christians captivated by the power of the Gospel

"a servant of Christ Jesus"

[Romans 1:1-7]

The Book of Romans is a letter written by the apostle Paul while he was in Corinth before going up to Jerusalem on his third missionary journey (Matthew Hendrickson). The recipients of this letter were the Christian community in Rome, which consisted of both Jewish and Gentile Christians. If distributed, this community was mainly Gentile saints. To them, Paul wrote a letter to the Romans. What was his purpose? His purpose was to preach the gospel (chapters. 1-11). And it was to help them live a life worthy of the gospel (chapters 12-16). In other words, the theme of the letter to Romans is "the gospel" (Moo). The noun "gospel" and its verb "evangelize" are used especially in the introduction (cf. 1:1, 2, 9, 15) and conclusion (15:16, 19). That is, the word "gospel" is framed throughout the letter. Today's text is a part of 1:1-17, the introductory part of this letter, and we can briefly divide verses 1-7 ("Introduction and blessing") into 3 parts: (1) The first part, verses 1-6, tells about Paul writing the letter, (2) The second part, the first half of verse 7, is Paul's blessing is written.

Focusing on today's text, Romans 1:1-7, I want to think about how Paul introduced himself to the saints in Rome while writing a letter to the saints in Rome.

First, Paul introduced himself as "a servant of Christ Jesus."

Look at Romans 1:1a – "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus" The apostle Paul introduced himself at the beginning of his letter to the saints in Rome whom God loved (v. 7) as "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus." Here, the word "servant" (Greek: $\delta o i \lambda o \varsigma$) has three meanings. The three meanings are "humility," "devotion," and "obedience" (Douglas Moo). In the Greek and Roman world at the time of Paul, a "servant" was like a piece of furniture to the owner (Yoon-sun Park). According to a historian, there were three kinds of furniture at that time: one that could not speak (like a scythe or hoe), one that was mute (like a dog), and one that was a talking slave (Internet). d When Paul wrote a letter to the saints in Rome, he introduced himself as "a servant of Christ Jesus" because he considered himself a slave of Jesus Christ. Also, Paul introduced himself as a slave who humbly devoted himself to absolute obedience to Jesus, the Lord.

When I meditate on this word, I think that we Christians need a little "slavery spirit". What is "slavery spirit"? Slave spirit refers to the quality of being able to act according to the owner's words without one's own

will and plan by thoroughly internalizing the owner's thoughts and values as a result of being accustomed to slave life (Internet). Mostly, we think negatively of "slavery spirit". For example, the Israelites lived in Egypt as slaves for about 430 years, so they were steeped in slavery spirit. Like the Israelites at the time of the Exodus, before we believed in Jesus, we lived in this sinful world and lived a life of slavery to sin. However, because Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the grave, as a result of giving us faith as a gracious gift, we are no longer slaves to sin. Rather, like Paul, we have now become slaves of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 7:22). Our Lord is Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must be humble in our devotion to the Lord and obey his commands. Then we will enjoy true freedom as slaves of Christ Jesus.

Second, Paul introduced himself as the one "called to be an apostle."

Look at Romans 1:1 – "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle" Here, "an apostle" is the Greek word " $\alpha\pi \delta\sigma\tau o\lambda o\varsigma$," which means "one who is sent." When Saul, who was persecuting the church of Jesus, met the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus, two things happened to him (Acts 9): conversion and commission. In other words, Saul met the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus and was born again (received eternal life), and also received a mission from the Lord and was sent. Apostle Paul was the one who was sent into the world as God's representative to establish the Church of God (Park). He had the authority of God. Therefore, with the authority of this apostle, Paul wrote the letter to the Romans to the members of the Roman church that he had not preached the gospel to.

Interestingly, referring to the Roman saints who receive this letter, Paul expresses it in two words in verses 6 and 7:

(1) The first expression is "those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ" (v. 6).

The reason why the Roman believers are said to be "Jesus Christ's" is because they are the saints who have been chosen by God. In other words, believers in Rome belong to Jesus Christ as those who have been chosen by God (Park). In the same way, we are Jesus Christ's, that is, those who belong to Jesus Christ. We must have a clear sense of belonging. We are no longer of Satan and of this world. We are those who belong to the Lord.

(2) The second expression is those "who are loved by God and called to saints" (v.7).

Here, the apostle Paul not only said to the believers in Rome, 'You belong to Jesus Christ' (v. 6), but also said, 'You are the saints loved by God' (v. 7). This word means that because God loved us, He called us, and because He called us, we have become saints (Park). In other words, we Christians are washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:11).

God loves you. That's why he called you to be saints. You are Jesus Christ's. In other words, you

belong to Jesus. You are no longer of the world. Also, God sent me and you into the world. In other words, we are those who have been sent. Therefore, we must go into the world and preach the gospel to all nations and make disciples of Jesus (Mt. 28:19-20).

Third and final, Paul introduced himself as the one who "set apart for the gospel of God" (v. 1).

Look at Romans 1:1 – "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God." Paul was a slave of Christ Jesus, one called to be an apostle, and one who was set apart for the gospel of God. As an apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13), he humbly devoted himself to obeying the will of the Lord who sent him. He did not regard his life as precious in the slightest to accomplish the work of testifying the gospel, which was the mission given to him by the Lord (Acts 20:24). The work of testifying the gospel that Paul regarded as more precious than his own life. What is the gospel? Look at Romans 1:2-4: "regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord." The word "gospel" in Greek is "Ευαγγέλιο" which means "good news." This good news, the gospel, is what God promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures (v. 2) that Jesus, the Son of God, was born of a descendant of David "according to the flesh" (Jesus' humanity) and resurrected from the dead "according to the Spirit of holiness" (Jesus' divinity). God loved His people and sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, to come to this earth in the form of a man to save His chosen people. And Jesus was crucified and shed his blood to forgive our sins and was resurrected on the third day for our justification (4:25). Therefore, God gives eternal life to those who believe in Jesus. This is the gospel of God. The Lord, who was resurrected from the dead and ascended to heaven, who sits at the right hand of God, called Paul who had no qualifications and no merit ("grace") and gave him apostleship to preach this gospel to all Gentiles for Jesus' name's sake in order to bring about the obedience of faith among them (v. 5).

You and I are also those who have been set apart as holy for this gospel like the apostle Paul. We are the ones who have been sent into the world with this best news, the Gospel. Therefore, we must testify of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We must preach, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31).

The lesson given to you and me in today's text is the fact that you and I are servants of Jesus Christ. A servant is humble before the Lord, devoted and obedient to the Lord. We must live the life of a servant of the Lord. Also, we must keep in mind that we are the ones who have been sent. Although we are not "apostles" like Paul, we must keep in mind that we are also servants of the Lord who have been sent into the world, just like the meaning of the word "apostles." And as those who have been sent, we must fulfill the will of the Lord who sent us into this world. The Lord's will is to boldly proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. We are those who are set apart for this work.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 7).

Paul's heart

[Romans 1:8-15]

Have you ever tried to express your feelings in writing? Have you ever sent a letter to someone you love, because you couldn't stand it without writing? I personally had this experience about 10 years ago. In other words, there was a time when I wrote a letter with a heart that couldn't stand it without writing a letter to a loved one.

I still remember it vividly. When my first baby, Joo-young, was lying in the intensive care unit at the hospital, I heard that a Korean radio station was conspiring to write a letter to a loved one, and I remember writing "To Joo-young, who loves Jesus." At that time, even though I knew that the sick baby could not receive and read the letter of my heart, I wanted to express the father's feelings for the baby in writing and share it with radio listeners.

If we look at Romans 1:8-15, we see that the apostle Paul, writing a letter to the Romans, expressed his heart toward the saints who belonged to Jesus in Rome, at least in writing. As I read the contents of the letter, I think of Paul's expressed heart and receive a lesson that this should be my heart toward the members of our church. Then, what was Paul's heart toward the Roman saints? We can think of it in 3 ways.

First, when Paul thought of the saints in Rome, he had a grateful heart (a thankful heart).

Look at Romans 1:8 – "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world." The reason Paul gave thanks to God when he thought of the saints in Rome was that their faith was spreading all over the world. The faith that the Roman church saints are spreading all over the world was a sufficient reason for Paul to give thanks to the Lord who is the author and perfecter of faith (Moo). The apostle Paul's job was to preach the gospel to all Gentiles for the name of Jesus Christ so that they would believe in and obey Jesus (v. 5). Of course, the saints in Rome were not the people Paul preached the gospel to and believed in and obeyed Jesus. Mostly, scholars think that the gospel was spread in Rome and Roman saints were created because of those who heard the gospel of the apostles filled

with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and returned to Rome to preach the gospel. The important thing is that Paul's interest was always the faith of the saints. As an example, in Paul's letter to the Thessalonian saints, he writes that the Thessalonian saints, who are undergoing tribulation (1 Thess. 3:4), for fear that the tempter might have tempted them, and his labor would be in vain (v. 5). So, since he couldn't endure it no longer, he sent Timothy to find out about their faith. Thankfully, Timothy returned to Paul and told him the good news of the faith and love of the Thessalonian saints (v. 6), and Paul was comforted (v. 7). When we see that Paul said, "now we will live" because the Thessalonian saints stood firm in the Lord (v. 8), we can know that Paul's life is related to the faith of the Thessalonian saints. The reason Paul thanked God when he thought of the Thessalonian saints (1:2) was that he had nothing to say because of their faith was being proclaimed throughout thew whole world (v. 8). When I think of Paul's interest, I can confirm once again that my interest as a pastor should be your faith. Like the saints in Rome, how much comfort and joy it will be when the word about your faith spreads everywhere you go. I can't help but thank God again and again.

I am happy and thankful to God that you are studying the Bible diligently these days, attending the Bible study every Sunday afternoon or the regional Bible study once a month, and learning diligently. The reason is because faith grows when you get close to the Word of God. Romans 10:17 says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." I hope that all of us will progress in faith as we diligently read, meditate on, and learn the Word of God. Therefore, I hope and pray that gratitude to God overflows more and more in my life and in your life.

Second, Paul prayed without ceasing for the saints in Rome (a prayerful heart).

Look at Romans 1:9 – "For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you." Why did Paul pray to God, remembering the saints in Rome without ceasing? The reason is because Paul loved them. He had a lot of interest in the Roman church saints, so he expressed his interest and love for them in prayer to God. What, then, was Paul's special interest in the Roman saints? It was none other than the faith of the Roman saints. Even though Paul was giving thanks to God for the faith of the Roman saints, he was always praying to God with interest so that their faith would grow and grow.

Personally, when I pray for our church members, I am praying for two things about faith: (1) Just as the Lord opened Lydia's heart to hear Paul's words (Acts 16:14), I' m praying that He opens the hearts of those who have not yet received Jesus as their Savior when they hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and accept Jesus as their Savior. (2) I am praying to God for the progress of their faith when I pray for the saints who have already believed and accepted Jesus.

While praying regularly for the faith of the Roman saints, apostle Paul also prayed for a good way to go to the Roman saints "by the will of God" (Rom 1:10). In other words, he prayed to God not only for the faith of the Roman saints (v. 8), but also with the desire to meet them one last time. However, even in this prayer, Paul continued to pray to God with the attitude of 'if it is the Lord's will'. We must also pray to

God with this attitude. In other words, we must pray to God saying 'if it is the Lord's will' (Jam.4:15). In order to do that, we must have progress in faith. The more our faith grows, the more our prayers change to "Do not do as I will, but as the Lord will" (Mt.26:39). However, if our faith does not grow, even when we pray, we will keep seeking only 'my will'. We don't even realize God's will, and we don't care. Therefore, we must pray with each other for the progress of our faith. And in the midst of this, we must seek the will of the Lord and live a life of obedience to His will.

Thirdly, Paul was eager to see the saints in Rome (an earnest heart).

Look at Romans 1:11 – "For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established." There were 3 reasons why the apostle Paul eagerly wanted to see the saints in Rome (vv. 11-15):

<u>The first reason was to strengthen the Roman saints by imparting "some spiritual gift"</u> to them.

Here, "some spiritual gift" refers to something supernatural (Park). We do not know what the supernatural was, but the important thing is that Paul wanted to strengthen the Roman saints by imparting some spiritual gift. When we stand firm in our faith, we can be comforted by each other's faith (v. 12).

(2) The second reason is to bring forth fruit among them.

Look at Romans 1:13 – "I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles." The apostle Paul longed to see the Roman saints, so he made several attempts to go to Rome. But he had been prevented. The reason he wanted to go out to the Roman saints was because he wanted to bear fruit among them. The fruit here refers to the fruit of evangelism and the believers themselves standing firm in their faith (Moo). In order to bear this fruit, Paul longed to see the Roman saints.

(3) The third reason is to preach the gospel to them.

Look at Romans 1:15 – "So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome." Paul was eager to preach the gospel to the Roman saints as much as he could. This was Paul's fervent wish (Park). So, he longed to see the Roman saints.

We could say that Jesus Christ is a "letter" from Heavenly Father to us. Jesus Christ, who was sent to this earth for our salvation, wanted to forgive our sins and died on the cross. His death on the cross was the highest expression of God's Father's heart of love toward us. Look at Romans 5:8 - "But God demonstrates

His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Therefore, referring to us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bible says, "a letter of Christ" (2 Cor. 3:2-3). We are called to belong to Christ (Rom. 1:6). We are those who have been called as saints loved by God (v. 7). Therefore, if we realize a little more of Heavenly Father's love and His heart today, let's write a heartfelt letter to Him. Let's express through praise, worship and prayer to God our gratitude toward Heavenly Father, our always praying heart to the Lord who always intercedes for us, and our longing to see the Lord.

Let us not be ashamed of the gospel.

[Romans 1:15-17]

What are you earnestly praying to God for as you write a letter of your heart to God? My earnest prayer topic is to be used by God. In particular, I have been praying that the Lord would use me as His tool like five loaves and two fish according to the words of John 6:1-15 when He called me during the college retreat in May 1987. As I kept praying, 'Lord, may You accomplish Your work of five loaves and two fishes through me,' I became convinced that the work of five loaves and two fishes could be accomplished even through my life or my death. So, I am not discouraged. But I am praying, expecting, and waiting today as well. With a heart longing to be used by the Lord in this way, I am praying more specifically to God: 'Lord, please use me as a burning evangelist and comforter of your love.' The reason I pray like this is because I want a heart that cannot endure without preaching Jesus. Also, as the one who has received the love of Jesus, I want to give glory to God by comforting my neighbors with His love like Barnabas the Encourager. However, when I look back on my own life so far, I think that I am being used a little as the Lord's instrument of comfort when I think about whether I am living properly as a burning evangelist and comforter of the Lord's love. I cannot help but confess that I am not able to live like that. I have to not only pray with a heart that loves one soul, but also open my heart and lips to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to them. But when I see myself living like a mute, I feel painful and ashamed. When I think about what the problem is, I see that I am ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In today's text, Romans 1:16, apostle Paul confesses, "I am not ashamed of the gospel." Every time I read and think about this word, I wonder how Paul could have boldly proclaimed the gospel without being ashamed. How can we boldly preach the gospel like Paul did? Aren't you curious? If you, like me, are ashamed of the gospel, I hope that as you meditate on today's text, you will have an opportunity to boldly proclaim the gospel without being ashamed like Paul.

If we are ashamed, we can think of one or two things: First, a person may be ashamed of what he possesses is worthless. Second, a person may be shy because of his timidity (a shy personality) (Moo).

You and I may be ashamed because of our personalities. But is there any reason why we are ashamed of what we possess because we think it is of little value? For example, have you ever been ashamed of the faith you possess, the faith God has given you as a gift? In other words, have you ever been ashamed in front of people for believing in Jesus? Have you ever felt embarrassed by the fact that you are going to church? Or have you ever been ashamed of your parents, family, or relatives who believe in Jesus? Are we not ashamed of our life of faith because we lightly regard the value of faith, which is more precious than gold? What would you do if you had the greatest good news for me and you? Would you be ashamed of the best news or would you not be able to bear the good news? The best good news is the gospel, the Bible says. What is this best news, the gospel? The gospel, as we have already meditated on in Romans 1:2-4, refers to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus, "according to the flesh," descended from David's lineage and came in the form of a man (v. 3). Jesus who was crucified and shed His blood to forgive our sins, and was resurrected from the tomb on the third day. The core content of the gospel is the Jesus who justified us who believed in Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection (v. 4).

Paul was not ashamed of this supreme good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ (v. 16). How could Paul not be ashamed of this gospel? It was because Paul had complete confidence in the gospel (Moo). Complete trust in this gospel, as stated in verse 16, is "... This gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes ..." means that he absolutely believed in the gospel of Jesus Christ (v. 16). In other words, Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because he fully trusted that the gospel is the power of God for salvation to all who believe.

Do we really believe in the power of this gospel? Do we really believe that the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes? Many times, we want to share the gospel with people who do not know Jesus, hoping that they will believe in Jesus and be saved and receive eternal life. This disbelief also prevents us from preaching Jesus Christ correctly. In other words, rather than preaching the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ correctly, we often try to evangelize with the words of this or that person, relying on our wisdom, experience, or ability. We just have to preach what Jesus did on the cross as it is written in the Bible. But we avoid preaching the gospel, the word of God, because we do not believe that the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. Although if we simply preach the gospel wisely and boldly, God will someday give those who are chosen by God faith as a gift and open the door to their hearts so that they will receive the gospel we preach, we lack this simple faith. Therefore, in our evangelism, man's artificial method is used more. Also, even after evangelism, we see many cases where man's ability is revealed and we ourselves receive that glory when we experience God's power rather than giving glory to God. Like the apostle Paul, we must trust completely that the gospel we preach is "the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (v. 16). In other words, we must preach the gospel with complete faith in the power of the gospel and the power of God. Then, the power of this gospel, the power of God that gives salvation, will appear "to all who believe" (v. 16). It refers to all those who fully trust in God who justifies sinners by letting His own Son Jesus to die on the cross and to be resurrected from the grave to forgive sins (4:5). When you and I boldly preach the gospel with faith in its power, God will give faith as a gift to all those whom He loves and are chosen by God before the foundation of the world so that they will receive the gospel of Jesus we preach. And he will let you accept Jesus as your Savior. Regardless of whether they are Jews or Greeks, from any country or from any nation, God will give His chosen people faith as a gift so they can receive the gospel. Therefore, when we evangelize, we must preach the gospel while praying. The reason is because, just as God opened Lydia's heart (Acts 16:14), God must open the hearts of those who we are preaching the gospel to. In other words, it is because God must give faith as a gift so that they can accept the gospel with faith when we preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Then, how does this gospel of Jesus Christ become the power of God that gives salvation to all who believe? The answer we can see in Romans 1:17 - "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith." The reason why the gospel that you and I preach is the power of God that gives salvation to all believers is because God's righteousness is revealed in the gospel. What does "a righteousness from God" mean here? The righteousness from God means that even though the righteous God [Justice (an attribute of God)] must judge us, weak sinners who have become enemies of God, but rather, He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to a sinless human body, to die on the cross and to resurrect him from the grave [an activity of God (the saving action of God)] to restore the right relationship with God (a status given by God) by justifying us who believe in Jesus (Moo). Since this righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel, only when we believe in Jesus Christ, that righteousness of God is imputed to us who believe in Jesus. Thus, we are no longer enemies of God, but we have a right relationship with God and become children of God. And we can live a righteous life-doing what is right. From the moment we believe in Jesus, we are no longer enmity with God, and all our sins have been forgiven by the precious blood shed on the cross of Jesus. And we have now become children of God who can call God our Father. Therefore, as children of God, we can live a righteous life, that is, do the right things. In other words, now we are all righteous in Jesus Christ. And we can live only by faith (v. 17). We can only live by faith in God and His Word. As righteous people who have been justified by the merits of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can live only by faith in Jesus. I hope and pray that God's work of salvation will be more fully fulfilled through you and me as we boldly proclaim His gospel without being ashamed of it by faith in Jesus Christ.

Professor Elton Trublood, in his booklet 'Prepared for Reconstruction', said of the true enemies of the faith: 'The true enemies of faith are not non-belief but dim faith and those who take an arrogant attitude toward the church while participating in the church without conviction of the gospel. And he concluded that in order for the church to demonstrate its church-like power, it must become a gathering of people who are not ashamed (Internet). That's right! The church should truly be a gathering of people who are not ashamed. It should be a gathering of those who are not ashamed to pray among unbelievers, those who are not ashamed to suffer for the truth, and those who are not ashamed to bear witness to Christ.

I hope and pray that we all become believers who are not ashamed of Jesus. Also, I hope and

pray that we, like the apostle Paul, preach the gospel boldly without being ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The wrath of God

[Romans 1:18-32]

A long time ago, there was a Korean drama called 'Mom is Angry' among the popular Korean dramas. Watching this drama featuring famous celebrities such as Lee Soon-jae, Kang Bu-ja, Kim Hye-ja, and Baek II-seop, I thought that writer Kim Soo-hyun wrote really well. The reason I thought that way was because even though there are some ideal parts in the drama (for example, the daughter-in-law Kim Hye-ja of a large family gets permission from her father-in-law Lee Soon-jae and her husband Baek II-seop to leave the house and live alone in an apartment), I think it's showing a realistic appearance well. There were times when I could sympathize with the way people live and listen to their words in that drama. Then, last week, when I saw "Christian Hellard," one of the Christian newspapers coming to our church, there was an article by a pastor, so I read it. The reason why I read that article was because the title of the article was, "Is the saint 'angry'?" The core exhortation of the article, in my opinion, is that believers should control their anger with the word of God. But the part of the article that interests me is this: ""Saints can't raise their horns, but they have to be angry when doing righteous things. ... In the original languages of the New Testament, there are two different words for 'angry.' Each expresses righteous anger and unrighteous anger" (Christian Hellard).

Here I think of "righteous anger," or "righteous indignation," rather than the "anger," which we can often produce. The reason is that in today's text, Romans 1:18, the apostle Paul is speaking about "the wrath of God" while writing a letter to the saints in Romans. But the question that arises is why the apostle Paul is suddenly talking about "the wrath of God" when writing to the saints in Rome. In Romans 1:15-17, apostle Paul said to the saints in Rome, 'I long to see you' (v. 11), and one of the reasons is because he wanted to preach the gospel to them (v. 15). Then, suddenly, I wonder why he spoke to the Roman saints about God's wrath from verse 18. In order to answer this question, we should compare the word "the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel" in Romans 1:17 and "the wrath of God" in verse 18. In other words, the reason Paul is telling the saints in Rome about the unrighteous sinners under the wrath of God is to tell them how absolutely these unrighteous sinners absolutely need God's righteousness (MacArthur). In other words, while writing a letter to the saints in Rome, 'I want to preach the gospel to you,' he is implying that he also wants to preach the gospel to unrighteous sinners under the wrath of God. In the midst of this, Paul is challenging the Roman saints to boldly preach the gospel to unrighteous sinners and dying souls who are in the midst of God's sould be aposed to be aposed to unrighteous sinners and dying souls who are in the midst of God's sould be aposed to be aposed to unrighteous sinners and dying souls who are in the midst of God's God's represented to gospel to unrighteous sinners and dying souls who are in the midst of God's God's represented to unrighteous sinners and dying souls who are in the midst of God's gospel to unrighteous sinners and dying souls who are in the midst of God's gospel to unrighteous sinners and dying souls who are in the midst of God's gospel to unrighteous sinners and dying souls who are in the midst of God's gospel to unrighteous sinners a

wrath.

Then, in today's text Romans 1:18-32, as apostle Paul writes a letter to the Roman saints, to whom is God's wrath revealed? Indeed, to whom should we preach the gospel? We can think of it in 3 ways.

First, the Bible says that God's wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

Look at Romans 1:18 - "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." Here, those who suppress the truth with unrighteousness refer to those who have the knowledge to know God but suppress that knowledge through their own unrighteousness and ungodliness. How is this possible? How can they suppress the truth, the knowledge of God, with their own unrighteousness and ungodliness? Look at verse 21: "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened." Those who suppress the truth with unrighteousness know God but do not glorify God or give thanks to Him, so their thoughts become futile and their hearts darkened. Therefore, they live foolishly, suppressing the truth. This reminds me Psalms 14:1a - "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'" However, if we look at Romans 1:19-20, the Bible clearly states that "which is known about God is evident within them." The reason is because God the Creator has revealed Himself through all things He has made. In other words, God the Creator clearly showed us His power and divinity through all things He created (v. 20). Therefore, all people are aware of the existence of God in their conscience. That's why the apostle Paul says, 'All people know God' (v. 19, original translation). John Calvin said, 'The natural world is a mirror through which we can see God' (Park). Everyone knows in their conscience the existence of God through the natural world He created. Therefore, all people have no excuse for not knowing God (v. 20). Theologically speaking, this is called "natural revelation." Natural revelation means that God has revealed Himself to all things in the universe He has created. Therefore, all creatures who see the universe created by God know that God the Creator exists. But what's the matter? Although those who see the heavens and the earth know that there is a God through natural revelation and know that there is a God by looking at their conscience, they still suppress the truth with unrighteousness and deliberately ignore it. In other words, all ungodly and unrighteous people suppress the knowledge of God. In the midst of this, they do not give glory to God or give thanks to God, but their thoughts became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened (v. 21). They claim to be wise, but they became fools (v. 22). The Bible says that God's wrath will be revealed to those who suppress the truth with unrighteousness. We must preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to them.

Second, the Bible says that God's wrath is revealed to those who exchange the truth of God for a lie.

Look at Romans 1:25 – "For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." Those who are ungodly and unrighteous, who suppress the truth of God with unrighteousness, exchange the truth of God for a lie. Although they know the existence of God through natural revelation, they suppress that knowledge, so their thoughts become futile and dark. And they say that there is no God in their foolish hearts, and they abandon the truth and instead pursue lies. As a result, they worship and serve things made by humans ("creatures") rather than God, the Creator. They are guilty of exchanging the glory of the immortal God for the images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles (v. 23). In a word, these people are guilty of idolatry. One of the sins of this idolatry is to love money more than God and idolize money. Despite the fact that the love of money is the root of all evil in the age of materialism, modern people live their lives trusting and relying on the power of money rather than the power of God because their intellect, emotion, and will, that is, their entire personality, is contaminated by the love of money. If we wrap this up in more Christian terms, it means that we, modern Christians, long for material blessings more than Jesus, the source of blessings. In the end, those who exchange the truth of God for a lie commit the sin of idolatry by idolizing material things and loving and serving money more than God, the Creator. What are the consequences of this sin of idolatry? In other words, what does the Bible say is the result of the sin of exchanging God's truth for a lie? Look at Romans 1:26-27: "Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion." In the end, the retribution that came upon those who exchanged God's truth for a lie was abandoned by God to their shameful lust (v. 26). In other words, God gave them over in the sinful desire of their hearts (v. 24). It means that both men and women commit the sin of exchanging what is natural relations for unnatural ones. Here, "natural" refers to the sexual desire of a man toward a woman and a woman toward a man. And the retribution given to those who exchanged God's truth for a lie is not according to order, but according to the opposite, that is, woman to woman, and man to man. In a word, it refers to the sin of homosexuality. This is the result of the sin of exchanging God's truth for a lie. This is God's retribution and wrath.

Conflicts continue to crop up these days between groups that support Traditional Marriage and groups that support Homosexual Marriage. In particular, we often saw on TV news that supporters of same-sex marriage poured out to the side of the road and held a signpost to demonstrate. How should we Christians view this situation? Here I think it is necessary to distinguish two things. In other words, while homosexuality itself is a sin against God, our attitude towards homosexuals is that we should pray and work hard for their salvation with a heart of compassion rather than hostility toward them. The fact that homosexuality is a sin against God appears not only in today's text but also in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and Jude 7: "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals" (1 Cor. 6:9), "In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire" (Jude 7). In this way, the Bible says that homosexuality is unrighteous and a sin. Although we should hate this sin, it is not a desirable attitude to be hostile to homosexuals who commit that sin. Rather, we hate their sins, but we must embrace those who commit that sin with the love of Christ. And we should pray so that when they hear the gospel from us, they repent their sin of homosexuality and return to God.

Thirdly, the Bible says that God's wrath is revealed to those who don't think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God in their hearts.

Look at Romans 1:28 - "Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done." Here, "they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God" means that those who with unrighteousness suppress the truth of God, and those who exchange the truth of God for a lie think that knowing God is not worth having in a practical way (Park). In other words, they conscientiously know the existence of God through the universe and all things created by God. But they suppress the knowledge of God and do not give thanks and glorify Him because they consider it worthless to put the knowledge of God in their hearts. This clearly shows that the value of those who suppress the truth of God and exchange it for a lie is crumbling. In other words, they do not know how precious the knowledge of God is and regard it as insignificant. So, in the end they are led astray by lies and commit the sin of worshiping idols. Men lust after men and women lust after women. As a result, God gave them over to a depraved mind (v. 28). Those who suppress the truth of God (v. 18) God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity (v. 24). And God who gave them over to shameful lusts (v. 26) gave them over to the depraved mind (v. 28). God's wrath came upon those who did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, but He gave them over to the depraved mind that is, their wrong hearts. What was the result? They do what ought not to be done (v. 28). It is to act inconsistent with human duty and responsibility (Park). The list of those sinful acts is recorded in verses 29-32, and this list can be classified into 5 categories: (1) wickedness, evil, greed and depravity: sin in which a person mistreats himself; (2) envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice: sin that occurs when a person competes with others; (3) gossips, slanderers: sin in which a person harms another through the media; (4) God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil: sin of exalting himself and (5) disobeying his parents, senseless, faithless, heartless and ruthless: sin against loyalty (Park). Those who have the wrong mind to commit these sins say, "Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them" (v. 32). Therefore, God's wrath is revealed against these people. We must think about God's wrath. This wrath of God is not the anger that is the saints often emit. The wrath of our God is righteous anger. In other words, His anger is holy anger. Why does God have such holy wrath? The reason is because people suppress the truth with unrighteousness (v. 18), because they exchange the truth of God for a lie (v. 25), and because they don't think it's worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God (v. 28). We must preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to these people. Therefore, I hope and pray that God's power of salvation will be

manifested, so that the work of salvation will appear in which people repent of all their sins, return to Jesus, and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.

God's judgment

[Romans 2:1-16]

We have already meditated on "The wrath of God" centered on Romans 1:18-32. In other words, we learned that God's wrath is revealed to those who suppress the truth with unrighteousness (v. 18), to those who exchange the truth of God for a lie (v. 25), and who don't think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God (v. 28). The sins these people commit are not glorifying God (v. 21), refusing to give thanks to God (v. 21), claiming that they are wise (v. 22), worshiping idols (v. 23), and disgracing the body (v. 24), namely the sin of homosexuality (vv. 26-27) and all unrighteousness (v. 29). Here, all unrighteousness is full of every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, depravity, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, gossips (v. 29), slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents (v. 30), senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless (v. 31), while doing these things, approving those who practice such things (v. 32).

In today's text, Romans 2:2, apostle Paul said, God's judgment against those who do such things that are listed in Romans 1:18-32 is "based on truth." Why did he write to the saints in Rome, 'I long to see you (1:11), and one of the reasons is to preach the gospel to them (v. 15), and talk about "the wrath of God" in Romans 1:18-32, and then speak of God's judgement in Romans 2:1-16? What was the reason? I looked for the reason in Romans 2:16 – "This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares." In other words, the reason why Paul is talking about God's judgment in writing to the saints in Rome is because the gospel is talking about God's judgment. We might be a bit puzzled: 'How can the gospel, the good news speaks about God's judgment?' However, we must keep in mind that even though the power of God (1:18ff) and God's judgment in the end (vv. 5, 16) to those who know God but suppress the truth in unrighteousness (v. 18), who exchange the truth for a lie (v. 25) and who do not see fit to acknowledge God any longer (v. 28). In other words, 'God's sulvation' comes to you and me who hear the gospel and believe in Jesus (1:16), but 'God's wrath' and 'God's judgment' will come upon unbelievers who hear the gospel but do not believe in Jesus.

Therefore, as apostle Paul, writing a letter to the saints in Rome, admonished, 'If you have heard the gospel and believed in Jesus Christ and been saved, you must live by faith alone as justified ones' (1:16-17), he also exhorted them not to imitate the sinful lives of those unbelievers who are in the midst of God's wrath and who will be judged by God in the future. The sinful life of unbelievers mentioned here refers to all the sins listed in Romans 1:18-32 that we have already meditated on, but especially in Romans 2:1-11, Paul said 'the sin of passing judgment'. Here, "judgment" does not refer to a simple discernment of good and evil, but 'to condemn without forgiveness' (Park). And our people's 'judgment' is different from God's 'judgment'. In other words, God's judgment is an impartial judgment based on the truth, whereas the judgment of people (sinners) is a partial judgment. In other words, even though God does not judge people by their appearance, we are guilty of judging people by their appearance (v. 11). We people treat people unfairly by relying on prejudice due to external forms, such as rich and poor (Park). Referring to these people, the apostle Paul said, "everyone of you who passes judgement" (v. 1).

Why does Paul exhort the saints in Rome to not to pass judgement? Why does Paul exhort them not to commit the sin of condemnation without forgiveness? The reason was that the saints in Rome were a mixture of both Jews and Gentiles, and especially the Jews condemned the Gentile brothers out of a sense of spiritual superiority. We can know this by looking at what Paul said: "you who judge practice the same things" (v. 1), "you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself" (v. 3). At that time, the Jewish believers in the Roman church not only passed judgement (condemning, not forgiving) on the Gentiles who, though they had knowledge of God, suppressed the truth with unrighteousness, exchanged the truth of God for a lie, didn't think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God and committed all sorts of sins (1:18-32), but also approved those who practiced them while they continued to do the same things (1:32; 2:1, 3). The question is, what will happen to the relationship between Jewish believers and Gentile believers when this judgment is made within the church community? Rather than maintaining the unity of the Holy Spirit, that relationship inevitably leads to disputes and divisions that destroy the unity of the church. Why? The reason is because these Jewish believers, as Jesus said, look at the speck in their brother's eye but do not notice the log that is in their own eye (Mt. 7:3). Due to the hypocritical behavior of these Jewish believers, the Roman church would have been divided in contention.

I think these disputes and divisions can exist in any church. Including our church, of course. One of the causes is judging others. In other words, if we see only the speck in our brother's eye and judge (condemn), like the Jews, not realizing the log in our own eye, eventually, because of our hypocritical actions, there can be strife and fight in the church, hence there can be division. I often regret saying things to my brothers and sisters in Christ. The reason is that after speaking, when I think about what I said to them, I realize that I myself am not properly following the teaching while I am trying to teach others. So, Jesus says in Matthew 7:5 – "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

As apostle Paul said in Romans 2:1, we have no excuses. In other words, since we are judging others and doing the same thing ourselves, we have no excuse before God for doing the same thing. Also, we should not think that we will escape the judgment of God (v. 3). The reason is because God will render to each person according to his deeds (v. 6). To those who "by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life" (v. 7) and "glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good" (v. 10). However, there will be wrath and indignation on those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness (v. 8). "There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil (v, 9). And we must not think lightly of the riches of God's kindness, tolerance, and patience (y, 4). In other words, when we are committing sins by condemning our brothers and sisters in Christ without looking back at ourselves, we should not take lightly that God is patient with us with His abundant love. The reason is that God is patient with us because He wants us to repent and return to the Lord. He is waiting for us. Therefore, we should not act like the Jewish believers according to their stubbornness and unrepentant heart (v. 5). d Rather, when the Holy Spirit rebukes our sins through our conscience with a heart of fear of God's judgment, we should repent and turn around and obey God's Word. We should not be just hearers of God's Word. Rather, we must become hearers and doers of God's Word (v. 13). The word of God given to us in today's text is 'Persevere in doing good' (v. 7). In other words, all of us should not commit the sin of judging and condemning others by their appearance (vv. 1, 3, 11). Rather, we should judge them rightly according to the truth like God (v. 2). And we must treat each other with patience, showing God's kindness, tolerance and kindness (v. 4). In the midst of this, we must do our best to keep the unity of the church, which is the body of the Lord.

Who are the true Christians?

[Romans 2:17-29]

In A. W. Tozer's book "That Incredible Christian", there is a chapter called "The Importance of Self-judgment' (Ch. 31) in which the author Tozer talks about seven rules for self-discovery about how we know that we are real Christians. Although these seven rules may not reveal all about the real Christians, they will be partially helpful. Why don't you also reflect yourself on these seven rules (Tozer):

- 1. What we want most.
- 2. What we think about most.
- 3. How we use our money.
- 4. What we do with our leisure time.
- 5. The company we enjoy.
- 6. Whom and what we admire.
- 7. What we laugh at.

After asking these seven questions, Tozer talks about eight things: Who is a fake?

- 1. Fake is instant: Instant Christianity tends to teach that everything is done in one act of faith. This represses the desire for further spiritual advancement.
- 2. Fake neglects the change of character: The first step in solving the problem is to get away from the illusion that over time will solve the problem. What we need is not time, but change. Only God can change us.
- 3. Fake believes that God's discipline is bearing the cross: When we are disciplined and hurt by God, we must feel that we are out of the right path for a while. On the other hand, feeling the pain of the cross tells us that we are on the right track.
- 4. Fake seeks forgiveness of sins by doing: An attempt to obtain forgiveness of sins by doing cannot succeed. For no one knows how much good to accumulate in order to offset one's own fault.
- 5. Fake ignores creeds: We shouldn't say that we can experience the mystery of God without

doctrinal knowledge, and that is enough. Truth can be stipulated, and the trust that is stipulated is creeds.

- 6. Fake disregards theology: It is theology that is essential to live right in this world and to lead us to the eternal kingdom of heaven. We have many difficulties because we learn hard and forget easily. Therefore, we must be determined and study theology.
- 7. Fake neglects feelings: We must not fear or ignore feelings. It is because the feelings are our normal part of what God has made us.
- Fake has no spiritual balance: The trust is like a bird and the bird cannot fly with one wing. But we foolishly try to fly with one wing squeezing like crazy and flipping the other wing like crazy (Tozer).

In the Bible, Romans 2: 28-29, Apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Roman church saints and talked about "a Jew who is one outwardly" and "a Jew who is one inwardly". Why did Paul talk about this? The reason is to teach Jewish believers who were condemning the Gentile brethren in their spiritual superiority and weren't forgiving them that the Jew who was one outwardly wasn't true Jew but the Jew who was on inwardly was true Jew. As I was meditating on this, I thought about 'Who are the true Christians and who are the superficial Christians, the outwardly Christians?'

First of all, let's think about the superficial Christians who are Christians outwardly.

(1) Those Christians who are outwardly call themselves a Christian.

Look at Romans 2:17 – "Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God." Paul said that the Jews who were one outwardly called themselves "a Jew." Why did they call themselves "a Jew" even though they weren't true Jews in Paul's view? The reason was because they had a sense of privilege. The Jews of Paul's day proudly called themselves "a Jew" because they believed that only they had a special right from God. What special rights did they receive from God that they were proud of? We can think about this in three ways: (1) Belonging to the chosen people, (2) Reliance on the law, and (3) A special relationship with God. The outwardly Jews bragged about their relationship to God in front of their Gentile brothers in the Roman church community with their consciousness of the chosen people (v. 17). Outwardly, it seemed that they were boasting God, but inwardly they were boasting themselves.

The Christians who are outwardly want to exercise their special rights in the church. Although they praise God's power with their lips, in their deepest hearts they have spiritual superiority and pride. They liked to brag themselves. And through bragging, they wanted to be honored and be recognized by people. This kind of Christians craves the praises from people. The Scriptures teach that God's wrath (1:18-32) and God's judgment (2:1-16) will be upon those

who call themselves "a Christian", brag themselves in the church and claim their special rights in the church with their consciousness of the special right.

(2) The Christians who are outwardly are convinced that they are true Christians.

Look at Romans 2:19-20: "if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth." The Jews who were outwardly believed that they themselves were a guide for the blind, a light for those who were in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants. Surprisingly, these Jews didn't know that they were the blind, they were in the dark, the foolish, and the infants. The cause of this ignorance was their spiritual superiority and pride. Like this, pride makes us blind. It doesn't allow us to examine ourselves and look back on our own weaknesses and deficiencies. The outwardly focused Christians' spiritual pride brings out the weaknesses and shortcomings of other believers, compares them with themselves, and lets them boast that they are better than the other believers. This is more prominent in those who think that they know the Bible well. Those who think they don't know much about the Bible humble themselves in their ignorance and have earnest desire to learn the Word of God. Those who have long lived their faith and learned a great deal about the Bible break up the peace of the church and raise problems by putting themselves up in spiritual superiority.

(3) The Christians who are outwardly like to teach others but don't teach themselves.

Look at Romans 2:21 – "you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal?" The Jewish believers, who received the law from God through Moses, believed that they knew God's will because they relied on it (v. 17) and were instructed by the law (v. 18). And they liked to teach others with their own misunderstanding and pride. They liked to preach against stealing, to teach that people shouldn't commit adultery and abhor idols (vv. 21-22). But they themselves didn't teach themselves and were guilty of the same sin. So, Paul rebuked them like this: "You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: 'God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you''' (vv. 23-24). Apparently, Jewish believers knew much about the Bible, and their teachings seem biblical, but in reality they lived a hypocritical life. It was because they neglected to teach themselves. We as parents, teaching biblical lessons to our children is the right thing to do. But if we neglect to teach ourselves before God, we cannot influence our children's hearts. This is what Dr. Park Yun-sun said: 'The lessons from this kind of people are not from motives for mercy, but from humiliation. Such lessons don't affect the educated, but rather cause resentment. '

(4) The Christians who are outwardly focuses on outward living.

Apostle Paul told the Jewish believers in the Roman church about both the law and circumcision and urged them to obey the law and not just have it and hear it (v. 13). And he told them that if they didn't obey the law, circumcision had no value and they had become as though they hadn't been circumcised (v. 25). The reason why Paul said this to the Jewish believers in the Roman church was because they had consciousness of special right and proud. That is, they boasted of the law and circumcision. For the Jews, the law and circumcision were the signs of the people chosen by God, so both were great pride to them. But the problem is that they didn't keep the law completely. They were guilty of boasting the law and circumcision, and arrogantly condemning the Gentiles with consciousness of spiritual superiority. This is the appearance of Christians who are outwardly. They focus on their outward life of faith, and live hypocritical life without true faith. They are trying to live a Christian life in order to be seen by people.

Second, let's think about the true Christians who are Christians inwardly.

Who are the true Christians? The true Christians are not the outward Christians, but the inward Christians. The inward Christians follow these three things:

(1) The Christians who are inwardly know that they are saved by God's grace alone.

Look at Romans 2:29 - "No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God." Apostle Paul told the Roman church saints that the Jews who were the one inwardly, that is those who did circumcised of the hearts by the Holy Spirit. Here, those who did circumcision of the hearts by the Spirit were those whom God chose in love and gave gift of faith to believe in Jesus Christ and were saved by God's grace alone. Never were they saved by keeping the law. The reason why Paul said this to the Roman church saints was because they believed that they could be saved by keeping the law, rather than believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was because their view of salvation was conditional with human efforts instead of unconditional grace of God. In other words, the Jews were guilty of greater dependence on human merit than on the merit of Jesus on the cross. That was why Paul, by his letter of Rome, taught the Roman church saints about the God's unconditional grace of salvation. The Christians who are inwardly, the true Christians, believe in Ephesians 2:8-9 completely: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God -- not by works, so that no one can boast." True Christians know that faith and salvation is God's gracious gift. They know that salvation never comes from their works. That is why true Christians know that not only they shouldn't but they can't boast about themselves.

(2) The Christians who are inwardly have living faith.

Like superficial Christians who are inwardly, the true Christians who are inwardly are not proud of their laws and circumcision or are living their faith in their pride through their lips. They don't just talk about the words of God. They hear them. Not only they hear the words of God and obey them, they bear its' fruits. Even when they go out to the world, they don't only say 'I go to church. I believe in Jesus. ' But they live in this dark world, truly shining the light of Jesus Christ. If we are true Christians, we must be ashamed. This is because we aren't shining the light of Jesus Christ in this dark world. It is because our church is like the church. It is because our lips seem to resemble Jesus, but our actions and lives are far from Him. We the church must repent our sins. We must turn to God and listen to God's Word and live the right life of faith.

(3) <u>The Christians who are inwardly focus on inner Christian life rather than</u> <u>outward Christian life.</u>

What is important to the Christians who are inwardly is to be praised by God, not by man (v. 29). They try to be recognized by God rather than by being recognized by people. They live their life of faith by cultivating their inner being. And such a life of faith is beautiful. This reminds me the hymn "Lord, I Want to be a Christian". In this hymn, the phrase "in my heart" appears 20 times: "I want to be a Christian in my heart," "I want to be more loving in my heart", "I want to be more holy in my heart" and "I want to be like Jesus in my heart". "Miles Mark Fisher, in Negro Slave Songs in the United States, writes that this African American spiritual could have been written in Virginia in the 1750s based on a story from Hanover, Virginia, 1756: "A black slave asked Presbyterian preacher William Davies, 'I come to you, sir, that you may tell me some good things concerning Jesus Christ and my duty to God, for I am resolved not to live any more as I have done…Lord [Sir], I want to be a Christian"" (Internet). Can the black slave who had to spend harsh years as a slave try to teach others by saying that he or she was a true believer with the consciousness of spiritual superiority? Couldn't he or she only cry out to God that "Lord, I want to be a Christian" from deep in his or her heart?

May we all become true Christians, those who are Christians inwardly and not just outwardly. May we all know and believe that we are saved by God's grace alone. May we all become men or women of living faith that has action. May we all be true believers who are beautiful inside.

May it never be!

[Romans 3:1-18]

There is a principle of discipleship that we must keep in mind in our life of faith. The principles are "Self-denial" and "Self-sacrifice". Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mt. 16:24). We cannot follow Jesus while pursuing the lust of our eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. We must follow the Lord while putting down what we have to put down. However, there are times when we try to follow Jesus without letting go even though we know the things we need to let go of. Therefore, as disciples of Jesus, we must realize the self-denial that Jesus is talking about. Also, we tend to follow Jesus without suffering and sacrifice. In other words, we have an old instinct to walk the way of the cross that Jesus went without bearing the cross given to each of us. That is why Jesus calls us to self-sacrifice. We are not ignorant of this principle. We just can't put it into practice. This is what Titus 1:16 says about this phenomenon: "They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him," We say we know God with our lips, but we deny that God with our lives. There are three dangerous sinful elements in our lives that deny God like this. It is none other than 'unbelief', 'unrighteousness' and 'arrogance'. Our unbelief distrusts God's faithfulness. Our unrighteousness makes us think that even God is an unrighteous God. And our arrogance judges and condemns others with the spirit and attitude of 'I am better than you' with sense of spiritual superiority and of privilege. The apostle Paul says in Romans 3:1-18 that "May it never be!" (v. 6)

In today's text, Romans 3:4, 6, 9, the apostle Paul, writing a letter to the saints in Rome, said three times, "May it never be!": "May it never be!" (vv. 4, 6) and "Not at all" (v. 9). Indeed, what is Paul euphemistically denying by saying, "May it never be!"?

First, the apostle Paul emphatically denies that our unbelief can never nullify the faithfulness of God.

Look at Romans 3:3-4: "What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar," Apostle Paul wrote a letter to the saints in Rome, especially Jewish believers who believed in their own righteousness in a sense of spiritual superiority, and said that as Jews, compared to the Gentiles, received much external grace but there is no benefit to them because they didn't faithfully endure it, but rather they would be in God's wrath and unable to escape God's judgment. In Romans3:1-2, two external graces received by the Jewish believers are mentioned here. They are circumcision (v. 1) and entrusting the law (word) of God (v. 2). The pride that the Jews had, that is, what they took pride in was the law and circumcision. As God's covenant people, the problem with these two graces bestowed by God was that the Jews could not internalize them, but only externalized them. In other words, the Jews externally received the law through Moses along with circumcision, a symbolic element of being God's covenant people, but they considered themselves righteous by keeping the law. Therefore, they were in the midst of pride in their own merits, spiritual superiority, and arrogance. Only the righteous should live by believing in Jesus, but they did not. Their problem was that they did not try to be justified by faith in Jesus Christ. In other words, the list of sins of the Jews was unbelief and unfaithfulness. They were not justified by faith in Jesus Christ, nor were they faithful to God as His covenant people. Therefore, Paul asks a hypothetical question in verse 3 to the Jewish believers in Rome who are committing such a sin, saying, 'If you do not believe in the truth that you are justified by believing in Jesus (unbelief), and even though you are entrusted with the word of God, you didn't diligently teach yourself and only love to teach others (2:21) (unfaithfulness), your unbelief and unfaithfulness will never nullify God's faithfulness.

How great is this word of comfort to us? I personally like 2 Timothy 2:13 - "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." The reason I like this word is that when God exposes my unfaithfulness, I am comforted by the fact that God continues to be faithful to me even in the midst of my unfaithfulness. In particular, the fact that God is the God of God, that is, the faithful God can only be faithful, is a great encouragement to me. My and your God is a faithful God. Even if we are unfaithful, He is faithful. I hope and pray that you believe that our unfaithfulness can never nullify God's faithfulness. In such faith, we should never try to look like believers in God only outwardly like the Jews. In other words, we should not be superficial Christians. We should never judge others with a sense of spiritual superiority while considering ourselves righteous like the Jews. This is a false life of faith. Our lies must be exposed more and more (Rom. 3:4). Our hearts, which are deceitful above all things and exceedingly corrupt, must be thoroughly exposed by the holy Word of God (Jer. 17:9). In the midst of this, we must be able to confess, "let God be found true" (Rom. 3:4). And in front of the true God, we must be found as true Christians. In other words, we must become Christians inwardly (2:29). We must keep in mind that we are justified only by faith in Jesus Christ. We must not forget that our salvation is entirely by God's grace. In the midst of this, we must internalize the grace of salvation that God has bestowed on us. In other words, as those who have received salvation through faith, which is a gift from God, we must live a faithful life before God.

Second, the apostle Paul euphemistically denies that God can never be unrighteous.

Look at Romans 3:5-6: "But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.) May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world?" The more our lies are exposed, the more we realize the truth of God. The more our unfaithfulness is exposed, the more we realize God's faithfulness. Because of the true and faithful presence of God, the more our unrighteousness is revealed, the more clearly God's righteousness is revealed (v. 5). Then we can never say that God inflicts wrath on us because our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God. Paul's logic is the question, how can God justly judge the world (v. 6) if we think that God is on the side of unrighteousness like we are and that He will bring His wrath on us because our unrighteousness demonstrates God's righteousness (v. 6). Also, we cannot say that it is good because God does not judge us even if we continue to do unrighteousness, knowing that God is glorified even through our unrighteousness (v. 7) (Park). However, Paul says, "why am I also still being judged as a sinner?" (v. 7) and "Their condemnation is just" (v. 8). In other words, even if our unrighteousness reveals God's righteousness.

As we have already meditated on in Romans 1:18-32, we have learned that God's wrath is directed against those who suppress the truth with unrighteousness (v. 18), against those who exchange the truth of God for a lie (v. 25), and against those who don't see fit to acknowledge God any long (v. 28). God gave these people over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper (v.28), that is "all unrighteousness" (v. 29): "wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful" (vv. 29-31). We should not continue to do unrighteousness because God's righteousness is revealed by doing such unrighteousness (3:8). In the midst of this, we must not think that God, who brings out His wrath, disciplines and judges us unrighteously (vv. 5-6). Our God never does. He is never the one who disciplines and judges us in unrighteousness. Our God is a righteous God who will never be unrighteous nor can He be unrighteous. The righteous God forgave our sins and justified us through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 4:25). Therefore, we, who have been justified by the merits of the cross of Jesus, must live only by faith (1:17).

Thirdly, the apostle Paul euphemistically denies that we are never better.

Look at Romans 3:9 – "What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin." Apostle Paul wrote a letter to the saints in Rome, especially with the Jewish believers in mind, and started Romans 3 with the question, "Then what advantage has the Jews?" (v. 1) and concluded that "Are we better than they? Not at all" (v. 9). In other words, in conclusion, Paul is writing to the believers in Rome, especially Jewish believers, that both Jews and Greeks are under sin, and that there is nothing better for Jews than for Greeks. In particular, starting with "as it is written" in verses 10-18, Paul declares that God's eternal truth is that we are all under sin: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who

seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one. Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes." In the end, Paul says that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin because they do not fear God and do all unrighteousness. Therefore, to the Jewish believers who judge (condemn) their Gentile brothers in arrogance with a sense of spiritual superiority, Paul is saying that they are no different. In other words, Paul teaches that superficial Jews are not qualified to condemn their Gentile brothers with a sense of privilege through the law or circumcision they received from God on the outside. Paul says that since we are all under sin, we can never boast that we are better than anyone else.

There is a Korean proverb that says, 'Measuring the height of an acorn.' If we look at the Internet dictionary, the meaning of the proverb is 'a word that refers to a quarrel between people of moderate degree, and a word that means that there is no need to compare because they are similar' (Internet). We must not break the harmony of the community by judging our brothers and sisters in Christ with a sense of spiritual superiority or privilege in the midst of arrogance while comparing ourselves to each other. I am never better than you, and you are never better than me. We believe in Jesus through the merit of the cross of Jesus, that we are all under sin, and we are forgiven of our sins and justified. There is no such thing as our merits. We are saved only through the merits of Jesus. It is the absolute grace of God. However, who dares to boast about how many years he has attended church with a sense of spiritual superiority, how much he has served the church, and boasts in the church and exalts himself? Paul says: "Do nothing out of strife or vainglory, but in humility let each esteem others better than himself" (Phil. 2:3).

Our unfaithfulness can never nullify God's faithfulness. Our God is a God who can never be unrighteous. We are never better than other brothers and sisters in Christ.

We are justified by faith alone!

[Romans 3:19-31]

In our life of faith, what we must never forget is the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, which God did for our salvation. We must never forget this wonderful work of God, in which God raised us, who was dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1), back to life through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ and made us the greatest masterpiece of God. However, the problem is that we believers who have been saved by God's exclusive grace often lose focus while living a life of faith. In other words, when we first live a life of faith, we tend to focus on the grace of salvation that God has done in Jesus Christ, and later on, we tend to focus on what we have done for God. Therefore, we commit the dangerous sin of relying on human merit rather than the concept of grace. As a result, we see ourselves serving the church, the body of the Lord, for our own glory in our arrogance rather than giving glory to God. Therefore, we must live a life of faith like the lyrics and refrain of verse 1 of the hymn "When Upon Life's Billows": When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed, When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost, Count your many blessings, name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done. Count your blessings, Name them one by one; Count your blessings, See what God hath done; Count your blessings, Name them one by one; Count your many blessings, See what God hath done.

Among the many blessings we have received from God, one that cannot be left out is "justification." Then what does justification mean? This is a legal terminology, which means that God, the Judge, not only acquits us, who are guilty of sin, but also declares, 'You are righteous.' In other words, God's righteousness is imputed to us. Therefore, now that we are justified by God's grace, our relationship with God has been restored. We are no longer God's enemies, but as God's children, calling God "Abba, Father" and have fellowship with us.

'The core of the Reformed justification theory is to emphasize that 'justification' is 'God's legal declaration'. It is to understand the meaning of 'recognize, declare' as righteous. Looking at justification in this way, it can be largely divided into negative and positive aspects. The former means freedom from punishment and wrath for sins, while the latter means recognition as a righteous person who possesses complete righteousness' (Internet).

In today's text Romans 3:19-31, apostle Paul teaches two core truths as he writes a letter to the saints in Rome.

The first core truth is that we cannot be justified by the work of the law.

Look at Romans 3:20 - "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin." The apostle Paul, writing a letter to the saints in Rome, explains that the reason why one cannot be justified by the work of the law is because through the law we become conscious of sin. In other words, Paul says that no one can justify by the work of the law because he and the Roman church saints realizes that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (v. 23) through the law. Writing to the Roman saints, Paul says that both Jews and Greeks "are all under sin" (v. 9). And they realize this fact through the law. Therefore, since all are under sin, no one can be justified by God by their own works of keeping the law. In other words, it is absolutely impossible for a sinner and an enemy of God to be forgiven of his sins and restore his relationship with God through his own act of keeping the law. The reason Paul explains the law like this is because the Jews wanted to be justified by God by keeping the law given by God through Moses. The Jews were very proud of having received the law through Moses. And in this pride, they relied on the law and boasted (2:17). Even so, they themselves were committing a sin against the law (2:12ff.). They thought they knew God's will (2:18), but in their arrogance, believing themselves to be an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants" (v. 20), they liked to teach others, but did not teach themselves (v. 21). Rather, the Jews boasted of the law, but dishonored God by breaking the law (v. 23). Because of them, the name of God was being blasphemed among the Gentiles (v. 24). Therefore, Paul wrote a letter to these Jewish saints, clearly telling the Jews who wanted to be justified by God through their own works, and relying on their own merits, saying that they could never be justified by the works of the law. So, after he said, "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin" (3:20), he said "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law" (v. 28).

How, then, does Paul say we can be justified? This is the second core truth that Paul teaches the saints in Rome and us in today's text.

The second core truth is that we are justified by faith alone.

Apostle Paul, writing a letter to the saints in Rome, said that one cannot be justified by works of the law (vv. 20, 28), but only by faith in Jesus Christ. In other words, it is not that sins are forgiven and the relationship with God is restored through the works of the law, but that the relationship with God can be restored through the forgiveness of all sins through faith in the works of Jesus. So, writing to the saints in Rome, he clearly said: "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law" (v. 28).

There are three truths to keep in mind here:

(1) It is true that we are justified entirely by God's grace.

Look at Romans 3:24 – "and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." The apostle Paul, writing a letter to the Roman saints, said that they could not be justified by the works of the law, but only by the works of God and the works of Jesus. Here, God's work means that God made Jesus as a propitiatory sacrifice to redeem us and allowed Him to shed His precious blood on the cross to die, thereby not only demonstrating His righteousness, but also justifying those who believe in Jesus (vv. 25-26). So, what was Jesus' work? That is, Jesus Christ was crucified and shed His blood to redeem us on the cross. Therefore, justification is not possible by the works of man, but only by the works of God and of Jesus Christ. Think about it. How can a sinner justify himself? How can a sinner be justified by keeping the law? How can a sinner keep the law perfectly? How can a guilty person be acquitted by human effort? If so, surely we can boast of ourselves. If we have been forgiven of our sins through our own merits and have restored our relationship with God, then we humans certainly have something to boast about. However, Paul says that we can never boast (v. 27). He says that no one can boast (v. 27). Why? It is because we are all justified freely by His grace (v. 24).

The Bible says that we are "by grace we have been saved, through faith, and this not from you; it is the gift of God; not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). Can those who have received God's gift as grace boast of themselves (or their deeds) because of what merits they have? Faith is a gift, salvation (eternal life) is also a gift, and all are gifts of God's grace given to undeserving sinners. What do we have to boast about? The only thing we can boast about is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, who justified us, was crucified, died, and rose from the grave on the third day. Because He obeyed Heavenly Father until death, we were forgiven of our sins, our relationship of enmity with God, was restored, and we became God's children and could pray while calling God, "Abba, Father." We must not forget this total grace of God.

It is true that there is no distinction in the righteousness of God that comes to all believers through faith in Jesus Christ.

Look at Romans 3:22 – "even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction." The community of saints in Rome receiving the apostle Paul's letters was composed of both Jews and Gentiles. But the problem was that there was discrimination among the Lord's community. The Jewish believers had a sense of spiritual superiority and differentiated themselves from the Gentiles in the idea that they were God's chosen people who received the law and circumcision from God. Paul wrote a letter with these people in mind, teaching them that they were justified freely by God's grace, not because they obeyed the law (v. 24). Also, he teaches that we are justified only by faith in Jesus Christ. He clearly states that there is no distinction in God's righteousness to all believers through faith in Jesus Christ. How can there be distinction within the church? All have been saved by the grace

of God, received the remission of sins through faith in the merits of the cross of Jesus, and have become children of God. How can they differentiate ourselves from other brothers and sisters in the community while boasting of themselves? It is because they do not realize the grace of God that they are differentiated within the church. In other words, those who differentiate themselves from other brothers and sisters in Christ with a sense of spiritual superiority in the church rely on their own merits rather than the merits of the cross of Jesus. One of the characteristics of these people is that they focus on what they have done for God rather than what God has done for them. It can be a very dangerous life of faith. So, Paul is telling the saints in Rome: "Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also" (v. 29). The same God, both Jew and Gentile, justifies all believers, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. In this way, there is no distinction in being justified by faith and being saved by faith. What kind of distinction can there be in being justified by faith in Jesus? There can never be distinction due to such things as country, ethnicity, gender, rich and poor, and so on.

(3) <u>It is true that all believers who have been justified by faith in Jesus Christ must</u> establish the Law rather than abolish it.

Look at Romans 3:31 - "Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law." Mainly, when we say the Law, we think of legalism and despise the Old Testament law in negative prejudice. As people of the New Testament, that is, the New Covenant, we are even breaking the Law thinking that we must live by faith in Jesus Christ only. However, such a life of faith is a life of faith that has lost its balance. A true balanced life of faith is a life that establishes the Law rather than abolishing it. In other words, although we are justified and saved by believing in Jesus Christ, our responsibility as a justified and saved person is to live a righteous life. To live that righteous life is to live by keeping the Law given by God. Of course, the life of keeping the Law here is not to be justified, but to live a life worthy of being justified by faith in Jesus Christ, having already received faith as a gift through the grace of God. How should we live as those who have received grace from God? The life we must live for the glory of God is a life that firmly establishes the Law. To put it simply, it is to live while practicing the twofold commandment of Jesus: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt. 22:37, 39). As those who have been saved by the grace of God and have been justified by faith in Jesus by the grace of God, we must live a faithful life, obeying Jesus' twofold commandment.

You and I have been justified by God through our faith in Jesus Christ. All of our sins have been forgiven by God's grace, and our relationship with God has been restored. We can pray to God and have fellowship while calling God "Abba, Father." Therefore, there should be no distinction in our fellowship. How can we, who have received faith as a gift by the grace of God and have been saved and justified by the merits of the cross of Jesus, differentiate ourselves from each other with a sense of spiritual superiority? May it never be! We also have a responsibility as those who have been justified by God's total grace. If we truly

realize and know this grace of God, even a little bit, we must love God more and love our neighbors more and live our lives by that grace. Let's not forget. We can be justified by God only by grace, only because of Christ, and only by faith.

The happiness of those who are credited as righteous by God (1)

[Romans 4:1-8]

Have you ever heard of the Happiness Quotient (HQ)? $HQ = GQ \times AQ / BQ$. Here, "GQ" stands for Gratitude Quotient, "AQ" stands for Achievement Quotient, and "BQ" stands for Blame Quotient. In 1998, as a result of measuring the HQ of 54 countries at the London School of Economics (LSE) in the UK, Bangladesh ranked first and Korea ranked 23rd (Internet). After that, it is said that Bangladesh took first place in the happiness formula (i.e. happiness quotient) created by British psychologist Rothwell and life counselor Cohen in 2002. Economist Layard attributed two factors to why poor countries rank high in the happiness index: First, the fact that people too easily adapt to better conditions, and second, relative income levels. Roswell and Cohen suggested ways to be happy, and these are the following (Internet):

- (1) Devote time to family, friends and yourself,
- (2) Pursue interests and hobbies,
- (3) Establish a close interpersonal relationship,
- (4) Meet new people and get out of the box.
- (5) Focus on the present and do not cling to the past or the future.
- (6) Exercise and rest.
- (7) Always do your best, but have a possible goal.

Among the books about happiness, there is a book called 'Increase your happiness quotient' (Author: Stefan Polke). This book deals with happiness in terms of the past, values, work, relationships, goals, and wealth as determinants of happiness. Although each person has a different view of life and interpretation of experiences, it is said that happy people can discover some common behavioral patterns and cores. This book tells the stories of happy people about what true happiness is and how to live to meet happiness.

Seven stories of the world's happiest people (Internet):

- (1) Past: The past always exists in the present. Happy people face their past and accept it positively.
- (2) Value: Happy people find the value of life and pursue it.
- (3) Work: Happy people know what they have to do and make the best out of it.
- (4) Relationships: Happy people have the ability to maintain good and strong relationships with family, friends, and partners.
- (5) Goals: Happy people set goals and are ready to reach them.
- (6) Wealth: Happy people have a clear view of money and power.
- (7) Secret of Happiness: Happy people always make others happy.

Through meditation on Romans 3:19-31, we have already been taught that those who believe in the works of Jesus, who was crucified and shed His blood to forgive all our sins, are justified, not by the works of the law. Having received the apostle Paul's teaching that we are justified only by grace, only because of Jesus, and only by faith, we can read today's text Romans 4:1-3 as an example of justification by faith. We see that it is talking about Abraham, the forefather of faith. Writing to the saints in Rome, he cites Abraham as an example as he further explains the truth that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ alone, not by the works of the law. Why is he citing Abraham as an example? The reason is because among the saints in Rome who received Paul's letter, the Jewish saints boasted and respected Abraham, their forefather "according to the flesh" (v. 1). What Paul is saying in verses 1-3 as he writes a letter to the saints in Rome, especially the Jewish saints, is that Abraham was justified by faith only (not by works). Look at verse 3: "What does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."" This is what Paul is quoting from "the Scripture," i.e., Genesis 15:6. Then, it says that Abraham was credited to him as righteousness through his faith in God. What is the word of God's promise that Abraham believed? That's what Genesis 15:5 says: "And He took him outside and said, 'Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be."" Whether Abraham was justified by faith in God's word of promise, he was never justified by works (Rom. 4:2). If Abraham was justified by works, he certainly had something to boast about. However, Paul clearly states that even Abraham had nothing to boast before God (v. 2). While citing Abraham as an example, Paul compares a man who works and the man who does not work and explains a little more about being justified (justification) (vv. 4-5). In other words, just as those who work do not regard their wages as grace, but rather as a debt, those who think that they have been justified by the works of the law regard it as something they deserve and do not regard it as the grace of God. However, those who have done nothing, that is, have been justified by believing in God who justifies ungodly sinners who have no merit or qualifications, know that they are justified entirely by God's grace. Even though Abraham, the forefather of faith, did nothing, he was justified by God by believing in God's word of promise. In other words, God credited Abraham's faith as righteousness, not his works (v. 5). Therefore, Abraham never had anything to boast about (3:27). No, he can't have anything to boast about. We have nothing to boast about because we are never justified by human works. After this explanation, Paul quoted David's Psalms 32:1-2 to the saints in Rome in Romans 4:6 of today's text, "David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works."

Who do you think is true happiness? 'Who is the happiest person in the world?' Britain's 'London Times' said they surveyed the happiest person for British people. However, an unexpected result has been reported. It is said that the four people who were selected at the top were unexpectedly simple people: 1st place is a child who completed a wonderful sandcastle on the beach, 2nd place is a mother who looks at her clear eyes after bathing her baby, 3rd place is an artist who completes a wonderful craft and shakes his hands, and 4th place is a doctor who saved a dying life with surgery. There were no chaebol aristocratic politicians among the happy people. And then the writer said: 'Happiness is a precious gift given to those who have accomplished something worthwhile. Happiness is not given to those who sit and wait' (Internet). What do you guys think? Who do you think is the happiest person in the world?

In today's text, Paul says that the happiest person in the world is a sinner who has done nothing and has no merit, believes in Jesus Christ by God's exclusive grace and is justified by God. Paul says this in Romans 4:6 – "David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works." What is the happiness of us who are considered righteous by God without any merit? Look at Romans 4:7-8: "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him." Our happiness is to have all our sins forgiven. For what sins have we been forgiven in Jesus Christ? All rebellious sins committed openly (v. 7), all sins committed out of weakness (v. 7), and all ethical sins (v. 8) (Park) are forgiven in Jesus Christ. All our sins have been taken away and covered (v. 7), and God has blotted out our sins, not counting them as sins (v. 8). All our sins have been blotted out through the precious blood of Jesus shed on the cross. All our sins have been covered. God has blotted out all our sins. You and I have been washed away from all our sins by the precious blood of Jesus, who is Immanuel like spring water. Therefore, we are the happiest people in this world. We who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus. Let's not forget that you and I, who have been washed clean, are the happiest people in the world.

The happiness of those who are credited as righteous by God (2)

[Romans 4:9-17]

We have already learned who is the happiest person in the world based on Romans 4:1-8. We learned that the happiest person in this world is the one who has received the remission of all sins only through faith in Jesus Christ, and whom God credited as the righteousness. In the midst of that, I personally created a "happiness formula": Happiness Quotient = Only grace + Only Jesus' work on the cross + Only faith. The more we get to know Jesus through the words of the Bible, and the more we realize what He did on the cross for our salvation, the more our faith grows. And the more our faith grows, the more we will think of the salvation that God has given us in Jesus Christ. And the more we think of the salvation that God has given us in Jesus God's grace is. The more we do this, the more we Christians feel happy and live a happy life.

If we look at Romans 4:9-17, we see that the apostle Paul, writing a letter to the saints in Rome, continued to speak about the happiness of those who are considered righteous by God. We can think of this word by dividing it into two parts.

The first part is Romans 4:9-12.

Here, the apostle Paul explained to the saints in Rome about the happiness of those who are justified by God only through faith in Jesus Christ, saying that those who can enjoy that happiness do not care whether they are circumcised or not. In other words, it is saying that the happiness of being justified by God through faith comes not from being circumcised or not (Park). So, Paul says this in Romans 4:9 – "Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness." He speaks of circumcision, which the Jews took pride in as God's covenant people, and it is not important whether the recipients of God's happiness are circumcised Jews or uncircumcised Gentiles. At the same time, he says that being circumcised, which is an act of the law, does not bring us the happiness of justification, but like Abraham, we can enjoy true happiness by being justified by God only through faith. Then, in today's text, Romans 4:10-11, Paul further

explains that Abraham, the Jews' ancestor whom the Jews respect, was justified by faith in God (the promised word of God) before he was circumcised. In other words, the fact that Abraham was justified by God is found in Genesis 15:6, whereas the fact that he was circumcised is found in Genesis 17:10 et seq. Therefore, Paul explains through a letter to the saints in Rome that Abraham's justification was never obtained because of circumcision (Park). Then, why did God justify Abraham by giving him the word of promise before he was circumcised so that he would believe in the word of promise? Paul explains the reason as follows: "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised." (Rom 4:11-12). In other words, the reason why God justified Abraham before he was circumcised was to make him the ancestor of all believers, and to teach them that, like Abraham, they can enjoy the happiness of being justified by God only through faith. In other words, Paul wrote a letter to the community in Rome where Jews and Gentiles were mixed to remind them that both circumcised Jewish saints and uncircumcised Gentile saints were justified by God only through faith, like Abraham, the father of faith. He only says that those who follow the traces of Abraham's faith, that he had at the time of uncircumcision (v. 12) are truly happy people who have been justified by God.

When the apostle Paul thought of the community in Rome, he kept in mind the mixture of Jewish and Gentile believers when he said, "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference" (3:22). In other words, since God's righteousness is revealed in the gospel (1:17), God justifies all those who hear the gospel and believe in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It does not matter whether you are a Jew or a Gentile in receiving the remission of all sins and being declared righteous by God only through faith in Jesus Christ. All are justified by faith in Christ Jesus alone. The problem, however, was that Jewish believers tended to be justified by the works of the law. For them, they tried to prove that they were God's chosen people by practicing circumcision. They wanted to be justified by God by performing circumcision as commanded by the law. Therefore, it would not have been easy for these Jewish believers to accept uncircumcised Gentile believers. So, pointing out the sinful tendency of the Jewish and Gentile believers in Rome to discriminate against each other, Paul used Abraham as an example when speaking of the supreme blessing of being justified by God. Paul taught that even Abraham was justified by faith in God's word of promise before he was circumcised, and that circumcision had nothing to do with being justified by God.

Here I thought about baptism. I thought about comparing circumcision in the Old Testament to baptism in the New Testament. Baptism itself is absolutely not the factor that makes us justified by God. Baptism is just a sign of justification like circumcision (v. 11) (Park). In other words, being circumcised by Jews in the Old Testament was a sign that they were justified by God, but the mark itself never made them righteous by God. Likewise, we are baptized because we are justified by God through our faith in Jesus Christ. Being baptized is absolutely not the same as being saved by God and being justified by God.

But the problem is that many people think that they cannot be saved unless they are baptized. Many people think of being baptized as a way to be saved, even though they are never saved by being baptized, but only by believing in Jesus Christ. If we say that only when we are baptized are we justified by God, we are saved, etc., we as baptized ones will surely be able to differentiate ourselves from those who are not baptized while boasting that we have been baptized. However, as the text of today teaches us, circumcision or uncircumcision, that is, when applied to the church living in the New Testament era, it is not important whether we have been baptized or not. Like Abraham, our ancestor of faith, we must keep in mind that only we can be saved by faith, and only by believing in Jesus Christ can we be justified by God.

The second part is Romans 4:13-17.

Here, Paul explains the happiness of those who are justified by God only through faith in Jesus Christ, saying that Abraham is the father of faith not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles. Paul says that God's covenant with Abraham or his descendants to become heir of the world was not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith (v. 13). Here, the "heir of the world" that God promised to Abraham can be thought of as four ways (Park): (1) All the families of the earth will be blessed through Abraham (Gen. 12:3), (2) Abraham will become the father of many nations (17:4-5), (3) Abraham's descendants will multiply like the stars in the sky and the sand of the sea (22:17), and (4) The land of Canaan, where Abraham is staying, will be given to Abraham and his descendants as an eternal inheritance (17:17). These four promises have been fulfilled through Christ. In other words, Christ gave us believers an eternal inheritance. In other words, we have received the eternal kingdom of heaven through faith in Jesus Christ. God has adopted all believers as His children so that we can gain the kingdom of heaven, our eternal inheritance. Therefore, we can live with the sure hope of living in this eternal kingdom of heaven. Ultimately, Paul writes a letter to the saints in Rome and tells them that the way to receive this eternal inheritance is not by keeping the law, but by believing in Jesus Christ only by God's total grace. However, if, as the Jews say, we are justified by the works of the law, not by faith, and receive eternal inheritance, then Paul says that our "faith has no value and the promise is worthless" (v. 14). In other words, if the promise of to receive an eternal inheritance ("heir of the world") is obtained through the merits of keeping the law, then our faith is in vain and the promise is bound to be a lie. Why? The reason is because the law brings wrath (v. 15). In other words, the law does not make us escape God's wrath, but rather fulfills it (Park). The law makes us aware of sin (3:20, 23). The law makes us realize how far we fall short of the glory of God (v. 23). Therefore, the merits of human beings who keep the law cannot obtain the eternal inheritance, that is, the kingdom of heaven. If we perfectly keep the law 100%, we will be able to gain the Kingdom of Heaven as our eternal inheritance. However, there is no one in this world who perfectly keeps the law. Therefore, the apostle Paul says that becoming heir and obtaining the kingdom of heaven by grace (v. 16). In other words, receiving the eternal kingdom of heaven as an inheritance is only through faith and is entirely God's grace. In other words, human salvation is entirely by God's grace, only through faith in Jesus Christ. Both Jews and Gentiles, like Abraham, the ancestor of faith (v. 16), can enjoy the happiness of being justified by God only through faith in Jesus Christ alone! Abraham came to enjoy the greatest happiness of being justified by God through faith in God, "who gives life to the dead and calls things that do not as though they were" (v. 17).

Here we must imitate the faith of Abraham. In today's text, Romans 4:17, Paul explains Abraham's faith in two ways (Park): "As it is written: 'I have made you a father of many nations.' He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed--the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were."

(1) Abraham's faith was faith in God who "gives life to the dead."

As God commanded in Genesis 22, Abraham tied his son to an altar to offer up his only son, Isaac, and even tried to strike him down with the sword, believing that God was able to raise him from the dead. We must have this faith. In other words, we must have faith in Almighty God who can raise the dead. In other words, we must believe in the power of God's resurrection that God resurrected His only begotten Son Jesus on the third day after He was nailed to the cross and died in order to forgive us all our sins.

(2) Abraham's faith was faith in God, who "calls things that are not as though they were."

Our God is a God who can make things that do not exist. In other words, He is the Almighty God who can create something out of nothing. Abraham had no sons until he was 100 years old, but Abraham believed God's promise that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Like Abraham, who believed in God who could create something out of nothing even in an impossible situation, we must long for and pursue this kind of faith. I hope and pray that you and I will live a life of faith with this kind of faith.

Faith that hopes against all hope

[Romans 4:18-25]

In Numbers 13-14, Caleb and Joshua, 2 of the 12 patriarchs who returned from spying on the land of Canaan, reported in faith, but the other 10 spies reported in disbelief. In other words, the 10 spies made a bad report saying that the people of the land of Canaan were not only powerful and were men of great size, but also the cities were fortified and very large so they would not able to go up against them. Also, compared to themselves and the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, they considered themselves to be grasshoppers (13:28-33). Therefore, all the congregation of Israel, hearing their bad report, raised their voices and wept all night long (14:1), grumbling against Moses and Aaron (v. 2). In the midst of this, the Israelites talked about appointing a leader and return to Egypt (v. 4). Hearing all this, God said to Moses, "How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst?" (v. 11) As I meditated on this word, I asked myself if God was saying to me, "How long will you not believe in me?" When we consider that unbelief is a crime that despises God, and that unbelief eventually leads to disobedience to God's commandments, we realize that not believing in God's power is a sin that should never be taken lightly. When we consider that unbelief is a crime that despises God, and that unbelief eventually leads to disobedience to God's commandments, we realize that not believing in God's power is a sin that should never be taken lightly.

Personally, I enjoy singing hymn "Encamped Along the Hills of Light." I especially like the chorus lyrics: "Faith is the victory! Faith is the victory! Oh, glorious victory, That overcomes the world." The reason I like this hymn is because I believe that only faith can win the spiritual battle. What is faith really? We can find the answer in Hebrews 11:1 – "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Faith hopes for the impossible. "Faith" is a word that means 'believe, trust,' and shows that the object is clearly present. The three important elements of faith in the New Testament are realizing and fully acknowledging the grace shown by God, giving up oneself and fellowshipping with the Lord, speaking total dependence, and trusting and hoping without

doubt or change in the Lord, the God of salvation. This faith, however, is not a feeling we create. It is our total response to God's revelation of His Word. Faith allows us to see what we cannot see. Faith is said to be "the conviction of things not seen". Faith is the inner conviction of things not seen. What God has promised, God surely does. To firmly believe this is an inner conviction. But this conviction also comes from God. It's not believing against one's will as he says "I believe! I believe!" All the forefathers of faith in Hebrews 11 were people who, by faith in God, accomplished things that we could never do with our human strength. Our ancestors of faith were those who worked with the conviction that with man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. Faith is a grace and a blessing given by God. This faith creates a new work and opens the way to the impossible (Internet).

While meditating on Romans 4:9-17, we have already considered Abraham's faith in two ways in verse 17: (1) Abraham's faith was faith in God, who gives life to the dead. As God commanded in Genesis 22, Abraham tied his son to an altar to offer up his only son, Isaac, and even tried to strike him down with the sword, believing that God was able to raise him from the dead. (2) Abraham's faith was faith in God who "calls things that are not as though they were." Even though Abraham had no son until he was 100 years old, he nevertheless believed God's promise that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore.

In today's text, Romans 4:18-25, apostle Paul continues to speak about the faith of Abraham, who was justified by faith, while writing a letter to the saints in Rome. What does Paul say about Abraham's faith? In a word, Abraham's faith was 'faith that hoped against all hope' (v. 18). What is the hopeless situation that Abraham was talking about here, that is, the situation where there is no hope? Look at verse 19-"... he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead." The hopeless situation that Abraham encountered refers to a "dead" situation in which neither he nor his wife, Sarah, are medically able to conceive at all. Abraham hoped in the Lord in this impossible situation, in a situation in which human hope of having a baby was cut off. What did he hope for? It was the fulfillment of the word of promise given by God to Abraham. The word of promise is written as follows in verse 18 of today's text (quoted from Genesis 15:5): "... So shall your offspring be." Abraham believed in God, who raises the dead. Even though he knew that his body and his wife Sara's body were good as dead, he believed the word of promise given by God that his descendants would multiply like the countless stars in the sky and like the grains of sand in the sea. Even in this hopeless, seemingly impossible situation, Abraham's faith did not weaken (v. 19), but rather became stronger and gave glory to God. Look at Romans 4:19-20: "Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God." What amazing faith is this? Usually, the more difficult the situation becomes, the weaker our faith becomes, doubting God's word of promise, and our hearts shake more and more. But Abraham gave glory to God because his faith became more and more solid in the hopeless and impossible situation. How is this possible? It is because Abraham was fully persuaded by God. Look at verse 21: "being fully persuaded that God had

power to do what he had promised." Here, the word "being fully persuaded" means Abraham was convinced (Park). In other words, God gave Abraham the word of promise and also convinced Abraham to firmly believe in the word of promise. Therefore, Abraham's faith became more and more steadfast in an impossible situation.

Abraham's solid faith was counted as righteousness before God (v. 22). In other words, Abraham did not have his own righteousness, but God's righteousness was given to him only through faith given by God's grace. This is recorded in the Bible, not just for Abraham's sake alone (v. 23), but also for us whom God will credit with righteousness (v. 24). The Bible records the faith that Abraham, the father of faith, hoped for when he was hopeless for those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead are not only for the Roman saints in the time of Paul, but also for us who are living in this age today. What do you and I really believe in? What we believe is the death of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. More specifically, the object of our faith is Jesus, who was delivered on the cross for our transgressions and rose from the dead for our justification (v. 25). We believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Through that faith, you and I were justified by God. And even now, we are living with the happiness of justification.

Do you believe in Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection from the grave on the third day? Do you really believe that Jesus died on the cross to forgive all our sins? Do you believe that Jesus rose from the dead to justify us? Those who hear this gospel and believe in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus have already been credited as righteousness by God. And God, who raised Jesus from the dead, is enabling us who believe in Jesus to move forward with faith in this hopeless world, with the hope of resurrection and the hope of heaven, the eternal inheritance. I hope and pray that even if the day comes when everything we believed in this world will be cut off, our hope will grow even more because we believe in the Savior's covenant. And I hope and pray that when we go up to heaven and meet before God, we can stand before the Lord with dignity thanks to the righteousness of the Savior (v. 4).

Having been justified by faith

[Romans 5:1-5]

In today's text, Romans 5:1, the apostle Paul gives the concluding words from Romans 1 to 4. The conclusion is 'we have been justified by faith.' The Scripture says that "we", that is, the saints (Jews and Gentiles) in Rome in the days of Abraham, the ancestors of faith, and Paul and me and you who believe in Jesus, all of us were justified by faith alone. As Paul makes this conclusion, he says in Romans 5:1-5, 'Then, since we have been justified by faith (in Jesus Christ), what is the grace (blessing) God has given us?' In other words, Paul is telling us the result of justification.

What does today's text Romans 5:1-5 tell us about the result of justification? I want to think about in two ways:

First, the result of justification is "peace."

We have been justified only by faith in Jesus Christ's death on the cross and resurrection from the grave (4:24), and now we can enjoy peace in our relationship with God. Look at Romans 5:1 -"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Here, the word to enjoy peace with God refers to reconciliation in a relationship with God (Park). In other words, before we believed in Jesus, our relationship with God was an enemy (v. 10). Due to the first Adam's sin, all mankind became enemies of God. Therefore, when we were enemies of God, we did not know the way of peace (3:17) and did not walk on it. Rather, when we were all under sin, ruin and misery mark their way (v. 16). When we did not believe in Jesus, we were in an enemy relationship with God, and the reason we were in such a relationship was because we were all under sin (v. 9). What were we like when we were under sin? We did not seek God (v. 11), and we all turned away and had together become worthless and did not do good (v. 12). We couldn't even do what was right in God's sight. Therefore, when we became enemies of God, we did not have inner peace (2:10). However, God made Jesus, His only begotten Son, the sacrifice of peace (3:25) and made all those who believe in Jesus righteous and reconciled with God. Now, all those who believe in Jesus are no longer enmity with God. Rather, we all became God's people and also became God's children. The relationship with God before Adam sinned has been restored to us who believe in Jesus. In other words, God is our God, and we have become His people and children. And God saved us, who were under sin, from the path of eternal destruction and suffering, and made us walk the path of peace. They were those who had been cut off from their relationship with God, who were spiritually dead, but God brought us back to life through Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection (4:25). Therefore, God justified us and also reconciled our relationship with God. Then, since we have been justified by God by faith in Jesus, how should we live a life of faith? I looked for the answer in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19: "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation." As those who have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, we have been given the minister of reconciliation from God (v. 18). As new creatures in Jesus Christ (v. 17), we have the responsibility to preach the word of reconciliation (v. 18). Therefore, we, who have been justified only by faith in Jesus Christ and have been reconciled to God, must preach the gospel of Jesus Christ of reconciliation. The reason is because "the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom 1:16). I hope and pray that we faithfully fulfill this position of reconciliation so that people who are under sin will have a work of reconciliation in their relationship with God.

Second, the result of justification is "hope."

Because we have been justified by faith in Jesus, we can live with a sure and joyful hope in this hopeless world. What is that sure and joyful hope? It is the glory of God. Look at Romans 5:2 – "through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." What you and I who believe in Jesus must keep in mind is the fact that the position we are standing in now, that is, the reconciliation with God is entirely God's grace. And we must not forget that being reconciled with God, enjoying the peace that God gives, and receiving the position of reconciliation is also God's exclusive grace. Another blessing of justification that God has given to you and me who live in the midst of this grace of God is to hope for the glory of God. Here, what does "the glory of God" that you and I hope for refer to? The glory of God could not be attained by the works of the law because we "all have sinned." But because of the crucifixion of Jesus, who is now the righteousness of God apart from the law, those who believe in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus can be justified by God and attain to the glory of God (3:21-23). Regarding the glory of God, Paul says: "And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified" (8:30). In other words, the glory of God' that we hope for is that on the day of Jesus' return, we will be suddenly transformed (1 Cor.15:51), no longer dishonored (v. 43), no longer weak (v. 43), and incorruptible and immortal (v. 54) and to be clothed with a glorious body (Phil. 3:21). Apostle Peter refers to this as "the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). Our very sure and joyful desire is to fully participate in the character of Jesus, who is God. We who are justified by the indwelling God the Holy Spirit are sanctifying us so that we may participate in the character of Jesus. Although we are not perfect now, on the day of Jesus' return, we will fully participate in the character of the Lord. This sure and joyful hope God has given to us who are being justified by faith in Jesus Christ. We, who rejoice in the hope of God's glory, rejoice even in tribulation (Rom 5:3). In other words, we believers not only rejoice with the hope of the eternal glory of fully

participating in God's character, but we also rejoice in tribulation (Park). Why do we rejoice even in tribulation? This is because "we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Rom. 5:3-4). The original Greek word for "suffering" here comes from the verb "θλίψεσιν" in Greek, which means "pressure". In other words, the suffering in this world that you and I come in contact with refer to all those things that "put pressure" on us (Park). This is beneficial to us because it cultivates endurance. In other words, suffering in the lives of our believers is beneficial not only to enable us to persevere with the hope of reaching the glory of God in the world to come, but also to give us the spirit of struggle to break through all obstacles positively. This is what Yoon-sun Park said: 'Patience is a precious power that makes humans human, and suffering is the grateful mother that produces patience. ... Suffering is a stone bridge that leads to victory in our lives' (Park). Paul is saying that patience produces refinement. In other words, although we suffer tribulation in this world, the reason why we rejoice in tribulation is that we not only gain patience through tribulation, but also through endurance, our character is tested and we become more and more partakers of the divine nature. In other words, as we pass through the passage of tribulation, we gain endurance, and furthermore, as our lacking personalities are refined, we become more and more personified in the Word. Then, through the tribulation of this world, we can look forward to the sure and clear hope of the world to come. That is why Paul says that believers who rejoice in looking forward to a more certain and clear hope through tribulation will never be disappointed (v. 5). In other words, the sure hope that you and I have for the world to come is a hope that we can have confidently or not be ashamed of (Park). The reason is because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (v. 5). The reason why we can confidently or not be ashamed of this hope to see the glory of God in the world to come more and more during tribulation while living in this world is because God sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, and through the Holy Spirit the love of God has been poured into our hearts. In a word, the reason why we are not ashamed of our hope for the afterlife is because that hope is based on God's great and abundant love (Park). God who loves us even to the point of giving up His only begotten Son Jesus Christ on the cross, give us the grace of salvation abundantly like pouring water (Joel 2:28, Park) and saved us from destruction and forever ruin and raised us from death. And since He loves us who are in this world to the end (Jn. 13:1), we rejoice even in the tribulations of this world and hope for the world to come. So Paul says, "Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:17-18). d

Last Friday, I received an email from a brother in Christ. The content of the email was a request for prayer for another brother in Christ. I had been praying for him since I learned that he was suffering from pancreatic cancer two years ago. Last year, I went to his house in Korea with other brothers in Christ and worshiped God together. And then we all put our hands on his body and prayed earnestly to God. And when I went to Korea last year, I also remember seeing him back as we parted while meeting once or twice and sharing a meal, and my heart was a little bit moved. But last Friday, when I saw the e-mail sent to me by his friend, the cancer had metastasized and spread to the lungs, stomach, and liver. I heard the news that he couldn't eat because his stomach was full of ascites, and he couldn't even receive chemotherapy. What should we do when we hear such news? I hope and pray in the Lord that since he who was justified by faith in Jesus Christ, he who became reconciled to God and became His child, the Lord would fill his heart with the amazing peace that only the Lord gives. Furthermore, may God make the Lord's servant see the glory of God. I hope and pray for a strong and glorious spiritual body so that he no longer needs to suffer from disease due to weakness. I hope and pray that he will become more and more like Jesus by enduring and persevering with God's grace in this suffering. In the midst of this, I hope and pray that he will be filled with the living hope of the eternal kingdom. Let us also look to the glory of God! We will see the face of the Lord in that house on the other side of the Jordan River, in that house where we can see splendidly, in that house in the shining sky. In the midst of this hope, I hope and pray that no matter what adversity and suffering may come into our life, you and I will faithfully fulfill the role of reconciliation by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God's love poured into our hearts

[Romans 5:5-11]

We believers in Jesus have a sure hope, a hope that does not disappoint (Rom. 5:5). That hope is the glory of God. Since we have been justified by faith in Jesus Christ, we are now able to rejoice in the glory of God. Now we no longer have to wear a body that is reproached, weak, or perishable (1 Cor. 15:43, 54). On the day Jesus returns, we will suddenly be transformed (v. 51). At that time, we will be like His glorious body (Phil. 3:21). We will fully participate in the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). We will fully participate in the character of Jesus, who is God. This hope is a hope that we can have confidently and not be ashamed of (Rom. 5:5). Why? The reason is because this hope that God has given us in Jesus Christ is based on God's love. In other words, because God loves us with great love, this sure hope given to us who are chosen in that love and justified by believing in Jesus can never disappoint us. In addition to faith, we who are justified by faith in Jesus Christ (v. 1), God has given us a sure and certain eternal hope that will not disappoint us (vv. 2, 5). Furthermore, God has poured out His love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (v. 5). In other words, God gave us faith, hope, and love. What could this be but God's undivided grace?

Today, I am going to think about the love of God among the graces that God bestows on us, focusing on Romans 5:5-11. In particular, if we look at Romans 5:5, the Scripture says, "Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." I'm trying to think about what kind of love God's love is. In the midst of this, we want to humbly receive the grace that God gives us. God's love that appears in today's text is that God allowed His only begotten Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for us (vv. 6, 8, 10). The apostle John says of this love: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (Jn.3:16). I would like to think about the great love of God who loves us even to the point of giving up His only begotten Son Jesus on the cross in three ways, centering on today's text.

First, God's love is the love that loves the helpless.

Look at Romans 5:6 - "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the

ungodly." The apostle Paul, writing to the saints in Rome, tells them that Jesus Christ died for the ungodly Himself and for the saints in Rome at a time when the love of God will be manifested as planned from eternity ("at the right time"). That's right. God loved you and me, who were helpless and ungodly before believing in Jesus, and gave Jesus up on the cross. Then, how were we helpless and ungodly before we believed in Jesus? Before we believed in Jesus, we were in a state of helplessness and inability to do any good (Moo). In a word, we were those of the flesh (Park). And as people of the flesh, we lived according to the desires of the sinful nature (Gal. 5:16). In other words, before we believed in Jesus, we lived doing the acts of the sinful nature (v. 19) in the desires of the sinful nature. What are the acts of the sinful nature. Look at Galatians 5:19-21: "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like." This is what we were before believing in the unredeemed Jesus. When we were in this state, God loved us and allowed Jesus to die on the cross in order to redeem us who He had predestined before the foundation of the world. Can we really compare this love of God to anyone else's love? It can never be compared to our human love. So, Paul, writing a letter to the saints in Rome, says: "For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die" (Rom. 5:7). The love of this world is not easy for those who die for the righteous. In other words, people are those who abide by the regulations of the law, and those who die for the righteous they respect are not so easy. However, as good people, that is, those who walk with love and are loved by the good people, there may be people who will die for the good people (v. 7) (Park). But there will be no one in this world who will die for the weak and ungodly, for those who do the acts of the sinful nature in the desire of the sinful nature. But Jesus died on the cross for you and me, those helpless and ungodly people. Why did He do that? The reason is because He wanted to reconcile us to God by redeeming us. Therefore, we no longer walk the path of destruction and suffering, but walk the path of peace. We have become godly (Ps. 32:6). Does a godly person refer to a person who has never sinned? It's not. A godly person is one who confesses his sins to God and receives forgiveness. It refers to those who have been justified by God, that is, you and I, who are "the righteous." This love of God was poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit when we believed in Jesus Christ (v. 5).

Second, God's love is the love that loves sinners.

Look at Romans 5:8 – "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The love of God is that before we believed in Jesus, when we were helpless, doing the acts of the sinful nature in the desire of the sinful nature, living an ungodly life and committing sins, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on the cross for us, sinners. This is God's divine love, unconditional love. Look at 1 John 4:9-10: "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." The love of God poured out into our hearts is that He sent His only begotten Son into the world to die on the cross as a sacrifice for peace in order to bring us back to life. God gave His only begotten Son, Jesus, to the cross as a sin offering to save sinners in His forbearance (Rom. 3:25). And because He was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died, we who

believe in the power of His blood were forgiven of all our sins and justified. Paul says that both Jews and Greeks are under sin (v. 9). Again, he says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (v. 23). And he says, "in this way death came to all men, because all sinned" (5:12). In other words, "the wages of sin is death" (6:23). In this way, before we believed in Jesus, we were all under sin and were walking the path of eternal death under the wrath of God (1:18, 5:9). We were walking the road to eternal destruction without any hope. God unconditionally loved these hopeless sinners with His love. God never loved us because we had something to love. God loves us because He is love. The greatest expression of God's love is the death of Jesus, the only begotten Son. In other words, the greatest expression of God's love for us was for the helpless, ungodly, and sinners to have Jesus, His only begotten Son, die on the cross to redeem us. Through the shedding of His blood on the cross, all sins of those who believe in Jesus are forgiven. All our sins have been taken away, and our sins are invisible to God (Ps. 32:1). Pointing to such people, the psalmist says that they are blessed: "Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sins are covered" (v. 1).

Third and last, God's love is the love that loves enemies.

Look at Romans 5:10 – "For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!" When we were still helpless (v. 6), that is, when we were still sinners (v. 8), we were at enmity with God. At this time, Paul describes our thoughts like this: "the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so" (8:7). After sinning, we humans became enemies with God. Therefore, before we believed in Jesus, not only did we not submit to the law of God, but we could not, while thinking about the flesh in the desires of the sinful nature. The reason why we became God's people and God's children in this enmity relationship is because Jesus, the only begotten Son, died on the cross. Therefore, we have been reconciled to God (v. 10). Therefore, Paul exhorts us to: "... we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ...," (v. 11). We should be rejoicing. We must rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The reason is because God loved us and saved us through Jesus Christ so that we could be reconciled to God. Furthermore, we rejoice and rejoice in the Lord because God has given us hope for His glory in Jesus Christ (v. 5). We rejoice even in suffering because we have this sure and confident hope in Jesus (v. 3).

How should we live in this joy? We are to love our neighbors with the love of God poured out in our hearts. How are we to love our neighbors? We must preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, which brings reconciliation, to those who do not know Jesus. In other words, we must preach the gospel of Jesus Christ who died on the cross to those who are still helpless (the ungodly), sinners, and enemies of God. And we must live a life worthy of the Gospel. In other words, we must live by obeying the commandments of Jesus. One of those commandments is Matthew 5:44 – "I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

The gift that came by the grace of Jesus Christ

[Romans 5:12-21]

I will give you an English test question. What does the English word "present" mean? What does it mean in Korean? The word "present" can be either "the present" or "gift" in Korean. When I think about these two meanings, I get a lesson to think of the present life as a gift. When I heard the news that a co-worker whom I had been praying for two weeks ago fell asleep (died) in the Lord, I thought that I should value the time given to me every day and enjoy it in the Lord. We should cherish every moment. Today is a gift given to us, so we must live thinking of the present as a present.

Romans 5:15 speaks of "the gift." The Scripture says that we who believe in Jesus have received the gift. What gift is the apostle Paul talking about? I would like to think about this gift in four ways.

First, this gift is the grace of God.

Look at Romans 5:15 – "But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!" This gift that God and Jesus have generously given is given to us even though we do not deserve it. Why don't we deserve this gift? The reason is that we were all under sin (3:9). To explain further, we were ungodly (5:6), sinners (v. 8), and enemies of God (v. 10), so we did not deserve this gift from God. If you and I were people who perfectly did good according to God's perfect standards, we would have been worthy of this gift from God. However, there is no one who does good perfectly in this world (3:12).

Second, this gift of God's grace came through the grace of Jesus Christ.

What does this mean? The word that this gift given by God's grace came through the grace

of Jesus Christ means that Jesus Christ died on the cross (vv. 6, 8, 10), so this gift was given to you and me by grace. In other words, this gift given to us was given by grace because "the one man," Jesus Christ, obeyed Heavenly Father even to the death of the cross (v. 19). Although we do not deserve this gift, our Heavenly Father let even His only begotten Son, Jesus, to die on the cross in order to give this gift to you and me. And Jesus, who wanted to give us this gift and was delighted to die on the cross voluntarily. We who receive this gift must keep in mind that this is God's exclusive grace and Jesus Christ's exclusive grace. And we must meditate again and again on how precious this gift is and why God allowed Jesus, his only begotten Son, to die on the cross in order to give us this gift. We must think about how precious this gift is that Jesus gave us this gift until He gave up His precious life on the cross. What we can say is that this gift given to us is the most valuable and precious gift that cannot be compared with anything in this world. The gift that God gives us is the greatest gift that cannot be exchanged for anything else in the world.

Thirdly, this precious gift of the grace of Jesus Christ is not equal to Adam's transgression.

Look at Romans 5:15a – "But the gift is not like the trespass." Paul writes a letter to the saints in Rome, and especially from Romans 5, that we have peace with God as a result of being justified through faith (v. 1), and have a confident hope of the glory of God (vv. 2, 5), and the moment we believed in Jesus, the love of God was poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (v. 5). After that, he talks about God's poured out love from verses 6 to 11, and from verse 12, he contrasts the "one man," the first Adam, with another "one man," the last Adam, Jesus. The one man spoken of in Romans 5:12 refers to Adam in Genesis. Through Adam, sin entered the world, and death came through sin. And in the end, because of Adam's disobedience (v. 19), sin was imputed to all people, and death came to all people (v. 12) because they all sinned. Even before God gave the law to Moses, there was sin in the world, but when there was no law, sin was not taken into account (v. 13). However, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned like the transgression of Adam (v. 14). Ultimately, death came to all people through the sin of disobedience by one man, Adam. Ultimately, because of the sin of one man, Adam, all people were in the path of ruin and misery (3:16) in the midst of God's wrath (1:18ff). However, to those who had no choice but to perish forever without hope, God sent another "one man," Jesus Christ, the last Adam, to this world at the right time. Jesus, the last Adam, is not like the first Adam. Although the first Adam disobeyed God's commandment, Jesus, the last Adam, obeyed God's will until He died on the cross (v. 19). Also, even though because of the first Adam's sin, the judgment resulted in condemnation for all people (v. 16), Jesus, the last Adam, obeyed even to the point of death on the cross, so that those who believe in Jesus Christ may be justified (v. 16). And although the first Adam's disobedience led to the death of all people, God gave us the greatest gift through the obedience of Jesus, the last Adam (v. 15). What is the greatest gift of the grace of Jesus Christ?

Fourth, the greatest gift of the grace of Jesus Christ is eternal life.

Look at Romans 5:21 – "so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Although all people were brought to death because of the first Adam's transgression, because Jesus Christ, the last Adam, obeyed even unto death on the cross, eternal life is brought to us. Now we have no more condemnation (8:1). The reason is that we no longer belong to the first Adam, but to Jesus, the last Adam. God justified us by giving us precious faith as a gift so that we could accept Jesus Christ as our Savior (vv. 16, 18). All our sins have been forgiven. God saw the righteousness of Jesus Christ and declared us righteous. Now we have a sure and clear hope of gazing joyfully at God's glory (vv. 2, 5). However, there is one thing we need to keep in mind here. It is none other than that when we say that we will receive eternal life if we believe in Jesus, we must not think of eternal life as just eternal life in the next world. Because eternal life is enjoyed in part even now in Jesus Christ. The place where the word "eternal life" appears intensively is in the Gospel of John. In Greek, "eternal life" means "ζωή" (life) "αἰώνιος" (eternal). This word is a combination of the words "ζωή" (life) and "αἰώνιος" (eternal). In other words, the word "eternal life" literally has two meanings (Internet): This means, firstly, "life that lasts forever" in terms of time, and secondly, it means "a divine life that is different from human life" in terms of quality. Therefore, the word eternal life includes both the meaning of eternal life in time and the meaning of divine life enjoyed in God. In particular, in the Gospel of John, the meaning of "eternal life" means "eternal blessings to be enjoyed in the next life," as in the Synoptic Gospels, but it also emphasizes the blessings enjoyed in the "now." The Gospel of John says that those who believe in the Lord already have eternal life, and can enjoy that blessing in reality in the Lord. What are the blessings of eternal life that we enjoy now? They are the blessings of the life after given through intimate personal fellowship (John 17:3) through the eternal God, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. A representative example of this is participating in the divine nature of God. In other words, the blessing of eternal life that we partially enjoy in Jesus Christ while living on this earth is to become like Jesus in the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. Another blessing of eternal life that we partially enjoy today is love. When we love God and love our neighbors with the love of God poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, we taste the joy of heaven, at least partially. Also, the blessing of eternal life is peace. Although we live in a world without peace, those who believe in Jesus are at least partially enjoying the peace of God, the blessing of eternal life, while living on this earth.

This very blessing of eternal life is given as a gift by God to those who believe in Jesus. Whoever believes in his heart that God raised Jesus from the dead and confesses with his mouth that Jesus is Lord will be saved (Rom 10:9) and can enjoy this greatest gift, eternal life, not only in the world to come but also in this world. It is said to be a true story that happened in America a long time ago. This is the story of a young boy who touched the hearts of all citizens of America and challenged Christians even more. The little boy's name was Ryan White (Internet). When Ryan was 13 years old, he suffered from hemophilia and underwent an operation. Through the negligence of adults through no fault of his own, the boy's life is now on the road to death. However, even though he knew that he would soon die, he did not blame anyone and continued his school life so brightly. On the contrary, he was very kind to others and was happy to comfort his concerned parents. After that, Ryan lived for 5 years and eventually died at the age of 18. The

boy's last conversation with his father before his death was published in a Christian magazine:

'Son, I am sorry. There's nothing I can do for you now. Please forgive this daddy for not being able to give you any more presents.'

'Dad, I have been given many presents, but no one has ever given me a gift like you. Dad gave me a ticket to go to heaven even after I die. You introduced me to Jesus. Because of you, father, I went to church and believed in Jesus and received eternal life as a gift. There could be no greater gift than this.'

May we all receive this great gift that cannot be exchanged for anything in the world, the gift of eternal life.

Living worthily as recipients of the best gift (1)

[Romans 6:1-11]

We have already learned through meditation on Romans 5:12-21 that the greatest gift God gives us is eternal life. We must believe in Jesus Christ if we want to receive this gift of eternal life. Whoever believes in his heart that God raised Jesus from the dead and confesses with his mouth that Jesus is Lord will be saved (10:9) and can enjoy this greatest gift, eternal life, not only in the world to come but also in this world. If there are people who have not yet received this blessing of eternal life, I hope and pray that you will receive this blessing today. Believe that Jesus died on the cross to forgive all your sins. Also, believe that Jesus, who died to justify you, rose from the grave (4:25). To all those who believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God will give you eternal life, the greatest gift that cannot be exchanged for anything in this world.

If among you, those of you who have already received the blessing of eternal life through your faith in Jesus Christ, you can enjoy this blessing of eternal life not only in the next world, but also partially in your current life on earth. Are you currently enjoying the blessing of eternal life? Are you partially enjoying eternal life in heaven while living in this wilderness-like world? Are you enjoying the blessing of becoming like Jesus in the work of sanctification of the indwelling Holy Spirit? Are you also enjoying the gift of love, the fruit of the Holy Spirit? Are you enjoying a life of love in heaven, at least partially, while loving God and loving your neighbor in this earth? Also, while living in this world without peace, are you enjoying the peace of God that the world cannot give? It is entirely by God's grace that we are able to enjoy all these blessings of eternal life, at least partially, on this earth (5:15). How should we live the more we realize this grace of God?

Today's Bible, Romans 6:1-11, as those who receive the greatest gift of eternal life through God's total grace, teaches us how to live a proper life as those who have received the gift of eternal life in two ways.

First, as those who have received the gift of eternal life, we must live a proper

life as if we were dead to sin.

Look at Romans 6:11 - "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus." Here, how does the word to live as dead to sin mean to live? To live as if we were dead to sin means not to dwell in sin. Look at Romans 6:1 -"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" Here, the saying that those who are dead to sin do not go on sinning means that sin no longer reigns in death (5:21). The words 'sin does not reign in death' mean that sin no longer has dominion over those who have eternal life (6:14). Now that we have received the gift of eternal life, sin and death no longer rule us in our lives (6:9). An example we can have to better understand this verse is Genesis 4:7. Because God accepted Abel's offering and disapproved of Cain's offering (Gen. 4:4-5), Cain was angry and his face downcast (v. 6). So, God said to Cain, "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." However, as we know, the result was that Cain could not master his desire to sin and killed his younger brother Abel (v. 8). This life in which we cannot master our desire to sin is what our life looked like before we believed in Jesus. In other words, before we believed in Jesus, our lives were governed by sin. Sin reigned in our lives. That's why we all turned away, and all together had become worthless, and did not do good (3:12). We couldn't do what was right in the sight of a good God. However, since we believed in Jesus, were justified, and enjoyed the bliss of eternal life, sin no longer had dominion over us. Sin no longer reigns in death, nor can it do so. Why? The reason is that we are already dead to sin (6:2). In other words, sin no longer reigns in death and has dominion over us because our old self has been crucified with Jesus and therefore dead to sin (v. 6). How do we know that we are already dead to sin? If we want to know that a person is dead, we can tell by looking at the body. No one will go to a funeral and see a dead body lying in a coffin and say he is alive. We know that the person has passed away and died when we see the dead body lying in the coffin. Likewise, when we look with faith to the death of Jesus, who died on the cross about 2,000 years ago to forgive our sins, we must admit that we are dead to sin. In other words, the shedding blood of Jesus on the cross proves that we are dead to sin. Paul expresses this by saying that the saints were baptized into the death of Jesus and buried with Him (vv. 3-4). This expression, in one word, points to union with Jesus. Union with Jesus, which is difficult for us to understand, means that Jesus died on the cross "once for all" (v. 10), so our old self also entered into the death of Jesus and died. In other words, the death of Jesus was the death for our own sins. Therefore, the relationship between sin and us was eventually severed as if it were dead (Park). So Paul, writing a letter to the saints in Rome, clearly told them in verses 6-7: "For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- because anyone who has died has been freed from sin."

Our old self, who belonged to the flesh before believing in Jesus, who committed sins by doing things to the sinful nature in the lust of the flesh, died when Jesus was crucified. Therefore, sin and death no longer have dominion and dominion over us, nor can they. In other words, believers who are united in the death of Jesus on the cross are no longer slaves to sin because their old self has already died. Why? The reason is that we have been freed from sin through the death of Jesus on the cross. That's why we sing

this hymn to the Lord: (v. 1 & chorus) "Would you be free from your burden of sin? There's pow'r in the Blood, pow'r in the Blood. Would you o'er evil a victory win? There's wonderful pow'r in the Blood. There is pow'r, wonde rworking pow'r In the blood of the Lamb. There is pow'r pow'r wonderworking pow'r In the precious blood of the Lamb." Then why do we continue to sin even though we have been set free from sin by the blood of the Lord? Why do we sin even though we are already dead to sin by being united in the death of Jesus? If we explain this with Paul's theology, we have to look at it from the perspective of "Already" and "Not-yet" that we have already been saved and will be saved in the future. In other words, we have already received salvation through our faith in Jesus, but the completion of salvation will occur when Jesus returns. In other words, on the day Jesus returns, we will be suddenly transformed and put on a glorious body. At that time, we will have a glorious, spiritually strong body that not only does not sin, but also does not know what sin is. But until then, we must continue to fight sin as we live in the Church Age between "already" and "not yet." That is why we say that the church is a victorious church and also a militant church. Then, how should we engage in this spiritual battle?

(1) We must not forget God's grace.

In other words, we believe that God bestowed grace on us, sinners, and enemies of God, even sending His only begotten Son, Jesus, to die on the cross in order to give us the blessing of eternal life. should not be forgotten. As we engage in the spiritual battle, we must go deeper and deeper into this grace of God.

(2) We must not forget the grace of Jesus.

Jesus, who obeyed even to the point of dying on the cross to save us and all our sins were forgiven because He shed His blood on the cross and died. If we have been justified by faith, we have been reconciled to God and are enjoying the privilege of fellowshipping with God, calling Him Abba, Father. Therefore, we must not forget the grace of the cross of Jesus.

(3) We must not let this grace of God and the grace of Jesus be in vain.

As it says in Romans 6:1-2, in order not to waste God's grace, we must no longer live in sin as if we were dead to sin. In particular, what we need to keep in mind in this part is not to misunderstand the words where sin abounded, grace abounded more (5:20), and to realize that the more we sin, the more God's grace abounds. This is a foolish idea and a foolish action. That is why Paul is strongly saying, "By no means!" (v. 2). How can we live in sin to increase grace? Believers who truly realize the grace of God and Jesus strive to lead a life of separation from sin so as not to make the grace of God in vain. We are no longer enslaved to sin. We live our lives of faith, counting ourselves as dead to our own sins. In particular, as those who are united to the death of Jesus on the cross, we do not allow sin to rule ourselves. In the midst of the work of the Holy Spirit, we live by mastering our sins.

Let us remember that we are dead to sin. Let us cry to ourselves, 'I am a corpse for sin'. As dead to sin, let us keep in mind that sin no longer reigns in death. In the midst of this, even when we fall into the temptation of sin and commit sins, let us remember that we are dead to sin, looking with faith to Jesus who died on the cross in order to forgive our sins. Let's live far away from sin as those who have died to sin. Even though sin comes close and rushes to eat us like a roaring lion, let us fight and overcome by relying on the power of the precious blood of the cross of Jesus. Since Jesus was victorious on the cross, we too can be victorious.

Living worthily as recipients of the best gift (2)

[Romans 6:1-14]

If you look at the Korean news these days, you will come across news that several people are being investigated by the prosecution because of the list of 'Park So-and-so' and the late 'Jang-so-so'. On one list, it seems that key figures in the former regime who took bribes are being investigated. And on the other list, it seems that because of the documents of a celebrity, the people involved in those documents are being investigated by the prosecution. Meanwhile, while listening to Korean broadcasts on the radio last week, I heard a voice lamenting why there are so many lists like this in Korea. What do you think? I once thought about my list. I thought about what my sin list would be like, where a list of such and such sins were recorded. At the same time, I thought that the list of all sins was completely erased by the blood of Jesus on the cross. I thought of the grace of the precious blood of Jesus, who erased all sins, blotted out, and covered them all. On the one hand, when I think of my list of sins, I think I can understand the apostle Paul's confession that he is the worst sinner while being afraid and ashamed. But on the other hand, when I think of the death of Jesus on the cross and the fact that all my sins have been washed away and forgiven, I cannot but confess that I am living today because of God's grace. Therefore, the more I think about God's grace, the more I cannot help but ask myself how I should live. The answer is that as those who have received the greatest gift of eternal life through God's grace, we must live a worthy life.

Centered on Romans 6:1-11, we have already been taught how to live as those who receive the greatest gift of eternal life. One of the two lessons was to live as though we were dead to sin. Living as dead to sin means no longer living in sin (v. 1), that is, a life in which sin no longer has dominion over us (v. 14). In the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, we are also dead to sin, and sin no longer reigns in death. Our old man was crucified with Jesus. Therefore, we are no longer enslaved to sin (v. 6). Today, I would like to learn the second lesson in terms of how to live as those who receive the greatest gift of eternal life, centered on Romans 6:1-14.

Second, it is to live counting ourselves alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Look at Romans 6:11 - "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ

Jesus." We must live by counting ourselves alive to God in Christ Jesus. Then, how does it really mean to live as a living person toward God in Christ Jesus? In today's text, the apostle Paul says two things:

(1) <u>To live as a living person toward God in Christ Jesus is to live while disobeying the lusts</u> of the sinful body.

Look at Romans 6:12 – "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires." Here, the "mortal body" refers to the "body of sin" (v. 6). According to Calvin, "the body of sin" refers to the lump of sin and corruption (Park). Paul exhorts the saints in Rome, as well as us who believe in Jesus, to no longer let sin reign in our mortal bodies. What does it mean? It means 'Do not obey the evil desire of your mortal body'. What, then, does it mean to not obeying the evil desire of our mortal body? This word means not to gratify the desires of the sinful nature (Gal. 6:16) and the acts of the sinful nature are obvious: "sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like" (vv. 19-21). It means to stop living a life of doing these things. In a word, a proper life as those who are justified through faith in Jesus Christ and enjoy the greatest gift of eternal life is to not obeying the lust of the sinful body. The word that we live by counting ourselves alive toward God in Christ Jesus means that we should no longer do the acts of the sinful nature according to the lusts of the flesh. So, Paul said in Romans 6:13a, "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness," We must not present our members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin. We must not continue to live with our bodies committing sins the way we lived in the old self. Such a life is not a worthy life for those who have received the greatest gift, eternal life.

(2) <u>To live by counting ourselves alive to God in Christ Jesus is to live offering our members</u> to God as if we were alive again.

Look at Romans 6:13 – "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness." Paul writes to the Roman saints, telling them, and also to us, those who are united in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, not to present our bodies as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but to offer ourselves to God as those who have been raised from the dead. In other words, we must offer ourselves to God as an instrument of righteousness. Having been justified through faith in Jesus Christ, we enjoy the gift of eternal life that God gives us on earth. As we do so, we must not present our bodies as instruments of unrighteousness to God as instruments of unrighteousness. In other words, we must offer our bodies, minds, and lives to God. We are no longer slaves to sin, but as servants of the Lord, we must give our all to our Lord and live for Him. Why should we not present our members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but to God as instruments of righteousness? Why should we disobey the lusts of our sinful body and live by offering our members to God as if we are alive to God?

Why? The reason is because we who believe in Jesus have received a new life through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In other words, it is because you and I who are united through the death and resurrection of Jesus have received a new life, so it is appropriate to walk in a new life. Look at Romans 6:4 – "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." Those who believe in Jesus are those who have a new life. So, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17 – "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" Our old has gone. We are a new creation in Jesus. You and I have received a new life through the grace of Jesus Christ. We have eternal life. And we are living, at least partially, enjoying this eternal life. Therefore, we must not live by obeying the lusts of our sinful nature. We must not let sin to by our mater (Rom. 6:14). The reason is because we are not under the law, but under grace (v. 14). Rather, we must live a new life as those who have received a new life. We must present our bodies to God. We must devote ourselves to God and live according to His will.

This is what the hymn "Lately the Life of Christ" says: (v. 1) Lately the life of Christ burst out alive in me! Old things have passed away, even myself is new. His life floods through me, like rivers towards the sea, His love shines on me like sun shining on the dew. (v. 2) Life hid in Him makes my glad-ness of heart in-crease, I set no price on what pleas'd me in other days. I'm tasting heaven's incredible joy and peace, My life the Lord's for an an-them of pray'r and praise. (v. 3) Hill, stream and woodland and all that I see is new, Sinner and foeman are turned into friends I know. This is eternal life tasted before it's due, Life with the Lord is a new heaven here below! (v. 4) Rough though and long His way, All set about with strife, With hymns I'll follow on exuberant with praise. I'll be with Christ my Lord un-to eternal life, Daily I'll walk with Him beyond the length of days. (chorus) With Christ I'll savor life Unending ev'ry day; Now and forever I'll walk with Him all the way. I hope and pray that you and I can live like this.

Slaves to obedience

[Romans 6:15-23]

Last week, during a wedding service for a couple in our church's English ministry, I gave three recommendations under the title of the sermon titled "By Faith," centered on Hebrews 11:23-26. One of those three exhortations was to have higher values by faith, refuse to enjoy the sinful pleasures of the world, but choose to be mistreated and to suffer for Jesus Christ. I took Moses as an example. What did Moses do with faith? He made the right choice "by faith". Moses made the right choice with faith in the choice between to be called the son of Pharaoh's princess (v. 24) or to be called the son of God, to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a short time (v. 25) or to suffer with the people of God (v. 25), to choose all the treasures of Egypt or suffering disgrace for the sake of Christ (v. 26). In this way, faith makes the right choice while distinguishing what is right and what is wrong with clear and distinct biblical value. The reason we make the right choice is because we have eternal hope. In other words, in the case of Moses, he was able to make the right choice because he "was looking ahead to his reward" (v. 26).

We Christians who believe in Jesus must clearly draw the line and live. In other words, there must be distinct differences between our life before believing in Jesus and our life after believing in Jesus. If we do not have clear and obvious differences or changes in our life before and after believing in Jesus, we cannot play the role of light and salt that influences the world for good. If we truly believe in Jesus, there must be a change in our lives. 'If life before and after believing in Jesus is the same, I need to check whether I am a person who really believes in Jesus. Many people in the Bible lived a different life after accepting Jesus as their Savior. After meeting Jesus, Zacchaeus, who was an embezzlement slave of money, repaid the original owners of the property he had unrighteously accumulated and robbed, and gave to the poor. He broke up with an unrighteous life. After meeting Jesus, the apostle Paul no longer took pride in his splendid background, such as his family, position, and academic achievements, and left his arrogance and humbly lived a life of living Jesus as the most precious Person in his life. After meeting Jesus, the Samaritan woman who had several husbands no longer pursued pleasure. She left her water jar and preached Jesus as the Savior to people' (Internet). But why do we believe in Jesus and live a life of faith, yet there are no clear changes in our lives? Why aren't the differences in our lives before and after believing in Jesus clearly revealed? The reason is because we have not drawn a clear and unequivocal line between life before and life after believing in Jesus. We must draw a clear line between life before and after believing in Jesus.

In today's text, Romans 6:16, we see that apostle Paul, writing a letter to the saints in Rome, draws a clear line between life before believing in Jesus and life after believing in Jesus. Look at verse 16: "Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?" Paul told the saints in Rome that even though before they believed in Jesus, they offered themselves to sin and were slaves of sin, but now, after believing in Jesus, they were justified and became slaves of righteousness. Then, what does Paul mean by slaves to sin and slaves to righteousness?

First of all, slaves to sin refers to the life we lived before believing in Jesus. Life before believing in Jesus refers to a life in which we were slaves to sin, a life in which we gave our members to impurity and wickedness. Look at Romans 6:19 - "... Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness," When we say here that we give our members to the "impurity", it literally means that we waste ourselves on things that have no value. From the point of view of the saints in Rome who received Paul's letter, that worthless vanity refers to a life lived in pursuit of impurity according to the sinful desires of their hearts (1:24ff). In other words, it refers to a life of sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another (v. 24). He writes a letter to the saints in Rome, reminding them that before they believed in Jesus, they were enslaved to sin because they were led by "shameful lust" and committed the sin of meaningless sexual depravity. Also, he writes this letter to the saints in Rome, telling them that before they believed in Jesus, they gave their members to lawlessness as slaves to sin. In a word, before we believed in Jesus, we lived in violation of God's law. This life of breaking God's law and living in sin (1 Jn. 3:4) was our life before believing in Jesus. Why did we break the law and live with sins like this before we believed in Jesus? The reason is that our thoughts have become futile and our foolish hearts were darkened because we have suppressed the truth with unrighteousness (1:18-21). As a result, not only did we exchange the truth for a lie (v. 25), but we also did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God in our hearts (v. 28). We did not want to have God's word or His law in our hearts. Therefore, we lived with sins, following the laws of the flesh and doing the works of the flesh according to the sinful desire of the flesh. In this way, before we believed in Jesus, we lived a life that led to more and more lawlessness by giving our bodies to impurity and wickedness. In a word, sin reigned in our lives. What was the result? The result of sin is death (vv. 16, 21, 23). Before you and I believed in Jesus, our life was a life leading to death by giving our members to impurity and wickedness.

Then, what kind of life does the life after believing in Jesus refer to? Paul refers to the life after believing in Jesus as slaves to righteousness (6:18-19). What kind of life does the life of the slaves to righteousness (v. 18) refer to? It refers to my life and yours who are justified by believing in Jesus. In other words, it refers to a righteous life as a person who has been justified by believing in Jesus. What kind of life does a righteous life refer to as one who has been justified by believing in Jesus and received the greatest gift of eternal life by God's total grace? In other words, what is the life of the slaves to

righteousness?

First, life as slaves to righteousness refers to the life of being ashamed of what we did when we were slaves to past sins.

Look at Romans 6:20-21: "When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!" At least now, if we are living a life of faith in Jesus, our conscience must be alive. And if our conscience is alive, when we lose the spiritual battle with ourselves and commit sins according to the sinful habits of our old self, our conscience should be stricken, and we should feel guilty and ashamed of having sinned. Furthermore, we shall be ashamed not only of our own sins but also of the sins of others in the church. For example, we should be ashamed when we hear the news that a certain pastor of a certain church has committed a sexual sin through TV or newspapers. In a word, we must be Christians who know how to be ashamed. It is said that former President Roh, who passed away, said these words at the Democratic Peaceful Unification Advisory Meeting on December 21, 2006, in a statement opposing the transfer of wartime operational control by a general in reserve service: 'They created an army that could not properly control the operation of their own country's armed forces, and I, the Minister of Defense, and I, the Chief of Staff, were so proud of yourselves? ... So, they rushed in and made statements saying that we shouldn't take back operational control, and they said they were dereliction of duty. You should feel ashamed.' The buzzword that originated here is 'You should be ashamed!' (Internet). It is right. We, those who believe in Jesus, should be ashamed. We should be ashamed of committing sexual sins driven by "shameful lust" after believing in Jesus. Also, breaking God's law (commandments), we should be ashamed. We must never be obstinate and stubborn like the Israelites (Ezek. 2:4).

Second, life as slaves to righteousness refers to a life lived under grace.

Look at Romans 6:15 – "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!" Apostle Paul said to the Roman saints, 'You are not under the law, but under grace' (v. 14), and then, as those who are under grace, 'Shall you sin since you are under grace? You cannot' (v. 15). How can we not sin? The reason is that sin no longer has dominion over the believers in Jesus (v. 14). Why does sin no longer have dominion over you and me? The reason is that we have been set free from sin (vv. 18, 22). Hymn "Would You be Free From Your Burden of Sin" comes to mind: (v. 1) Would you be free from your burden of sin? There's pow'r in the Blood, pow'r in the Blood. Would you o'er evil a victory win? There's wonderful pow'r in the Blood. (v. 2) Would you be free from your passion and pride? There's pow'r in the Blood. Come for a cleansing to Calvary's tide. There's wonderful pow'r in the Blood. (v. 3) .Would you be whiter, much whiter than snow? There's pow'r in the Blood, (v. 4) Would you do service for Jesus your King? There's pow'r in the Blood, pow'r in the Blood. (v. 4) Would you do service for Jesus your King? There's pow'r in the Blood. (chorus) There is pow'r, pow'r, wonderworking pow'r In the blood of the Lamb. There is pow'r wonderworking pow'r In the precious blood of the Lamb. We have been freed from sin through the power of the blood of the Lamb, Jesus. And we can overcome the test of the lust of the flesh with the power of the blood of Jesus. Believers who have been justified by faith in Jesus by God's total grace no longer commit habitual sins and become slaves to sin through faith in the power of the precious blood of Jesus. Rather, the life of the saints who live under the grace of God lives while enjoying freedom from sin.

Third, the life of slaves to righteousness refers to a life of obeying the word of God with their hearts.

Look at Romans 6:17 – "But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted." Paul tells the saints in Rome that they must live a life of slaves to righteousness, that is, they must obey the word of God with their heart, and the result is leading to righteousness (v. 16) and holiness (vv. 19, 22). In other words, if we disobey God's word and serve as slaves to sin, the fruit is death (v. 21), but if we obey God's word with our hearts, the fruit is holiness and eternal life (v. 22). God has given us the "sound doctrine" to us who believe in Jesus (Tit. 2:1). And God gave us a heart that wants to know God and to obey His word (1 Pet. 2:2) (MacArthur). We must thank God for this grace (Rom. 6:17). Then, what is the word that God wants us to obey? It is not obeying evil desires to our sinful nature (v. 12). The word of God that we must obey is the preaching of the gospel (Rom 1:16). We must clearly distinguish between what to be ashamed of and what not to be ashamed of. What we should be ashamed of is the sins we commit against God. But what we should not be ashamed of is the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the midst of this, we must live a life worthy of the gospel. We must preach the gospel of Jesus Christ not only with our lips, but also with our lives. This is the life of obeying the word of God with our hearts. This should be the life of me and you as slaves of righteousness.

Before believing in Jesus, life was a slave to sin. But now, by God's total grace, we have been justified through faith and have eternal life. And as those who have been justified, we are no longer slaves to sin. The reason is because we have now become slaves to righteousness after believing in Jesus. As slaves to righteousness, we should be ashamed of what we did when we were slaves to sin in the past. Also, as slaves to righteousness, we must live under God's grace. In the midst of this, I hope and pray that we will be able to glorify God by obeying God's word with our hearts.

A life that bears fruit to God

[Romans 7:1-6]

Do you know the expression 'seonmok seonsil, akmok aksil'? This word means 'good trees bear good fruit, and bad fruits bear bad fruit' (Internet). In other words, we can know a tree by its fruit. For example, we know a tree is an apple tree when we see an apple fruit, and we know that a tree is a pear tree when we see a pear fruit. Jesus said this simple truth in Matthew 7:17-18: "Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit." The reason Jesus said this is because He wanted His disciples to recognize false prophets and refrain from them. How can we recognize false prophets? We can tell by looking at their bad fruit. What are the bad fruits of false prophets? According to Jesus, they come to us "in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves" (v. 15). Although they prophesied in His name, drove out demons in His name, and performed many miracles (v. 22), they were evildoers (v. 23). These were the foolish people who built their houses on sand (v. 26). However, Jesus is saying that we must build our houses on the rock. In other words, we must be those who hear the words of Jesus and put them into practice. As those who have been grafted into the Lord who is the vine, we must bear good fruit. That good fruit is the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23). What fruit are you bearing?

In today's text, Romans 7:4-5, apostle Paul speaks of two types of fruit when writing a letter to the saints in Rome. As we meditate on these two types of fruit, I hope and pray that we can bear fruit worthy of God by receiving lessons and obeying what kind of fruit we must bear and how to bear it.

First, in Romans 7:5, apostle Paul says this about the first kind of fruit: "For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death."

The first kind of fruit that Paul tells us is 'fruit for death'. This fruit for death is the fruit we bore before we believed in Jesus. And it is the fruit we bore while living the life of a slave to sin before believing in Jesus. And the result of these fruits is death. In other words, before we believed in Jesus, we lived with sinful fruits by committing sins in impurity and lawlessness. And the result of that life is death. Referring to the life before believing in Jesus, who lived bearing the sinful fruit for this death, Paul refers to it as 'a life under the law' (6:15). What kind of life is life under the law? If we look at Romans 7:5, it says that life under the law is living according to sinful nature. The life of living according to the sinful nature is a life of pursuing impurity according to the sinful desires of our hearts (1:24), and a life of living according to the shameful lusts rather than the natural relations (v. 26), which is doing what ought not to be done in the sight of God (v. 28). That life of doing what ought not to be done is 'every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice, gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; inventing ways of doing evil; disobeying their parents; senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless' (vv.29-31). The end of life before believing in Jesus, who bore such sinful fruits, is death.

But now, after believing in Jesus, our lives are no longer enslaved to sin and bear fruit for death. Now, after believing in Jesus, we bear "fruit to God" (Rom. 7:4). What is the "fruit to God" that we are talking about here? The answer is given in Romans 6:22, which we have already meditated on: "But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life." In other words, the fruit to God is holiness, and the result of holiness is eternal life. This is the fruit that you and I must bear. If we truly believe in Jesus, we must live a holy life. What is a holy life? That is the life of a saint. We are now called to belong to Jesus Christ (1:6) and also called to be saints (v, 7). In other words, we are those who live a life separated from the world with a clear sense of belonging that we do not belong to the world but belong to Jesus. Furthermore, we are those who pursue and become like Jesus' holiness. Are we living the lives of saints in this world as believers in Jesus? Although before we believed in Jesus, we lived doing impurity and lawlessness according to our sinful lusts, so we lived bearing fruit for death, now, after believing in Jesus, we are saints loved by God who are set apart from the world and resemble the holiness of Jesus. What is the result of living a life that moves toward this holiness? That is "eternal life" (6:22-23). Although before we believed in Jesus, we lived as a slave to sin, bearing fruit for death in impurity and lawlessness, now, after believing in Jesus, as a servant of righteousness, we are living by obeying the word of God with our hearts and bearing the fruit of holiness to God. And the result of this holiness is eternal life.

But what's the problem? It is none other than fruit to God, that is, we are not living a life that brings about holiness. Why do we live our lives making sin rule over us even after believing in Jesus, if we do not imitate the holiness of God and are still enslaved to sin, the life of our old self? The fundamental reason is that we forget that through the dead body of Christ on the cross, we have already been put to death to the law (v. 4). What does it mean to be put to death to the law? The meaning of this word is that we were dead to sin (6:2). Our old self has already been crucified with Jesus on the cross. Now our sinful bodies have been destroyed, and we are no longer enslaved to sin (6:6). Now, for we who believe in Jesus, the law cannot condemn us. The reason is that we are not under the law, but under grace (v. 14). Because we forget this truth, there are times when we still live under the law and are bound by sin as we were in the old days (7:6) and bear sinful fruits in our lives. But we must keep in mind. We have already died of the old self through the dead body of Jesus on the cross. We have already been killed to the law (v. 4). In

order to explain this fact, Paul is explaining the law of marriage as an example in verses 1-3 of today's text. The explanation of this marriage law is that when a couple marries, they are bound by the marriage law (v. 2). But if the husband dies, his wife is freed from the marriage law and can remarry again (v. 3). The intention of this parable about the law of marriage is that before we believed in Jesus, we were bound by the law and our sins were condemned by the law. But now we are put to death to the law through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Therefore, it means that we have been set free from the law. In other words, the law can no longer condemn us. Why? The reason is that we have already been freed from sin through the death of Jesus on the cross (6:18, 22). And because we have been justified by the resurrection of Jesus, the law can no longer condemn us.

Therefore, we no longer live bearing fruit for death, but live bearing fruit to God. Then, how are we to live while bearing the fruit of holiness for God? Look at Romans 7:6 – "But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code." Now we must live by serving the Lord with the new way of the Spirit. We must live by serving in the new way of the Holy Spirit. We must no longer live by serving the Lord with the old things of the mystery, that is, the law. After we believed in Jesus, the Holy Spirit gave us a new heart. This new heart is the heart that wants to keep the commandment of God (MacArthur). What is the commandment of God? This is the great commandment of Jesus, to love God and love your neighbor. It is the life of our saints to live bearing holy fruits to God by obeying this commandment with our hearts. I hope and pray that we can faithfully carry out the ministry of salt and light in this world by living the lives of these holy saints right in front of God.

This is the Korean gospel song "For another Fruit":

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Thank you so much I never realized it It is how precious and how valuable I am From the beginning of the world until now the love of God always has turned to me Give thanks to you, you have taught me and sown me the stead-fast love And thanks to God He'd prepared you for me Serving more and more with the sacrificing love of God I will also share the love in to the world It's because you are to be loved and you're to testify to the love of God You are chosen among men planted in this land for another fruit expected by the land

The function of the law

[Romans 7:7-13]

Have you ever violated one of the California traffic laws, the D.U.I.? In other words, do you know about Driving Under Influence? This law is said to be applied when the blood alcohol concentration is 0.08% or more after drinking alcohol. If you drink and your alcohol level is over 0.08%, you will be punished if you are caught driving while intoxicated. The penalties are, for example, (1) Imprisonment for up to 48 hours to 6 months, (2) Impoundment of the vehicle for up to 6 months, (3) Suspension of driver's license for up to 6 months and so on (internet). Before, if you were caught drunk driving, the record was 7 years, but now it is said that it is 10 years. Therefore, if you are caught drinking and driving twice within 10 years, you will have additional punishment. You maybe even go to jail. One of the reasons why this D.U.I. traffic law is getting stricter is that so many people die in drunk driving accidents. So, in the United States there is a group called "Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)." Founded in 1980 with the efforts of a mother whose young daughter died from drunk driving, this group develops policies, codes of conduct, and organizes citizen campaigns to end drunk driving, and is now it is said to be the world's largest anti-drunk driving organization. One of the initiatives by this organization is a poster called "Don't Drink and Drive". According to an internet article, thousands of anti-drunk driving laws were passed through this organization (Internet). Why do these traffic laws exist? In other words, what is the purpose of traffic laws? Its purpose is to secure safe and smooth traffic by preventing and removing all hazards and obstacles in traffic on the road (Internet). In this way, there are numerous laws in the world besides traffic laws. Even within the church, there is something called the church constitution, but today I'm going to think about the law. The reason is because apostle Paul is talking about the law in Romans 7:7-13.

After apostle Paul told the saints in Rome about the life under the law before they believed in Jesus, that is, the life that bore fruit for death in impurity and lawlessness, through Romans 6 and 7:6, he talks about the law in Romans 7:7-13 to explain the life under the law before believing in Jesus in more detail. The law is about the function of the law. What is the function of this law that Paul is explaining to the Roman saints? We can think of it in 3 ways. While meditating on these three functions of the law, I hope and pray that you and I learn how to look at the law, so that we can go deeper into

God's grace. And because of the grace of the Lord, I hope and pray that we will be able to glorify God by obeying God's commandments more and more with our hearts.

First, the function of the law is to convict us of sin.

Look at Romans 7:7 – "What shall we say, then? Is the law a sin? Certainly not! Indeed, I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, 'Do not covet.'" Here Paul gives an example of the law. That law is none other than the tenth of the Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house." It is based on the word "Do not covet" (Exod. 20:17, Deut. 5:21). What does the phrase "Do not covet" really mean? It means 'Don't have unreasonable wishes' (Park). The overall summary of the entire law is the Ten Commandments, and the tenets of the Ten Commandments are to love God and love people. Covetousness is the unjust desire that prevents us from loving God and makes us love other things (Park). That is why Paul even said, greed is idolatry (Col. 3:5). Furthermore, covetousness that makes a very person a selfish person full of greed. Therefore, covetousness is opposed to love, which is the spirit of the whole law.

When the apostle Paul looked at himself, he saw that he had various covetousness within him. He confesses this in Romans 7:8 - "But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead." When Paul did not have the law, he did not regard sin as sin. But because of the law, Paul came to realize that the sinful nature that had been dormant within him was sufficiently active to produce various kinds of greed that he could not bear. If the tenth commandment of the Ten Commandments had not been given, we would not have regarded the sin of covetousness as a sin even though we committed the sin of covetousness. Therefore, we would have continued to commit the sin of covetousness without a sense of guilt. However, because of the tenth commandment of the Ten Commandments, not to be covetous, we realize that covetousness is a sin when unreasonable greed arises in us. In the midst of this, what surprises us is that this sinful nature of covetousness inherent in us sees the tenth commandment of the Ten Commandments, a strong sinful passion to break the law even though we know it. Therefore, because of the fruit of the tree of covetousness that has fully grown in us, we eventually see ourselves committing the sin of covetousness with actual actions. So, Paul said, "when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died" (v. 9). In other words, Paul confesses that since the law is enacted, sin is aroused by taking the control of the law as an opportunity. And as a result, he is captured by the sinful nature and is in a pitiful state (Park). This pitiful state captivated by sinful nature is because sin deceived Paul (v. 11). Just as the devil tricked Eve into eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, thus breaking God's commandment and causing her to commit a sin, the devil is trying to make us enslaved to sin by deceiving us in the way that it is okay to sin. Why is Satan working so hard like this? The reason is to bring us to death, the end of the life of a slave to sin (v. 10). In the end, in order to be separated from God and put to death forever, Satan is trying to deceive again and again.

Let's keep in mind. You and I have already passed from death to life through faith in Jesus Christ (Jn. 5:24). We are no longer slaves to sin. We are now slaves of righteousness and slaves of obedience. Therefore, we must now live by obeying the word of God. The first lesson God gives us today is that we must realize our own sins through God's law, God's commandments, or more comprehensively, God's word. We must realize our sins through God's word (3:20). We will be exposed as sin through His word (7:13). Through His word, our sins will be exposed again and again. What should we do then? We should thank God. Why? The reason is because "where sin abounded, grace abounded all the more" (5:20). The more we realize our sins through the word of God, the more we realize how great, many, and overflowing the grace of the Lord is. So, we must be thankful.

Second, the function of the law is to lead us to Jesus Christ.

What would you do if, through God's law, you were to become more and more aware of your own sins? I think you will choose one of the two: Whether you hide your sins or humbly go to Jesus as you are by faith, relying on the precious blood of Jesus on the cross to receive the forgiveness of sins. If we hide our sins, we will fall deeper and deeper into sin. The Bible commands us not to covet. But if we commit the sin of covetousness and live by hiding it from God and others, all the more we will continue to commit the same sin over and over again. Then in the end we will not have a clear conscience and thus we will not regard sin as a sin and will feel no remorse. However, if we do not hide our sins when our sins are revealed through the word of God but go to Jesus in faith to receive the remission of sins and confess and repent of our sins, God not only forgives our sins but also will not remembers them. And He will deliver us (save) us from our sins. Which path are you choosing?

The apostle Paul says in Galatians 3:24 -"So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith." What does it mean? When we realize our sins through the law (Rom. 7:13; cf. 3:20), we realize that we cannot be justified by obeying the law. Therefore, we have no choice but to look to Jesus Christ. Why? The reason is that we can be justified only through faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:24). In the end, the law not only makes us realize our sins, but also makes us realize that the blood of Jesus on the cross is absolutely necessary. When we realize our sins through the law, we realize that we cannot be justified by God by obeying the law. How do you realize it? It is because we have to admit that we cannot obey God's word 100%, since we can be justified by God only when we obey the law completely. The law makes us feel helpless. It makes us realize that we cannot fully obey the law. Therefore, we have no choice but to look to Jesus, the one righteousness of God who has been revealed to us outside the law (3:21). Why? It is because only in Jesus there is forgiveness of our sins.

Let's look to Jesus. There is forgiveness and forgiveness only in Jesus Christ. There is only true salvation in Jesus. Although sin kills us because the commandment causes us to commit various sins within us through various kinds of covetousness, Jesus Christ brings us to life (v. 10). I hope and pray that we can be forgiven of our sins by looking to Jesus with faith and receive life by being delivered from our sins.

Third and last, the function of the law is that the law is a guideline for our life of faith to those of us who believe in Jesus.

The law not only makes us realize our sins and leads us to Jesus Christ, but also guides us who believe in Jesus on how to live. In other words, we learn how to live as believers by understanding God's will through the law. Among modern believers, it seems that there are people who often think that since the Old Testament of the law is the age of the old covenant, there is no need to keep the law of the Old Testament in the age of the new covenant, the New Testament. Why are they thinking this way? I think the cause is because they confuse the law with legalism. In other words, because we see the law and legalism as the same, we think that there are cases among us who view the law negatively or, worse, as sinful. What is legalism? Usually, when we think of legalism, we think of the Pharisees in the Bible. What's wrong with them? Are they hypocritical? The most fundamental problem of the Pharisees was that they were trying to be justified by obeying the Old Testament law. This is legalism. In other words, legalism is a faith based on self-righteousness. So, in legalism, one's dedication and effort to keep the prescribed rules and regulations are emphasized (Internet). However, there are two dangerous fruits of this self-righteous legalistic faith. It is none other than a sense of spiritual superiority and habitual guilt. Those who abide by the rules and regulations set forth in the law better than others have a sense of spiritual superiority, so they look down on those who are inferior to them. On the other hand, people who have not followed it well have a habitual guilt (Internet). We know that the legalism that makes us feel spiritually superior like the Pharisees is not the right faith. That is why we are wary of it. But the problem is that while we are wary of this legalism, we also tend to take the law lightly. Perhaps one of the reasons is the confusion between the rules and regulations of the Old Testament and the rules of the New Testament that continue to be followed and those that are no longer required. But what is clear is that the law is different from legalism. In other words, legalism is based on selfrighteousness to be justified by keeping the law. But the law is what we believers must keep and obey as those who have been justified by God's grace through faith in Jesus. This is faith based on the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

In Romans 7:7 and 13, Paul says this to the saints in Rome: "... Is the law sin? Certainly not! ..." (v. 7), "Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! ..." (v. 13). What does it mean? The law itself is not sinful. Rather, Paul is saying that the law is good. In particular, Paul says 'the law is holy, righteous and good' (v. 12).

(1) The law is holy.

Because God is holy, His Law (Word) is also holy. Through those holy words, we realize our unholiness, so we have no choice but to rely on this grace of Jesus Christ. Also, because of the Lord's grace, we must live a life of pursuing God's holiness by obeying God's holy word.

(2) <u>The law is righteous.</u>

The word righteous here means to be 'flawless and upright before God and man' (Park). God's Law (word) shows us the right way. As saints who have been justified through faith in Jesus, you and I have the responsibility to walk the right path, the path of righteousness that God's law shows us.

(3) The law is good.

Its meaning teaches us that we must do good works by obeying the law. Why do we have to obey the law with our hearts and do good deeds? The reason is that you and I are those who have been created anew in Jesus Christ "for good works" (Eph. 2:10). I hope and pray that by obeying the good law, we will see our good works and the world will glorify our Heavenly Father (Mt. 5:16).

"What a wretched man I am!"

[Romans 7:14-25]

Are you guarding your heart well? Are you guarding your heart well when Satan's thoughts try to come into your heart? There is a book called "Freedom From Sinful Thoughts" written by Pastor Heinrich Arnold, a Christian counseling pastor (Internet). In this book, the author emphasizes the importance of fighting and struggling against the evil thoughts that come into us countless times. The reason is because if we neglect and let them come into our thoughts, then the evil thoughts will grow and eventually bear the fruit of sinful actions. The moment we voluntarily enjoy evil thoughts, we are being manipulated by the forces of darkness without even realizing it. Because a change in behavior begins with a change in mind, we cannot enjoy true freedom in Christ unless freedom from sinful thoughts precedes it. Indeed, how will we fight and overcome evil thoughts in the realm of our thoughts? How can we win this fierce internal battle? The author is telling us not to focus on ourselves, but to focus instead on God and the victorious cross of Jesus. When we do that, we are confident that we can win this fight. What does it mean here to focus on God and focus on the victorious cross of Jesus? It implies that without God's help, we cannot win the inner battle in the realm of our thoughts with our own strength. Thinking more specifically, we must fight and overcome evil thoughts with good thoughts with faith in God and with the assurance of victory. Those good thoughts are God's thoughts and His words. Even knowing this, there are times when we lose our inner battle with ourselves and commit unwanted sins. How distress is it when we want to have God's thoughts in our hearts, obey God's word, and live according to God's will, but despite this, we see ourselves falling into Satan's delusion and committing sins because of evil thoughts?

In today's text, Romans 7:24, we can see that apostle Paul shares this confession in a letter to the saints in Rome in his inner struggle: "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" Why does Paul describe himself as a wretched man, that is, a miserable man? The reason is because of his "body of death" (v. 24). What is this "body of death"? This is "the body of sin" (6:6) and also refers to the "mortal body" (v. 12). This body of sin or mortal body is the body of the "old self" (v. 6), which follows its evil desires (v. 12) and "the sinful nature" (7:5). And there is a law that this body of the old self obeys, and that law is "the law of sin" (v. 23). This law of sin was causing Paul to commit unwanted sins (vv. 15, 16, 19, 20), so Paul is saying, "What a wretched man I am!" (v. 24) Now he laments in distress

as he sees himself fighting the law of sin to which the body of the old self obeys, and the law of God (v. 22), in which the new man in Jesus rejoices and obeys the inner man. Having already been justified through faith in Jesus, he became a new man, and his inner man delighted in the law of God (v. 22). But another sinful law within his members kept making him commit unwanted sins. Because of this, Paul suffered. In his heart, Paul wants to obey God's law and do good (vv. 19, 21), but in his flesh, which is the body of sin, he does not do the good he wants, but does the evil he does not want (v. 19). Looking at himself, he laments, "What a wretched man I am!" (v. 24).

Isn't this the lamentation of you and me? When we look at ourselves, like Paul, we want to do good by obeying God's law in our hearts. But as we see ourselves repeatedly committing unwanted sins, how many time are we disappointed and agonized over ourselves in distress. However, this battle with ourselves continues to this day. Even now, the law of God and the law of sin are fighting each other within us (v. 23). These two laws continue to clash within us even now. To give an example, what we want with our hearts after we believe in Jesus is to obey God's law, "Do not be covetous." And in our hearts (our inner man) we want to be satisfied (sufficient) only with Jesus (Phil. 4:11). However, unlike our hearts, our bodies keep shouting to our minds and hearts, 'Be covetous, do not be satisfied with Jesus alone, pursue Jesus + Alpha.' So sometimes, like the psalmist Asaph, we are envious (jealous) when we see the prosperity of the wicked (Ps. 73). Why are those wicked people healthy without pain and hardship (vv. 4-5), eating well and living well (v. 7)? However, while thinking to ourselves, 'Why do I have to live in poverty and suffering like this?' There are times when we feel that covetousness and greed arise within us as we see the wicked always peacefully adding to their wealth (v. 12). Even so, we know. Like Asaph, when we cannot resist the temptation of covetousness even though we know that we should not bear the sinful fruit of covetousness and commit a sin, there are times when we see ourselves committing a sin against God as this covetousness eventually grows (Jam. 1:15). At that time, we often suffer from remorse of conscience. Even so, we are thankful that when God loves us and punishes us with the discipline of love, we repent and turn around to ask God for forgiveness because of receiving that discipline. Then, like Asaph, God's blessing is to confess, "I have no one but you in heaven, and on earth I have no one to desire but you" (v. 25), realizing that there is only the true Jesus.

In the midst of these internal or spiritual battles, Paul concludes in Romans 7:17 and 20: "As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me" (v. 17), "Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it" (v. 20). Paul says that doing unwanted evil in the midst of his inner struggle is not him, but the sin that dwells in him. Of course, this should not be used as an excuse for us to sin in violation of God's law. Because we are responsible. One of those responsibilities is described in 2 Corinthians 7:1 - "Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." It is our responsibility to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit by perfecting holiness in the fear of God according to the word of God. We can't say that the sin that dwells in us after committing a sin is that we have committed such a sin, while not fulfilling this responsibility. However, the clear fact is that the sinful nature inherent in us, who have already become new people by believing in Jesus like Paul,

is making us commit unwanted sins. In the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 13, Article 2, "On Sanctification," says: "This sanctification is throughout in the whole man, yet imperfect in this life: there abideth still some remnants of corruption in every part: whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war; the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." In a word, even those who are born again commit sins (Park). So, when Paul saw himself doing evil (v. 19) that he did not want to do and hated (v. 15) because of the sin that dwelled in him, he lamented, "What a wretched man I am!" Indeed, what can we who are afflicted like Paul do? It is only to look to Jesus Christ, the Savior. We see Paul saying, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from the body of this death?" in verse 24 and in verse 25 "Thanks to be God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" How could the apostle Paul give thanks to God after lamenting, "What a wretched man I am!" in the midst of discouragement, frustration, and sorrow? It is because of Jesus Christ, the Savior who rescued him and saved from the body of death. Paul was able to give thanks to God through Jesus who died on the cross in order to destroy the body of death and the body of sin so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin (6:6). Although when we see our own weakness, wanting to obey God's law in our hearts, but committing sin against God in our flesh by following the law of sin, in discouragement, frustration, and despair, say, "What a wretched man I am!" and have no choice but to lament, we have no choice but to give thanks to God when we look at Jesus, who shed His blood on the cross to destroy our sinful body and rose from the dead to justify us, we have the assurance of salvation and a joyful eternal hope.

What is that joyous eternal hope? That is the glory of God (5:2). The glory of God that we hope for is the day when Jesus returns (1 Cor. 15:51), so that we are no longer dishonor (v. 43), in weakness (v. 43), but are imperishable with immorality (v. 54) and our lowly bodies will be like His glorious body (Phil. 3:21). We will participate in "the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). You and I will fully participate in the character of Jesus. God the Holy Spirit, who already dwells in us, is sanctifying us so that we who are justified may participate in the character of Jesus. Although we are not perfect now, on the day of Jesus' return, we will fully participate in the character of the Lord. We have no choice but to give thanks to God because God has given this sure and joyful hope to us who are justified through Jesus Christ. Hopefully, in the midst of these grateful hearts, let us all fight the spiritual warfare faithfully and well. Since we delight more and more in the law of God in our hearts, let us strive to do good by obeying it. And let's defeat the law of sin with the law of God. Let's overcome evil with good. Although the sinful nature within us delights in the law of God that we desire in our hearts and overcome evil with good by doing good.

Those who are in Christ Jesus

[Romans 8:1-11]

There may be hymns or gospel songs that you like. And you probably have a reason why you like that hymn or gospel song. Personally, when I see brothers and sisters in Christ whom I love around me suffering from hard work, I often exhort them by quoting the lyrics of the 2nd verse of the gospel song "We Will Keep Our Faith Alive": "We will live as God has planned though at times we may not understand. Many things we may not see, but our faith will help us believe. From His word we learn the truth; through His love we all are born a new. …." I don't know how much comfort and strength these lyrics are. Although it is difficult to fathom what the Lord intends, there are many times when I am personally strengthened and comforted by the fact that I am always in the Lord's will.

In the midst of this, I began to ponder a little in today's text, Romans 8:1, in the words of the apostle Paul, "those who are in Christ Jesus." As I thought 'What does it mean to say that I am indeed in Christ Jesus? I looked back at the book of Romans along with commentaries here and there to understand its meaning. It means, in one word, 'to be united with Christ Jesus' (6:5). In other words, 'I am in Christ Jesus' means 'I am united with Christ Jesus'. Then what does it mean to be united with Christ Jesus? It means that we are "into" Jesus (v. 3), and when Jesus died on the cross, our old self also died on the cross (v. 6) and when Jesus arose from the dead, we also rose again and became a new person (vv. 1-11). Therefore, for those who are in Christ Jesus, the death of Jesus replaces the penalty for our sins, and the resurrection of Jesus establishes our resurrection.

In today's text, Romans 8:1-11, the apostle Paul, writing a letter to the saints in Rome, says in one word, 'You are in Christ Jesus.' Then, who are "those who are in Christ Jesus" here? I would like to meditate on three things today, focusing on the main text.

First, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Look at Romans 8:1 – "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." What does it mean here that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus? In

order to understand this word, we need to know the meaning of the word "condemnation." The original Greek word for the word, "κατάκριμα," is a court term and refers to conviction (Park). We are the people who were condemned for Adam's transgression in Genesis (Rom. 5:16, 18). In other words, because of Adam's disobedience, his sin was imputed to all mankind (v. 12). And because we were all born in sin and live with our sins, God, the Judge, condemned us all in the court of law. In the end, we had no choice but to die forever (v. 21). However, Jesus, the second or last Adam, came to this earth and obeyed God's will until the death of the cross, so that all of us who believe in Jesus can now be justified (v. 16). In other words, the righteousness of Jesus was imputed to us who believed in Jesus, and we became righteous in God's sight (v. 19). Therefore, you and I, who have become righteous by believing in Jesus, can never be condemned. Why is there no condemnation for us who believe in Jesus? Paul explains why in Romans 8:2 - "because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death." The specific reason why there is no condemnation for us who believe in Jesus is that you and I have been set free from the law of sin and death. In other words, even though before we believed in Jesus, as slaves of sin (6:17), we sinned against God by offering our members to impurity and lawlessness, and in the end we had no choice but to die, but now, after we believe in Jesus by God's grace, we are no longer slaves of sin, but slaves of righteousness, not death, but eternal life. In other words, God the Holy Spirit, who has been living in us since we believed in Jesus, replaced the law that produced only sin and death with a new law. That new law is "the law of the Spirit of life" (8:2). The core of these two laws is that the law of sin and death is based on human merit, and the law of the Holy Spirit is based on grace. In other words, the Jews wanted to be justified by God through human merit by thoroughly keeping the law. We can also refer to this as the law of conduct. However, in Romans 3:27, Paul speaks of "a law of faith." It means that we can be justified by God only through faith in Jesus Christ. This law of faith is the law of grace. The reason is because even faith is a gift of God's grace. And this law of faith is "the law of the Spirit" (8:2). The reason is because the Holy Spirit has made us accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior through hearing and understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ. As a result, you and I have gained eternal life. How is this possible? How have you and I been set free from the law of sin and death? Look at today's text Romans 8:3-4: "For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit."

It was God who freed us from the law of sin and death (v. 3). It's never what we did. We are "powerless" (v. 3) and can never, on our own, free ourselves from the law of sin and death. We humans could not escape condemnation because of the law. The reason is that our corrupt humanity (meaning "sinful nature") is unable to practice the law (Park). Therefore, we can never escape the punishment of sin through the law, nor can we be justified (MacArthur). But God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, to die on the cross to deal with our sins. Jesus, who had no sin, was sent to this earth in the form of a sinful body and was condemned on our behalf by being nailed to the cross and died (Park). As a result, He fulfilled all the requirements of the law for us who believe in Jesus and for us who walk by the Holy Spirit. In other words, as a result of Jesus Christ being condemned in the flesh on behalf of sinners like us, we have been

justified objectively without any merit. In other words, we who are in Christ Jesus are justified and never condemned.

Second, those who are in Christ Jesus are those who walk according to the Spirit.

Look at Romans 8:4 - "in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit." We, who have been justified because Jesus Christ suffered the condemnation of the sinful nature on behalf of sinners, are never condemned, and we no longer walk according to the sinful nature, but according to the Spirit. What does it mean to walk not according to the sinful nature, but according to the Spirit? In a word, the saints (believers) who have become new people (new creations) by believing in Jesus do not follow their corrupt humanity and live the sinful lifestyle of the old self. Rather, it means that we walk according to the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ" (v. 9), that is, the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us. Although, as old self, before we believed in Jesus, we pursued the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, living a corrupt life and practicing lawlessness, but when we became new people in Jesus, we shouldn't no longer live like that. We should no longer live with the mind of sinful man (v. 6) and live according to the sinful nature (v, 5). The reason is because the sinful mind is hostile to God (v, 7). The sinful mind not only does not submit to God's law, but it cannot do so (v. 7). This is by no means the life of those who are in Jesus Christ. The life of those who are in Christ Jesus walk and live according to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ (v. 9). What kind of life is this? That life is a life that obeys the law of the Spirit of life (v. 2). In other words, a life lived according to the Holy Spirit refers to a life lived in obedience to God's law (v. 7). In this way, what must we do to live in obedience to God's law and the laws of the Holy Spirit? We must set our minds on the things of the Spirit (v. 5). In other words, in order to live in obedience to the laws of the Holy Spirit, we must think about the things of the Holy Spirit. All our thoughts, emotions, and wills must long for and pursue the things of the Holy Spirit. Then what is the things of the Holy Spirit? It refers to the will of God. Look at Romans 8:27 - "and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." This word teaches us that living according to God's will is to become a new person in Jesus Christ and live according to the indwelling Holy Spirit, that is, pursuing the things of the Holy Spirit. In other words, for our saints to live according to the Spirit is to live according to the Holy Spirit, and that is to live according to God's will. And what are the results of living according to God's will? Look at Romans 8:6 - "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace." Before believing in Jesus, we have thoughts of the sinful nature, plan for the works of the sinful nature, and the result of living according to the sinful nature is death. But when we, who are in Christ Jesus, walk and live according to the Holy Spirit, that is, when we yearn for God's will and live according to His will, the result is "life and peace" (v. 6). How is it? Are you really enjoying the life (eternal life) and peace that God gives you? If so, it is proof that you are following the Holy Spirit and living according to God's will. However, if the life (eternal life) and peace that God gives are not within you, the cause can be proof that you are not living according to God's will. However, if we are living according to God's will by following the Holy Spirit, we are surely living a life that pleases God (v. 8). Even after believing in Jesus, if we walk according to the sinful nature and commit corruption and lawlessness according to the desires and lusts of our flesh, then we are absolutely not pleasing God. However, if we live a life filled with the Holy Spirit, under the control of the Holy Spirit, and obeying the will of God, just as we overcome evil with good, and overcome the lusts of the flesh, we can please God. The Scripture says that those who live a life that pleases God in this way belong to are people of Christ, that is, people who belong to Christ (believers) (v. 9). We, who are in Christ Jesus, are people of Christ. Therefore, we must live according to the Holy Spirit. We must never live a sinful life under the domination of corrupt humanity by following the sinful nature. We must long for God's will and live by pursuing it. Therefore, we must live a life that pleases God.

Third and last, those who are in Christ Jesus have the hope of resurrection.

Look at Romans 8:11 – "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you." The apostle Paul, writing this epistle to the saints in Rome, is clearly telling us here in verse 11 that the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us. This Spirit refers to the Holy Spirit who dwells in us believers as the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Christ (v. 9). This Holy Spirit is the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead. In other words, the Holy Spirit who dwells in us is the Spirit of resurrection. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of resurrection, will also raise our mortal bodies, just as He raised Jesus from the dead according to the will of Heavenly Father.

You and I have no choice but to die someday. In other words, our bodies are bound to die someday. That is why the Scripture says that it is appointed for man to die once (Heb.9:27). That is why Ecclesiastes 7:2 says, "Because that is the end of every man, And the living takes it to heart." In this way, our bodies will die one day, but we have a clear and certain hope. It is the hope of resurrection. Just as Jesus was resurrected from the dead, so we in Christ Jesus will also be resurrected when Jesus returns to the world after the death of the body. How is this possible? How can the dead live again? It is because the Holy Spirit who resurrected Jesus dwells in us who believe in Jesus. The Scripture clearly says that the Holy Spirit of resurrection will give life to our mortal bodies (Rom. 8:11). The Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead will also bring our mortal bodies back to life. Sinners who are already destined to die forever, who have lived in sin while pursuing the work of the sinful nature in the thoughts of the sinful nature, hear and believe in the gospel of the death and resurrection of Jesus on the cross through God's undivided grace. As a result, God the Holy Spirit, who made us who were dead in our sins and trespasses live again and became a new creation, dwells in us in Christ Jesus and makes our mortal bodies live again on the day Jesus returns, putting on a glorious spiritual body and will enable us to live with the Lord forever in the eternal kingdom of heaven.

Past, present, and future blessing

[Romans 8:1-2, 14-18]

Among the blessings that God has given to us Christians in Jesus Christ, I heard the word through our church retired pastor last Wednesday prayer meeting that the three blessings shown in Romans 8:1-2 and 14-18. The three blessings are past blessing, present blessing, and future blessing. I want to meditate on these three blessings again.

First, what is the past blessing? It is that there is now no condemnation for us who are in Christ Jesus.

Look at Romans 8:1 - "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." The Scripture says that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. What does it mean? In order to understand this word, we need to know the meaning of the word "condemnation." The original Greek word for the word, "κατάκομα," is a court term and refers to conviction. We are the people who were condemned for Adam's transgression in Genesis (Rom. 5:16, 18). In other words, because of Adam's disobedience, his sin was imputed to all mankind (v. 12). And because we were all born in sin and live with our sins, God, the Judge, condemned us all in the court of law. In the end, we had no choice but to die forever (v. 21). However, Jesus, the second or last Adam, came to this earth and obeyed God's will until the death of the cross, so that all of us who believe in Jesus can now be justified (v. 16). In other words, the righteousness of Jesus was imputed to us who believed in Jesus, and we became righteous in God's sight (v. 19). Therefore, you and I, who have become righteous by believing in Jesus, can never be condemned. Why is there no condemnation for us who believe in Jesus? Paul explains why in Romans 8:2 - "because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death." The specific reason why there is no condemnation for us who believe in Jesus is that you and I have been set free from the law of sin and death. In other words, even though before we believed in Jesus, as slaves of sin (6:17), we sinned against God by offering our members to impurity and lawlessness, and in the end we had no choice but to die, but now, after we believe in Jesus by God's grace, we are no longer slaves of sin, but slaves of righteousness, not death, but eternal life. In other words, God the Holy Spirit, who has

been living in us since we believed in Jesus, replaced the law that produced only sin and death with a new law. That new law is "the law of the Spirit of life" (8:2). The core of these two laws is that the law of sin and death is based on human merit, and the law of the Holy Spirit is based on grace. In other words, the Jews wanted to be justified by God through human merit by thoroughly keeping the law. We can also refer to this as the law of conduct. However, in Romans 3:27, Paul speaks of "a law of faith." It means that we can be justified by God only through faith in Jesus Christ. This law of faith is the law of grace. The reason is because even faith is a gift of God's grace. And this law of faith is "the law of the Spirit" (8:2). The reason is because the Holy Spirit has made us accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior through hearing and understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ. As a result, you and I have gained eternal life. This is the blessing we received in the past in Christ Jesus.

Second, what is the present blessing? It is that we are being led by the Spirit of God.

Look at Romans 8:14 – "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Those who are in Christ Jesus are those who have received eternal life. God's love has been poured out through the Holy Spirit within us who have received eternal life (5:5). Therefore, we no longer have to fear the spirit of bondage, but have received the spirit of adoption, so we can cry out to God, "Abba, Father" (8:15). The indwelling Holy Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are children of God (v. 16). We are God's children and God's heirs (v. 17). Therefore, we are now being led by the Spirit of God (v. 14). Now the Holy Spirit is guiding us down the narrow path. Although all those who have received the fearful spirit of bondage have entered through the great gate that leads to destruction and are walking on the broad road, we, the children of God who have received the spirit of adoption, have entered through the narrow gate following the guidance of the Holy Spirit and are walking on the narrow path (Mt. 7:13, Lk. 13:24). The narrow path is the path Jesus walked. The narrow way is the way of the cross. The narrow way is the way of suffering. The Holy Spirit is now making us suffer with Jesus in order to be glorified with Him (Rom. 8:17). This is God's grace. Look at Philippians 1:29 – "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake." Those who have received the spirit of the fearful servant not only do not believe in Jesus, but also cannot believe in Him. Therefore, not only do they not suffer for Jesus' sake, but they cannot suffer. And they do not know that it is grace to suffer for Jesus' sake. However, those of us who have received eternal life in Christ Jesus not only know that believing in Jesus is God's total grace, but also that suffering for Jesus is God's great grace. Therefore, like Paul, we not only want to know that we are participating in the sufferings of Christ (Phil. 3:10), but also want to bear on our body the mark of Jesus (Gal. 6:17). Therefore, we suffer with the gospel according to the power of God (2 Tim.1:8). Also, we suffered and endured for doing good (1 Pet. 2:20). We suffer for the kingdom of God (2 Thess. 1:5). When we are suffering, we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words (Rom. 8:26). Therefore, the Holy Spirit enables us to endure our suffering (2 Cor. 1:6). Furthermore, the Holy Spirit enables us to rejoice in participating in the sufferings of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 4:13). This is the present blessing we are currently enjoying in Christ Jesus.

Third and last, what is the future blessing? It is the glory that will be revealed to us in the future.

Look at Romans 8:18 - "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." The present sufferings that apostle Paul is talking about here refers to the sufferings we must suffer together in order to be glorified with Christ as children of God and joint heirs with Christ (v. 17). Then, what suffering do we have to go through with Jesus? That is persecution (Mt. 5:10-12, Jn. 15:21, 2 Tim. 3:12). The persecution we suffer because of Jesus is the suffering that you and I must endure together with Jesus. For example, the persecution means that we are hated by the world (Jn. 15:18-21), that we are being insulted by the world because of Jesus (Mt. 5:11), and that people falsely say all kinds of evil against us because of Jesus (v. 11), etc. Why do you and I, the children of God, have to suffer these hardships? Why? Apostle John says: "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you" (Jn. 15:19). In other words, the reason we have to suffer is because we do not belong to the world, but rather are chosen by God from the world. The reason we must suffer is because we are God's children. In other words, since we are God's children and co-heirs with Christ, we must suffer together in order to be glorified with Him (Rom 8:16-17). These present suffering is not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us (v. 18). Why is Paul writing a letter to the Roman saints like this? What is its purpose? John Calvin says: 'Here the apostle is not comparing suffering and the worthiness of glory but comparing it with the size of glory (to appear), so as to lighten the weight of the cross and to make the hearts of the faithful saints persevere' (Calvin). Therefore, when we suffer because of Jesus, we can lighten the weight of the cross by looking forward to the glory that will be revealed in the future. Then, what glory will be revealed to us in the future that cannot be compared with our present suffering? We can think of it in 2 ways:

(1) The glory to be revealed to us in the future is to be set free from slavery to corruption.

Look at Romans 8:21 – "that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God." Paul writes a letter to the saints in Rome, exhorting them to persevere in the current suffering while talking about the anxious longing of the creation (v. 19). Here, "creation" refers to all things in the world, excluding humans. And Paul says that the creation eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God. Why does the creation look forward to the revealing of the sons of God? The reason is that when God's children participate in God's glory, creation will also be set free from the slavery to corruption" (v. 21). This means that just as you and I, the children of God, will be completely liberated from sin and its effects when Jesus returns, all things (creatures) in the world will also be liberated from the slavery to corruption. Just as sin entered the world through the first Adam's disobedience and eventually all sinned and resulted in death (5:12), the creation was also cursed because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;

..." The creatures that were cursed because of the first Adam's sin, subjected to futility (v. 20), and all creation groaned and suffered the pains of childbirth together until now (v. 22). Among such groaning and suffering, there is something that creation eagerly awaits, and that is, on the day of Jesus' return, the Lord will make all things new (Rev. 21:5). No longer will all things be under the curse of the first Adam. Being freed from that curse, creation will no longer be enslaved to corruption. With this hope, the creation groans and endures and perseveres even in pain. This is by no means the hope of only the creatures (of all things in the world). When the Lord renews all things, not only the creation but also you and I, the children of God, will be freed from death, the result of sin, and will no longer be enslaved to death. Not only will we enjoy complete freedom from sin, but we will enjoy eternal freedom from the effects of sin, death. This is the freedom of the glory of the children of God (v. 21) that we, in part, now enjoy. Therefore, according to Paul's admonition, we must persevere in the present sufferings while looking forward to the glory that will appear in the future, which is incomparable to our present sufferings.

(2) The glory to be revealed to us is the redemption of our body.

Look at Romans 8:23 – "And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body." It is not just all things in the world groaning and waiting for the return of Jesus. Even we ourselves groan inwardly because of our sins and wait for the return of Jesus. The reason is that when Jesus comes again, we will enjoy the glory of resurrection, which is the redemption of our body, that is, the adoption of complete liberation from sin. This is the glory that you and I, the children of God, will enjoy in the future. This is the glory of God (5:2). The glory of God that we hope for is that on the day of Jesus' return, we will be suddenly transformed (1 Cor. 15:51), no longer dishonored (v. 43), no longer weak (v. 43), imperishable and immortality (v. 54) and our body will be conform with the body of His glory (Phil. 3:21). Apostle Peter refers to this as the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). Our sure and joyful hope is to fully participate in the character of Jesus, who is God. God the Holy Spirit who already dwells in us is sanctifying us who are justified so that we may participate in the character of Jesus. Although we are not perfect now, on the day Jesus returns, we will fully participate in the character of the Lord. This is the future blessing we will enjoy in Christ Jesus.

A debtor (1)

[Romans 8:12-17]

What do you think of when you hear the word "debtor"? When we think of "a debtor," we can usually think of a person who has borrowed money and is in a position to pay it back. As an example, we can take Matthew 18:24. When a king was accounting with his servants, one "debtor" of ten thousand talents (v. 24) had nothing to pay (v. 25), so he fell on his knees and bowed before the king and said, 'Be patient with me and I will pay you back everything' (v. 26). Then the master of the servant had compassion on him and let him go and forgave the debt (v. 27). But the servant whose debt of ten thousand talents was forgiven met another servant who owed him a hundred denarius and grabbed him and began to choke him and said "Pay back what you own me! (v. 28). His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, "Be patient with me, and I will pay you back" (v. 29). But he refused and instead of forgiving the debt, he put him in prison to pay the debt (v. 30). At that time, the other servant went to the master and reported everything (v. 31). The master called the servant whose debt was forgiven and said, 'You wicked servant, I canceled all that dept of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' (vv. 32-33) In anger, he imprisoned the servant to the prison guards to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed (v. 34). What is the point of this parable? The answer is verse 35: "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." Just as God forgave all our sins in Jesus Christ, it is a lesson for us to live a life of forgiveness.

We are debtors. God forgave (indemnified) all our sins. Our original sins, past sins, present sins, and future sins have all been forgiven by the precious blood shed on the cross of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must live by forgiving those who sin against us, just as God has forgiven us. But why are we not forgiving? The reason is that we lack the sense of debtor. The more we live a life of faith, the more clearly, we must have the sense of debtor. In other words, the closer we come to the holy God, the more our sins will be exposed, and the more our sins are exposed, the more desperately we will feel the need for the shed blood of Jesus on the cross. And the more we receive God's forgiveness in repentance, the more we will go deeper into God's grace. The more this happens, the clearer our sense of debtor will become. In doing so, we cannot help but praise the hymn "I Know not Why God's Wondrous Grace": "I know not why God's wondrous grace To me He hath made Known, Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love Redeemed me for His own." The problem is that we cannot enter deeply into this grace, so we lack the sense of being a debtor, and because we lack this sense of being a debtor, we think, 'I am still of some use.' It is that God is using useless people with His full grace. Therefore, we must go deeper and deeper into the grace that God bestows on us in Christ Jesus. We need to realize more and more how much God has forgiven our debt. Then we will be able to live like debtors.

We must heed the message of the lesson to live like a debtor.

Look at Romans 8:12 – "Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it." Here, "we have an obligation" means "a debtor" in the original Greek. The word "debtor" has two possible meanings, one meaning "one who owes money" and the other meaning "one obligated" that applies to today's text. In a word, "the debtor" refers to the "he is under obligation" (Gal. 5:3) as the one who is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1). This word is already used by Paul in Romans 1:14 – "I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish." So, as a debtor, Paul wanted to go all the way to Rome to preach the gospel (v. 15) because he was focusing on preaching the gospel, which was his duty. And he said in 1 Corinthians 9:16-17: "For if I preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me." In today's text, Romans 8:12, Paul gives us a lesson on how to live as Roman saints and as debtors. As debtors centered on today's text, I would like to first think about one of the two ways we should live. I hope and pray that we all live like the debtors mentioned in the Scripture.

First, as debtors, we must not live according to the sinful nature.

Look at Romans 8:12 – "Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it." Here, when we see that Paul said, "it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it," we can see that he is thinking of the internal or spiritual warfare mentioned in Romans 7. In other words, as Paul said, "For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members" (7:22-23), he is admonishing against the law of sin following the sinful nature in the spiritual battle, not to live according to the sinful nature. Why is he saying not to live according to the sinful nature (8:13). As we have already meditated on, "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what the nature desires" (v. 5), but the end of the mind of sinful man is "death" (v. 6). Therefore, Paul is exhorting the saints in Rome not to surrender to the sinful nature and live according to it, because living according to the sinful nature will result in death.

How does 'living according to the sinful nature' that the Scripture speaks of live here? In a word, living according to the sinful nature means living by sinning. And living if we sin means living while disobeying God's laws (commandments, words). For example, living according to the sinful nature disobeys the twofold commandment of Jesus, which is God's law, 'Love God and love your neighbor' by not loving God but to love the world and not to love one's neighbor but to hate one's neighbor. This is a life of sinning against God. How is it? As we listen to this word, do we have the thought, 'Ah, I have lost my sinful nature and am living according to the sinful nature'? Or do we think, 'I am living my life obeying God's law by overcoming the sinful nature in my internal battle'?

There are two kinds of laws in us who believe in Jesus. One is the law of God according to our heart, and the other is the law of sin according to our sinful nature. In other words, we serve the law of God with our hearts and the law of sin with our sinful nature (7:25). Now these two laws are fighting within us (vv. 22-23). But the problem is that these two laws collide within us and fight each other, and we lose to the sinful nature and live according to the sinful nature. No Christian would ever want to live like this. If you and I are true saints, no one would ever want to give up on the sinful nature and live according to the sinful nature. But the question is, why do we sometimes lose to the sinful nature and live according to the sinful nature? Why do we suffer from guilt after losing the spiritual battle? Why do we keep fighting against sin and living in a sense of defeat, thinking to ourselves, 'I will never be able to fight this sin and win'? What could be the cause? The reason is that we are not filled with the Holy Spirit. What is being filled with the Holy Spirit? Many Christians seem to think of being filled with the Holy Spirit as a gift of the Spirit, a miracle, or a frenzied immersion in prayer, or an experience of ecstasy. But that is not the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Being filled with the Holy Spirit refers to the state of being filled with the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Christ. It refers to the state of being controlled by the Spirit of Christ. If we are controlled by the Spirit of Christ, we will obey the words (commands) of Christ, and we will live if we are led by the words. A Christian who is filled with the Holy Spirit lives in complete submission to the Lord. A life filled with the Holy Spirit is a life of listening to the voice of the Lord in close fellowship with the Lord and fully obeying the word of the Lord. In this way, the Spirit-filled Christian lives by putting to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit of Christ (8:13). What is Paul talking about here? A Christian who is filled with the Holy Spirit is guided by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God (v. 14), and lives as a servant of God, obeying God's laws (commands). A Spirit-filled Christian never lives by committing the same sin over and over again, obeying the law of sin as a slave to sin. Pointing to these Christians, the Scripture says, 'They are the sons of God' (v. 14).

The debtors are the sons of God. And the Son of God is led by the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. And Christians who are led by the Holy Spirit never keep on living according to the sinful nature. Rather, they live by putting to death the misdeeds of the body by the Spirit of Christ. Let us all live like debtors.

A debtor (2)

[Romans 8:12-17]

How should we live as debtors?

First, as debtors, we must not live according to the sinful nature.

In a word, as debtors, we should not live according to the sinful nature (Rom. 8:12). We must live by putting to death the misdeeds of the body by the Spirit of Christ (v. 13). We must live as servants of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God (v. 14), obeying God's laws (commands). The Scripture says that these Christians are "sons of God" (v. 14).

Second, as debtors, we must live like children of God.

Look at Romans 8:16 – "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." What does it mean to live like children of God?

(1) God's children call God "Abba, Father."

Look at Romans 8:15 – "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'" Last week, while I was at home preparing a sermon with the door locked, my youngest daughter, Karis, knocked on the door. I said to her 'I am busy and would not open the door.' Then she pushed the card through the gap under the door. So, after she left the door, I opened the envelope and read the card inside. On the cover, she wrote "Friend" referring to me, and then wrote "I love you Dad". And when I looked at the contents of the card, she drew a picture that I was sitting in a chair in front of my desk, and she drew a computer in front of me. Perhaps my child imagined and drew me preparing a sermon. She wrote a note on the picture. She wrote with her regretful

feeling, saying, 'My dad is so nice to me. I love him and I really want to help him, but I can't help him.' Haha. When I read Karis wrote "I love you Dad" and saw her drawing of me, I felt a little bit how much my daughter loves me as a father in her own way. At that time, my heart was grateful and happy. I thought about how Heavenly Father would feel. Because Jesus Christ died on the cross and was resurrected, those who believe in Jesus no longer have the spirit of sin within us (cf. Jn. 8:34-36) but have received the spirit of adoption (Rom.8:15). Now, as children of God, we cry out to God, "Abba, Father." I think about how Heavenly Father will feel. In particular, I imagine how happy our Heavenly Father will be when we go to God and say 'Abba, Father, I love you with all my heart and soul' and obey His commandments (Jn. 14:21). However, if we, who believe in Jesus and have the spirit of adoption, the Holy Spirit, dwells in us, still enslaved to sin as we were in our old self, and thus we are living in fear of judgment and death, how will our Heavenly Father feel? Although our old self died on the cross with Jesus, if we are still living the life of the old self, committing the same sins over and over and not enjoying a life freed from sin, how would Heavenly Father feel? We will grieve God the Holy Spirit and our Heavenly Father. As debtors, we are those who are guided by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God. As God's children, we no longer receive the spirit of slavery but rather the spirit of adoption. Therefore, we cry out to God, "Abba, Father," with total trust in Heavenly Father.

(2) <u>The testimony of the Holy Spirit appears in the life of living like children of God.</u>

Look at Romans 8:16 - "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God." Indeed, how does the Holy Spirit who dwells in us testify that we are God's children in our lives, who have become God's children by believing in Jesus? According to Pastor John MacArthur, the Roman custom at the time of Paul required seven reputable (respected) witnesses for adoption to be legally binding (MacArthur). God has adopted us as His adopted children, and the one who proves this fact is the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. How the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, proves that we are children of God by bearing the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23) and supplying the necessary power for our spiritual service (Acts 1: 8) (MacArthur). If we are children of God, surely the Holy Spirit bears (inwardly) the fruits of the Spirit, 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control' (Gal. 5:22-23) and the fruit will appear through our lives. Also, the Holy Spirit inwardly sanctifies us and makes us holy. Therefore, true children of God must have the work of sanctification of the Holy Spirit appear in their lives. Also, if we are children of God, the Holy Spirit will give us power to do the will of our Heavenly Father. For example, the Holy Spirit will make us do the work of spiritual service through us, such as preaching the gospel and doing good deeds, which is the will of Heavenly Father.

(3) God's children suffer with Christ.

Look at Romans 8:17 – "and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him." Those who believe in Jesus are not only children of God, but also heirs of God. Here, "heir" means "one who will receive an inheritance" (Park). Then, what is the inheritance that you and I, the children of God, will receive? It is eternal life. Look at Titus 3:7 – "so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." And the inheritance we, as children of God, will receive is "the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2). As those who receive these amazing blessings, the Scripture says that we must suffer together with Christ. Why? Why do we have to suffer? The reason is to be glorified with Christ (v. 17). We must suffer together with Christ on earth in order to enjoy the glory of resurrection and a glorious eternal life in heaven (Park).

I hope and pray that all of us, as debtors, do not live according to the sinful nature, but, like children of God, cry out to God, "Abba, Father," experience the testimony of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and receive the suffering with joy in order to be glorified together with Christ.

The glory that will be revealed to us

[Romans 8:18-25]

Chapter 17 of the Westminster Confession of Faith, "On the Perseverance of the Saints," says: "They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved." This doctrine is that those whom God has chosen by His eternal providence and regenerated by the Holy Spirit will never lose their status as God's children because they are protected by God's grace. This means that such people will not lose their qualifications for adoption, their status as righteous will not be taken away, and their souls will not be destroyed (Jn. 10:27-29; Rom. 8:35-39; Phil 1:6). John 10:28, one of the New Testament sources for this, says: "and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand." Salvation once received can never be taken away. Those who are chosen because God loves them endure to the end and gain eternal salvation by the unchangeableness of the decree of election that flows out of Heavenly Father's free gift and unchanging love. Nevertheless, because of the temptations of Satan and the world, the prevalence of corruption remaining in them, and their laziness in their means of self-preservation. They fall into heinous sins, and sometimes remain in them for a while. As a result, they incur the wrath of God, grieve His Spirit, rob some of their grace and comfort, harden their hearts, bruise their consciences, hurt and insult others, which incurs temporary punishment for itself (Internet). In the end, God will allow you and me to enter into the glory that will be revealed in the future by His unchanging love and unchanging decree of choice. Until then, we must persevere with patience, rejoicing in hope in the midst of tribulation.

In today's text Romans 8:18, Paul writes a letter to the saints in Rome and speaks of "the glory that is to be revealed in us." I would like to meditate on this word in three ways.

First, the glory that is to be revealed to us cannot be compared with the sufferings we are experiencing at the present time.

Look at Romans 8:18 - "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to

be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." The present sufferings that Paul is talking about here refers to the sufferings that we must suffer together in order to be glorified with Christ as children of God and joint heirs with Christ (v. 17). Then, what suffering do we have to go through with Jesus? That is persecution (Mt.5:10-12, Jn. 15:21, 2 Tim. 3:12). The persecution we suffer because of Jesus is the suffering that you and I must endure together with Jesus. For example, the persecution means that we are hated by the world (Jn. 15:18-21), that we are insulted by the world, and that the world falsely say all kinds of evil against us because of Jesus (Mt. 5:11). Why do we, the children of God, have to go through these kinds of sufferings? Why? The apostle John says: "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you" (Jn. 15:19). In other words, the reason we have to suffer is because we do not belong to the world, but rather are chosen by God from the world. Paul is saying that the reason we must suffer is because we are God's children. In other words, since we are God's children and joint heirs with Christ, we must suffer with Him in order to be glorified with Him (Rom. 8:16-17). These present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed to us (v. 18). Why is Paul writing a letter to the Roman saints like this? What is its purpose? Apostle Paul is not comparing the worthiness of suffering and glory here but comparing it with the size of the glory that will appear in the future, so that the weight of the cross will be lightened and the hearts of the faithful believers will be able to persevere (Calvin). I hope and pray that when you and I are suffering for Jesus, the heaviness of the cross can be lightened by looking forward to the glory that will be clearly revealed in the future.

Second, the glory that will be revealed to us is to be set free from slavery to corruption.

Look at Romans 8:21 - "that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God." Paul writes a letter to the saints in Rome, admonishing them to persevere in the present suffering and coming to verse 19, he talks about the anxious longing for the creation. Here, "the creation" refers to all things in the world other than human beings, and Paul says that the anxious longing for this creation waits eagerly is for the revealing of the sons of God. Why does the creation look forward to the revealing of the sons of God? The reason is that when God's children participate in God's glory, creation will also be set free from its slavery to corruption (v. 21). This means that just as you and I, the children of God, will be completely liberated from sin and its effects when Jesus returns, all things in the world (creation) will also be liberated from its slavery to corruption. Just as sin entered the world through the first Adam's disobedience and eventually all sinned and resulted in death (5:12), creation was also cursed because of one man's transgression. Look at Genesis 3:17b-18a: "... Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you" The creation that was cursed because of the first Adam's sin, "subjected to futility" (Rom.8:20), and the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now (v. 22). Among such groaning and suffering, there is something that creation eagerly awaits, and that is, on the day of Jesus' return, the Lord will make all things new (Rev. 21:5). No longer will all things be under the curse of the first Adam. Being freed from that curse, we will no longer be enslaved to corruption. With this hope, the creation groans, endures even in the pains. This is by no means the wish of only the creatures (of all things in the world). When the Lord renews all things, not only the creation but also you and I, the children of God, will be freed from death, the result of sin, and will no longer be enslaved to death. Not only will we enjoy complete freedom from sin, but we will enjoy eternal freedom from the effects of sin, death. This is the freedom of the glory of the children of God that we, in part, now enjoy. Therefore, according to Paul's admonition, we must persevere in our present sufferings while looking forward to the glory that will be revealed in the future, which is incomparable to our present sufferings.

Third and last, the glory that will be revealed to us is the redemption of our body.

Look at Romans 8:23 – "And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body." It is not just all things in the world groaning and waiting for the return of Jesus. Even we groan inwardly because of our sins and wait for the return of Jesus. The reason is because when Jesus comes again, we will be adopted children of God who will be completely freed from sin. That is, because we will enjoy the glory of the resurrection, the redemption of our body. This is the glory that you and I, the children of God, will enjoy in the future. This is "the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2). The glory of God that we hope for is the day of Jesus' return, when we are suddenly transformed (1 Cor. 15:51), will be no longer dishonored (v. 43), no longer weak (v. 43), but will be imperishable and immortal (v. 54) and the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory (Phi. 3:21). Apostle Peter refers to this as "the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). It is our sure and joyful hope to fully participate in the character of Jesus. Although we are not perfect now, on the day of Jesus' return, we will fully participate in the character of Jesus. Although we are not perfect now, on the day of Jesus' return, we will fully participate in the character of the Lord. This sure and joyful hope has been given to you and me by God through Jesus Christ.

What should we who live with this hope do? What should we do as we hope and look forward to the incomparable glory of God, the glory of resurrection, which will be revealed to us in the future? Just as we have been saved through hope, we must wait patiently while hoping in faith. Look at Romans 8:24-25: "For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it." We "already" believed in Jesus Christ by God's totally grace, were forgiven of all sins, were justified, and saved. Nevertheless, as we live in this world that is enslaved to corruption, we cannot but groan because of sin and its effect, death, as we fight with sin. The reason is that we are "not yet" saved. In other words, because we have not yet been glorified, we are fighting an internal, spiritual battle like Paul while living in this wilderness-like world (Rom. 7). However, when Jesus returns to earth, we will be glorified and will no longer have to fight spiritual battles. The reason is that we will have full participation in the glory of God. Therefore, we must wait patiently while looking forward to the glory of God, the glory of resurrection, which will appear in the future even in the midst of this present suffering. Let us all be patient and endure.

I hope and pray that you and I will be happy in hope.

Those who love God

[Romans 8:26-30]

C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), one of the greatest Christian apologists of the 20th century, said in his book "The Four Loves": 'To love is to be weak. Love anything. Then your heart will be troubled and probably broken. If you want to keep your heart intact, don't give it to anyone. Avoid all complex relationships and keep them safe in the box of your selfishness. But even in the safe box it will change. It will not be broken, but it will seldom break and become something incomprehensible' (Internet). What do you think of this word? I personally agree with Lewis. In particular, I wholeheartedly agree with the saying that to love is to be weak. I think that loving people in human relationships, such as husband and wife relationships at home, relationships between father and son, and relationships between friends, brothers, and sisters, can make our hearts suffer or break. So, I also think that to love is to make ourselves weaker and weaker. However, if we don't like being weak, we don't want to be hurt or broken, and if we keep our loving heart safely in the box of selfishness, then of course our heart won't be broken, but also, it's hard to break and it's hard to understand. But honestly, when I look deep inside myself, God's love has been poured into my heart (Rom. 5:5), and I know that I have to live a life of loving my neighbors with that love. Sometimes, in the midst of suffering and pain, there are times when I want to hide the heart of love in a box called selfishness. But looking at it, I see that my heart is seldom broken and is changing into something I can't understand. How can we stop our hearts from changing like this? I think there is only one way. It is to love God and love our neighbor according to the commandments of Jesus. Because we love endlessly, when we seek change, we can prevent our own deterioration. Therefore, we must choose, resolve, and devote ourselves to love God and love our neighbors today as well. Even though we ourselves are broken, afflicted, and weak, we must choose to love and walk the path of that love.

In today's text Romans 8:28, the apostle Paul speaks of "those who love God": "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are

called according to His purpose." Who are those who love God Paul is talking about here? They are "those who are called according to His purpose" (v. 28). And those who are called according to God's purpose refer to those whom God foreknew (v. 29) and those whom God predestined (v. 30). In other words, they are the ones who have been called according to God's purpose, and they are the ones whom God loves and cares for in advance [Ref.: Ps.1:6, Hos.13:5, Am. 3:2, Mt.7:23 (Park)]. Those whom God chose before the foundation of the world were saved (effective or special calling) and became "saints" (Rom. 1:7) by allowing them to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ (general calling) and believing in Jesus Christ. They are the called according to God's purpose, and they are the ones who love God love God because God first loved them.

God loves those who love Him. How do we know this? I hope and pray that we will experience God's love while meditating on two things, centered on the words of today's text Romans 8:26-30.

First, God the Holy Spirit is interceding for those who love God.

Look at Romans 8:26b and 27b: "... but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words ... because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." The Holy Spirit is still praying for those who love God, that is, for the saints who are called according to His purpose. Indeed, how is the Holy Spirit praying for you and me who love God?

(1) The Holy Spirit Himself intercedes for us "with groanings too deep for words."

Look at Romans 8:26 – "In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." Why is the Holy Spirit Himself interceding for you and me with deep groanings that cannot be expressed in human words? The reason is because we are weak (v. 26). Because we are weak and do not know what to pray to God as we ought, the Holy Spirit Himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groans (v. 26). In other words, because we are spiritually ignorant due to sin and corruption and do not know how to pray to God, the Holy Spirit is interceding for us. God the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of adoption within us, not only inspires us to pray by calling God "Abba, Father" (v. 15), but also prays for us in our hearts (Park). Hebrews 7:25 says that Christ, as the eternal High Priest in heaven, always lives to make intercession for us.

(2) The Holy Spirit intercedes for us "according to the will of God."

Look at Romans 8:27 – "and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." The Holy Spirit is interceding "according to the will of God" for you and me. What does "the will of God"

mean here? It points to the glory that will be revealed to us in the future. More specifically, the Holy Spirit is pleading for "the redemption of our body" (v. 23). In order to obtain the glory of the redemption of our body, that is, the resurrection, the Holy Spirit is still interceding for us instead of us. Only the creation and God's children groan (v. 22) and do not wait for the glory to be revealed (vv. 23, 25). Even the Holy Spirit Himself pleads with groanings unspeakable (v. 26) for the redemption of our body, the glory of which we shall appear. In this way, God the Holy Spirit prays for you and me, those who love God, with groanings that cannot be expressed. If so, how could this prayer not be answered? Clearly, Heavenly Father is answering this prayer of the Holy Spirit and will answer in the future, so that the salvation of the weak me and you will be accomplished forever.

Second, God loves those who love Him, and all things work together for good.

Look at Romans 8:28 - "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." When Paul wrote a letter to the saints in Rome, he said, "we know," but do you really know it? Do you really believe that God will make all things work together for good to those who love Him, to you who are the called according to His purpose? What does "all things to work together for good" mean here? It means that God orchestrates everything that happens in our lives (even suffering, temptation, and sin) in His providence to achieve our momentary and eternal benefits (MacArthur). In other words, God brings together everything that happens in our lives so that it is beneficial to our salvation in the end. So Augustine said: 'Even the sins of the saints cannot be harmed but will be helpful to our salvation through God's mighty rule' (Prov. 16:4) (Park). Our God is a good God. Therefore, God has no choice but to make everything work together for good in our lives, the children of God whom He loved and chose. Therefore, you and I, who are called according to God's will, must taste and know that God is good (Ps. 34:8). Paul, who had tasted the goodness of God, was able to be sure that all things work together for good to those who love God as he writes a letter to the saints in Rome. It is because he believed in the immutability of God's unchanging love and the decree of election. In other words, Paul was convinced that God loved and worked in the lives of His children whom He chose before the foundation of the world to finally save us. That is why he used all the verbs in the past tense, saying that God "foreknew" (Rom. 8:29) and "predestined", justified, and glorified God (vv. 29, 30). In other words, Paul used all the verbs here in the past to show that the future salvation of the elect would be certain (Park). He was convinced that God foreknew and predestinated people by calling them to believe in the gospel, counting them as righteous only through the merits of Christ, and eventually resurrecting them on the day of Jesus' second coming to make them partakers of the Lord's glory. Those whom God loves, that is, those who are chosen by God, must be saved to the end. Why? The reason is never with us. The reason is God. In other words, because God loves me and you, God will complete our salvation. God will glorify us who love Him in the future.

God loves you. He loves you even to the point of crucifying His only begotten Son, Jesus, to die on the cross. Therefore, even today, the Holy Spirit who dwells in the saints who have been justified by believing in Jesus is praying for you with inexpressible groans according to God's will. Also, all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. By feeling and experiencing this love, I hope and pray that we will love the Lord more and more.

"If God is for us"

[Romans 8:31-39]

God loves me and you. Because of His love, God chose us in advance (predestination) (Rom.8:29, 30), who knew in advance (foreknowledge) (v. 29). And God called us, the chosen ones, through the gospel of Jesus Christ, and made us believe in Jesus amidst the inspiration, influence, and works of the Holy Spirit, and thus called us righteous (justification). And God has given us who have been called righteous eternal hope. That eternal hope is the glory that will be revealed to us in the future (v. 18), the redemption of our body (v. 23), and the glory of resurrection. In other words, God will glorify us in the future (v. 30). This is God's will for us who love Him (v. 27). As God accomplishes this will, God the Holy Spirit also dwells in us who believe in Jesus and continues to pray with inexpressible groanings for His will to be fulfilled (vv. 26-27). In this way, if the Holy Spirit personally prays for God's will to be done with inexpressible groans, will not Heavenly Father answer that prayer? Paul was confident that God's will would be done. Therefore, he wrote a letter to the saints in Rome with this conviction and said in the first half of Romans 8:31 - "What then shall we say to these things? ..." Because Paul knew God's unchanging and faithful love, he said that we have nothing to say in saving His children whom God loves and chooses. Why? Why did Paul say that neither he nor the saints in Rome have anything to say? The reason was because he was sure (because there was no doubt at all) that God would definitely accomplish what He intended and planned for salvation. In this conviction, Paul goes on to Romans 8:31b and says: "... If God is for us, who is against us?" Here in the Korean Bible, "If" is written, so it can be heard as saying that God may or may not be for us. Rather, it is more appropriate to translate 'Since God is for us' (MacArthur). Today, I would like to receive three lessons about what kind of assurance we must live in, "If God is for us," that is, God is for you and me. I hope and pray that you and I will live with these 3 assurances.

First, since God is for us, we must live with the assurance of victory.

Look at Romans 8:31 - "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is

against us?" Paul is saying, 'Who will be against us?' since God is for us. This does not mean that we do not have adversaries. The Scripture clearly says that we, the children of God, have an adversary. Our adversary is "Satan." In Hebrew, the word "Satan" means "the adversary." Satan opposes God and also opposes God's people, me and you who believe in Jesus. So the apostle Peter exhorts: "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith," Obviously, Satan exists. And Satan prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Who will he devour? It is me and you who believe in Jesus, the people of God. In other words, Satan is prowling around to devour us who belong to God. And he is trying in any way to seduce us and make us commit sins. What should we do? Of course, we must resist Satan. And in order to resist Satan, we must be sober and awake. How can we resist Satan while sleeping spiritually? In order to resist Satan, we must stand firm in our faith. In what faith must we stand firm? Since God is for us, we must engage in the spiritual battle with the conviction (belief) that God will surely fight Satan and give us victory. How can we have this assurance of victory? The answer is today's text, as Romans 8:32 says: "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" The reason why we can have the assurance of victory is because God loved us and did not spare Jesus, His only begotten Son, and gave us up to die on the cross. We can have the assurance of victory because of God who loves us even to the point of allowing His only begotten Son to die on the cross. The more we feel God's love, the more we can have the assurance of victory with complete trust in God. In particular, when we look with faith to the victorious Jesus who overcame Satan and death on the cross, we can have the assurance of victory. That God even gave His only begotten Son, Jesus, for our salvation. 'Will He not freely give us everything along with his Son (Jesus)?' (v. 32) Won't God give us everything so that we can win our spiritual warfare? Since God, who gives us everything as gifts, loves us and chooses us and justifies us, how can we not glorify Him? God is for you and me. Since God with us, who will be against us? (v. 31) With this attitude of faith, let us all advance boldly and courageously with the assurance of victory.

Second, since God is for us, we must live with the assurance of forgiveness.

Look at Romans 8:33 – "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies." Since God is for us, Paul dares to say, 'Who can bring charges against God's elect' (v. 33). In other words, the Scripture says, 'Who is the one who condemns?' (v. 34) since God is with us. God, the Judge, has justified us who believe in Jesus whom He loved, chose, and called. Who can accuse and condemn us? Neither Satan nor anyone else can condemn us. Therefore, we should not condemn ourselves either. Why? There are 2 reasons for this.

(1) The first reason is that God justified us (vv. 33, 34).

This word means that through the death of Jesus on the cross, God has forgiven all our sins.

Because we who believe in Jesus have all our sins forgiven by the precious blood of Jesus, no one can condemn us. And no one can condemn us because we have been justified by the resurrection of Jesus. In particular, for us who believe in Jesus, since Jesus' righteousness, not our own, has already been imputed, no one can say that we are guilty or that we have sinned. Therefore no one can say we must die forever as punishment. Think about it. If the highest judge in the highest court judged not guilty, who can condemn it? So, Paul already said this: "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (v. 1).

(2) <u>The second reason is that Christ Jesus, who sits at the right hand of God, is</u> interceding to Heavenly Father for us (v. 34).

In other words, Jesus, who is righteous, sits at the right hand of God and whenever we commit a sin, He goes before Heavenly Father to defend for us (1 Jn. 2:2). And when Jesus pleads for us, the evidence is His own precious blood shed on the cross. We, the children of God who have received atonement through the blood of Jesus, Jesus went before Heavenly Father and pleaded and defended us, so that Satan or anyone else could not condemn us. Therefore, we must freely lead a life of faith with the assurance of forgiveness from God in Christ Jesus. No one can condemn me or you. It is God who justifies, but who can call us sinners and condemn us like those who will perish forever? We must not condemn ourselves or ourselves. Even when we have sinned, we believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus on the cross, confess our sins, and repent. We have the assurance of forgiveness by believing in Jesus Christ, the Advocate who sits at the right hand of God and pleads for us. We must enjoy a life of true freedom in faith.

Third and last, since God is for us, we must live with the assurance of love.

Look at Romans 8:35 – "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" How do you hear this word of God, "Who will separate us from the love of Christ?" It is the word of God that I personally will never forget. The reason is that after the first baby Charis fell asleep (died), the late Pastor Ike Kim wrote Romans 8:35-39 among the contents of a letter handwritten with a ballpoint pen. I still remember the words of Romans 8:35-39. Verses 38-39 are especially comforting to my heart: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Paul confidently states that not even death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus my Lord. No tribulation, hardship, persecution, or anything else can separate you and me from God's love. No matter what happens in this world, even death, cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. No matter how much Satan and his followers oppose and condemn the true believers in Jesus, they can never separate us from God's love, the love of Jesus Christ. In that love, God will eventually glorify us who He has chosen, called, and justified. In other words, God will complete the redemption of our body. In other words, God's love is what provides the stability

of our salvation. So, Paul is saying, "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us."

God loves us and is for us. God is for us until He gave up his only begotten Son, Jesus, on the cross for us. Therefore, we must live boldly with the assurance of salvation, the assurance of victory, the assurance of forgiveness, and the assurance of love. God is for us, who can be against us? Who can condemn us? Who can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord?

Inseparable love

[Romans 9:1-13]

We have already meditated on Romans 8:31-39. In particular, I thought of the third and last of the three assurances, "Assurance of love." I personally shared verses 38-39 with you: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Even death cannot separate you and me from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. In the midst of this, as we read Romans 9:1-3, we can see a glimpse of Paul's heart of loving the Israelites with God's inseparable love. An example of this is Romans 9:3 – "For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." As I meditated on these words, I thought that Paul's heart for Israel was inseparable love. And I came to realize that Paul's inseparable love for the Israelites with God's inseparable love. Today, while meditating on Paul's inseparable love for the Israelites under the title of "Inseparable love," I hope and pray that we all imitate Paul's heart and love our neighbors with inseparable love.

How was Paul's inseparable love for the Israelites?

In the heart of Paul's inseparable love for the Israelites, there was "great sorrow" and "unceasing anguish".

Look at Romans 9:1-2: "I speak the truth in Christ--I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit--I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart." Why did Paul have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in his heart? Why? The reason, in a word, was Israel's unbelief. In other words, the reason Paul had great sorrow and unceasing anguish in his heart was that his brothers, the people of Israel (v. 3), want to be justified by their works rather than by their faith in God (v. 11). In particular, Paul,

seeing the Israelites, who had the privilege of knowing and believing in God (vv. 4-5), but were not able to enjoy that privilege, he had great sorrow and unceasing pain in his heart. What was the privilege given to the Israelites? In Romans 9:4-5, Paul speaks of the privileges of the Israelites in six ways:

 <u>The privilege of the Israelites was to have an adopted relationship to God [(v. 4) "...</u> <u>Theirs is the adoption as sons ..."].</u>

In the Old Testament times, the nation of Israel had an adopted relationship with God. This is by no means a relationship to any individual among those peoples. The entire nation was nurtured in its relationship with God. Soon Israel was a theocracy. The Israelites were the people ruled by God (Park). In that way, the Israelites were privileged.

(2) <u>The privilege of the Israelites was to see the glory of God [(v. 4) "... theirs the divine glory ..."].</u>

For example, considering the glory of God (God manifesting Himself) that the Israelites witnessed and experienced at the time of the Exodus, we cannot deny that the Israelites were truly a privileged people.

(3) <u>The privileges of the Israelites were "covenants" [(v. 4) "... the covenants ..."]</u>.

Covenants here are the covenants that God made with Israel, which have been repeated since Abraham (Park). It was never because the Israelites did something well in God's eyes that God made a covenant with them. Because of God's sovereign love, God made a covenant with the Israelites. This was a great blessing and privilege for them.

(4) <u>The privilege of the Israelites was to receive "the law" [(v. 4) "... the law ..."].</u>

God gave the law to the Israelites through Moses. This is a great privilege to them.

(5) <u>The privilege of the Israelites was to receive "the temple worship and promises" [(v. 4) "... the temple worship and promises"].</u>

Only the Israelites had the privilege of worshiping God. And only they had God's promises.

(6) <u>The privilege of the Israelites was that Jesus Christ was born of them according to</u> the flesh [(v. 5) "Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, ..."]. Paul had great sorrow and unceasing anguish in his heart because the Israelites, who had these privileges (grace), did not believe in Jesus Christ and did not accept the gospel.

Because of the disobedience of the Israelites, Paul had "great sorrow" and "unceasing anguish" in his heart in the midst of his earnest desire to save their souls, but there was something that comforted his heart. It was none other than the word of God's covenant that cannot be failed. Look at verse 6: "It is not as though God's word had failed." Paul had great sorrow and unceasing anguish in his heart because of the unbelief of the Israelites. But even in the midst of that, he held on to the covenantal words of God that could never be failed. What are the words of God's covenant that cannot be failed? Look at verse 9: "For this was how the promise was stated: 'At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son.'" The word of this promise is presented in more detail in the second half of verse 7: "... It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." This is Paul's quote from Genesis 21:12, when Sarah, Abraham's wife, saw that Ishmael, the son of Hagar, her maidservant, was mocking Isaac (v. 9) and told Abraham to get rid of Hagar and Ishmael (v. 10). At that time the word of God's promise that came to Abraham while he was greatly distressed (v. 11). What is the point of this promise? It is God's sovereign choice. Paul knew that not all who are descended from Israel are Israel (v, 6). And he also knew that "t is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring" (Rom. 9:8). In the midst of this, he believed that God loved the Israelites with inseparable love and that there was a true seed of Abraham who was sovereignly chosen among them. And because Paul believed that God would call the true seed of Abraham through the gospel, he held on to the word of promise given to Abraham by God and relied on God's sovereign choice. God chose Isaac among Abraham's seed and not Ishmael (vv. 7-8). Also, God chose Jacob among Esau and Jacob, born between Isaac and Rebekah, and not Esau (vv. 10-13). In particular, in choosing Jacob and not choosing Esau, Paul is saying very important words to the saints in Rome and to us in verse 11: "Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad--in order that God's purpose in election might stand." What does it mean? Before Esau and Jacob were born, before they did anything good or evil, God chose Jacob and did not choose Esau. This is absolutely not saying that God chooses some people and calls them through the gospel to believe in Jesus but does not choose others and does not give them faith as a gift. This word means that the selection of Isaac rather than Ishmael and Jacob rather than Esau was entirely within God's sovereign will. It is absolutely not based on human actions. However, the disobedient Israelites were trying to gain salvation through good works without knowing this truth. Therefore, Paul had great sorrow and unceasing anguish in his heart toward his own brethren in their unbelief, the people of Israel, his kinsmen according to their flesh. And he loved his brothers, the Israelites, with the inseparable love of God. He loved them, but even though he himself was cursed and cut off from Christ, he earnestly desired that his brothers, the Israelites, hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and believe in Jesus and receive eternal life (v. 3). Of course, Paul and us who believe in Jesus cannot be separated from Jesus Christ. In the end, the children of God whom God loved and chose, called though the gospel and justified, will be glorified. In other words, God will eventually save those whom God has decided to save, no matter what happens. Therefore, Paul and us who believe in Jesus can never be separated from Jesus Christ. Paul is simply expressing his love for the people of Israel. This is a virtual, not a real possibility (Park). Even if he was cut off from Christ by being cursed for them, he was eager for the salvation of the Israelites to that extent. Do you and I have this

earnestness? Especially for the salvation of the souls of our family and relatives who do not believe in Jesus, do we earnestly want them to be saved even if we ourselves are cursed instead and cannot go to heaven and go to hell?

Today's text, Romans 9:1-13, is the word that God gave me through the pastor who was the president of the presbytery when I was ordained as a pastor at Sierra Vista United Presbyterian Church in Arizona in 1998. After receiving that message, as a pastor serving the church, which is the body of the Lord, there are times when I ask myself the question, 'Do I really have such earnestness for the salvation of souls?' Especially when I think of my friends who are still wandering without knowing Jesus, I remember asking this question from time to time. And I couldn't help but confess that I didn't have that kind of earnestness in my heart. After all, it was only a short while ago that I prayed the prayer that Moses had given to God: 'God, save the souls of my dear friends. Otherwise, please erase my name from the book of life written by the Lord' (Exod. 32:32). Even while praying, there was a feeling of fear on one side. Of course, the names recorded in the book of life cannot be erased. But I felt a little how difficult and frightening this prayer was. In the midst of that, I thought, 'Even if my life ends today, my death is worth it if God saves the dying souls He loves'. What do you think? Are you willing to trade your life for the salvation of one soul? Do you love one soul that much? I hope and pray that, with God's inseparable love, we can be like Paul, loving the dying souls who do not believe in Jesus whom God sends into our lives during great sorrow and unceasing anguish.

"What then shall we say?"

[Romans 9:14-29]

We have already meditated on Paul's heart for the Israelites, centered on Romans 9:1-13, under the title of "Inseparable love." We learned that because of God's inseparable love, Paul had "great sorrow" and "unceasing anguish" toward his brothers, the people of Israel, his kinsmen according to the flesh. Why did Paul have great sorrow and unceasing anguish when he thought of the Israelites? The reason was the unbelief of the Israelites who refused to believe in Jesus. Even though there were privileges that God gave only to the Israelites, they did not accept the only begotten Son as their own Savior. Therefore, Paul had great sorrow and unceasing anguish. However, in the meantime, there was something that comforted his heart. It was the word of God's covenant that could not be failed (v. 6). The core of the word of the covenant was God's sovereign election. Speaking about God's sovereign election, Paul said, as an example, that God chose Isaac and did not choose Ishmael, and also, of Isaac's two sons, he chose Jacob, the second son, but not the firstborn Esau (v. 13). In particular, in Romans 9:11, Paul said that Jacob was chosen, and Esau was not chosen before Esau and Jacob were even born, and before they did anything good or evil, and argued that God's sovereign election was not due to human merit or actions.

Then, starting today's text, Romans 9:14, apostle Paul says, "What then shall we say?" What does this mean? The apostle Paul teaches that the saints in Rome and we who are listening to this message not only have nothing to say about God's sovereign election, but also should not have anything to say. In the meantime, Paul is asking two hypothetical questions and one challenging question in Romans 9:14-29. The two hypothetical questions are (1) "Is God unjust?" (v. 14) (2) "Why does He still find fault?" (v. 19) And one challenging question is, "For who resist His will?" (v. 19) As we meditate on these two hypothetical questions and one challenge question today, I hope and pray that God will raise us up as humble Christians who acknowledge God's sovereignty.

The first hypothetical question is "Is God unjust?"

Look at Romans 9:14 - "What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all!" This first hypothetical

question, "Is God unjust?" (v. 14), is a question about God's unconditional election. It is a hypothetical question, whether there is any injustice to God, when we see the word, that God chose Jacob and not Esau without any conditions before they were born and before they did good or evil (v. 11). In other words, this hypothetical question is 'Isn't God unfair?' What do you think? Don't you feel that God is unfair, choosing some and not others? Don't you think that God is unfair because He loved someone and chose them before the foundation of the world, gave them faith as a gift, made them believe in Jesus, justified them, and gave them eternal life, while He left someone to die in their sins? I still remember that someone came to our church almost 20 years ago, and he said to me after the service on the stairs in front of the main entrance of the church that God is unfair because He chose some people and not others.

Paul's answer to this first hypothetical question is found in Romans 9:15-16: "For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy." God is a God who has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and who has compassion on whom He will have compassion. This word is Paul's quotation from Exodus 33:19, which means that people are saved not by human merit, but entirely by God's grace (Park). In other words, God chooses His people unconditionally and grants them salvation without any conditions, that is, not based on human good or bad deeds. No matter how much we want to be saved and how hard we try to be saved, we cannot save ourselves. It is only through God who is merciful that we are saved and go to heaven. As an example, Paul cites "Pharaoh," the king of Egypt in the Old Testament book of Exodus: "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: 'I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth" (v. 17). The background story of this word is that when God wanted to deliver the chosen Israelites out of Egypt, He used Pharaoh king of Egypt. Although Moses, the Israelites, and Pharaoh the king of Egypt were all sinners in the sight of God, God was merciful to Moses and the Israelites and bestowed the grace of salvation on them because of His compassion. But King Pharaoh was not saved in his transgression because God had no mercy on him. Rather, God used Pharaoh in His own way to deliver His chosen Israelites. How did God use Pharaoh King? God hardened Pharaoh's heart, so He sent 10 plagues on Egypt to show God's power and to spread God's holy name throughout the land. This does not mean that God actively created unbelief or any evil thing in Pharaoh's heart. But it means that He simply withdrew from Pharaoh all His divine influence, the restraint from sin, and caused Pharaoh to change his evil heart to follow sin (MacArthur). In conclusion, Paul says the answer to this first hypothetical question in verse Romans 9:18 - "Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden."

The second hypothetical question is "Why does He still find fault?"

Look at Romans 9:19 – "You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" This second hypothetical question relates to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, whom Paul cites in verses 17-18 as 'How could God, in His sovereignty, decide a man's destiny and then impute to him the responsibility for sin and unbelief?' (MacArthur). In other words, the question is, 'Since God hardened Pharaoh's heart (the heart of the unelected), isn't there anything He can find fault in Pharaoh?" (Park) Doesn't it make a lot of sense from a human point of view? We can ask how God, in His sovereign will, chose the Israelites, rescued them from

Egypt through Moses, and hardened the heart of Pharaoh, the Egyptian king whom H did not choose, and then transferred the responsibility to Pharaoh. What is Paul's answer to this question? Look at verse Romans9:20 - "But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?" What does it mean? In a word, 'You O man, what are you that you dare to presumptuously respond to God?' And Paul gives an example of this. He said that the thing that was created can ask the person who made it why he made me like this. Look at verse 21: "Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?" Doesn't the potter have the right to make out of the clay vessels for honor and for dishonor as he pleases? Does the dishonorably made bowl have the right to argue back and argue with the potter why he made me like this? At the same time, Paul refers to the wicked, like King Pharaoh, who have hardened themselves according to their own evil hearts because God did not advise them and allowed them to do so, and said that they were "vessels of wrath prepared for destruction" (v. 22), and that God in His sovereign will referring to the Israelites whom He loved and chose 'vessels of mercy, prepared beforehand for glory' (v. 23). At the same time, Paul says that God endured with much patience toward vessels of wrath, like King Pharaoh, prepared for destruction (v. 22). And he says that God did to make known the riches of His glory to vessels of mercy, like the Israelites, which He prepared beforehand for glory (v. 23). What does it mean? It means that God does not quickly destroy even the vessel of wrath but endures for a long time (Park). Nevertheless, these vessels of wrath do not repent to the end but harden their hearts and walk the path of evil. The Israelites are no different. However, God loved them with sovereign love and chose them before the foundation of the world to make known the riches of His glory.

This is absolutely God's total grace. It is entirely God's sovereign will and sovereign grace that God loved, predestined, and set apart the Israelites as a holy people among all the many peoples of the world. Then, who is the vessel of mercy who truly enjoys God's sovereign grace? Look at Romans 9:24 – "even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles." Paul says that "us" is the "vessel of mercy" whom God has lovingly predestinated and set apart as a holy people. In other words, Paul is saying that he himself and the saints in Rome who receive the letter to the Romans, and all those who believe in Jesus, whether Jews or Gentiles, will know and enjoy the riches of the glory of God. In the meantime, he quotes Hosea 1:10 and 2:23 in Romans 9:25-26, and also quotes Isaiah 10:22 in Romans 9:27-29, concluding that Paul says, "only the remnant will be saved" (Rom 9:27). In other words, only God's beloved people, chosen by God in His sovereign will, will be saved. It doesn't matter whether the people are Jews or Gentiles, but only as God's "called" (v. 24) will be saved by God's sovereign election and grace without any merit on their part.

Third and last, the final challenging question that Paul is throwing to the saints in Rome and to us is 'Who resists His will?'

Look at Romans 9:19b – "… For who resists His will?" What does this question mean? If Paul's two hypothetical questions we have already meditated on were questions related to God's sovereign and unconditional election, then this third challenging question is related to God's irresistible grace. What does God's irresistible grace mean here? God's irresistible grace means, just like Jesus Christ said in John 6:36, "All

that the Father gives Me will come to Me" the person whom God has determined to give faith cannot but believe in Christ (Internet). In other words, when God determined to give faith to His people who have been chosen unconditionally (unconditionally election) among those who have completely fallen (totally depravity), those people cannot resist this grace of God, but have no choice but to believe in Jesus by receiving the gift (irresistible grace). What Paul is saying in Romans9:19b, "For who resists His will?" means 'who can dare to resist the sovereign will of God?' In other words, who can resist the sovereign will that God chose and saved before the foundation of the world? Here Paul expresses those whom God has chosen before the foundation of the world? Here Paul expresses those whom God has chosen before the foundation of the world? Here Paul expresses those whom God has chosen before the foundation of the world as 'those called' (v. 24) and "the remnant" (v. 27). Paul's conclusion is that God will save only those whom He called, the remnant. But the question is, who can resist the zeal of God's salvation? When God calls the predestined people, those people cannot refuse (reject) or resist this call of God. In conclusion, Paul says: "For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality" (v. 28). What does it mean? It is the word that God must completely fulfill what He said. What is that word of God? It means that God saves only "the remnant," that is, those whom He chose before the foundation of the world. The faithful God is the God who must and completely fulfills this word. So, what can we say? (v. 14)

'The stumbling stone'

[Romans 9:30-33]

We have already meditated on two hypothetical questions and one challenge question under the heading "What then shall we say" (v. 14), centered on Romans 9:14-29. We learned that we have nothing to say about God's sovereign and unconditional election and His irresistible grace, and that God did not choose, but rather people hardened their hearts. In other words, we have learned that we have nothing to say about God, by His sovereign and unconditional election, has mercy on whom He will have mercy (v. 15), and by His irresistible grace, justifies and saves those who believe in Jesus, while God's bringing to His judgement by hardening the Pharaoh-like ones whom He did not choose in His sovereign will. No creature dares to say anything to the Creator about God's sovereign election and non-election. We have nothing to say about how God, in His sovereignty, chooses some to believe in Jesus and saves them, and does not choose others to perish in their sins. Paul said this as a parable of the potter and the vessel: "Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?" (v. 21). In a word, Paul says, 'Who are you, O man, to talk back to God?' (v. 20) We have nothing to say about the "vessels of mercy" whom God has chosen and called and the "vessels of wrath" whom God has not choose (vv. 22-23).

I would like to meditate on Romans 9:30-33 today. Interestingly, if we look at verse 30 of today's text, Paul continues to write letters to the saints in Rome and begins again, "What then shall we say?" Why is he repeating, twice over and over again, 'What then shall we say?" The reason is that the saints in Rome and all of us are emphasizing that we should have nothing to say about God's sovereign election. Indeed, as we meditate on the words of Romans 9:14-29, do we have anything to say to the sovereign God about who He chooses among His sovereign will and who He does not choose? Are we still challenging God's sovereignty by asking why He chooses some and not others? Aren't we questioning God about why He chooses some people to believe in Jesus and grants His salvation, while not choose others to be judged by God in their unbelief? If we still have doubts, I hope and pray that we will hear the voice of God "What then shall we say?" once again as we meditate on the words of Romans 9:30-33.

As I meditated on Romans 9:30-33, I came to think of two stones. It is none other than 'The

stumbling stone' mentioned in verses 32 and 33 and 'The steppingstone'. I believe that Jesus Christ can be both the stumbling stone and also the steppingstone. The reason I think this way is that Jesus Christ became the stumbling stone (vv. 32-33) to the Israelites who followed "a law of righteousness" (v. 31) and the steppingstone to the Gentiles who obtained the righteousness by faith (v. 30) to God the Father.

First, I would like to think about why Jesus Christ became the stumbling stone to the Israelites.

The reason why Jesus Christ became the stumbling stone to the Israelites was because of their unbelief. As we have already meditated on in Romans 9:4-5, despite the six privileges given to the Israelites to know and believe in God (adopted relationship with God, seeing the glory of God, given covenants, received the law, worship and promises, Jesus Christ begotten from them according to the flesh), they couldn't enjoy those privileges because of their unbelief in Jesus Christ. Here, the unbelief of the Israelites based on Romans 9:31 refers to pursuing a law of righteousness rather than following (believing) Jesus (believing). In other words, the unbelief of the Israelites did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah (Christ) nor their Savior, but rather wanted to obtain righteousness by keeping the Moses' law. Regarding this fact, Paul says: "... Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. ..." (v. 32). For the Israelites who wanted to be justified by their works by keeping the Moses' law, Jesus Christ had no choice but to be the stumbling stone. Therefore, they were eventually put to shame (v. 33). In other words, the Israelites failed in trying to gain salvation through works (Park).

Like the Israelites mentioned in today's text, if we think that we can obtain salvation through human merit, not by faith, but by works, then Jesus Christ will inevitably be the stumbling stone to us. As a result, we will surely fail (will be ashamed). Why? The reason is because no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law (Rom. 3:20; Gal.2:16). Paul says this: "Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, ..." (Gal. 3:11). We definitely need to know that we can never be justified before God by keeping the law, that is, through human meritorious works.

How, then, did Jesus Christ become the steppingstone to the Gentiles?

In a word, it is by faith. In other words, it is because of faith that Jesus Christ has become the steppingstone, not the stumbling stone to the Gentiles. Look at Romans 9:30 – "What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith." Here Paul writes to the saints in Rome, saying that because the law of Moses was not given to the Gentiles, they did not try to become righteous by keeping the law like the Jews who received the law ["the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness" (v.30) (Park). Nevertheless, the Gentiles were justified. How did the Gentiles justify? It was through "the righteousness that is by faith" (v. 30). In other words, the Gentiles were justified by faith in Jesus Christ (v. 30). Therefore, the Gentiles who believed in Jesus, who was the stumbling stone and "a rock of offense" to the Jews, were never be put to shame (v. 33). In a word, Jesus became the steppingstone for the Gentiles who were justified by faith in Jesus.

As we have already learned from Romans 2:1-16, even though the power of God for salvation is revealed to those who hear the gospel and believe in Jesus (1:16), those who know the existence of God but suppress the knowledge of God with all unrighteousness, turn the truth into a lie, and didn't see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God's wrath will be revealed (1:18ff), and God's judgment will come in the end (v. 5). In other words, even though God's salvation comes to us who hear the gospel and believe in Jesus (1:16), God's wrath and God's judgment come to unbelievers who do not believe in Jesus even after hearing the gospel. Here we see both sides of the gospel. The gospel is the power of God that gives salvation to those who believe in Jesus, the content of the gospel, but to those who do not believe in Jesus, God's wrath (1:18-32) and God's judgment (2:1-16) is coming. In other words, the gospel brings blessings (eternal life) to those who believe, but curses (judgment, destruction) to those who do not believe. The Gentiles who hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and believe in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, are justified and are saved by God. In other words, the Gentiles were justified by "a law of faith" (3:27). The Gentiles never tried to be saved by keeping the law. Rather, they were saved by faith alone. Look at Romans 3:28 – "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law." For those who are justified by faith, Jesus Christ is the steppingstone. Look at John 14:6 - "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Only through Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life, can we go to God the Father. In other words, Jesus becomes the steppingstone for us who believe in Jesus. Is Jesus the steppingstone or the stumbling stone to you? I hope and pray that Jesus is the steppingstone and not the stumbling stone to you.

'The word of faith we are proclaiming'

[Romans 10:1-15]

We have already considered two things under the title of "The stumbling stone" centered on Romans 9:30-33. Those two things mean that Jesus Christ became the stumbling stone (vv. 32, 33) to the Israelites who followed the law of righteousness (v. 31), while He became the steppingstone to the Gentiles who followed the law of faith (3:27). In other words, we learned that Jesus Christ became the stumbling stone to the Israelites who relied on works and the steppingstone to the Gentiles who relied on faith (9:32). We learned that the Israelites, for whom Jesus Christ was the stumbling stone, would be put to shame, and the Gentiles, for whom Jesus Christ was the steppingstone, would never be put to shame (v. 33). After that, we were encouraged to live a steppingstone life as those who have been justified by faith in Jesus Christ. In particular, we were challenged to live a life of steppingstones leading dying souls to Jesus.

If we look at Romans 10:1-15, we see the apostle Paul living a life of steppingstone. In other words, Paul wanted to fulfill the mission of steppingstone to lead the Israelites to Jesus. Looking at Paul's attempt to fulfill this steppingstone mission, I thought of three application questions. As we ask ourselves these three application questions today, we would like to receive the lessons and grace that God gives to us.

The first question is, 'What do we really want from our heart and what do we ask God for?'

In A. W. Tozer's book "That Incredible Christian", there is a chapter called "The Importance of Selfjudgment' (Ch. 31) in which the author Tozer talks about seven rules for self-discovery about how we know that we are real Christians. The first of those seven questions is "What we want most." How would you answer this question? What do you most want? When I asked myself this question, I thought, "What I want most should be the glory of God." But when I asked the question again while meditating on this passage, I came to the idea that the answer was, 'If we are true Christians, what we want most must be what God wants most'. Then, what does God want most? A few things came to mind: (1) living for God's glory, (2) right worship, (3) obeying God's commandments, (4) devotion, and so on. And there are things that God wants from us. But when I think of Acts 1:8, one of them is that God wants us to live a life of witnesses who preach the gospel of Jesus Christ by receiving the power of the Holy Spirit. God wants us to live a life of steppingstone to lead dying souls to Jesus Christ.

If we look at Romans 10:1, it tells us what Paul wanted: "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved." What Paul wanted in his heart and what he asked of God was clear. He desperately wanted the Israelites to be saved by believing in Jesus. He desired that he himself be cursed and cut off from Christ for the salvation of his brethren, the Jews, his kinsmen according to the flesh (9:3). As I meditated on the words of Romans 9, I challenged you to pray with an earnest heart like Paul and put your energy into evangelism, at least for the salvation of the souls of your family and relatives. I challenged you to pray and evangelize with an earnest heart like Paul did for the salvation of the souls of your unbelieving husbands, wives, children, parents, and descendants. Do you have a longing in your heart to evangelize the souls of your family and relatives, and do you pray to God?

The second question is, 'How do we really think we are saved?'

Look at Romans 10:2 - "For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge." Writing to the saints in Rome, Paul says that the Jews have zeal for God, but that zeal is not according to knowledge. In other words, the zeal of the Jews was not according to the correct knowledge based on God's revelation, that is, the truth. Look at verse 3: "Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness." In other words, the Jews were working hard to establish their own righteousness without knowing God's righteousness. Clearly, the truth of God is that the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel, from faith to faith (1:17). But the Jews did not try to be saved by hearing the gospel and believing in Jesus, but by keeping the law, self-righteousness. They were not zealous according to the word of faith but according to legalism (10:8). In other words, the Jews were not zealous based on faith, but zeal based on works (9:32). This zeal is very dangerous. The reason is that although they were zealous, they were zealous according to wrong knowledge. Think about it. Think of being zealous according to the truth and being zealous according to lies. The true truth is that our salvation is only through faith in Jesus Christ. We are forgiven of our sins and justified only by the merits of Jesus Christ on the cross. It is not that Jews are forgiven of their sins and justified by keeping the law that they believed in. So Paul is saying to the saints in Rome and to us: "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (10:4). In other words, the vain efforts of sinners, like the Jews, to establish self-righteousness through their efforts to keep the law are over. As for how it ended, it means that it is over if we believe in Jesus Christ (MacArthur). Therefore, Paul earnestly desired that his brothers, the Jews, his relatives according to the flesh, repent of their unbelief in trying to be justified by keeping the law, turn around, and be justified and saved through faith in Jesus Christ.

How are we actually be saved? We are never saved by works. It is not that we earn God's righteousness by doing good deeds diligently. Only through faith in Jesus Christ can we be justified and saved.

Paul makes it clear: "That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." Whoever truly believes in Jesus in heart leads to righteousness, and whoever confesses with the mouth that Jesus is Lord is saved. In other words, "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (v. 13). There is no difference between Jew and Gentile (v. 12). Only those who believe in Jesus will be saved and will never be put to shame (v. 11).

The third and last question is, 'What are we doing for the salvation of our unborn believers?'

Look at Romans 10:14-15: "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" Paul teaches that we must preach the good news, that is, the gospel, for the salvation of the unborn believers. If we were not sent, how would we preach the gospel to our unborn believers? How can our unborn believers hear the gospel without a preacher? And how can our unborn believers believe in Jesus whom they have never heard of, and how can those who do not believe in Jesus call on Jesus? In a word, since we who believe in Jesus are disciples of Jesus and also sent ones, so our mission as sent ones is to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. So, what are we to preach? What we are to preach is "the word of faith" (v. 8).

What we have to preach is the word of truth, that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ. We must never preach the untruth that salvation is obtained through human efforts and deeds. It is not the word of faith, and it is not the true gospel. We must spread the word of faith to our unborn believers and to the dying souls. We must boldly preach, 'If you believe in Jesus, you will be saved!' In particular, like Paul, we must preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to them while praying with earnest desire for the salvation of the souls of family members, relatives, and friends who are dying without knowing Jesus. In this way, the feet of those who preach the gospel of Jesus Christ are beautiful (v. 15, quoting Isa. 52:7).

Jesus who has stretched out His hands all day long

[Romans 10:16-21]

We have already received the word of God under the title of "The word of faith we are proclaiming," centered on Romans 10:1-15. What you and I must preach is the word of the truth that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ. We must never preach the untruth that salvation is obtained through human efforts and deeds. It is not the word of faith, and it is not the true gospel. We must spread the word of faith to our unborn believers and to dying souls. We must boldly preach, 'If you believe in Jesus, you will be saved!' In particular, like Paul, we must preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to them while praying with earnest desire for the salvation of the souls of family members, relatives, and friends who are dying without knowing Jesus. The feet of those who preach the gospel of Jesus Christ are beautiful (v. 15, quoting Isa. 52:7).

In meditating on today's text Romans 10:16-21, especially in verse 21, Paul quotes Isaiah 65:2 and writes a letter to the saints in Rome like this: "But as for Israel He says, 'All day long I have stretched out my hands to disobedient and obstinate people." I would like to receive the grace that God gives to us while meditating on three things under the heading of "Jesus who has stretched out His hands all day long" centering on Romans 10:16-21.

First of all, what does it mean to say that Jesus is stretching His hands all day long?

This word means that Jesus is inviting people with His arms wide open. Jesus is inviting people "all day long." Jesus is inviting people to turn and repent and sit in the arms of God's love. In Luke 14:15-16, Jesus speaks in a parable about the qualifications of those who can participate in the heavenly banquet (Park). First, Jesus is talking about those who do not come even after being invited to the heavenly banquet (vv. 17-21). These are the ones who cannot participate in the heavenly banquet. These people refer to the Jews at that time who were invited first. All of them did not respond to the invitation because of the works

of the flesh. By what fleshly work did they not respond to the invitation? Some did not respond to the invitation because some have just bought a field and must go see it (v. 18), some have just bought five yokes of oxen (v. 19), and still another just got married (v. 20). When the servant reported to his master, the master of the house became angry and ordered the servant: "Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the city and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame" (v. 21). As commanded, the servant went out into the streets and alleys and brought the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame, but when the servant informed the owner of the house (v. 22) that there was still room available (v. 22), the master commanded the servant: "Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full" (v. 23). This is the Lord's command to you and me: 'Go out and make people come in, so that My house will be full.' Our Jesus is the Lord who stretches His hands and invites us all day long. Like Jesus, we must stretch our hands and invite people throughout the day. The doors of our hearts must be open, and the doors of our homes and churches must be wide open and we must invite people. Indeed, how should we invite people?

From John 1:45, we can find several principles in Philip's invitation to Nathaniel: (1) Philip found Daniel [(v. 45) "Philip found Nathanael ..."], (2) Philip introduces Jesus of Nazareth, whom he met, to Nathanael [(v. 45) "... and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph"], (3) When Nathaniel heard Philip's words and responded, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Philip said to him, "Come and see" (v. 46). Personally, in order for us to invite people to fill the house of the Lord, there are three more things I would like to add to Philip's invitation principle in addition to the word "Come and see."

(1) <u>It is "Come, follow me" (Mt. 4:19).</u>

Of course, this is what Jesus said when He called His disciples. But when we invite people, we must say, "Come and see," and then we must show them the example of Jesus so they can follow Jesus through us.

(2) It is "Come and have breakfast" (Jn. 21:12).

This is the word Jesus spoke to Peter and the other disciples on land at the Sea of Tiberias after He rose from the dead. The lesson we learn from this is that we must show the people we invite to church the love that Jesus showed for Peter in the midst of table fellowship.

(3) It is 'Come and be with me.'

Come to Jesus and be with Jesus. Just as the branches of the vine abide in the vine, so we must invite people to join Jesus. In doing so, we will experience the words of Jesus to us, 'Come and share your master's happiness!' (Mt. 25:21).

How do you feel about inviting people to your church? Are you reluctant to invite some unchurched people to your church? Aren't you sorry for inviting them to come to your little church? Do you see that there is something in your church that you can confidently invite people to? Starting from John 6:66, when many of the disciples withdrew because of Jesus' teaching was hard teaching (v. 60) and did not walk with Jesus again, Jesus asked the twelve disciples, "Do you want to leave too, do you?" (v. 67). Then comes the scene where Simon Peter answers Jesus like this: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God" (vv. 68-69). As I was meditating today's message, I remembered Peter's answer. And the lesson the Lord teaches me is that as our church becomes a church that has the words of the Lord's eternal life. So, "Come and see." I hope and pray that our church would be able to invite by saying 'Come see our church and stay with us. In our church, there are the words of Jesus and there are those who enjoy the joy of obeying the words. There are people who love Jesus and there are people who are becoming like Jesus.'

Second, to whom is Jesus stretching His hands all day long?

We can think of it in 2 ways:

(1) Jesus keeps his hands stretching all day long to those who disbelieve.

Last week, I meditated on the word of God under the heading "Leave it alone for one more year," centered on Luke 13:8. As I meditated on this word, I thought about the fig tree that did not bear fruit, and I thought about what kind of fruit we should bear. What are the fruits that you and I must bear? I thought of those fruits in two ways: externally, the fruit of evangelism, and internally, the fruit of character changing to resemble Jesus. However, I realized through the context that the fruit spoken of in Luke 13 is the fruit of repentance. What sins do you and I really need to repent of? When we hear that we must repent of our sins, the first thing we think of is presumptuous sins. What are presumptuous sins? Presumptuous sins refer to a person who refuses such advice and willfully commits the same sin repeatedly, even though he has been told what a sin is through the gospel of Christ (Internet). So the psalmist prayed: "Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; Let them not rule over me; Then I will be blameless, And I shall be acquitted of great transgression" (Ps. 19:13). But the sins we need to repent of are what Jesus said in John 16:9 - "concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me." The Scripture tells us that the sin we must repent of is the sin of not believing in Jesus. Look at Romans 10:16 - "But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our message?'" Paul preached "the word of faith" to his brothers, the Israelites, because he earnestly desired them to believe in Jesus and received salvation (10:8), but they did not accept the gospel of Jesus Christ (v. 16). So, he quoted Isaiah 53:1 in Romans 10:16 and says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" The reason he quoted Isaiah's words was because he was pointing out that Jews did not believe in the true Messiah, the dead and resurrected Jesus Christ, in the days of the prophet Isaiah and when Paul was preaching the gospel. The reason he quoted

Isaiah's words was because he was pointing out that Jews did not believe in the true Messiah, the dead and resurrected Jesus Christ, in the days of the prophet Isaiah and when Paul was preaching the gospel. This does not apply only to the time of the prophet Isaiah or the time of Paul. Most Jews living in the 21st century still do not believe in Jesus as the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament. Why did the Jews not believe in Jesus and still do not? Is it because they have not heard this gospel of Jesus Christ? Look at Romans 10:18 - "But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: 'Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world." Clearly, Paul is saying that Jews do not believe in Jesus because they have not heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Even now, the sound of the gospel continues to spread throughout the land. Those who were sent in obedience to the command of the Lord to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth are spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we can no longer say that we do not believe in Jesus because we have not heard the gospel. The problem isn't that we haven't heard the gospel, it's a problem of the heart. The problem is the hard heart that refuses to believe in Jesus. So, Paul, quoting Deuteronomy 32:21 in Romans 10:19, said to the saints in Rome that since the Israelites knew God but followed other gods, God showed great grace to other nations and caused Israel to feel jealous. Jesus is stretching out His hands all day long to the Israelites who are so hard-hearted and refuse to believe in Jesus. In other words, while Jesus was nailed to the cross and died, He stretched out His arms and wants us to sit in His bosom, who reject and refuse to believe in Jesus.

(2) Those to whom Jesus stretches out His hands all day long are disobedient.

Look at Romans 10:16a, 21: "But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. ... But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." Here in verse 16, the word "not all the Israelites accepted the good news" is a Greek word meaning "ύπακούω", which is a combination of two words: "under" + hear." This compound word has the meaning of 'obey, accept', and the most interesting meaning among them is 'answer (the door)'(Newman). When I think about this meaning, I remembered the words of Revelation 3:20 – "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." Jesus stands at the door and knocks on our hearts. Jesus is letting us hear His voice, the gospel. The question is whether you and I are willing to humbly listen to the voice of the gospel of Jesus. The Jews did not humbly listen to the voice of Jesus, the gospel of Jesus Christ, heard through Paul. In other words, Jesus was knocking the hearts of the Jews with the gospel through Paul, but the Jews did not open the door to their hearts, but rather hardened their hearts. That is why Paul referred to the Jews who did not believe even after hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ as "a disobedient and obstinate" (Rom.10:21). Why did these Jews not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ but rather rebel? The reason is because they didn't know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own (v. 3). The Israelites tried to earn salvation by doing their best to keep the law, so they did not submit to the gospel of Jesus Christ (v. 3). Even to the disobedient and obstinate Jews, Jesus stretched out His hands all day long.

In conclusion, Jesus invites the unbelieving and disobedient with stretched hands all day long. For those who hear the gospel of Jesus but do not believe in Jesus and do not obey Him, Jesus is stretching out His hands all day long to embrace us with the open arms of the cross. What should we do with this invitation from Jesus?

Third and last, how should we respond to Jesus who stretches His hands all day long?

We must respond to Jesus' invitation. We must humbly accept the invitation of Jesus with a heart that repents of the sins of unbelief and disobedience of not believing in Jesus. We must go to God with a heart of repentance, stretching our hands to Him because no other help we know (v.1 of the hymn "Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee"). And we must bear fruits worthy of repentance. In other words, we must submit to the gospel of Jesus Christ. No longer should we live in disobedience to the word of the Lord. We must humbly live a life of obedience to the word of the Lord. At this time today, Jesus is inviting us with the open arms of the cross. What will you do when Jesus invites you? I hope and pray that you will respond to Jesus' invitation with faith. To do that, you must listen to the words of Jesus Christ. Look at Romans 10:17 – "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." Faith comes from hearing. Faith comes from hearing the words of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must listen to the words of Jesus Christ being heard today. I hope and pray that God will open wide the doors of our hearts and allow us to believe in the word of Jesus Christ that is being preached today. Therefore, I hope and pray that we will be embraced in the arms of Jesus who invites you with His stretched hands.

"By no means!" (1)

[Romans 11:1-10]

Have you ever felt abandoned in your life? Have you ever felt abandoned by your beloved parents, or abandoned by your beloved husband or wife, or abandoned by your beloved children, or abandoned by your dear friends? The psalmist David cries out in Psalm 22:1 – "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?" What do you feel through David's groaning? I have the feeling that David was abandoned by the God he loves. In fact, God did not forsake the beloved David, but David had the feeling that he was abandoned by God. Have you ever felt, like David, that you have been abandoned by the God you love? Have you ever felt that you were abandoned by God in despair when you felt the limit of endurance due to long suffering when you cried out, 'O Lord, how long?' and when there is no answer to God no matter how much we cry out to God?

If we look at Romans 3:4, 6, 9, which we have already meditated on, Paul wrote a letter to the saints in Rome and said three times, "Not al all!" (v. 4), "Certainly not!" (v. 6), "Not all all!" (v. 9) What is Paul euphemistically denying three times here?

(1) <u>Apostle Paul euphemistically denies that our unbelief can never destroy God's</u> <u>faithfulness (3:3-4).</u>

"If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself" (2 Tim. 2:13).

(2) Paul euphemistically denies that God can never be unrighteous (Rom. 3:5-6).

The more our lies are exposed, the more we realize God's truthfulness. The more our unfaithfulness is exposed, the more we realize God's faithfulness. Because of the true and faithful presence of God, the more our unrighteousness is revealed, the more clearly God's righteousness is revealed (v. 5).

(3) <u>Paul euphemistically denies that we are never better (v. 9).</u>

Why did Paul tell the saints in Rome that we are never better? The reason is because both Jews and Greeks are under sin (v. 9). In addition to these words in Romans 3, the Apostle Paul says, "By no means!" twice in Romans 6 (vv. 2, 15), twice in Romans 7 (vv. 7, 13) and once in Romans 9 (v. 14). In Romans 6:2 and 15, Paul says, "By no means!" because we who have already died to sin cannot live in sin (v. 2) and shall not sin (v. 15), and we are no longer under the law but under grace. He said in Romans 7:7 ("Is the law sin? Certainly not!") and 7:13 ("Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means!"), and in Romans 9:14, "Is God unjust? Not at all!"

In today's text, Romans 11:1, Paul continues to write letters to the saints in Rome, saying "By no means." What does Paul euphemistically deny by saying, "By no means!" here? It is none other than that God never forsakes His chosen people. Look at Romans 11:1a – "I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! ..." After Paul constantly reminded the fact that Jesus was inviting the disobedient Israelites with stretched arms all day long in Romans 10:16-21, coming to Romans 11:1, he clearly said that God has never forsaken His chosen people, even though the Israelites now do not believe in Jesus and disobey the gospel of Jesus. As he did so, Paul presented two evidences in today's text:

The evidence that Paul first presented to the saints in Rome to prove that God never abandoned His chosen people was Paul himself.

Look at Romans 11:1 – "I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin." Here Paul introduces himself on three sides: (1) an Israelite, (2) the seed of Abraham, and (3) the tribe of Benjamin. Although Paul, like the Israelites, who did not believe in Jesus and disobeyed the gospel of Jesus, Paul himself was an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, and a Benjaminite from the tribe of Benjamin, to which King Saul, the smallest of the 12 tribes, belonged, he persecuted the Christians who followed Jesus and slandered the church of Christ, by God's total grace, he met the resurrected and ascended Jesus on the road to Damascus and presented the fact that he was justified by God by faith in Jesus as the first evidence to the saints in Rome. In this way, Paul himself was an unbelieving Israelite, but just as he was saved through meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul thought that among the Israelites there would be people who were chosen by God and would be saved like himself (Park). And he believed that if God could save him (Acts 9:22, 26), He could also save other Israelites (The Bible Knowledge Commentary). Look at 1 Timothy 1:15-16: "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life." Then Paul said this in Romans 11:2a: "God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew" In other words, God never abandoned His covenant people, whom He foreknew and chose before the foundation of the world. Rather, God called the believers beforehand, in other words, those whom He foreordained, and those whom He called, He also justified, and those whom He justified, He also glorified (8:29-30). 1 Samuel 12:22 says: "For the sake of his great name the LORD will not reject his people, because the LORD was pleased to make you his own." Those whom God foreknew, whom He foreordained, He never forsakes for the sake of His great name. Why? It is because God delights in His people. Look at Zephaniah 3:17 – "The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."

The second evidence that Paul presented to the saints in Rome to prove that God never abandoned His chosen people was the 7,000 people God left behind in the time of Elijah in the Old Testament.

Look at Romans 11:2b-4: "... Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah--how he appealed to God against Israel: 'Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me'? And what was God's answer to him? 'I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal."" This is a story from 1 Kings 19 and is the conversation Elijah had with God. After Elijah fought against the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel and was victorious, Queen Jezebel, wife of King Ahab, sent a messenger to Elijah and said, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them" (1 Kgs.19:2). So, Elijah ran away for his life and went into the wilderness by himself. The essence of this conversation is the fact that God has left seven thousand people who have not bowed the knee to Baal (an idol) (v. 18). After Paul said that God left seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal in the days of Elijah, he said in Romans 11:5 - "So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace." What he is saying is that not only did God reserve a gracious elect in the time of Elijah, but also in the time of Paul, and even now, God has retained a gracious elect of His people. In this way, God's chosen people whom God has left behind are of grace, not of human works (v. 6). This remnant was chosen by God's sovereign will and received salvation by believing in Jesus. And other people who were not chosen by God hardened their hearts in unbelief (v. 7). These unchosen, hard-hearted people still have blinded eyes and deaf ears in their spirits of stupor and refuse to receive the truth of God. So, there will be eternal judgment and their backs will always be bent due to the gravity of their sins since God's wrath and retribution are with them (vv. 8-10).

Sometimes during Wednesday prayer meetings, I sing praises to God with gospel songs. Among the gospel songs often sung is "Abide in Me." The song's lyrics are: "For I am the Lord your God, so abide in Me Your Deliverer and Protector, a Shelter from the storm Don't tremble with fear. Surely I will help you. I am holding your hand, so do not be afraid. I have called you by name; you are Mine. You are Mine and I am the Lord your God. You are precious in My sight and you are highly honored. I, the Lord your God love you." When I sing this gospel song, I often think of Isaiah 43:1b, 4a when I think of the lyrics "You are Mine … You are precious in My sight and you are highly honored": "… "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. … Since you are precious and honored in my sight …." I find great comfort and strength in the fact that God loves me, chose me, redeemed

me, considers me precious and honorable, and says that I am His. Will God, who loves us so much, forsake us? The Bible clearly says: "By no means!" How could Heavenly Father, who loves us even to the point of giving up His only begotten Son, Jesus, on the cross, forsake us? Certainly not!

"By no means!" (2)

[Romans 11:11-24]

As we have already meditated on Romans 11:1-10, we have seen the apostle Paul write a letter to the saints in Rome 'Will God forsake His chosen people? By no means!' [(v. 1) "Did God reject his people? By no means!"] and euphemistically denying it. Then, in today's text, Romans 11:11, he again says, "Not a all!" Look at verse 11: "Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious." What Paul euphemistically denies here is that God did not cause the Israelites to stumble until they fall. In other words, the Israelites fell because they rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ, but God did not allow them to fall beyond recovery. Rather, God uses their mistakes [mistakes that could be corrected through repentance (Park)] to restore the Israelites who disobey the gospel and disbelieve in Jesus Christ.

How does Paul say in Romans 11:11-24 that God uses the Israelites' stumbling? Paul says that God will save His chosen people among the Israelites because the Israelites' stumble made the gospel (salvation) reach the Gentiles and made the Israelites jealous (v. 11). This was Paul's heart. As the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul is telling the Gentiles among the saints in Rome his intention as follows: "in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them" (v. 14). D

Paul honored his duty as the apostle of the Gentiles (v. 13) and was fulfilling his duty while preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles because of the salvation of the Gentiles, he made his own flesh, the Jews, jealous and saved some of them (v. 14). He longed for the Jews, his flesh, to live from the dead (v. 15), that is, the spiritual restoration of the future Israelites. Therefore, he expressed his earnest heart toward the people of Israel, his own flesh, to the Gentile believers in Rome, and at the same time expressed their pride and arrogance in the fact that salvation came to the Gentiles through the Israelites' stumbling by rejecting Jesus Christ. (MacArthur). Look at Romans 11:18-20: "do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root

supports you. You will say then, 'Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.' Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid." Here, the "root" is the root of "the olive tree," and "the olive tree" refers to the "Church of God," and the root of the olive tree refers to Jesus, who is the head of the Church of God. And the broken branches refer to the Jews who do not believe in Jesus and seek salvation by keeping the law, which is human effort (Park). Perhaps the Gentile believers in Rome knew that they were grafted into the olive tree, the Church of God, through the unbelieving Jews who were broken branches. So, Paul said, "Branches were broken off (Jews) so that I (Gentiles) could be grafted in" (v. 19). At the same time, Paul tells the Gentile saints in Rome, 'The Jews were broken off because of unbelief, but the Gentile stand by faith' (v. 20). In other words, the broken branches, the Jews, were originally God's people, but they were excluded from the chosen people because they did not believe in Jesus Christ. On the contrary, the Gentiles accepted Jesus Christ with faith and became the people of God (Park). Therefore, Paul is warning the Gentile believers in Rome, "Do not be arrogant, but be afraid" (v. 20).

Now Paul is warning the Gentile believers in Rome not to boast to the Jews who do not believe in Jesus. Why? The reason is that because the Jews, the descendants of Abraham by blood, did not believe in Jesus, the gospel was directed to the Gentiles. As a result, the Gentiles were saved through faith in Jesus and became the spiritual descendants of Abraham and were included in God's covenant people. In a word, Paul told the Gentiles not to be arrogant, but rather to be afraid, because they received faith as a gift by grace through the merits of the cross of Jesus Christ, the root of the olive tree, and were saved by believing in Jesus. Isn't that interesting? Just imagine what this must have been like just if the Jewish believers in a church condemn the Gentiles with a sense of superiority that they are descendants of Abraham physically or by lineage, and the Gentiles have a sense of spiritual superiority and are guilty of this sin of boasting against the Jews. What would the Roman church look like if, on the one hand, the Jewish believers still condemn and despise the Gentile believers, proudly boasting, 'We are still the descendants of Abraham, circumcised, and have received the law of Moses, so we are the true people of God', as was the custom of the old people and on the other hand, the Gentiles believe in the Jewish believers with arrogant hearts, saying, 'Because you Jews rejected the gospel, the gospel came to us, and because we heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and believed in Jesus, we are the true spiritual descendants of Abraham'? That's why Paul, writing a letter to the saints in Rome, is telling the Gentile saints, "Do not be arrogant, but be afraid" (v. 20). Then he says why they should be afraid: "For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off" (vv. 21-22). What does it mean? If God did not spare and cut off "the natural branches", the Israelites, who disobeyed the gospel and showed unbelief in Jesus, even though they were God's covenant people, then how much more, will God not spare the Gentiles who are strangers to God's covenant if they do not believe in Jesus and commit sins by disobeying the truth of the gospel? (MacArthur) If the Gentile saints do not continue to abide in God's lovingkindness, they are warned that they too will be cut off (v. 22). In other words, Paul warns the Gentile saints in Rome that if they do not abide in God's

lovingkindness and become unbelievers like the unbelieving Jews, they too will be eliminated (Park). The branch must remain in the olive tree to be preserved through the tree's roots. But if the branch is separated from the olive tree, it cannot be preserved any longer. But if the Israelites do not persist in unbelief and if they no longer abide in unbelief and believe in Jesus, then they will be grafted in (v. 23). How can this be? Look at verse 23b: "... for God is able to graft them in again."

Paul earnestly desired that his fleshly relatives, the Jews, see God's work of salvation for the Gentiles, repent, turn around, and be grafted into the Church of God by believing in Jesus Christ, even if they were jealous. And he believed that God, who knew this earnest heart, would not abandon all of the Israelites, but would allow those who were chosen among them to repent and turn to Jesus Christ and engraft them into the Church of God. In this faith and confidence, Paul said to the Gentile saints in Rome: "After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!" (v. 24) What does it mean? If the Gentiles, who are not descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by lineage ("an olive tree that is wild by nature'), repent and turn around and believe in Jesus and are grafted into the Church of God, how much more will the Jews not be grafted into the Church of God, if the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by lineage? If God saved the Gentiles who repented and grafted them into the Church of God, how could He not graft the Jews who repent and accept Jesus to the Church of God?

Not long ago, I received a magazine called "KIBI News" through a sister in Christ who is an accompanist at our church. Here, the abbreviation of "KIBI" is "Korea-Israel Bible Institute." The ministry of this organization is mainly in charge of various ministries such as intercessory prayer ministry, literature ministry, and compassionate ministry for the restoration of Israel. In particular, we get a glimpse of how this group handles the ministry of supporting the believing Jews in Israel through photos and articles in magazines. In the midst of this, I remember reading an article titled 'Aren't we Christians ignoring physical Israel by emphasizing spiritual Israel too much?' I think it makes a lot of sense. While we say that we live our lives of faith with pride as spiritual Israelites, descendants of spiritual Abraham, we think that the descendants of Abraham through lineage are now neglecting the Israelites and Jews as we preach the gospel. This is not the proper attitude of an evangelist. God never abandoned the Jews (11:1). Therefore, we must not abandon the Jews whom God did not abandon. Surely God will make His chosen people among the Jews, the remnant, repent and come back. God is still doing that. We must at least join in prayer in this work of redemption toward the Jews of God. From today, I hope and pray that our church will be able to pray for the evangelization of the Jews. In the midst of this, we, who are not Jews, should not pride ourselves as Gentiles and have boastful hearts (vv. 18, 20). How can we, who have been engrafted into God's church (God's kingdom) by God's undivided grace, have boastful hearts and arrogance? Rather, we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). How do we work out our salvation with fear and trembling? We must see God's lovingkindness and majesty (Rom.11:22). And we must

abide in God's lovingkindness. God saved Gentiles like you and me by loving and choosing us to believe in Jesus Christ. Because God loved sinners like us, He did not cut us off and instead engrafted us into the Church (Kingdom) of God. Therefore, I hope and pray that with a heart of gratitude for this grace of God, we strive to spread the gospel to God's chosen people whom God loves and does not forsake, to save some of them (v. 14).

"Who has known the mind of the Lord?"

[Romans 11:25-36]

During the morning prayer meeting last week, I received a lesson from God about 'The church dispute' centered on 1 Corinthians 1:10. The lesson of God is that there are three causes of disputes in the church. The three causes are: (1) not agreeing with one another, (2) not uniting in mind, and (3) not saying the same thing. The reason why all the members of the Corinthian church did not have the same mind was because they were proud (4:6). And because of their pride, they went beyond what is written (4:6) and boasted of themselves rather than the Lord (1:31). As a result, there was envy and strife in the Corinthian church (3:3). Upon hearing the news of this conflict, the apostle Paul (1:11) wrote a letter to the Corinthian church and said: "Is Christ divided?" (1:13) In order for us to keep the unity of the church, we all must have the same mind. In other words, we all must have the heart of Jesus (Phil. 2:5).

Paul, who had the heart of Jesus (1:8), told the saints in Rome, especially the Gentiles, in Romans 11:11-24, not to take pride in being engrafted into the Church of God (v. 18). Then he admonished them, "Do not be arrogant, but be afraid" (v. 20). Why did Paul exhort the saints in Rome not to be arrogant? The reason is because all the Gentile believers in Rome received salvation through the grace of God and entered (engrafted) into the Church of God. In other words, the Gentile believers in Rome did not have the ability to enter the Church of God, but God had the ability to bring them into the Church of God (11:23). So, God allowed them all to enter the Church of God. To the Gentile saints who came into this Church of God by God's exclusive grace, Paul exhorted, "Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God" (v. 22). And he told the Gentile saints to abide in God's lovingkindness (love) (v. 22). Then, in today's text, Romans 11:25-32, Paul introduces the mystery of God to help the saints in Rome, especially the Gentiles, to avoid being arrogant, claiming to be wise. The mystery of God is the mystery of God. This mystery of God is that in saving the Israelites, which is His will (purpose), Israel will be saved only after the full number of Gentiles is saved. Look at Romans 11:25-26a: "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not

be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so, all Israel will be saved," What Paul is saying here, 'all Israel will be saved,' does not mean that all Jews will be saved, without exception. We should not just interpret these words verbatim. Rather, we must interpret these words in terms of what Paul is talking about throughout the book of Romans. For example, in Romans 8:29 or Romans 11:2, which we have already meditated on, Paul refers to those whom God foreknew (8:29) and those whom God predestined (8:29, 30), and God did not reject His people whom he foreknew (11:2). In light of this word, in Romans 11:26, "all Israel" does not refer to all Jews, but refers to those whom God foreknew among all Jews, that is, those whom God chose before the foundation of the world. That's why Paul said that he was trying to save some of the Jews (v. 14). Then, in saving His chosen people among the Israelites, which is His will (purpose), God said that His method was to harden some of Israel until the full number of the Gentiles came in. What does this mean? It does not mean that the Israelites will become partially hardened until all Gentiles are saved and enter the Church of God. The meaning of this word is that only after all of God's chosen people among the Gentiles are saved and enter the Church of God, then all His people who have been hardened beforehand will be saved. How will God deliver those whom he has foreordained (chosen) among the Israelites? Look at Romans 11:26b-27: "... as it is written: 'The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins." Here, Paul, quoting Isaiah 59:20, says that God will send the Savior, Jesus Christ, to this earth to take away the sins of the ungodly Israelites whom God chose beforehand, so that they may be saved.

When I think of this mystery of God, I have summarized His mind in two ways in saving those whom God predestined among His covenant people, the Israelites, that is, His people whom He chose before the foundation of the world, which is His purpose:

First, God's heart is to have mercy on the disobedient chosen Israelites.

If we look at Romans 11:30-32, there are two words that are prominently repeated: "disobedience" and the word "mercy". Both words appear four times in Romans 11:30-32. The realization that God gives through these two repeated words is that if God used the disobedience of the Israelites and showed them mercy so that they would not be abandoned forever, He would not let them stumble. How amazing is God's providence and grace? How wonderful it is that God uses even their disobedience to save His chosen people and show them mercy. So, as Paul wrote letters to the saints in Rome, in Romans 11:1, "Did God reject his people? By no means!", and in Romans 11:11, "Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all!" God did not forever destroy the Israelites who disobeyed the gospel, but had mercy on them, did not forsake them and did not allow them to stumble and fall beyond recovery. This God is my God and your God. The God who has mercy on us is the God who shows mercy to us rather than judges us when we disobey His word, so that He does not forsake us and keep us from stumbling and falling beyond recovery. Do we really know the heart of this God?

Second, God's heart is the heart of loving the disobedient chosen Israelites.

Look at Romans 11:28 – "As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs." Here Paul goes on to write letters to the saints in Rome, telling them that God loves the Jews, the enemies of the gospel who disobey. God, who loves the Jews who were enemies of God because of their disobedience to the gospel principle, loved those whom He had predestined among them, so that He called them to the gospel and gave them the gift of eternal life without regret in calling them to the gospel and giving them the gift of eternal life (v. 29). In other words, God does not change in saving the chosen Jewish people without any conditions (Park). How wonderful is God's sincere love and gracious God's great love? God's zeal for salvation directed the gospel to the Gentiles in order to save the disobedient Israelites and those who were enemies. He wants to save the chosen people among them. How great is God's love?

With this great love and abundant mercy, Paul realizes God's mysterious work of saving His chosen people (whether Jews or Gentiles) and is praising God like this: "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" (vv. 33-35) Here, Paul is praising God after telling the saints in Rome about the mysteries of God through the letter. He is God's rich wisdom and knowledge, God's immeasurable judgment, God's path undiscoverable, and the unknown heart of the Lord. Especially when he thought of God's future plan for Israel (Chaps. 9-11) (MacArthur), he couldn't help but praise God when he thought of God's great love and abundant mercy toward Israel. He praised God like this when he thought of God's deep heart toward His chosen people: "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen" (v. 36).

As I meditated on Romans 11:25-36, I became convinced that God loves His chosen people whom He predestined, both Jews and Gentiles, and uses even their disobedience to show mercy to them, so that He will never abandon them forever and will never let them stumble beyond recovery and save all His people. Do you and I really know this heart of God? When I thought of God's heart, I remembered 1 Timothy 2:3-4: "This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." This is the heart of the Lord. The Lord's heart is that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are saved. God's heart toward our church wants no one to perish, but everyone to repent and be saved (2 Pet. 3:9). If you feel even a little of this heart of God today, you must repent and turn around and believe in Jesus Christ to be saved. And we must glorify God by praising His great love. Glory be to the Lord in all ages.

Worship-witnesses

[Romans 12:1-2]

What is your life purpose? What are you living for? In the book "Purpose Driven Life" by Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Church, he says there are 5 benefits to living a purpose driven life (Warren):

(1) The first benefit is that knowing purpose gives meaning to life.

Without God there can be no purpose in life, and life without purpose is meaningless. Without meaning there is no importance or hope. A young man in his 20s wrote: 'I must be a failure because I am struggling to become something, but I don't really know what I am trying to become. All I know how to do is live roughly. One day I will feel that I am beginning to live only when I find my purpose in life.' Are we living while feeling the meaning of life?

(2) The second benefit is that life becomes simpler when we know our purpose.

We sometimes make simple things a little complicated. Why? Why do we sometimes make simple things complicated? The reason is the purpose of life is confused. Having a clear purpose in our life gives us a clear idea of what we should and should not do. In other words, purpose provides a standard for our lives. Therefore, if we have a clear purpose in our lives, before we do anything, we ask ourselves whether or not this work will help us achieve God's purpose for us. And then we can live a simple life by doing what helps us achieve our goals and not doing what doesn't. However, if we are not clear about our purpose in life, we lose ground as to why we make the decisions we make and how we invest our time and resources. We just make decisions based on the circumstances, the pressures, and our mood at the moment. In the words of Pastor Warren: 'People who don't know their purpose try to do too much, which causes stress, fatigue, and relationship conflict' (Warren).

(3) The third benefit is that if we know our purpose, we will live a focused life.

When we know our purpose in life, we can focus our efforts and energy on what matters. But now, as we live in this complex world, we live in confusion about the purpose of our lives, unable to concentrate our efforts and energy in one place and disperse them. As a result, when we look back on our lives, we seem to have done everything, but nothing seems to have been accomplished. Pastor Rick Warren refers to this kind of life as 'distraction without purpose.' We hope that a life of constantly changing directions without a clear purpose, constantly changing jobs, relationships, churches, and other external things will settle the confusion in our hearts and fills the void, but it only makes us feel more confused and emptier. However, those who live by being led by a purpose do the most important things first, no matter how beneficial they are.

(4) The fourth benefit is that when we know our purpose, we are motivated in life.

When we have a clear purpose in life, we burn with passion to achieve that purpose. The reason is because purpose breeds passion. Last week I read an article about actor and director Clint Eastwood in an American magazine. He is said to be eighty years old now. Nonetheless, he is still devoting himself to making films. It was a bit of a refreshing shock to see him say that he still thinks he has a lot to learn from the film world as to why he puts so much effort into making films instead of retiring. Even an 80-year-old man like this was challenged by how much more I, still only in my 40s, should run towards the purpose God gave me with enthusiasm and an attitude to learn. Even in the Bible, if we look at people like Moses or Caleb and see how God uses them even at the age of 80, we can't help but feel the burning passion for those who have a clear purpose.

(5) <u>The fifth and last benefit is that we can prepare for eternal life by knowing our purpose.</u>

How will people evaluate us when they come to our funerals after we die? A more important question is, 'How will God evaluate our lives after we die?' The purpose of God sending us to this earth is not to be remembered in this world. We were sent to this earth to prepare for eternal life. What do those who really prepare for eternal life do? Pastor Rick Warren says that believers who prepare for eternal life live on this earth by asking two important questions that God will ask us: (a) 'What have you done with my son Jesus Christ?', (b) 'What did you do with the things I gave you?' What is the purpose of our life? What are we living for?

Our church has three goals. The three major goals are (1) raising true worshipers, (2) raising faithful disciples, and (3) raising soul-loving evangelists and humble volunteers. Based on these three goals, our church has three purpose statements. The first statement of purpose is: 'The church that attends the Lord: Worship-Witnesses.' The passage for this first statement of purpose is 1 Corinthians

14:25 – "and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!" This word was challenged in a book called "Worship in Spirit and in Truth" written by a systematic theology professor I studied under at Westminster Seminary. I learned that what God wants most from us is worship, and that worship must fulfill the role of witness or mission of evangelism. The purpose of giving us the grace of salvation because God made us believe in Jesus Christ is to worship God. That is why God saved the Israelites from bondage in Egypt through Moses. This God says: "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks" (Jn. 4:23). Since God is looking for those who worship Him, our church is pursuing the right worship, worship in Spirit and truth, where we all prioritize worship and put our heart and soul into it. In the midst of this, we earnestly pray that through our worship service, even those among us who do not believe in Jesus will fall down and worship God, and God is truly among us. That's why I set the first purpose statement of our church as 'The church that attends the Lord: Worship-Witnesses.' However, a couple of weeks ago, while reading 1 Corinthians 14:25, I began to meditate on this word again. In the midst of this, I gained an important realization through the context of this word. That realization is that in worship, both non-believers and believers in Jesus are rebuked and judged through the word of God (v. 24), so the work of realizing their sins, repenting, and returning to the Lord must take place in our worship. The basis for this realization is 1 Corinthians 14:24 – "But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all." The voice the Lord gives me through this word is that as a church pastor, I must faithfully take up the responsibility of proclaiming the prophetic word. In other words, when I boldly proclaim the word of God, our sins are revealed through the word, and only when we realize that we are sinners can we repent of our sins and turn to the Lord by relying on the precious blood of Jesus on the cross.

So, I want to boldly declare the word of God to you under the heading of "Worship-witnesses," centered on the text of Romans 12:1-2. The word of God that I want to spread to you today is, in one word, "Offer spiritual worship to God." As apostle Paul says to the saints in Rome the doctrine from Romans 1 to 11, and then the application of the doctrine from Romans 12, he exhorts them to offer spiritual worship to God first. In other words, he is telling the saints in Rome: 'Since you have been saved by believing in Jesus Christ, live a life of true faith as those who have been saved. That life of true faith is to offer spiritual worship to God first.' Didn't you and I receive salvation by believing in Jesus Christ by God's total grace? Then, since we have been saved by faith, shouldn't we live a faithful life before God? What is that faithful life? It is to offer spiritual worship to God. What is "worship"? In a word, worship is respect and adoration. Worship is not for us, but for the God we seek to glorify. We worship to give God the greatest joy, and we have our greatest joy in pleasing Him (Frame). Then, what is the "spiritual worship" mentioned in Romans 12:1? Spiritual worship does not refer to the external ceremonial worship performed by the Jews in the Old Testament, but refers to spiritual worship, that is, worship with the Holy Spirit and truth (Jn. 4:24) (Park). The external ceremonial worship of the Old Testament, which the Israelites offered to God, was, as the prophet Isaiah said, offering countless offerings as sacrifices (Isa. 1:11) to show God something (v. 12). Ritual worship is not pleasing to God (v. 11) and is

of no benefit (v. 11). Furthermore, such outward ceremonial worship is an unbearable abomination to God and is detested (vv. 13-14). From God's point of view, the material things we offer to God are burdensome and exhausting to God (v. 14). Then, what is the spiritual worship that God wants? That is to worship in the Spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:24). In other words, the true spiritual worshipers God is looking for are guided by the Holy Spirit of truth and the truth of the gospel (the good news of salvation in Jesus) and worship. After all, spiritual worship is God-centered worship, and God-centered worship is always offered in the name of Jesus and by the Holy Spirit. In a word, spiritual worship is trinitarian worship (Frame). Spiritual worship is worship in which we give thanks, praise, worship, and God the Holy Spirit for our salvation.

Three things pursued by spiritual worshipers who hold such spiritual worship are recorded in Matthew 12:1-2. I hope and pray that we can also be established as true spiritual worshipers by pursuing these 3 elements:

First, spiritual worshipers present their bodies as living sacrifices that are holy and pleasing to God.

Look at Romans 12:1 – "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship." The living sacrifice that God is pleased with is the holy living sacrifice. In other words, the spiritual worship that pleases God is to offer our bodies to God. Of course, this does not mean that the priests killed animals and placed them on the altar when offering sacrifices to God, as in the Old Testament times. Since Jesus, the Lamb of God, died as a sacrifice on the cross in our place, we do not need to offer our bodies to God as a sacrifice. In today's text, as spiritual worshipers, what Paul exhorts the saints in Rome and you and I to offer our bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God is to live a holy life. What does it mean to live a holy life? As Paul already told us in Romans 6:12-13, it is not obeying the lusts of the body and presenting our members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but rather presenting our bodies to God as an instrument of righteousness. A true spiritual worshiper who lives a life dedicated to God as an instrument of righteousness lives a righteous life toward God. In other words, spiritual worshipers live a life worthy of the gospel. A true spiritual worshiper lives a life worthy of the gospel, especially a holy life. This is the life of worship-witnesses.

Second, the spiritual worshiper seeks transformation by renewing the mind.

Look at Romans 12:2a – "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. …" A true spiritual worshiper does not conform to this world. What kind of generation is this? Jesus referred to this generation as 'a wicked and adulterous generation' (Mt. 12:39). What do you think? Do you think that this generation we are living in is the

wicked and adulterous generation? This world is full of sin and adultery. What should we do at this time when the waves of sin and adultery are blowing through our lives like a storm? We must be transformed only by the renewing of our mind. This is not just an external change. This represents a fundamental, internal change. This refers to a life that meets the standards of the next world (Park). This is the essence of a life of spiritual worship. The key to a life of spiritual worship is transformation. Are you and I really changing? Or are we deteriorating? What is truly amazing is how should we explain the lives of our Christians who have worshiped hundreds of times and said countless times that they have received grace from God's word, but which do not change? Even pastors who are preachers of the Word feel like they have given up lamenting at the unchanging appearance of the saints, and from the standpoint of the saints listening to the Word, criticism and dissatisfaction do not seem to stop at the unchanging appearance of the preachers. How do we explain the appearance of Christians who do not change no matter how much we worship, even though we seem to faithfully handle worship, which is a religious ceremony, even out of habit? This shows that there is a problem with our worship life. Even though we have a lot of knowledge of the Bible, how many correct doctrines we have, and how many times we have held worship services, why do we not experience the work of change and rather become degenerate?

There are two kinds of change. It is important which direction it changes. It is either a change in an evil direction or a change in a good direction. While we worship, we can either change in a bad direction or change in a good direction. You may sound puzzled. Let me give you an example. During worship, we hear the word of God through the preacher, the pastor. The Scripture says that the word of God is like fire and a hammer (Jer. 23:29) and the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). This word means that the preacher himself or the saints who truly receive grace through the word of God during the sermon have their hard hearts broken, their cold hearts melted, their hearts and consciences pierced, and there is a work of true repentance and a work of being established. But at the same time, we must consider that God's word can harden our hearts. Hearing the word of God through Moses hardened King Pharaoh's heart. Likewise, those who hear the word of God through the preacher but do not obey it can rather harden their hearts by hearing the word. Obedience is a blessing, but disobedience is a curse. Then, in which direction are you and I receiving changes now? The saints who are changed in the direction of evil through Sunday worship will be conformed to this world even after they go out into the world. Outwardly, they may call themselves church members, Christians, and even worshipers, but they are Christians who have lost the ability to change the world. Greed and ambition to grow the church by increasing the number of Christians may not seem like it to people, but it is an abomination and hate in God's eyes (Isa. 1:13, 14). The change God is pleased with is that we are established before God as true worshipers. And the life of a true worshiper changes the world while worship and life are united and changed. Although the number may not be large, like the 300 in Gideon, a community that is being raised up as spiritual worshipers who fight and win over themselves, sin, and the world for the glory of God brings true change to all areas of ministry through changes in worship. I am praying to God for a dream of such a church community. We must not imitate this generation. We must be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Because we are changed, we must change our families, our workplaces, our

businesses, our neighbors, our society, our country, and the world. This is the life of worship-witnesses.

Third and last, the spiritual worshiper obeys God's will.

Look at Romans 12:2b – "… Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will." When we offer our bodies as living sacrifices to God and renew our minds, when we are transformed, we have the discernment to discern God's will. In other words, those who offer spiritual worship renew their minds, so when they are transformed, they gain spiritual discernment. As a result, true spiritual worshipers can discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God with spiritual discernment. Then what do spiritual worshipers do? They obey the discerned will of the Lord. The will of God is not known to those who have no heart to obey (Jn 7:17) (Park).

God makes everything beautiful in its time because He fulfills His purpose or His will (Eccle. 3:1-14). That's right. Our God is the God who makes everything beautiful by fulfilling His sovereign will at the time of birth and at the time of death, at the time of discipline and at the time of recovery, at the time of crying and at the time of laughing, at the time of being silent and at the time of speaking, at the time of love and at the time of hatred. I am reminded of the commentary on the hymn, "My Jesus, as Thou Wilt": After Luther's Reformation, there were several Lutheran Reformed churches, but they declined day by day and were forced to be annihilated by Roman Catholic forces. Thanks to the peace of Westpholia in 1648, only one Lutheran church survives in Schweidnitz and Pastor Benjamin Schmolck (1672-1737) took charge of the Lutheran church. As pastors in charge of only one Lutheran church in a vast area of 36 villages, Pastor Schmolk and his wife had a very difficult pastoral life. He often came in the middle of the night because it took him a whole day to do once he left the atrium, and sometimes he was away for several days at a time. At that time, there were only small children in the house. One day in 1704, when Pastor Schmolk and his wife returned home after visiting, they found the house on fire and ruined. And they found their younger son and his brother, who had died by fire, lying side by side in a pile of ashes. Shocked, Pastor Schmolk and his wife lost consciousness for a moment, but then knelt down and began to pray with tears before God (Internet). The content of the prayer at this time is the lyrics of the hymn "My Jesus as Thou Wilt": (v. 1) My Jesus, as Thou wilt! O may Thy will be mine; Into Thy hand of love I would my all resign. Through sorrow, or thro' joy, Conduct me as Thine own; And help me still to say, My Lord, Thy will be done. (v. 2) My Jesus, as Thou wilt! Though seen through many a tear, Let not my star of hope Grow dim or disappear. Since Thou on earth hast wept, And sorrowed oft alone, If I must weep with Thee, My Lord, Thy will be done. (v. 3) My Jesus, as Thou wilt! All shall be well for me; Each changing future scene I gladly trust with Thee. Straight to my home above I travel calmly on; And sing, in life or death, My Lord, Thy will be done. Amen. Like Pastor Schmolk and his wife, true spiritual worshipers want the Lord's will to be done on earth whether they live or die. I hope and pray that all of us will be able to glorify God by being established as spiritual worshipers, offer our bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God, and be transformed by renewing our minds, obeying the will of the Lord with all our heart and soul, and serving as witnesses of true worship.

Transformation

[Romans 12:1-3]

We have already learned from Romans 12:1-2 that the key to a life of spiritual worship is change or transformation. The question is, are we transforming or are we deteriorating? What is truly amazing is the lives of our Christians, who do not transform even though we worship hundreds of times and say countless times that we have received grace from the word of God. How are we to explain this? Even the pastors, who are preachers of the Word, seem to give up lamenting at the unchanging appearance of the saints. And from the standpoint of the congregants listening to the Word, criticism and dissatisfaction do not seem to stop at the unchanging appearance of the preacher. How should we explain the appearance of Christians who do not change no matter how much we worship, even though we seem to faithfully handle worship, which is a religious ceremony, even out of habit? What this teaches us is that there is a problem with our worship life. No matter how much knowledge we have in the Bible, how many correct doctrines we have, and how many times we have held many worship services, we do not experience the work of transformation and are rather deteriorating.

There are two kinds of transformation. Which direction we transform is important. It is either a transformation in an evil direction or a transformation in a good direction. While we worship, we can either transform in a bad direction or change in a good direction. You may sound puzzled. Let me give you an example. During worship, we hear the word of God through the preacher, the pastor. The Scripture says that the word of God is like fire and a hammer (Jer. 23:29) and the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). This word means that the preacher himself or the saints who truly receive grace through the word of God during the sermon have their hard hearts broken, their cold hearts melted, their hearts and consciences pierced, and there is a work of true repentance and a work of being established. But at the same time, we must consider that God's word can harden our hearts. Hearing the word of God through Moses hardened King Pharoah's heart. Likewise, those who hear the word of God through the preacher but do not obey it can rather harden their hearts by hearing the word. Obedience is a blessing, but disobedience is a curse. Then, in which direction are you and I receiving changes now? The saints who are changed in the direction of evil through Sunday worship will be conformed to this world even after they go out into the world. Outwardly, they

may call themselves church members, Christians, and even worshipers. But they are Christians who have lost the ability to change the world. Greed and ambition to grow the church by increasing the number of Christians may not seem like it to people, but it is an abomination and hate in God's eyes (Isa. 1:13, 14). The transformation God is pleased with is that we are established before God as true worshipers. And the life of a true worshiper changes the world while worship and life are united and changed. I would like to think about the three transformations that we believers must pursue, centering on the words of Romans 12:1-3. Hopefully, while all of us are pursuing these three transformations, when we look back at ourselves later, we can see ourselves more transformed than before.

First, we must seek a transformation of our hearts.

Look at Romans 12:2 – "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will." As we have already meditated on this word, we have learned that Jesus referred to this world as a wicked and adulterous generation (Mt. 12:39). Apostle Paul also referred to this generation as "the present evil age" (Gal. 1:4). At the same time, he says that before we became a new person by believing in Jesus, we followed "the ways of this world" (Eph. 2:2) or "the desires of the sinful nature" (Gal. 5:16). Then, what are the ways of this world or the desires of the sinful nature that we followed before we became new people by believing in Jesus? Look at Galatians 5:19-21a: "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like." A similar list is found in Romans 1:29-31: "They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless." The problem is that there are times when we, who have already become new people by believing in Jesus Christ, still follow the desires of the flesh according to the habits of the old self, rather than living like new people as God's holy people. What's the problem? If we believe in Jesus and become new people, we should live like new people. But why are we still unable to abandon the things of the old self? What is the problem? The problem is our heart. We sin because we do not put the Word of God in our hearts. Hear what the Scripture tells us: "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Ps. 119:11). If we do not put the Word of God in our hearts, our hearts cannot be renewed. As a result, we have no choice but to live according to our darkened foolish hearts (Rom. 1:21) or according to the lusts of our hearts (v. 24), imitating this wicked and adulterous generation. What should you and I do? We must be transformed by the renewing of our minds. In a word, we desperately need a transformation in our hearts.

In his book "Renovation of the Heart," Pastor Dallas Willard says, 'The only thing that can surely conquer external evil is a deep inner transformation (Willard). What do you think? Do you really believe that the only thing that can truly conquer external evil is a deep inner transformation? Personally, I am pursuing an inner transformation when I think of myself as well as my church members, who are not only

my physical family members but also my spiritual family members. In other words, I want to handle my personal spiritual life, family ministry, and shepherding ministry, focusing on the inner transformation God sees rather than the external changes. The reason is because there can be no real change on the outside without a change on the inside. I think the problem is that we Christians are neglecting inner changes and paying too much attention to external changes. As we pursue superficial changes without a fundamental change of heart, we Christians are becoming corrupted by committing sins in front of God and people, living in imitation of the world by being influenced by the world instead of exerting the good influence of the world. To us, our faith seems good, we pray very well, we seem to have knowledge of the Bible, and we seem to be serving the church diligently. But since there is no fundamental transformation of heart, there is no change in character or change in behavior even after going to church for many years. So, as I started this year, I set the church motto, "The Year of Meditation on the Word." With this motto in mind, all members of Victory Church would like to meditate on the Word of God more and more with me. This is because the more we meditate on the Word of God day and night like the psalmist, the more our hearts can be transformed through the Word of God. How is this possible?

(1) <u>The more we meditate on the Word of God, the more the Holy Spirit hears the voice</u> <u>of God.</u>

Speaking again from the perspective of today's text Romans 12:2, the more we meditate on God's Word, the more we can discern God's will.

(2) <u>Then, as we obey the discerned will of God, true transformation take place in our hearts.</u>

We must purify our souls by obeying the truth (1 Pet 1:22). Our hearts must be cleansed by the Word of God and live a holy life (Eph. 5:26).

I sincerely hope that a fundamental transformation of heart will take place in us as we all get closer to the Word of God, listen, read, meditate, study, and obey it. May our hearts be whole. Therefore, I hope and pray that all of us will no longer be conformed to this generation, but become more and more imitated by Jesus to change the world.

Second, we must seek a transformation of mind.

Look at Romans 12:3 – "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." The word of French modern rationalist philosopher R. Descartes spoke of revealing the essence and core of human beings. It is none other than 'I think. Therefore I exist'. What differentiates us humans from animals is that we humans have the ability to think. Animals live by instinctive impulses. The life of animals can be summed up in these four words: 'Eat, sleep, reproduce, and

die.' But we humans are thinking beings. We have reason, and through that reason, we are beings who think and live. In other words, we humans live while thinking and thinking (Internet). But for some reason, it seems that we are living impulsively like animals rather than thinking more and more. We are committing sins against God by speaking, acting, and living in emotions and impulses lacking in reason and logic. If we talk about these phenomena from the apostle Paul's point of view, it is because of our futile thoughts. Because our thoughts have become futile, we are living in sin against God. Look at Romans 1:21 – "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened." After all, even if we know God, unless we are transformed by the renewing of our minds, we will neither glorify God nor give thanks to God. And our thoughts are bound to become futile. In other words, our thoughts are bound to be worthless and vain. In these futile thoughts, there is no choice but to do worthless and vain things. But the problem is that these worthless and vain things in the eyes of God are being done in the church as well. For example, in the church "... sexual immorality ... discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies and the like" (Gal. 5:19-21). So, in today's text, Romans 12:3, Paul says, "... Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you." What does it mean? We can think of it in two ways.

(1) It means not having arrogant thoughts.

Why are these and other sins such as division and dissension being committed within the church community? It is because of arrogance. Why is there such a thing as spiritual superiority? Why is there such a preconceived notion? Isn't it because we overestimated ourselves? That's why Paul says, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought" (v. 3).

(2) It means to think humbly.

Look at Romans 12:3b – "... but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you." What does it mean? In a word, it means to think rationally. The word to think according to the measure of faith means to know oneself and think humbly before God, and to think soberly (Park). Those who know grace are humble. Those who know grace never think beyond their means. Rather, he is humbled. That is why Paul said, "For by the grace given me I say to every one of you" (v. 3), and in the midst of the grace he received from God, he humbly wrote a letter of exhortation to the saints in Rome.

We need a change of thinking. When we do not follow the example of this world and receive change only by renewing our mind, our thoughts are also bound to change. In other words, it comes with a change of mind and a change of thought. A renewed heart and a mind that submits to the will of the Lord can never think proudly before the Lord. Rather, a renewed heart and a submissive heart make us humble before the Lord. I hope and pray that this change of thinking continues for me and you. May we all humbly hold the same mind as well as the same thought.

Third and last, we must seek transformation in our lives.

Look at Romans 12:1 – "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship." When there are changes in our hearts and minds, our lives are bound to change naturally as well. How is it bound to change? We no longer follow the customs of this world or the lusts of the sinful nature, but live a life of obedience to God's good, pleasing, and perfect will. And we will live a humble life, not an arrogant life. In a word, the fruit of life that comes from changing our hearts and minds is "holiness". What does "holiness" really mean? The Hebrew word " $\psi \varphi \psi$ " (kodesh) for "holy" means to cut off, separate, and separate the unclean. In a word, the life of our saints refers to a life separated from the world and sin. In other words, the saint's life refers to a non-secular life. The Greek word for "saints" is " $\alpha \gamma \iota o \varsigma \psi$ " (hagios), and holiness is a combination of the negative word 'ha' and the word 'ge' for land and world, meaning non-secular (Internet). But what about reality? The church has become secularized. Why was the church secularized? The reason is that we are secularized. We are no different from the people of the world. While we also have the values of the people of the world and speak and act like them, our life patterns are generally not distinguished from those of the world who do not believe in Jesus. A life that is not distinguished from these worldly people is never a saintly life, a holy life. Are you and I living a holy life, the life of a saint?

Among the books I am reading these days, there is a book called "Gospel-Powered Parenting". This is a book that teaches us how the gospel changes us parents and nurtures our children. If we look at Chapter 4 of this book, Pastor William P. Farley, the author, under the title "A Holy Father," says that our fathers should be holy just as our fathers in the family are holy to Heavenly Father. And then he tells the wonderful truth about God the Father's holiness: "Such is holiness of the Fatherthat when his Son bore our sin and transgressions, God separated himself from him" (Farley). What do you think of the holiness of this Heavenly Father? How should we react to the holiness of Heavenly Father, who separated Himself from Jesus, the only begotten Son who took on all our sins? We must live a life separated from sin. We must live a life separate from this sinful world. We must never be secularized and make our words and actions no different from the people of the world. Rather, we must be transformed by renewing our minds, discerning what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God, and living a holy life in this sinful world. Therefore, the holiness of God must be revealed in this sinful world through our holy lives.

There must be transformation in our lives. There must be a transformation in our hearts, a transformation in our thoughts, and a transformation in our lives. I hope and pray that you and I will be transformed more and more by obeying the Word of God.

'According to the grace given us'

[Romans 12:3-8]

Am I really living a life of faith? Have you ever asked yourself this question? I think there is no one who has not asked himself this question at some point in his life of faith. Why are we asking ourselves this question? Perhaps one of the reasons is because when we look back on our own lives of faith, we have a guilty conscience that we are not doing something right. How can we know whether or not we are living a life of faith properly? Superficially, when we look at each other and say, 'Oh, brother and sister, you are working hard in your life of faith', what do we see and say that? For example, when we see these things, such as diligently coming to the church to worship God, praying very well (of course, attending the early morning prayer meeting diligently), and serving the brothers and sisters diligently while serving the church diligently, we usually say things like, 'Oh, brother and sister, you live a life of faith very diligently,' I think your faith is really good,' etc. What do you think? Of course, this is what we think when we look at it superficially. Internally, God knows whether we are not properly living a life of faith, and God the Holy Spirit speaks to each of us through the words of the Bible. So, as we read, listen, learn, and meditate on the words of God, God the Holy Spirit also gives each of us the realization that we are not living a life of faith properly through His words. Indeed, how does God the Holy Spirit give us that realization? Through the words of the Bible, God the Holy Spirit enables us to see ourselves in front of the holy God, so that we can realize whether or not we are living a righteous life of faith. In other words, God the Holy Spirit allows us to grow in the knowledge of God through the words of the Bible so that we can know ourselves. In other words, God the Holy Spirit makes us realize the greatness and depth of our sins through the Word of God, so that we can realize God's rich, great, and deep grace. So, believers who lead a righteous life in front of God are living a life of faith with God's total grace while deeply realizing their sins: a life of obedience! Are you really living your life of faith? If you and I are living a righteous life of faith, we serve the church, which is the body of the Lord, by the grace of God. We serve with a grateful heart and with a willing heart.

Looking at today's text Romans 12:6, the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the saints in Rome and said, "... according to the grace given us" I would like to think about two things today, focusing on Romans 12:3-8, under the heading 'According to the grace given us": (1) What is the community called

church? (2) What is the gift that the Lord has given to each of us so that we can serve the community called church? I hope that God will give us more and more grace at this time today, so that we can have the correct ecclesiology, serve each of us according to the gifts He has given to each of us, and humble ourselves in the work of the Lord who builds the church, which is the body of the Lord.

First, what is the community called church?

In Romans 12:4-5, Paul writes a letter to the saints in Rome, teaching them what the church is as a community. In other words, he emphasizes that the church, community, is the body of Christ, but "one body" (vv. 4, 5) and this body of Christ is said to have "may members" (v. 4) or "many" (v. 5) people. The church is one body of Christ, and in that one body there are many members (1 Cor. 12:12). And this is what God has placed each member in the body as He wants (v. 18). In a word, diversity and unity coexist in the church. So, I personally think that the heart given to our church is that we the church members should devote ourselves to advancing unity in diversity while acknowledging the diversity of the church, which is the body of the Lord. Here, "unity" is the fact that the church is "one body" of Christ (vv. 4, 5). And in this "one body" there are various members, but it is true that "each member belongs to all the others" (v. 5). Paul says this in Ephesians 2:21-22: "In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit." What does it mean? It means that as members of the one body of Christ, we are connected to one another, and we are being built together. So, Paul is saying that God has united us in Christ (Eph. 1:10). What should we do? We must make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (4:3). In other words, as peacemakers, we must strive to keep the unity of the church.

What, then, is the "diversity" of the church? It is said in two ways in today's text. It is none other than the diversity of the church, firstly that there are "many members" or "many" people and secondly that they do not all have "the same function". Just imagine. If the members of our body are not diverse, but all are mouths, all noses, and all arms, what would happen? Can't you imagine? Just as we have a nose, mouth, arms, and so on, God has chosen the church, which is the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:24). Why has God combined the church, the body of Christ? Look at 1 Corinthians 12:24b-25: "... But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other." God has combined the body of Christ, the church, so that there are weaker-looking members of the body (v. 22), and less honorable members (v. 23), and unpresentable members (v. 23). Why did God combine it so even? The purpose is to add honor to the members who are lacking so that there is no strife in the body and to look after each other with the same mind. But why are there constant disputes in the church today? Why are two or three churches splitting apart, which should be united? The reason why we Christians cannot keep the unity of the church and cannot set an example to the world due to quarrels and strife is that we do not recognize the diversity of the church. In other words, the cause of the church's dispute is that we do not acknowledge the fact that not all of our members have the same function (Rom. 12:4). Although each of us has different gifts from the one body of Christ (v. 6) and different roles (functions) (v. 4), we do not respect each other's gifts and roles, nor do we properly fulfill our respective roles. If not, the church gets caught up in a dispute while other members are held accountable. In a word, the cause of disputes in the church is arrogant thoughts and overflowing thoughts. Why do we have arrogant thoughts beyond our means? The reason is because we do not properly realize the grace of God. So, in Romans 12:6, Paul says, "We have different gifts, according to the grace given us" First of all, the gifts given to you and me are different, and furthermore, the gifts given to us are the full grace of God. If we know this grace of God, we must humbly use the gifts God has given us with a grateful heart to build the church, which is the body of the Lord, together.

Second, what is the gift that the Lord has given to each of us?

If we look at Romans 12:6 to 13, Paul speaks about gifts in 7 ways (MacArthur):

(1) The gift of prophecy

Look at Romans 12:6b – "... If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith." This refers to speaking the truth of God to comfort and strengthen the hearts of the listeners, rather than talking about the future. In other words, the gift of prophecy refers to the ability to convey the word of God well in public places. Paul urges those who have received this gift of prophecy to "use it in proportion of his faith" (v. 6). In other words, Paul is telling us to prophesy in the full revealed message or body of Christian faith.

(2) The gift of service

Look at Romans 12:7a – "If it is serving, let him serve" Here, "serving" has the meaning "deacon". This gift of service is similar to the gift of helps in 1 Corinthians 12:28. People with the gift of service give practical help of all kinds.

(3) The gift of teaching

Look at Romans $12:7b - \dots$ if it is teaching, let him teach." This gift is the ability to interpret, clarify, organize, and articulate God's truth. In particular, it is a gift that is desperately needed for pastors in the church. It is also a necessary gift for teachers.

(4) The gift of encouragement

Look at Romans 12:8a – "if it is encouraging, let him encourage …." Those who have this gift effectively call believers to follow God's truth in obedience. If this gift is applied negatively, it can be used to rebuke in love the brothers and sisters who have sinned correctly (2 Tim. 4:2). But when it is applied positively, this gift is used to comfort, exhort, and strengthen the believers who are

struggling.

(5) <u>The gift of giving</u>

Look at Romans 12:8b – "… he who gives, with liberality …" Even in the church, there are brothers and sisters who have received this gift of giving and like to give what they have to meet the needs of others. It is a very precious gift. Those who have this gift must do it with sincerity. In other words, those who have the gift of giving are expected to give generously or with liberality.

(6) The gift of leading

Look at Romans 12:8c – "... he who leads, with diligence" The word "leads" here literally means "to stand before." Paul refers to this gift as "the gift of administration" in 1 Corinthians 12:28. A person with this gift of leading (administration) guides others like a man at the helm of a ship. Those who have this gift of leading must lead with diligence.

(7) The gift of showing mercy

Look at Romans 12:8d – "… he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness." A person with this gift is sensitive and sympathetic (empathy) to those who are suffering and grieving. Therefore, the person who has this gift is willing to use his or her resources to help alleviate the pain and sorrow of that person in pain and sorrow cheerfully. What gift do you think you have received? We must humbly use the different gifts that God has given us with a grateful heart to build the church, the body of the Lord, together.

Yesterday Saturday, at the early morning prayer meeting, I sang hymn "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord" with the members, and then we prayed aloud for the church, which is the body of the Lord. Personally, when I sing that hymn, there are times when the lyrics 1 and 3 come to mind: (v. 1) I love Thy Kingdom, Lord, The house of Thine abode, The Church our blest Redeemer saved With His own precious blood, (v. 3) For her my tears shall fall, For her my prayers ascend; To her my cares and toils be given, Till toils and cares shall end. When I think of these lyrics and sing praises to God, because of the grace God has bestowed on me in Jesus Christ, I become fervent in my desire to love and serve the church, the body of the Lord, by devoting myself more and more before the Lord. The grace that God has given me and you is great. As we realize more and more the grace of this great God, I hope and pray that we will work hard to maintain the unity of the church in diversity by humbly and properly using the gifts given to each of us with the strength of the grace given by the Lord.

Causes of church conflict

"Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; ... Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly Do not be wise in your own estimation" (Romans 12:6, 16).

How should we view church disputes? Why are churches that should be loved fighting each other? What are the causes of the conflict in the church? One of the causes is the failure to acknowledge diversity. In other words, there is conflict in the church because it does not accept the fact that there are people with various gifts in the church.

Often when we look at a couple's dispute, we say: 'You and I are just different, but not wrong.' However, when I actually think about the relationship between husband and wife, it seems that there are many times when we say 'You are wrong' rather than admitting and accepting the fact that 'We are just a little different'. As a result, the couple quarrels and fights. Likewise, all human relationships are quarreling and fighting each other because they think 'you are wrong'. Even in the church, the reason why we fight and quarrel when we look at human relationships is that we treat each other with the thought and attitude of 'You're wrong' even though we are just different. Among these thoughts and attitudes, there is a bitter root of arrogance saying, 'I am right'. In other words, because there is a deep-rooted thought that 'I am right, you are wrong', we criticize and eventually even slander the other person. After all, the deep cause of contention is pride.

In Romans 12:16, the apostle Paul exhorts us to be the same mind toward one another and do not be haughty. The reason why we cannot be the same mind is because of our arrogant mind. In other words, we quarrel and fight each other because we pretend to be wise ourselves. If you look at yourself with your own eyes and think, 'I am wise', then you look at the other person with the attitude 'I am wise and you are foolish', so there is no choice but to have a dispute in the church. "Such 'wisdom' does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil" (Jam. 3:15). "But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not boast about it" (v. 14). If you boast, you are denying the truth (v. 14). What is the wisdom spoken of in the Bible? Look at James 3:17 - "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere." If we truly have God-given wisdom, as peacemakers in the church (v. 18), we must be considerate (v. 17). However, if we fail to acknowledge the various gifts the Lord has given to each of us and judge and criticize the gifts given to other members based on 'my gifts', there will inevitably be conflict within the church.

The church is one. Because of Jesus, the church has become one. There is unity in the church, which is the body of the Lord. At the same time, there is diversity in the church, which is the body of the Lord. The members who received various gifts gathered and made one body in the Lord. Therefore, we have a responsibility to maintain unity in diversity. That responsibility is that we must all be of one mind. How can we all be of one mind? There is only one way. In other words, we all have the mind of Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:5). With a self-emptying and self-humbling heart, we must acknowledge the various gifts the Lord has given to each of us. And we must strive to keep the unity of the Holy Spirit by making full use of the various gifts given to each of us in peace and tolerance with the wisdom from above (Eph. 4:3).

Community of love

[Romans 12:9-13]

What do you think of when you think of a community called church? When I think of "community," I think of the early church community in the Book of Acts. And I think of the community of the Early Church as a community of love. At the same time, I often ask myself, 'How can our church be established as a community of love like the Early Church?' In doing so, I can't forget the 5 steps I get through studying the Book of Acts on how the Lord establishes the church, which is the body of the Lord: (1) About 120 people also gathered together and prayed holding onto the word of promise (Acts 1:14), (2) When they prayed in unison, they received the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Ch. 2), (3) When they were filled with the Holy Spirit, they boldly proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ (4:31), (4) The Lord added people who are being saved daily to the church, which is the body of the Lord (2:47), (5) The Lord established the Early Church as a community of love (2:42-47; 4:32). So, when I think of our church now, one of the most important things is the first step, "prayer." Of course, there are individual prayers, but the prayer I value here is corporate prayer. The whole church works hard to gather together, and cry out to God together by holding onto the word of promise given by the Lord to our church, "... I will build my church ..." (Mt. 16:18). Of course, I want to pray together during the Friday-Saturday 2-day prayer meeting on the first week of every month. I also want to pray together during the intercessory prayer time every week and also during the Wednesday prayer meeting. Especially at the early morning prayer meeting, I want to continue praying together for the church as the Lord sends 5 faithful men and women of prayers. Then, I believe that we will all receive the filling of the Holy Spirit and boldly proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. We will also love each other with the love of God, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and be established as a community of love that is beautiful in the eyes of the Lord.

We have already meditated on Romans 12:3-8 in two ways under the heading 'According to the grace given us': (1) We learned that the community of the church is one body of Christ (the unity of the church), and that there are many members (the diversity of the church) in one body, but they do not all have the same function. (2) What we have learned is that in serving the community of the

church, we must humbly and gratefully use the different gifts that the Lord has given us by grace, and join together in the work of the Lord who builds the church, the body of the Lord. So, we thought about the 7 gifts centered on Romans 12:6-8. As we pondered these seven different gifts, we asked ourselves this question: 'What gift do you think you have received?' We must use the gift that the Lord has given to each of us as a gift and dedicate ourselves to building a community of love for the church. Indeed, how should you and I be dedicated? How can we participate in the work of the Lord who builds a community of love? I hope and pray that we receive lessons from today's text about how to devote ourselves to building the church the Lord builds as a community of love, centered on the words of Romans 12:9-13, and put them into practice.

In order for us to participate in the work of the Lord who builds the church community, which is the body of the Lord, we must pursue sincere love.

Look at Romans 12:9 – "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good." The sincere love that Paul is talking about here is, in one word, love without hypocrisy. What is hypocritical love? Saying 'I love you' with our lips, but hating with our heart, isn't this hypocritical love? This was the case with the Israelites who turned to God. They said that they honored the Lord with their lips, but in their hearts they left the Lord and repeatedly committed the sin of idolatry. This is hypocritical love. At the morning prayer meeting last week, after proclaiming the word of God, centering on Leviticus 5:1, I meditated on the word again under the title, "I want to be truthful, sincerely." I tried to write it down. While meditating on the word that as witnesses, not to state what we have seen and heard, and that our sins and faults will return to us, I ended my meditation on the word with the words, "Beware of lies and hypocrisy in the heart". The reason for so little is that I don't want the lies and hypocrisy of my heart to come in. It is because I do not want to love God and love my neighbor with lies and hypocrisy rather than the truth without even knowing it. Also, I do not want to hurt and beautify all the hearts around me by living a life of inconsistent words and actions with lies and hypocrisy infiltrating my heart. Rather, it is because I want to show them the true life of Christ by living a life of consistency of speech and action. How can we truly love sincerely and without hypocrisy? It is to hate evil and cling to what is good. In other words, Christians who love God and love their neighbors with sincere love hate evil and pursue good. Christians who love each other with sincere love strive to do good without compromising with sin.

In order for us to participate in the Lord's work of building the church community, which is His body, we must love our brothers and sisters with sincere love (v. 10). Indeed, how are we to love our brothers and sisters in the church with God's love?

(1) We must devote ourselves to one another (v. 10).

This word means that we, like a family, should be attracted to each other by a spiritual bond and love each other with a longing heart (Park). To do so, we must first keep in mind that the community we belong to is our spiritual family. When we know that we are spiritually one family and love each other with the Lord's love, our church will be established as a community of love more worthy of God's sight.

(2) We must honor one another above ourselves (v. 10).

In 1 Timothy 5:17, Paul exhorts us: "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching." From the point of view of the members, it is beautiful in God's eyes to honor and respect the pastors and elders of the church. And it is also beautiful in God's eyes to see our pastors and elders honoring and respecting the saints first. When we put our energy into honoring and respecting each other first, the church, which is the body of the Lord, can be established as a community of love. Rather than trying to get honor and respect first, we must be those who give honor and respect first.

(3) We must serve the Lord with zeal and spiritual fervor.

Look at Romans 12:11 – "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord." The community of love we dream of in the Lord is not a community just for each other, but in the end it is a community for the Lord we love. And the community of love for the Lord is expressed by serving people toward the Lord. All members of the church must serve the Lord with a humble and grateful heart, using the gifts bestowed upon them by grace. And while serving, we must serve the Lord with zeal and spiritual fervor (v. 11).

(4) <u>Even in tribulation, we must be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.</u>

Look at Romans 12:12 – "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." Even if there are tribulations that our community will have to go through in the future, we must persevere and move forward together while crying out together, looking at Jesus, our hope, with faith. Rather, the difficulties that come from the church level will be an opportunity for all church members to gather together and pray in unison. And when we pray and move forward together with one heart and one mind, the Lord of hope will not only make us persevere, but we will be able to rejoice in hope even in difficulties and adversity. I dream of such a community of love.

(5) We must practice hospitality.

Look at Romans 12:13 – "Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality." Here, the word to 'share' what the saints need is the word to 'lend and share in remain on

good terms with one's neighbor' (Park). In other words, since the church is one body of Christ and we are members of each other, we should strive to live a shared community life. Those who strive to live a sharing life like this also strive to practice hospitality. This does not mean that we should strive to practice hospitality only because we have the gift of service. Whether or not there is a gift of service, this is the principle of life in the church community, and we must strive to keep it.

The community the Lord establishes is a community in which brothers and sisters love each other and love the Lord, who is the head of the church, with sincere love. I hope and pray that the Lord will establish us as a community that believes in being one spiritual family in the Lord, loves each other, and strives to honor and respect each other first. Also, I hope and pray that the Lord will build a community that prays together, endures, and rejoices together while looking to the Lord who is hoped for in the midst of tribulation with faith. I hope and pray that the Lord will establish our church as a community of love that strives to provide hospitality while putting into practice the life of sharing and supplying each other. And above all, I earnestly pray that the Lord will establish a community of love in which all church members serving the Lord together with zeal and spiritual fervor.

'You will heap burning coals on his head'

[Romans 12:14-21]

When we read the Bible, there are many difficult words. Not only there are many words that we don't understand well, but there are also many words that we don't understand at all. But what is more painful than this is the fact that we are not able to obey even the words we understand. And because we are not obeying the word of God, we suffer a little from being pricked by our conscience. But after it passes, our conscience is no longer pricked, and we get used to living disobeying the Word, saying, 'I guess that's just how it is.' Perhaps one of those words is "Love your neighbor as yourself." Of course, we also have a tendency to love only those who are just lovable and dear to us, asking who our "neighbor" is. But even then, if we remember Jesus' words, "If you love those who love you, what reward will you have?" (Mt. 5:46), we know that we must love those who do not love us. Especially when we hear Jesus' command in the first half of Matthew 5:44-45a, we have no more excuses: "But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven."

If we look at the second half of Romans 12:20, we will find a word that is a bit difficult to understand. It says, "... you will heap burning coals on his head." What is the meaning of this word? To understand the meaning of this word, we must read Proverbs 25:21-22: "If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you." Looking at these words, we can see that the word about putting burning coals on people's heads is related to our enemies. What does it really have to do with it? According to Pastor John MacArthur, in the old Egyptian culture, if a person wanted to publicly show people that he had repented of his sins, he would put a brazier with burning coals on his head and walk (MacArthur). Here, "burning coals" is said to symbolize the person's burning pain of shame and guilt (MacArthur). That is why the Proverbs writer says, "If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink." In other words, the message given to us by the writer of Proverbs and the author of Romans today is to show love even to our enemies. Why? Why does God tell us to love even our enemies? I think there are two reasons for this: The first reason is that if we show love to our enemies, they will feel shame for the hatred, resentment, hatred, and

hostility in them (MacArthur). But a greater reason than this is that if we show love even to our enemies who oppose and persecute us, their cold and hard hearts will melt like fire and become our new friends (Park). In a word, to summarize today's text Romans 12:20, Paul exhorts the saints in Rome and you and me to love our enemies. The purpose is to melt the hearts of our enemies and make friends in the Lord. How is this even possible? Indeed, how can we love our enemies, melt their hearts, and make them friends in the Lord?

I applied this word of God in a narrower way to the church, which is the body of the Lord. In other words, our enemies can be outside the church, but I think that an enemy relationship can be established even within the church. So, I applied today's Bible verses to the relationship between our members in the church. The reason for doing so is that when we look at the context of Romans 12:14-21, just as we meditated on the words under the title of "Community of love" centered on Romans 12:9-13, Paul is writing a letter to the church members in Rome, so we are taught how to participate in the work of the Lord who builds the church, the body of the Lord, into a community of love. The lesson is that we must melt the hearts of our brothers and sisters, whom we regard as our enemies even within the church, with God's love and make them our friends in the Lord. How is this possible? Indeed, what must we do to love even our enemies, melt their hearts, and make them friends in the Lord? I would like to receive 4 lessons centered on today's text.

First, we must bless the enemy who persecutes us.

Look at Romans 12:14 – "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse." It is a very difficult word to obey. It is impossible with our human strength. How can we bless those who persecute us without cursing them? I think the secret is in Matthew 5:11-12: "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." In order to bless the enemy who persecutes us, we must believe in the fact that it is blessed to be reviled and persecuted because of Jesus, that is, our reward in heaven is great. Then we can bless our enemies with faith. Why should we bless even our enemies in faith? Of course, since the Bible commands us to do so today, we must obey the Word. However, when we think about it a little more, the reason we must bless even our enemies is that God has blessed us who were our enemies.

If we look at Romans 5:10, which we have already meditated on, it says, "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son." In other words, the blessing that God bestowed upon us, His enemies, is salvation through the death and life of His Son, Jesus. The saints who know the grace of always being grateful for this grace of salvation must love their enemies and bless them without cursing them with the attitude, God showed love even to those who were enemies of God like me and gave them the grace of salvation. Just as Balaam in Numbers 22-23 commanded Balak, the king of Moab, to curse the Israelites, but he blessed the Israelites who were

cursed because he spoke only what God told him, we also must bless, not curse those who persecute us. There seem to be one, two or three songs called 'Passage of Blessing' in Korean gospel songs. If we look at the songs written and composed by Suji Kim, the lyrics for the first verse are as follows: 'Make me a channel of blessings/ Make me a channel of blessings. Through me, let all nations enjoy the blessings God has planned/ for them. Break me within myself/ Let me put on the heart of God/ Let the whole world be embraced with love/ Make me a channel of blessing' (Internet). You and I must become channels of the Lord's blessings. To do so, we must love those who persecute us with God's love. We must forgive those who persecute us, just as God has forgiven us. When we sincerely forgive, we will be able to bless (pray) the persecutors with a loving heart.

Second, we must have compassion even for those who persecute us.

Look at Romans 12:15 - "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." This too is impossible on our own. How can we sympathize with those who persecute us when we cannot sympathize with our loved ones? For some reason, don't you feel that the love that the Lord requires of you is very difficult? Don't you think it's almost impossible? I always applied the words of Romans 12:15to my relationship with my brothers and sisters in the church. The reason is because while meditating on today's text, I thought that there are those who make us hard, suffer, hurt, and persecute us even in the church. When we are persecuted because of such people, instead of loving them, we will hate them. But Paul is telling us to empathize with them. How does he tell us to have sympathy with those who persecute us? We should rejoice with them and weep with them. In other words, we must rejoice with our brothers and sisters who give us a hard time, harass us, and persecute us when they rejoice and weep with them when they cry. How is this possible? How can we rejoice with him when he rejoices and weep with him when he weeps? On the contrary, shouldn't we rejoice when he cries and be angry when he rejoices? I found the secret in Hebrews 4:15 - "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin." Since Jesus, the High Priest, loves sinners like us and feels our weaknesses, we also have to love our enemies and feel their weaknesses. Why does Paul exhort the saints in Rome to have experience with you and me? The reason is because our church members want to keep the unity of the church with one mind. So, Paul says this in Romans 12:16 - "Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited."

We must be of one mind with one another. In other words, our church must have one mind. What kind of mind is that mind? It is the mind of Jesus (Phil. 2:5). The mind of Jesus is a humble mind. It is the mind that does not place it high but stays low. We must not pretend to be wise ourselves. Rather, we must humble ourselves and rejoice with the brother who rejoices with the heart of Jesus and weep with the brother who weeps.

Thirdly, we should do what is right in the eyes of everybody.

Look at Romans 12:17 – "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody." Here, "Do not repay anyone evil for evil" means not to take revenge (Park). Why should we not take revenge on the person(s) who have done us evil? Dr. Yoonsun Park cited six reasons for this, and among them, looking at the last six, he said: 'It is because those who act in retaliation lose the grace of God' (Park). The thought of retaliation itself is a sign that we are already losing God's grace. We should think of retaliation, and rather than act in retaliation, we should leave it to God to take vengeance. Look at Romans 12:19 – "Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord." What does it mean? It is said that vengeance is not in us, but in God. God will avenge Himself, so we must leave the vengeance to God. We should rather do good than repay evil with evil. When someone has done us evil, how can we plan good rather than repay evil? To do so, we must overcome evil with good (v. 21). If we do not overcome evil with good, we will never be able to plan good works. Rather, we will seek to repay evil to those who have done us evil. We won't be like that. Rather, because we overcome evil with good, we should seek to do good rather than repay evil to those who have done evil to us.

Fourth and last, we must be at peace with everyone.

Look at Romans 12:18 – "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." When writing a letter to the saints in Rome, Paul not only said, "Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody" (v. 17), but also exhorts them to "live at peace with everyone" (v. 18). When we say here to be at peace with everyone, it is not just to love us and be at peace with only those we love. This word tells us to be reconciled with those who persecute us and with our enemies. How is this possible? Ephesians 2:14-16 comes to mind: "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility." Because Jesus, the Peacemaker, died on the cross, He not only reconciled us, who were enemies, with God, but also reconciled Jews and Gentiles, who were enemies, so that they could become one body. Therefore, Jesus is telling us: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (Mt. 5:9). We must be at peace with everyone.

God is giving us four lessons today in Romans 12:14-21: (1) We must bless the enemies who persecute us, (2) We must be sympathize even with those who persecute us. (3) We must be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. (4) We must be at peace with everyone. Who do you think of when you think of these lessons? I thought of Jesus: Jesus who loved even the Jews who persecuted Him and those who crucified Him, Jesus who loved even our enemies, knowing our weaknesses and having compassion on them, and crucified and died in our place, He did good things for us and died on the cross, reconciling us to God and to one another. Indeed, what should we, the disciples of Jesus, do?

We must submit ourselves to the governing authorities.

[Romans 13:1-7]

While I try to have a conversation with my wife, there is a topic that I avoid talking about. In other words, whenever possible, I try to avoid having a conversation with my wife on this subject. The subject is none other than the separation of church and state. What does separation of church and state mean? In 1947, the Supreme Court of the United States proclaimed: 'We have marked the boundaries of our nation's existence on the basis of the belief that complete separation of state and religion is for the best, both national and religious' (Internet). And Americans united by the separation of church and state wrote the following about the 1987 Alabama School trial: 'America is a nation of people of many different religions and non-religious people. Government neutrality towards religion is essential to preserving the richness and diversity of religious life. The provision of the Amendment guarantees this neutrality and guarantees that the government will not show favoritism to any particular religion' (Internet). These trial words and Supreme Court proclamations emphasize the separation of church and state. What do you think? 'The Reformed tradition does not insist strongly on the question of the separation of church and state, a view supported by Gresham Machen, who suggests that the church should refrain from engaging in the political arena in a corporate capacity' (Internet). The late Prof. Machen, who was a professor at East Westminster, argued that individual Christians abide by state laws, but in politics there must be a strong distinction between individual Christians participating in politics and in the act of faith and community church bodies participating in politics (Internet).

There is a very important confession of faith in our Presbyterian Church. That is the "Westminster Confession of Faith". What is the Westminster Confession of Faith? The Westminster Confession of Faith is a confession of faith approved by the General Assembly of theologians and pastors gathered in Westminster, England in 1647. It is a confession of faith enacted and adopted based on Presbyterianism at the Church Council held at Westminster Cathedral for the reform of the Anglican Churches in Scotland, England and Ireland (Internet). If we look at Chapter 23 of the Westminster Confession of Faith, it says "Of the Civil Magistrate." In particular, 23-1 says of the national source and end of authority: "God, the Supreme Lord and King of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates to be

under him over the people, for his own glory and the public good: and, to this end, hath armed them with the power of the sword, for the defense and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evil doers" (Internet).

In today's text, Romans 13:1, the apostle Paul exhorts the saints in Rome to submit to the governing authorities. What does it mean? This word means that if the saints in Rome are God-fearing people, they must submit to the government. Why should we submit to the government? The reason is that all governments are ordained by God. Look at Romans 13:1 - "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God." What does it mean? If applied to us living in the 21st century America, we, as God's people who fear God, must obey the American government that God has ordained. Of course, you and I are Koreans. Still, as people who have come to live in the United States, we must obey the US government. In a way, seeing as Paul says that the Jewish believers in Rome who are receiving this Paul's letter now must submit to the Roman government, we too, as people living in the United States, should submit to the government established by God, even if we are not Americans but Koreans. I think Paul is telling the saints in Rome to submit to the Roman government that persecutes them. As a basis for this, I cite Romans 12:14 - "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse." At that time, the saints of the church in Rome could have had people who persecuted them internally, but the Roman government especially persecuted them externally. In other words, Paul is admonishing the saints in Rome to submit to the Roman government that persecutes them. Why? This is because all authority has been ordained by God (13:1). If we do not submit to God's ordained government and disobey it, we are disobeying God's command, and disobeying God is to bring judgment (v. 2). Of course, this does not mean that we must submit to the government unconditionally. In other words, when a government is corrupt and institutes things that are contrary to the Word of God and commands all its citizens to obey, we cannot and must not yield to such an order. One example would be attempts to institutionalize same-sex marriage. If same-sex marriage is made a law of the country, what should we do with that law? It is clearly a country law that goes against God's law (Word), so are we to follow that country's law? Today's word is that we must submit to the government established by God, but do not go against the laws of the country within the line that does not go against God's laws.

So, what government should we submit to? Paul gives us the answer in Romans 13:3 – "For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you." In other words, the government we must obey is, in principle, a government that justly implements retaliation in order to prevent evil and encourage goodness (Park). In other words, the government that you and I must submit to is a government that does justice. We must obey the government that distinguishes between good and evil, encourages good deeds and punishes evil deeds. If the government is corrupt and does not do justice, we cannot submit to such a government. In other words, if the government is corrupt and unprincipled, promoting evil and preventing good, how can we trust and submit to such a government? But if a government is, in principle, a government that justly retaliates in order to prevent evil and promote good, then we must submit to such

a government. Submit, but how are we to submit to the just government established by God? Today's text teaches us three lessons:

First, we must fear and respect the government that God has established.

Look at Romans 13:3, 7: "... Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? ... if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor." What if we are not afraid of authority? We will sin. God has established 4 authorities in this world: (1) He established the government for all citizens; (2) He established the Church for all believers; (3) He established parents for all children, (4) He established masters for all employees (MacArthur). But, for example, what would happen if the children did not fear the father's authority even at home? They will surely disobey their father. The same goes for companies. If an employee ignores the authority of the boss, he or she will not listen to the boss. It is the same with the church and the same with the country. If citizens do not fear those in power in the country, they will disregard public authority and commit crimes of their own accord. As a result, the country will be in disorder. That's why Paul says, "if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the word for nothing" (v. 4). If we do not fear the government and sin, "God's servant," that is, government officials established by God to preserve the culture and order of the country, will repay us who do wrong (v, 4) (MacArthur). It is natural that we will be punished if we break the laws of our country. And when we break the law, we must be punished so that we fear public authority. Even if we live in violation of the law, if we do not get punished when we deserve it, we have no choice but to be bold in breaking the law. Therefore, we must fear and respect the government established by God and follow the laws of the country.

Second, we must submit to the government God has established by doing what is right.

Look at Romans 13:3b – "... Then do what is right and he will commend you." There are principles we need to know in order to obey the government established by God. In a word, the principle is that doing good is praised, and doing bad is punished. We must strive to do good in order to submit to the government that God has ordained according to the word of God. We must do good because we fear God rather than fear the government. And those who fear God obey the word of God. What is the word of God? Ephesians 2:10 is the word of God that we think in relation to the second half of Romans 13:3. In this verse, the Bible says that the reason why we are made new creatures in Jesus Christ is to do good. In other words, as God's new creation, we must use our strength to do good. However, looking at the church these days, it seems that there are two extremes that flow: On the one hand, the church does not do good to society. Of these two, I think the current trend is the second. It seems that the church is trying to do a lot of good deeds to have a good influence on society, but it seems that the gospel of Jesus Christ is not being spread through words and life. I don't know now, but in the past, as far as I know, I heard that a Catholic church, does more good deeds for society than the Protestant church. So, I know that Catholics do a lot of orphanage ministry, and they do a lot of good things in this or that society, such as

helping the poor. However, it seems that Protestant churches have not done good deeds that contribute to society while preaching the gospel. But how about now? It seems that we Protestants are trying to do a lot of good deeds by participating in the society. But for some reason I think that I have forgotten the taste of the gospel. A balance is needed. In other words, while preaching the gospel, we must live a life worthy of the gospel. One of living a worthy life of the gospel is doing good as a new creation in Christ. I believe that the church should also contribute to society and the country by doing good.

Third, we must submit to the government out of conscience.

Look at Romans 13:5 – "Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience." Paul says that the motive for obeying the command of the state is not only to escape the wrath of those in power, but to know that it is right in our conscience and to do it truthfully (Park). For example, what we believe is right and what we must do truthfully is to pay taxes to the country. Look at verses 6-7: "This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor." Now, Paul is telling the saints in Rome to submit to the Roman government, but knowing that it is right to pay taxes on conscience, and to do it truthfully. How does this sound to you? I remember what Dong-gil Kim, professor emeritus at Yonsei University, said a long time ago, whether it was at a rally or a radio broadcast, when he came here in LA. That word was for us, Christians, to pay taxes to the country? Isn't it a citizen's responsibility to pay taxes to the country? Aren't we trying to benefit from the country while trying not to pay taxes? Is our conscience stricken?

In Matthew 22:17-21, there is a scene where the Pharisees sent their disciples and the Herodians together to Jesus to see how they would ensnare Jesus. They went to Jesus and asked: "Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" (v. 17) What was Jesus' answer then? "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (v. 21). But what about us Christians? Aren't we giving back to God while not paying taxes to the country? Obviously, Jesus also said to Caesar what is Caesar's, but we, like the Pharisees and other hypocrites, seem to think that if we give offerings only to God, we do not have to pay taxes to the country. What should we do? As far as I know, I know that I have to file my tax report by early April, but what will you do with your tax report?

In the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 23-4, it is written about the duty of the church members to those in power: ". It is the duty of people to pray for magistrates, to honor their persons, to pay them tribute and other dues, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority, for conscience's sake. …" (Internet). We must submit to the government established by God. We must pray for our governments, and we must also fear and respect them. And we must do good deeds while living in this society. We must pay taxes to the country. Therefore, I hope and pray that you and I can glorify God through this.

Let us love each other.

[Romans 13:8-10]

Are you good at interpersonal relationships? There is an eternal classic of human management that has provided useful clues to solutions for people struggling with human relationships. The name of that classic book is "How to Win Friends and Influence People.' The author of this book is Dale Carnegie, considered the master of human relationships. I want to share with you today some of his 30 relationship quotes (Internet): (1) Take a sincere interest in others, (2) Be a good listener. Create a comfortable atmosphere so that the other person can speak freely about themselves, (3) Try talking about the other person's interests as a topic, (4) Give generous praise for small progress, (5) Don't criticize, belittle, or complain about the other person's opinion. What do you think? We already know these words, but aren't they difficult lessons to apply to human relationships in real life?

During the morning prayer meeting last week, I meditated on Judges 8 and 9 for two days in a row and thought about human relationships. The lesson given in meditating on those words is that the important thing in human relationships is meekness or humility. In particular, I learned the importance of considering others better than myself (Phil. 2:4). I have learned that since I consider others better than myself, I need to value and acknowledge others' work more highly than my own. Another thing is that I remember the grace that God bestows, so I learned to treat people who have shown me kindness in a good way. I learned to treat others the way I would like to be treated. The challenge is to obey these lessons learned in life. By obeying, we must live the life of a disciple who loves his neighbor as himself, which is the commandment of Jesus.

In today's text, Romans 13:8-10, Paul exhorts the saints in Rome to love one another. In other words, he was telling the Roman saints about the love of neighbor, the second of the twofold commandment given by Jesus: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt. 22:37-39). Who really is our "neighbor"? This question also appears in Luke 10:25-37. When Jesus asked a lawyer asking questions to test Jesus, "What is written in the Law and how do you read it" (v. 26), the lawyer named Jesus' twofold commandment (v. 27). At that time, Jesus said, "You have answered correctly. ... Do this, and you will live" (v. 28). But this lawyer wanted

to justify himself, so he asked Jesus: "And who is my neighbor?" (v. 29) The words of Jesus at that time are the story of the good Samaritan (vv. 30-35). To summarize, there was a man who met robbers, and the priest and the Levite saw him and passed by (vv. 31-32). But it is a story that only the Samaritan showed love to the man whom the robber met. Jesus' question was, "Which of these three, in your opinion, was a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" (v. 36). At that time, the lawyer's answer was, "He is the one who showed mercy" (v. 37). To this lawyer who answered right away, Jesus said, "Go and do likewise" (v. 37).

We must go and give love. We must show love to our neighbors. We must show love not only to our family members but also to our church members and to those who do not know each other well. Furthermore, we must show love to those who persecute us. This applies not only to the neighbors Paul is talking about in today's text, but also to the Jewish and Gentile believers in the Roman church. In other words, the word to love one another is to love one another as brothers and sisters in the church. However, if we think more broadly, Paul is now writing a letter to the Roman church saints, admonishing them to love even the Roman government people who persecute them. In other words, the neighbor love he is talking about also includes the enemy love.

Then, how does Paul exhort the saints in Rome to love one another? Two lessons to be learned:

First, we must owe nothing to anyone except to love one another.

Look at Romans 13:8a – "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another" We have already seen in Romans 13:1-7 that Paul wrote a letter to the saints in Rome and exhorted them to submit to the authority established by God, the Roman government that persecuted them. We meditated on what Paul exhorted the Roman saints to pay a tax, that is, to pay taxes to the nation, exhorting them to obey because of their conscience. Then, in the first half of Romans 13:8, Paul exhorts the Roman saints to owe nothing to anyone except to love one another. What does it mean? Is the Bible saying don't go into debt at all? So, when we go to school, we shouldn't borrow money from a bank to get into debt? When we do business, we shouldn't borrow money from a bank and get into debt? When we do business, we shouldn't borrow money from the bank or people around us? Is that what it means? Not at all! What we are talking about in today's text is not saying that we should not be in debt at all. Neither the Old nor the New Testament forbids taking on debt (Exod. 22:25; Lev. 25:35–37; Ps. 37:26; Mt. 5:42; Lk. 6:35) (Cottrell). What Paul is saying in today's text is that even if we are in debt, pay back everything in our conscience as promised. For example, if we owe the country, we have to pay it back. In other words, if we haven't paid our taxes, we have to pay the tax to our country. In addition, if brothers and sisters owe each other within the church, they must repay the debt. It seems that it is very difficult to live without debt in our lives. Especially when we are experiencing financial difficulties like these days, we may be in a situation where we need to borrow money here and there. In particular, students may have no choice but to borrow money from a bank for their student loans. And those who do business may have no choice but to borrow money from banks, friends, or even church members. I don't think the Bible forbids that. Rather, if we look at Exodus 22:25,

the Scripture says this: "If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not be like a moneylender; charge him no interest." What does it mean? If we apply it to the church in the New Testament era, if we lend money to a brother who is struggling financially in the church, I think it means that we should not collect interest on the debt like a creditor. Of course, this is what we say to the money lender. So, what does the Bible say to those who borrow money? As it says in Romans 13:8, it means to pay our debts. In other words, if we are in debt, put it into practice according to the contract. For example, if we borrowed money from a bank and owed money, it means that we should repay the debt according to the contract with the bank. When there is a certain amount to be paid every month, every month, we have to pay back the money to the bank according to the contract at that time. In particular, if we believers in Jesus borrowed money from our brothers and sisters in the church and made a contract or promise to repay a certain amount each month with the lender when we could not repay it all at once, Paul urges us to put it into practice according to our conscience. But what's the problem? The people who believe in Jesus lend money to each other in the church, but the person who borrows the money does not keep his promise. Looking at this reality, my personal opinion is that it is best not to have any debt at all, as in verse 8 of today's text. In this way, the relationship between the members of the church will not be broken due to money, and the unity of the church will be maintained. That's why the apostle Paul says in Romans 13:7, "Render to all what is due them." If we are in debt, we must pay the debt of our conscience as true worshipers who fear God.

However, this is not the core content of today's text Romans 13:8. It is just a word that guides us to its core content. What's that core content? That is what the word says, 'To be loved is to be in debt, and the debt of this love is to be paid to each other'. What do you think? Do you think love is a debt? Didn't all of us receive the love from our parents? Aren't we in debt of love to our parents who gave us that love? Have we paid off our parents' debt of love? Is there no way to pay it back? You and I owe a debt of love to God. Although we owe the debt of love, we will never be able to repay the debt of God's great love. Now, in Romans 13:8-10, Paul begins admonishing the saints in Rome from Romans 1 to 11 to worship God spiritually if they have been saved through faith in Jesus through God's love and total grace. And in Romans 13:8-10, all of them are debtors of God's love, and internally, both Jewish and Gentile believers within the church are told to pay each other's debt of love as brothers and sisters in the Lord. What do you think? The more we get to know God's great love in our vertical relationship with God, the more we can't repay that love. Wouldn't there be joy and pleasure in giving love to each other? Wouldn't we enjoy the joy when the Lord's love shines? But, like the words of Jesus' prophecy of signs about the end of the world, love is growing cold. Rather than the joy of giving love, we are becoming more and more selfish. Of course, this is also the word of the prophecy of the end of the world. What should we do?

Last week, during the closing worship service of the presbytery to which our church belongs, the pastor in charge of a church prophesied the word of God to all the presbyteries in attendance, focusing on the words of Revelation 2:1-7. The key point of that statement was this: We must remember, repent and rekindled our first love. Remember the moment you first felt God's love. Remember the moment you confessed your love to God because you were grateful and moved by God's great love. Wouldn't you like

to recover our first love for God like those moments at that time? Don't you want to ignite love, devotion, passion, etc. toward the Lord? We must repent. We must repent of our sins. Like the church in Ephesus, we must remember where we fell, repent, and do the first deeds (Rev.2:5). Therefore, we must be filled with the love of God again and love our neighbors. I hope and pray that you and I will bear this debt of love.

Second, we must keep the commandments of God.

What are the commandments of God? Look at Romans 13:9 – "The commandments, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not covet,' and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" Our church has been here for about 3 months with the slogan "Year of obeying the Word" this year. The reason why the motto "Year of obeying the Word" is set is because, as John 14:21, the motto verse of this year, says, those who love God keep God's commandments. If you and I truly love God, we must keep God's commandments. So, with the hope that we all love God with all our hearts this New Year, we set the motto, "Year of obeying the Word." In today's text, Romans 13:9, the Bible teaches us that just as those who love God keep God's commandments, we must keep God's commandments in order to love one another as brothers and sisters in the Lord. There are four commandments of God that Paul is talking about here. The four commandments are 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not covet.' All of these four commandments are commandments from man to man and are commandments that only those who love God can truly keep (Park). And because we love God, we show our love for one another as brothers and sisters in the community?

(1) We must not commit adultery.

When I say this, I don't know if I can say, 'How could we commit such a sin'. How can we actually commit adultery in the church? However, as Jesus said in Matthew 5:28, the sin of adultery can be committed even in the church. When a man lusts after a woman (and a woman looks at a man), he has already committed adultery in his heart. In other words, we must not commit adultery with our hearts.

(2) We must not murder in loving each other as brothers and sisters in the Lord.

It seems that this commandment also does not apply to us. How could anyone commit the sin of murdering another person in the church? However, if we look at 1 John 3:15, we can commit murder to each other. That murder is that we hate each other. The Bible says, "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer." How is it? Do you still think that the commandment in today's text, "Thou shalt not kill," does not apply to you and me?

(3) We must not steal.

Malachi 3:8 says: "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' In tithes and offerings." The Bible says that not giving God tithe that belongs to God is stealing. My personal opinion is that if not giving God tithes, which belongs to God, is stealing, then church members borrowing money from each other and not paying it back is also stealing. But the problem is that we say, 'How did we rob the Lord,' when we do not pay tithes to God, we think that even after stealing, we move on to the question of when we stole. So, we must refrain from borrowing and lending money within the church. And if we borrowed money from a brother or sister in the church in a situation where we cannot repay it, we must pay it back. If we do not repay, I think it is a violation of God's commandment, "You shall not steal," which is mentioned in Romans 13:9.

(4) We must not covet.

This commandment, as we know, is the tenth of the Ten Commandments: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor" (Exod. 20:17). Brothers and sisters in the church should not covet each other's things. We should not covet what others possess because we envy them. We should not covet the other person's money just because the other person has a lot of money. And we should not covet the other person's wife or husband just because they are pretty and handsome. In the end, covetousness leads to adultery, murder, and theft. Therefore, we must be very wary of covetousness. We must always examine our hearts with the holy Word of God while praying with vigilance so that our hearts do not become greedy.

Paul tells the saints in Rome, and also to you and me, that we must keep these four commandments in loving one another. As stated in today's text Romans 13:10, this is the love of not doing wrong to one's neighbor. So, although there are other commandments we must keep in loving one another besides these four commandments, the most important one is the second commandment given by Jesus, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (v. 9). The reason is because this commandment of Jesus, to love your neighbor as yourself, includes all these commandments: do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, and do not covet. I hope and pray that we, brothers and sisters, will devote ourselves more and more to love each other with that motive because we love God. Let us strive to show our love for one another as we obey God's commandments. Therefore, I hope and pray that not only to keep the unity of the church, but also to be used as a community of witnesses by becoming an example to the world as a community of love.

I hope and pray that our Victory community members will devote themselves to loving each other with God's love. I hope that we owe nothing but the light of love. I pray that we will do our best to keep God's commandments. Therefore, I hope and pray that through the Victory community that the Lord establishes, we will be able to reveal the scent of love to the world where this love is growing cold.

Do you know the time?

[Romans 13:11-14]

What time do you think it is now?

My Korean is short and I often make typos, so there are many times when my Korean is wrong. One of them, whenever I made a bulletin for Palm Sunday, there were many times when I wrote "종료" (which means "end") instead of "종려" (which means "Palm"). However, I am not good at Korean, but for some reason, whenever I greet Palm ("종려") Sunday like this, I cannot help but think of Jesus' death on the cross, which is the end ("종료") of Jesus in this earth. In fact, Palm Sunday is the first day of Passion Week. Palm Sunday today, Passion Week from tomorrow, and Good Friday commemorating the crucifixion of Jesus on Friday. What do we think when we celebrate Palm Sunday every year?

I meditated on the word of God under the heading, 'The God who makes beautiful in His time,' focusing on Ecclesiastes 3:1-14. Among those words of meditation, in Ecclesiastes 3:1, King Solomon says, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven." Indeed, we have to think about what time it is now that God is in the process of fulfilling His purpose.

In today's text Romans 13:11, the apostle Paul continues to write letters to the saints in Rome and says: "Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed." What is the "time" he is talking about? He is talking about the time in two ways:

First, that time is the time of the second coming of the Lord.

The time we are living in now is the time when the day of the Lord's return is near. Now, Paul is telling the saints in Rome, and to us who are meditating on this word, that this is the time when the second coming of the Lord is imminent. What does it mean that the return of the Lord is near? It means that the time of salvation for us who believe in Jesus is near (v. 11). In other words, now is the time of the Lord's return, and the word that the time of the Lord's return is near is the time of our salvation. In other words,

it means that the final stage of our redemption, glory, is near (v. 11). And the word that our salvation is closer than when we first believed means that since we may die at some point and meet the Lord, we are closer to meeting the Lord as much time has passed since we started to believe in Jesus. So, what must we do?

Second, the time is when we must wake up from sleep.

Paul is saying that the time has come for you and me to wake up from sleep, as the time for the return of Jesus is near. What does Paul mean when we should wake up from sleep? The meaning is that now is the time to wake up from the sleep of sin (Park). In this era in which we are living, as the Lord's return is near, it is a time when sins reach the extreme. Pointing to this, Paul says, "The night is nearly over; the day is almost here" (v. 12). Here, the word "the day is almost here" means that the second coming of Jesus, who is the light, is near, and the word "The night is nearly over" means that the night of sin has deepened in this world as much as the second coming of the Lord is near. In other words, in this era in which you and I are living, the night of sin in this world has deepened because the second coming of the Lord is near.

At this time when the second coming of the Lord is near, how should we live? How should we live a life of faith at this time when our salvation is closer than when we first believed?

(1) We must love one another (vv. 8-10).

If we look at Romans 13:11 in the original Greek text, the phrase "Kαì τοῦτο" is written at the beginning of this verse. The English NASB Bible translates this phrase as "And this do." This phrase is 'Also, you will have to do more of this' (Park). What does "this" refer to here? What more should we do? It refers to 'loving one another' as we have already meditated on in Romans 13:8-10. What does it mean? It means that we must love each other more sincerely, knowing that the time in which we are living now is when the return of the Lord is near. In particular, as Jesus prophesied about the end of the last days in Matthew 24:12, at this time when people's love is growing cold, we must strive to love each other with the Lord's love. Indeed, how are we to love one another? We are to owe nothing to anyone except to love one another. And we must keep the commandments of God: Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not covet, etc.

(2) We must put aside the deeds of darkness.

Look at Romans 13:12 – "The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light." At this time when our salvation is closer than when we first believed, we must realize that the night of sin has deepened and put aside all the works of darkness in this world. What are the things of darkness in this world that we must put

aside? In today's text, Romans 13:13, apostle Paul says three things:

(a) We must put aside the works of darkness, orgies and drunkenness.

What are orgies? The original Greek word " $\kappa\omega\mu\rho\varsigma$, kōmos" was originally used in the course of a festival honoring Dionysus, the god of wine in Greek mythology. But later it came to be used negatively for excessive, unrestrained revelry, drinking revelry, and drinking parties (Cottrell). Eventually, when a person becomes dissolute, he gets drunk, loses his self-control, goes on a spree, and commits a sin. If we look at Ecclesiastes 2:3, King Solomon tried to please his body with wine while ruling his heart with wisdom in order to know what pleasure is. What was his conclusion? He confessed that his efforts to obtain pleasure from drunkenness were futile and useless (v. 11). What is the meaning of orgies and drunkenness? Are there any benefits? As we already know, Paul says in Ephesians 5:18, "Do not get drunk, for this is debauchery." He also says that debauchery and drunkenness are works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19). We must put off the work of the flesh. Why? It is because the return of the Lord is near. It is because our salvation is closer than when we first believed.

(b) We must put aside the works of darkness, sexual immorality and debauchery.

The world we live in is like Sodom and Gomorrah. In this world full of sexual immorality and debauchery, why is it so full of sexual immorality and debauchery? I found the cause in Romans 1:24, which we have already meditated on: "Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another." Why did God do this? The reason is that people, being proud of their own wisdom (v. 22), exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for idols in the form of corruptible man, and of four-footed animals and crawling creatures (v. 23). Looking at Romans 13:8-10, we must keep God's commandments in order to love one another, and one of those commandments is "Do not commit adultery." After saying that, Paul says in Romans 13:13, that at this time when Jesus' return is near, we must put aside the works of darkness, and one of the works of darkness is sexual promiscuity and sensuality. Here, the Greek word "fornication" "κοίτη (koitē)" literally means "bed." This word refers to having sex, and in today's text, it is used in the plural, not the singular, and it refers to sexual promiscuity, sexual excesses, and harlotries (Cottrell). And "sensuality" is an act of disrespectful manners and lust that appears as disrespectful words or unclean actions (Park). Paul gave this exhortation not only to the saints in Rome, but also to the saints in Thessalonica. Look at 1 Thessalonica 4:3-4: "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable." God's will is our holiness. We must not pursue lust like the people of the world. This is a worldly thing. As the time of our salvation draws near, we must forsake these works of the flesh.

(c) We must put aside the works of darkness, strife and jealousy.

What is strife? Strife refers to a quarrelsome temperament, a spirit of contention and contention over trifles. Strife reflects fighting with hostile competitiveness to walk the path we want even if it harms the other person (Cottrell). Because of this fighting spirit, we are jealous of each other in human relationships. And because of envy, in the midst of strife, we eventually plan the works of the flesh rather than the works of the Spirit. Therefore, Paul is telling the saints in Rome and you and I to put off the works of the flesh and the works of darkness.

Third and last, at this time when the second coming of the Lord is near, we must put on the armor of light.

Look at Romans 13:12 – "The night is almost gone, and the day is near Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light." What is the armor of light that we must wear that Paul is talking about here? In two ways, Paul is giving us a lesson in today's text:

(1) The armor of light we must put on is "behave properly as in the day."

Look at Romans 13:13a – "Let us behave properly as in the day, ….." In other words, the armor of light that you and I must wear is to get rid of the sinful night life and live a day life. What does day life refer to here? It refers to a well-behaved life. And acting neatly refers to actions in an orderly manner (Park). The conduct of those who believe in Jesus must be modest. In other words, there must be order in our actions. Why? Of course, we must obey the command in today's text, but the fundamental reason is that our God is not a God of confusion, but only a God of peace (1 Cor. 14:33). That's why Paul says: "Let all things be done properly and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40).

(2) The armor of light we must put on is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at Romans 13:14 – "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." What does it mean to put on the Lord Jesus Christ? In a word, it means sanctification. In other words, the word that we must put on the Lord Jesus Christ refers to the change that we who have been saved through faith become like Jesus (MacArthur). And the change to resemble Jesus means that you and I are becoming holy just as God is holy. I am reminded of the hymn "My Lord Has Garments so Wondrous Find". Looking at the lyrics of this praise, it says that the clothes Jesus wore are wonderful (v. 1), precious (v. 3), and glorious (v. 4). We must put on this garment of glory of Jesus. At this time when the time of Jesus' return is near, we must put on the clothes of Jesus' glory and show the holiness and beauty of Jesus in this world.

Today, the first day of the Passion Week, we must meditate on the Lord, who is the Alpha and

Omega, the Lord who is the beginning and the end, His suffering and death on the cross while offering Palm Sunday worship to God. In the midst of that, we have to think about what time is now. Like the word given today, we must realize that this is the time when the Lord's return is near, and our salvation is much closer than when we first believed. In the midst of that, we have to think about how we should live. At this time when the night of sin is deep and the return of Jesus, the light, is near, we must strive to love each other. And we must put off the works of darkness. We must get rid of orgies and drunkenness, sexual promiscuity and sensuality, strife and jealousy. Instead, we must put on the light armor. We must walk neatly as in the daytime. We must live in order. And we must put on the Lord Jesus Christ. We must be holy as Jesus is holy. Therefore, I hope and pray that we will all participate in the wedding banquet of the glorious Lamb of God on the day the Lord returns.

Let us seek the maturity of faith.

[Romans 14:1-12]

How do you resolve conflicts and disputes at home, at work, or in interpersonal relationships? Of course, in order to resolve conflicts and disputes first, we must identify (diagnose) the causes of those conflicts and disputes. For example, conflicts and disputes in the relationship between husband and wife or father and son in the family, conflicts and disputes in the relationship between brothers and sisters in the church, and why there are conflicts and disputes must first be identified so that existing conflicts or disputes can be resolved.

While meditating on the Word of God, centered on 2 Samuel 3:30, during the early morning prayer meeting last Tuesday, I thought about the incident in which King David's general Joab took revenge on Abner, King Saul's general who killed his brother Asahel. The key lesson I came to realize while thinking about these words was that in order to keep the unity of a nation or a church or a family, they should not be biased toward personal feelings. What is important is not individual personal feelings, but the unity of a nation, church, or family. For example, in order to keep the unity of the family or the church, we must not be biased towards vengeance, unforgiveness, or anger towards each other. Families and churches cannot become one if they are still sharpening their swords of anger or revenge against each other due to past wounds or pains in their relationship. In the end, families and churches are bound to split amidst conflicts and disputes. Many families and churches are divided in strife. We are not faithfully keeping the unity of family and church. I think there are two things at the heart of this problem. It is none other than "arrogance" and "ignorance".

In today's text Romans 14:3, the apostle Paul is saying this to the saints in Rome and to you and me: "The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him." What does it mean? The strong in the faith does not despise the weak, and the weak in the faith does not judge the strong. In other words, it says that those who are mature in faith should not have a sense of superiority toward their brothers and despise those who are immature in faith because of the excellence of their knowledge of the truth (Park)

and those who are immature in faith should not judge those who are mature in faith in ignorance. In Romans 14:1-12, Paul deals with the issue of adiaphora regarding Christian freedom of conscience. What does adiaphora mean? Originally, this word is a philosophical term that can be interpreted as "insignificant", "not so important", "value neutral", "things that you can do or don't do'. When this philosophical term is used as a theological term, it means that when Christians encounter a problem for which no definite answer can be found in the Bible, they try to solve the problem based on the cultural conscience and situational characteristics of the individual or community. In other words, the area that is not clearly stated in the Bible and is left for people to decide and choose freely according to their circumstances is called "adiaphora" (Internet). Dr. Yoon-sun Park defined adiaphora as follows: 'It refers to leaving any ceremonial event that is not forbidden or commanded in the Bible to the individual conscience of the believer" (Park). For example, Korean churches seem to be talking about alcohol and cigarettes these days. Also, some seminary professors seem to say that working on Sundays is adiaphora. The believers in the Roman Church believed that the laws of the Old Testament had already been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, so they thought that they did not keep the strict food laws or the dates of religious feasts that were mentioned in the Old Testament. However, the saints whose faith was immature believed that the Old Testament food law or the date of the religious feast must be observed. Therefore, because they had different convictions of conscience, they were able to become an element of conflict within the church. The element of contention was that believers with mature faith had the risk of despising and criticizing the saints who were immature in their arrogance, while the saints with immature faith were at risk of committing the sin of judging the saints who were mature in their ignorance. So, in today's text, Paul writes a letter to the saints in Rome, exhorting those who are mature in faith not to look down on those who are immature in faith, while admonishing the saints who are immature in faith not to judge the brothers who are mature in faith (v. 3). Why do we despise our brothers and sisters in the church? The reason is our arrogance. Why do we judge other brothers and sisters without embracing them with the love of Christ? The reason is our ignorance. In particular, in today's text, the reason why Paul exhorts the mature saints in the Roman church not to despise and criticize the immature brothers in the midst of arrogance and ignorance is because he wanted to keep the unity of the church in Jesus Christ. Of course, that responsibility lies with all the church members. But Paul especially exhorts the saints in Rome who have strong faith, that is, the mature saints, to fulfill that responsibility well. Surely believers with mature faith have a greater responsibility than those with weak faith in maintaining the unity of the church? What kind of responsibility do they really have?

First, Christians who are mature in faith should not look down on and criticize brothers who are weak in faith.

Look at Romans 14:1, 3: "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. ... The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him." Here, "him whose faith is weak" refers to the saint who eats "vegetables" (v. 2). He still followed the strict dietary laws of the Old Testament (Lev. 11, Deut. 14) and avoided eating meat that had been offered to idols as unclean. So, he ate mainly vegetables, following the strict dietary laws set out in Leviticus 11. However,

he who was with strong faith and was a mature believer enjoyed freedom in Christ, so he ate cheap meat sold after sacrifices at Gentile meat markets (MacArthur). He who is mature in faith receive food with thanksgiving because God created it (1 Tim. 4:3). Paul exhorts the saints in Rome, who have matured in faith to eat meat, the food created by God, with thanksgiving, not to despise and not criticize the brothers with weak faith who still eat vegetables and do not eat meat according to the strict dietary laws of the Old Testament, the old covenant. Arrogant people who have a sense of spiritual superiority may well happen in the community of the church that they despise a brother with weak faith. As they compare to the church saints who had immature faith, there is a risk not only looking down on them in arrogance since they think they have a lot of knowledge of the Bible and has lived a long life of faith have a sense of spiritual superiority, there is a risk of not only looking down on in arrogance, but even despising him. Outwardly, they appear to be mature in their faith, but their hearts are full of arrogance amidst a sense of spiritual superiority, so they may look down on, and ignore brothers with weaker faith. For example, 'That person is a legalist. How can he not enjoy the freedom in the Lord because he has no knowledge of the Bible and lives a life of faith' and so on. Faith does not do this if we are truly a mature Christians. Also, neither is it. Also, Christians with mature faith should not criticize the doubts of a brother whose faith is weak (v. 1). What does it mean? Christians of mature faith should not argue with brothers of immature faith over differences of opinion (Park). Paul is telling us to refrain from arguing over the view that mature people can eat meat with thanksgiving in the Lord, and that those who are weak in faith should only eat vegetables.

Second, Christians with mature faith must tolerate brothers who are weak in faith.

Paul exhorts those with mature faith who eat meat with gratitude to accept those who are immature in faith who eat vegetables. In Romans 14:1, the Greek meaning of the word "Accept" means "accept fully." In other words, he is exhorting the mature saints in Rome not to doubt the saints whose faith is weak, but to regard them as satisfied members (members of the church) (Park). It is right. Christians who are mature in the faith should regard their immature Christian brothers as unsuspecting and satisfied church members. Even though saints with immature faith lack more faith than saints with mature faith and do not have faith enough to eat everything and have no choice but to eat vegetables, saints with mature faith should tolerate brothers with weaker faith rather than criticize them. Why? Why should believers with mature faith tolerate immature believers? The reason is because God accepted them (v. 3). Therefore, who are we to be able to reject those whom God has accepted?

What, then, is the responsibility of the saints whose faith is immature? In other words, what should be the attitude of believers with weak faith towards brothers with strong faith in order to keep the unity of the church within the church?

(1) <u>Christians who are immature in faith should not judge their brothers who are mature in faith.</u>

Look at Romans 14:3 - "... and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man

who does," A saint with weak faith should not criticize a brother with strong faith. At that time, the Jewish believers with weak faith in the Roman church still believed that they had to keep the Old Testament food laws (Lev. 11; Deut. 14), the religious ceremonies of keeping the Sabbath, and the laws of offering sacrifices in the temple. They were still unable to escape from the legalism of the Old Testament era. So, in the eyes of the believers with weak faith who have such confidence, those with strong faith would have been seen as irresponsible and corrupt (MacArthur). It is said that at the time of Paul, all meat was first sacrificed to idols and then circulated in the market. How could meat that had been offered to idols be bought and eaten in the market? Wouldn't they be seen as truly irresponsible and corrupt saints who did not keep the Sabbath day holy, did not keep the feasts mentioned in the Old Testament (v. 5), and also did not keep the Old Testament law of sacrifices? So, from the point of view of the saints with weak faith, the brothers with strong faith could be seen as irresponsible and even corrupt saints. This accusation (judgment) ultimately comes from ignorance. In other words, they are still living a life of faith in the age of the old covenant because they lacked the correct knowledge of the Bible. They criticize the mature brothers in faith because they do not know much about the life of faith in the age of the new covenant opened in Jesus Christ.

(2) <u>Christians who are immature in faith must tolerate their brothers who are mature in faith just as their brothers who are mature in faith tolerate them.</u>

We must tolerate each other. Those who are mature in faith must tolerate those who are immature, and those who are immature in faith must tolerate those who are mature. Do not doubt each other and accept them as satisfied members of the church. Why should they accept each other? The reason is because God has accepted both those who are mature in faith and those who are immature in faith (v. 3).

In order for us to keep the unity of the church well, we must tolerate (accept) each other. We must never despise, criticize, or judge one another. What should we do to do that? We must acknowledge each other's differences and use those differences as an opportunity for blessing to build the church, the body of the Lord. 'Different' is not 'wrong', but an opportunity and a blessing. In other words, the differences within the church are an opportunity to get to know each other and also a good opportunity to be blessed to maintain the unity of the church by respecting each other's differences. Saints with mature faith should devote themselves to filling the lack of knowledge of the Bible by knowing and respecting the lack of knowledge of the Bible of the saints with immature faith. The important thing is that as we get to know and respect each other's differences, we must not forget three important core principles.

(a) We should all have a heart of gratitude to God.

Regardless of whether we are mature or immature, we must have a heart of gratitude to God. Look at Romans 14:6 – "He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God." Since those who are mature in faith enjoy freedom in the Lord, they no longer keep the feasts ("days") mentioned in the Old Testament literally according to the rules of the Old Testament, but keep them in the way of the age of faith, and eat the meat offered in sacrifices with thanksgiving. Even those who are immature in faith do not eat the meat, the important thing is that both those who are mature in faith and those who are immature give thanks to God. Even though the perspectives of the Old Testament and the New Testament are different between those with strong faith and those with weak faith in the Bible regarding keeping the feasts and eating meat, the important thing is that if both groups give thanks to God, then the church can keep the unity of the church. How can faith be the same in the church? There are those who have matured faith who can eat meat, and there are saints who can only eat milk. All faith will not be the same. However, if the hearts of all believers are grateful (for the grace of salvation) to God, whether the faith is strong or the faith is weak, the church will never be caught up in strife and divided. Therefore, it is very important that we have a heart of gratitude to God even for the differences in the church community. In doing so, we will be able to keep the unity of the church, which is the body of the Lord.

(b) An important key principle to overcome our differences is that we all have our hearts for the Lord.

Look at Romans 14:7-8: "For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord." If we look at verse 6, the word "to the Lord" appears three times. And here in verses 7-8, it appears twice. It comes out 5 times in total. What does this fact tell us? Christian liberty of conscience (adiaphora), that is, in things that are not restricted by God's commandments or prohibitions, it means that it is natural for believers to do this or that to the Lord. The reason is because the saints' freedom of conscience is because each of them does what they think is right in their conscience, but the standard is whether or not to glorify God (Park). So, for the glory of God, those who are mature in their faith should refrain from eating meat that has been offered to idols and then sold on the market, even if God does not forbid it, if they cause other people who are weak in faith to stumble by eating such meat. I think there is a point in what a seminary professor said: 'Limiting my freedom in consideration of the interests of my neighbors is the starting point of Christian freedom' (Internet). However, if a saint with mature faith pursues his own glory because he is arrogant, or if a believer with weak faith pursues his own glory rather than the glory of God in a legalistic religious life and takes actions that offend his conscience, then they will not be able to overcome their differences. As a result, the church will be caught up in strife and the church will have no choice but to split. In conclusion, both mature and immature believers in the church community can overcome their differences if their heart motive is for the glory of God.

(c) An important key principle for overcoming our differences is to recognize that we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

Look at Romans 14:10 – "You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat." Each of us will stand before the judgment seat of God. And at that time, each of us must report our own work to God (v. 12). Here, each of us' own work includes the work each of us has done according to our conscience (MacArthur). In other words, each of us must report to God whether or not we have performed any ceremonial activity that is not forbidden or commanded in the Bible, in accordance with our individual conscience. If we knew this, we would not judge and despise our brothers who are united in Christ.

The church, which is the body of the Lord, is one. And there are many members in the church. In other words, the church is one and also diverse. Of course, each of us has different gifts and different talents, but we also have different faith. In other words, there are people with strong faith, but there are saints with weak faith. Some saints are able to eat "meat" because their faith is mature, while others have no choice but to drink "milk" because their faith is weak. We should not say that these differences are 'wrong, wrong' and that those who are mature in faith look down on and criticize their immature brothers. And those who are immature in faith should not judge those who are mature. Rather, we must accept one another. The Lord has completely accepted all the saints, but who are we to accept some and reject others? Who do we dare to criticize, belittle, and judge our brothers and sisters who have a slightly different faith? We give thanks to the Lord, do everything for the Lord, and know that each of us must report our work to the Lord. We love each other, so we must humbly and faithfully keep the unity of the church, the body of the Lord.

Service that pleases God

[Romans 14:13-23]

We have already learned, based on Romans 14:1-12, that saints who seek maturity in faith must accept each other. We are taught that saints who are strong in faith must receive saints who are weak in faith must also receive saints who are strong in faith. Why? Why should we accept each other? The reason is because God has accepted all of us (v. 3). How can we receive each other when we have different levels of maturity in faith? How can we overcome our differences? Three lessons have been learned. Those three lessons are (1) We should all have a grateful heart, (2) We should do everything for the Lord, and (3) We must all stand before the judgment seat of God and recognize that each of us must report to God all of our own works (including those we have done according to our conscience). With this mindset, we must accept each other by overcoming each other's differences. If we love each other with the Lord's love, we must accept each other. Therefore, we must faithfully keep the unity of the church, which is the body of the Lord.

In today's text, Romans 14:13-23, Paul urges us to serve one another in order to keep the unity of the church, the body of Christ. In particular, he says this in verse 18 of today's text: "because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men." In this word, I thought about how we should serve each other as those who serve Christ. So today, I would like to learn three lessons about what kind of service God is pleased with, centered on this word.

First, we are careful not to put any stumbling block in front of our brothers in the service that God is pleased with.

Look at Romans 14:13 – "Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way." When Paul said that "let us stop passing judgement one another," he said, 'Judge what you will not put before your brothers as a stumbling block.' Both are the same word. However, Paul uses the same word one negatively and the other positively in today's text. The word "let us stop passing judgment" used

negatively means that those who are strong in faith and those who are weak in the church do not respect each other's convictions of conscience and do not judge and condemn each other as if they were wrong, despise, criticize, and judge as irresponsible. Rather than making such judgments, Paul advised them to make decisions with good judgment and take action to see how they can overcome their differences, serve and build up each other, and keep the unity of the church. What is required of us is good judgment. And we must do in good judgment what we know and are sure of.

That's what Paul did. Look at Romans 14:14 – "As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean." What he knew and was convinced in the Lord Jesus was that no food was profane (unclean). In other words, there is nothing unclean in the food itself. However, for those who think themselves profane, the food is profane. This word will be especially applicable to the believers who are weak in the faith of eating only vegetables according to the Old Testament food law in the Roman church. The reason is because for them, meat once offered to idols and then distributed in the market was regarded as profane. So did the apostle Peter. In Acts 10, Peter went up on the roof to pray (v. 9). And while he was hungry, in his sleep (v. 10), the sky opened and something like a cloth came down (v. 11). What was the second voice Peter heard then? "Do not call profane what God has made clean" (v. 15). What did God cleanse here, that is, what did Peter think was profane? It was the Gentiles. So God led Peter to the house of Cornelius, a Gentile, and eventually made him confess like this: "... I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (vv. 34-35). We too must have this realization. God cleansed all the brothers and sisters with the blood of the cross of Jesus and received them as members of the church, which is the body of the Lord. Who are we to judge the brothers and sisters with disdain and not accept them, saying that they are not clean?

What should we do? As members of the church, which is the body of the Lord, we must become steppingstones to each other. Never should we be stumbling blocks to each other. We must be careful not to become a stumbling block to each other in any way. In order to do that, there are things we all need to decide and put into action. It means that we will never judge our brother or sister again (v. 13). Saints with strong faith who can eat meat must resolve not to despise and criticize those with weak faith who only eat vegetables. Saints with weak faith who only eat vegetables must also resolve not to judge and condemn those with strong faith who only eat meat as irresponsible and corrupt. Even if we only eat vegetables instead of eating meat, each of us can eat meat or vegetables because we thank God for the Lord. But the problem is, if a person with a strong faith eats meat because he is thankful for the Lord, and eats meat in front of a person with a weak faith? From the standpoint of those with strong faith, it can be said that they enjoy the freedom of their faith with the conviction that they can eat meat without a conscience, but won't those with weak faith stumble? That is why Paul is saying, "If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love" (v. 15). If we eat meat in front of those weak in faith who are convinced that they should not eat meat

just because we have a clear conscience, won't that cause confusion in the conscience of those whose faith is weak? It will be able to stumble those whose faith is weak enough. The true freedom of us Christians is to offer our freedom in consideration of mutual benefit. Isn't this the freedom we are supposed to enjoy in the true Lord, to offer ourselves the freedom given to us so as not to offend each other out of consideration for each other? With this freedom, we must strive to be kind to one another. Therefore, we must be careful not to become a stumbling block to one another. It is beautiful not to do things that stifle each other like this (v. 21).

Second, the service that God is pleased with serves the church from the perspective of the kingdom of God.

Look at Romans 14:17 – "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." One day, I meditated on the word of God under the heading "We all have gone astray" centered on Isaiah 53:6. In meditating on that word, I thought of three causes of gone astray, and the first of them was "wrong viewpoint" (followed by wrong values and wrong thoughts). That wrong perspective is not seeing the beauty of Jesus (v. 2). In other words, our wrong perspective is to fail to see the beauty of Jesus, who obeyed to the point of dying on the cross to fulfill the will of Heavenly Father. We are not attracted to the obedience of Jesus. That's why we disobey the Lord. And when we look at obedience from the perspective of our disobedience, we cannot help but see the beauty of obedience. If you and I obey the word of God given by Paul in Romans 14, so as to preserve the unity of the church, if we do not despise, do not criticize, do not judge, but rather accept each other, then it is beautiful in the sight of God. The beauty of us Christians is to keep the unity of the church because we love each other. In order to do that, we must not cause each other to stumble. Look at Romans 14:21 - "It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall." What does it mean? Saints with strong faith can eat meat and drink wine without any offense to their conscience. But Paul says it is better not to eat meat or drink wine for the sake of the weak believers. Why does Paul say it is better not to eat meat and not drink wine? The reason is to keep our brothers from stumbling. Think about it. If I eat meat and drink wine, and my brother, who is weak in faith, is put to the test and stumbles, would it be beautiful in the sight of God? Paul says it is beautiful that we do not stumble our brother. Why is it beautiful? It is because we love our brothers by obeying the word of the Lord. And because it preserves the unity of the church, it is beautiful in the sight of God.

Beautiful service in the eyes of God is to serve the church, the body of the Lord, with the perspective of the kingdom of God. In other words, beautiful service in the sight of God is to pursue God's work first rather than pursuing individual affairs, such as eating and drinking according to the freedom of each individual conscience (v. 20). We put God's work first and serve the church, which is the body of the Lord, but we must pay special attention to two things to keep the unity of the church. These two things are the work of peace and the work of building one another up. Look at Romans 14:19 – "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification." Even

if there is no offense in my conscience from eating meat or only vegetables, if I eat meat in front of a brother with weaker faith, or if I eat only vegetables in front of a brother with stronger faith, and we become people who stumble with each other's life of faith, it cannot be beautiful in the sight of God. The reason is because my actions not only prevent me from building a brother whom the Lord loves, but also break the peace of the church. Of course, the freedom of conscience of each of us is important. The freedom of conscience to think that each of us is able to eat because we are thankful for everything is important (v. 16) (Park). However, even with this freedom of conscience, Paul exhorts us to not to be spoken as evil (v. 16). In other words, although each of us has the Christian freedom of conscience, Paul is admonishing us to be careful not to be spoken as evil by the people of the world (non-believers) if we abuse that freedom and judge each other and break the unity and order of the church.

We must use our freedom of conscience within the boundaries of mutual benefit and the unity of the church. So, Paul is telling us that the freedom of conscience of each of us is important. But what is more important is the kingdom of God and the church, which is the body of the Lord. If the order of the church is disturbed and the peace of the church is broken because of our eating and drinking, how foolish would this be? So, Paul is saying: "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking ..." (v. 17). What is the "kingdom of God" that Paul is talking about here? Paul says that the kingdom of God is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (v. 17). In other words, the kingdom of God is the realm of salvation, where God rules the hearts of those who save (MacArthur). Eating and drinking are not essential there, but (1) "righteousness" in the Holy Spirit. In other words, the kingdom of God is holy and there is an obedient life. (2) The kingdom of God is "peace" in the Holy Spirit. In other words, in the kingdom of God, there is peace in the relationship with God given by the Holy Spirit, and peace in the relationship between brothers and sisters. (3) The kingdom of God is "joy" in the Holy Spirit. In other words, in the kingdom of God, there is joy, the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is in the kingdom of God to praise, worship, and serve God with joy in any situation and environment. We must serve the church community, which is the body of the Lord, from the perspective of the kingdom of God. In other words, we must first think about whether everything we eat, drink, and do in the freedom of our conscience reveals holiness not only to each of us individually, but also to our entire church community, brings peace, and brings joy to all of us. Those who serve Christ with the viewpoint of the kingdom of God in this way, thinking about the holiness, peace, and joy of the church, will be pleased with God and praised by men (v. 18).

Third and last, the service that God is pleased with is performed according to faith.

Look at Romans 14:23 – "But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin." In this verse, we can get a glimpse of how a person with weak faith who had been swayed by a certain food (for example, meat) was confused by two judgments when he saw a person with strong faith eating it: "Should I eat meat or not, I think I can eat it or I think I shouldn't.' This is the eating with doubts that Paul is talking about

in verse 23. Those with weak faith who doubt and eat meat in this way are attracted to those with strong faith and eat it believing that it is okay to eat meat for a while. But on the other hand, if they doubt whether it is okay to eat it, Paul is saying that it is a sin (Park). In other words, if we believe that it is okay to eat meat, then we believe it, half believe it and half doubt it. And if we follow a person with strong faith who shunned us with our conscience, then we will be condemned. The reason this is a condemnation is because it was not done out of pure and true faith.

In other words, if we believe that we can eat meat with thanksgiving in Jesus, then we can eat meat according to that faith (v. 22). If we believe that it is right enough that it does not offend our conscience, then we just have to do it. Of course, this only applies to cases concerning the problem of adiaphora (Park). If a person with strong faith is not sure whether it is right or wrong to eat meat, and he eats it in a state of confusion and reproaches himself, that is not eating with faith. Also, if a person with strong faith believes that it is okay to eat meat, but is conscious of the eyes of a person with weak faith who believes that meat should not be eaten, and does not act according to the conviction of his conscience and does not eat meat with faith, this is also a sin against God. That's why Paul is saying, "everything that does not come from faith is sin" (v. 23).

We must walk according to faith. Whether we eat or drink, whether we eat or not, we must do it by faith. Never doubt whether to eat or not to eat, to drink or not to drink, in a confused state of confusion. Whether we eat meat or vegetables, we just have to eat with faith, giving thanks to the Lord. The service that pleases God is performed according to faith. Therefore, when it comes to freedom of conscience, we must never act out of doubt, but out of faith.

We are servants of Christ. While serving, we must be careful not to put any stumbling block in front of our brothers and sisters. We must have good judgment and do what we know and are sure of. We must be careful not to become a stumbling block to one another. Rather, we must strive to become a steppingstone. Also, we must serve the church, which is the body of the Lord, from the perspective of the kingdom of God. Each of us eats and drinks according to the freedom of our individual consciences, and instead of pursuing our own personal affairs, we must first pursue God's work. In particular, we must focus on the work of peace, which is God's work, and the work of edifying one another.

We must serve the church, the body of the Lord, by faith. We must listen carefully to the words, 'Everything that does not come from faith is sin' (v. 23). Serving like this is the kind of service God is pleased with.

May we be of the same mind.

[Romans 15:1-6]

These days, I am studying Jonah 4 during the Bible study for leaders. The more I study, the more the lesson God gives me is, in one word, 'Yet not my will, but Your be done.' God's servant, the prophet Jonah, was angry with God for turning His will to bring disaster on the people of Nineveh who repented and turned from their sins. Why? Jonah wanted his will to be done rather than God's will to be done. What was Jonah's will? It was the destruction of the people of Nineveh. Jonah wanted God to bring disaster on the people of Nineveh with his life. Looking at Jonah like this, I thought about how to know the maturity of faith. In a word, I think the maturity of faith is to put down my own will in front of the cross and submit to the will of the Lord. In other words, a mature Christian prays the prayer Jesus offered to Heavenly Father in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before He was crucified: Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done" (Lk. 22:42). What is the Lord's will for our church?

In today's text, Romans 15:5-6, Paul prays for the Roman church as follows: "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." He prayed to God for the unity of the church. The reason is because the unity of the church is the will of the Lord, who is the head of the church. What must we do for the unity of the church? Through today's text, I hope and pray that we will devote ourselves to keep the unity of the church in diversity by receiving and obeying the lessons God gives.

First, in order for us to keep the unity of the church, which is the body of the Lord, we must please our neighbors rather than please ourselves.

Look at Romans 15:1-2: "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up." Paul is writing a letter to the church in Rome, admonishing its members not to share with each other due to the Christians'

faith and conscience issues (the issue of adiaphora) and tolerating them, but in particular, believers with strong faith should understand and embrace those who are weak (Park). To do so, believers with strong faith must please their neighbors rather than please themselves. What does it mean? It means that the church is not to dogmatize or enforce its own standard that believers who can eat meat in the community are okay to eat meat (Park). If believers with strong faith dogmatize what they believe or force it to be the standard of the church, what will happen to believers with weak faith who believe that they should not eat meat and only eat vegetables? If those who claim to be strong in faith try to carry out their assertion within the church, how will believers with weak faith react? In the end, disputes will inevitably arise due to friction and conflict within the church. In order to guard against this very result, Paul exhorts the Roman church saints who are strong in faith to use the subject "we" (v. 1), not to please ourselves, but to please our neighbors who are weak in faith.

How can those who are strong in faith please those who are weak in faith?

<u>Those with strong faith must take responsibility and embrace the weaknesses of</u> <u>those with weak faith.</u>

Look at Romans 15:1 – "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves." The church cannot be one if those who are strong in faith look at those who are weak in faith, they despise them in their hearts, thinking, 'Why is their faith so weak?' and think that 'I have better faith than them' and have a sense of superiority. In order to keep the unity of the church, the saints who think their faith is a bit strong should be wary of these sinful tendencies. Rather, those with strong faith should understand and embrace the weaknesses of those whose faith is deduced, thinking about when their faith was weak. In order to do so, the consciousness that those who have strong faith must have is the 'debtor consciousness'. In fact, the word "ought" in verse 1 has the meaning of being in debt (Park). That's why Paul already told the Roman church saints in Romans 13:8, " Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another." If those who are strong in faith help and embrace the weaknesses of those who are weak in the faith with a sense of being debtors after receiving Paul's exhortation, then the unity of the church can be maintained.

(2) Those with strong faith must strive to build those with weak faith up.

Look at Romans 15:2 – "Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up." d

The word to build up here means to construct (Park). In other words, those who are strong in faith help those who are weak in faith with a sense of responsibility, but they must think about how they can help their faith to be firmly established. In other words, we all must become spiritual architects who build God's church. So, we need to think about how we can build each other up and move forward. I thought of 3 things: (a) Just as the foundation must be strong when

building a house, those with strong faith in the church must use their strength as spiritual architects to strengthen the foundation of those with weak faith. In other words, those with strong faith must help those with weak faith to build the foundation of faith on the rock of God's word. (b) Just as there must be walls when building a house, those who are strong in faith must provide spiritual protection through prayer to those who are weak in faith. (c) Just as a roof is needed when building a house, those with strong faith in the church must convince those with weak faith about the helmet of salvation they are wearing. In other words, those with strong faith must instill assurance of salvation to those with weak faith. Therefore, those with strong faith must help those with weak faith to win the spiritual battle with the assurance of salvation.

Why should those who are strong in faith do this? Why should those who are strong in faith help and embrace the weaknesses of those who are weak in faith with a sense of responsibility, and also strive to build them up? In a word, why should we please our neighbors rather than please ourselves? The reason is because Christ did not please Himself (v. 3). The final purpose of Jesus Christ is not to please Himself, but to please Heavenly Father and do His will (Jn. 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 8:25, 27–29; Phil. 2:6–8) (MacArthur). Like Jesus, we too must please the Lord rather than please ourselves. In fact, when we please the Lord, we also please ourselves. The reason is because the joy of the Lord becomes our joy. Therefore, we must keep the unity of the church, which is the body of the Lord.

Second, in order for us to keep the unity of the church, which is the body of the Lord, we must have hope through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures.

Look at Romans 15:4 – "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." In order for us to keep the unity of the church, we must please the Lord rather than please ourselves. How can we please the Lord? It is because we obey the will of the Lord that we can please the Lord. Then what is the will of the Lord? If we want to know the will of the Lord, we must see the words of the Scriptures. And as Paul says in verse 4, "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us," and that lesson tells us the will of the Lord in verses 4-5: "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus." It is the endurance and encouragement of the Scriptures. In order for us to keep the unity of the church, we must persevere with faith in the words of the Scriptures. We must endure with faith in the words of the Scriptures against all the works of Satan who oppose the church and try to break the unity of the church. In doing so, we can keep the unity of the church. Also, in order for us to keep the unity of the church, we must comfort each other with the words of the Scriptures. Why? The reason is to have hope in the Lord. In other words, the reason we endure the words of the Scriptures by faith and comfort each other with the words of the Scriptures is to have hope in the Lord.

When I meditated on "hope," I remembered Romans 5:3-5: "Not only so, but we also rejoice in our

sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." In order for us to keep the unity of the church, we must have hope. Because the church is persecuted, the reason why we can endure and persevere in tribulation is because we have hope. And because we have hope, we can comfort our brothers and sisters in tribulation. What is our hope? That is "the glory of God" (5:2). What does the "glory of God" that you and I hope for refer to here? The glory of God that we hope for means that on the day of Jesus' return, we will be suddenly transformed (1 Cor. 15:51), no longer dishonored (v. 43), no longer weak (v. 43), incorruptible and immortal (v. 54), and put on "a body of glory" (Phil. 3:21). Apostle Peter refers to this as "the divine nature" in 2 Peter 1:4. Our very sure and joyful hope is to fully participate in the character of Jesus, who is God. The indwelling God the Holy Spirit is sanctifying us so that we, who are justified, can participate in the character of Jesus. Although we are not perfect now, on the day of Jesus' return, we will fully participate in the character of the Lord. This sure and joyful hope God has given to us who are justified through Jesus Christ. With this hope, we must strive to keep the unity of the church while being patient and comforting each other.

Third and last, in order to keep the unity of the church, which is the body of the Lord, we must give glory to God with one heart and one mouth.

Look at Romans 15:5-6: "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." As Paul wrote a letter to the saints in Rome, he prayed to God that all the saints would be of the same mind with one another by imitating Christ Jesus. In other words, in order for us to keep the unity of the church, which is the body of the Lord, we must pray to God, saying, 'Please make our will the same.' In order to offer these prayers, there is an essential condition. That is, we all imitate Jesus. The reason is because if we all fail to imitate Jesus, we cannot have one mind in the Lord. However, if we imitate Jesus, we will lay down our will in front of the cross and pray, 'Do not do my will, but do as the Lord will'. In other words, if we all imitate Jesus, we can all have one will, that is, the will of the Lord. So, Paul prayed to God for the saints of the church in Rome, asking that the God of endurance and comfort grant them to be of the same mind as Christ Jesus did (v. 5). What is its purpose? It is so that the entire church may glorify God with one heart and one mouth. That is our purpose. Our purpose is for the whole church to glorify God with one heart and one mouth. It is the purpose of our church that all of us with one accord (12:16) and with one mouth (10:9) all who confess Jesus as Lord give glory to God the Father. I hope and pray that we will be dedicated to fulfilling this purpose of the church.

A church worthy of God's sight is a church that obeys the will of the Lord who is the head of the church. A beautiful church in the sight of God is a church that keeps the oneness (unity) of the church, which is the will of the Lord. In order for us to keep the unity of the church, we must please our neighbors rather than please ourselves. Especially in the church, those who are strong in faith must please those who are weak in faith. Also, in order for us to keep the unity of the church, we must have hope through the endurance and comfort of the Scriptures. The hope of our church is the Lord. Holding on to the word of the Lord by faith,

we must persevere and endure. And we must not only be comforted by the word of God, but also comfort one another with the word of God. In order for us to keep the unity of the church, we must glorify God with one heart and one mouth. When all church members put down their own will and obey the Lord's will because of following Jesus' example, we can glorify God with one heart and one mouth. I hope and pray in the name of Jesus that our church will become a church that gives glory to God.

"Accept one another"

[Romans 15:7-13]

Through meditating on the words of Romans 15:1-6, we received the prayer title, "May we be of the same mind." The reason we offer this prayer is to keep our unity in Jesus Christ. Therefore, as we prayed to God to keep the unity of the church, we learned that there are three responsibilities we must strive for: (1) All members of our Victory Presbyterian Church should please each other rather than please ourselves, (2) We must have hope with the endurance and comfort of the Scriptures, and (3) We must glorify God with one heart and one mouth.

In today's text, Romans 15:7, Paul exhorts the Roman church saints and all of us to 'accept one another.' Look at verse 7: "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." Why is he telling both the Jewish and the Gentiles saints of the Roman church to accept one another, that is, to tolerate one another? Why? The reason is because Christ accepted them. In other words, why should we accept each other? The reason is because none other than Jesus Christ accepted sinners like you and me. If the righteous Jesus, the Son of God, accepted sinners like you and me, isn't it right that we, the sinners, accept other sinners? How is this even possible? How can we really accept each other? Paul gives us three ways in today's text:

First, in order for us to accept each other, we must be "a servant."

Look at Romans 15:8 – "For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jewson behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs." We cannot accept each other if we are proud. In particular, if we do not realize that we are sinners in front of God, and if we do not realize the grace and love that Jesus Christ accepted sinners like us, then we will not accept each other because our hearts are hardened, and we will not be able to accept each other. Rather than accepting each other, just as the Jewish saints of the Roman Church at the time of Paul had a sense of spiritual superiority and ignored, belittled, judged, and condemned the Gentiles, we too will ignore, belittle, judge, and condemn our other brothers and sisters in arrogance. Then, what will happen to the church, the body of the Lord? We will never be

able to keep our unity in the Lord. That is why Paul is telling the members of the Roman Church, as well as you and me, to imitate Jesus Christ (v. 8). In other words, he is telling us to imitate the humility of Jesus Christ. More specifically, Paul is telling us to be "servants", like Jesus. What do you think? Do you really believe that if we all become humble servants like Jesus, we can accept each other and keep the unity of the church well? I believe that the greatest obstacle to maintaining the unity of the church is arrogance. In other words, if all members of our church are proud, we will all try to be served instead of serving. What would our church look like if we all wanted to be served by each other rather than trying to serve each other? Can you imagine? It seems that it is difficult to find the image of Jesus in the church these days. In other words, I think there are more and more people in the church these days who want to be served without serving like Jesus. Clearly, although Jesus came to this world to serve, not to be served (Mk. 10:45), we want to be served in the exact opposite way from Jesus. If we all try to be served, the church will not be able to accept each other and keep the unity of the church. We will have to become servants like Jesus and use our strength to humbly accept each other.

Second, in order for us to accept one another, we must accept one another on behalf of God's truth.

For the sake of God's truth, Jesus Christ became a servant of the circumcision, that is, a servant of the Jews (v. 8). By no means does this mean that Jesus served only the Jews and not the Gentiles. The meaning of this word is that Jesus Christ came to this world to fulfill the promise of the Old Testament characterized by circumcision, God's covenant of salvation, and preached to the Jews as the first place (Park). So, like Jesus, Paul preached the gospel to the Jews first. Then, when the Jews did not accept the gospel, Paul went out with the gospel to the Gentiles. Now, Paul is writing letters to the saints in Rome, admonishing them to accept one another as Jesus Christ accepted you, not only humbly accepting one another like Jesus, but also telling the Roman church saints to be faithful and accepting one another according to God's promised word, just like Jesus, who faithfully fulfilled God's promises in the Old Testament, for the sake of God's truth. We must have the right purpose in accepting each other like Jesus in the church. What is its right purpose? It is for the truth of God. In other words, we must accept one another for the glory of God. Look at Romans 15:9a – "so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy" We must accept one another for the glory of God. We must accept each other with a sincere heart. In doing so, we can keep the unity of the church.

Third, in order for us to accept each other, we must hope together.

Look at Romans 15:12 – "And again, Isaiah says, 'The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him." Now, Paul is writing a letter to the Roman church saints, saying that not only Jesus Christ became a servant of the circumcision for God's truth and first preached the gospel to the Jews (v. 8), but He also preached the gospel to the Gentiles, and made them put their hope in Jesus Christ (Isa. 11:10). Briefly speaking again, Paul is telling the Gentiles as well as the Jewish members of the Roman Church to accept one another, saying that both Jews and Gentiles should

put their hope in Jesus Christ. What hope should we place in Jesus Christ? It is the hope of salvation. Did our Jesus come to this earth and die on the cross only for the sake of the Jews? Certainly not. Didn't our Jesus come to this earth and die on the cross for all the people of God whom God loved and chose before the foundation of the world, whether Jews or Gentiles? This very Jesus is the Lord who is the hope of salvation for all of us, whether Jews or Gentiles. Paul is exhorting the Roman church saints to accept one another in Jesus, who is the hope of salvation. So, Paul offered this prayer to God in Romans 15:13 – "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

The community of the church must be overflowing with hope. The hope of salvation must overflow, and the church must be filled with hope for heaven. Our church must be filled with the hope that all God's chosen people in heaven will forever give praise and worship to God with one heart and one mind. In the midst of this hope, we must be filled with joy and peace. Although this world gives us sorrow and tries to break the peace of our hearts, we must move toward that heaven, looking with faith to Jesus Christ, who is the hope of salvation.

What blessings can we enjoy when all church members accept each other for the glory of God? We can enjoy the blessing of giving thanks to the Lord and praising His name. Look at Romans 15:9b – "... as it is written: 'Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name." How much would our God be pleased if all the members of the church went up to the worship hall and praised and worshiped God out of gratitude while the church accepting each other and kept the unity of the church? However, if our church does not accept each other and does not keep the unity of the church in the Lord, so we cannot have one heart and one mind and come to Heavenly Father to praise and worship, what will God think of that praise and worship? Now, too many churches are praising and worshiping God every Sunday in the midst of envy, strife, strife, and division. Will our Heavenly Father receive that praise and worship? The praise and worship that God receives are praise and worship offered with one heart, one mind, and one lips. Therefore, we must obey God's word, which is our responsibility, while praying to God, " May we be of the same mind." One of the words of God is to accept each other. When we all obey this word, we will be able to enjoy the blessing of praising the name of the Lord while giving thanks to the Lord. Another blessing we enjoy when we accept one another is that we can enjoy the blessing of rejoicing in the Lord together. Look at Romans 15:10 - "Again, it says, 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." The church, the community, must become the kingdom of God. In other words, the church community must be a community ruled by the Lord, the King of the kingdom of God. Therefore, because our church obeys the Lord's word on earth, accept one another, and loves one another, we not only have to experience the unity of the church, but we also have to experience life in heaven, at least partially, on earth. In that partial heavenly experience, there is a joy that the world cannot give. We must experience that divine joy, at least partially, in keeping the unity of the church. I sincerely hope and pray that such joy will be filled in our community.

'A minister of Christ Jesus'

[Romans 15:14-22]

Today, as we celebrated the first Sunday after the 30th anniversary service of Victory Presbyterian Church, I threw this question in front of the Lord. What is the message that God is giving to our victory community? Two things came to mind when I asked this question: (1) As I shared with you last week, it is to 'be thankful'. During the 30th anniversary revival meeting, God repeated the same message through the two guest speakers. The message is that we are blessed as those who have already received the spiritual blessings of heaven in Jesus Christ. And as blessed people, the responsibility we should do is to give thanks to God. (2) The message that God gives to our Victory community is our church's vision, 'Raise leaders!' We must devote ourselves to raising leaders with a Christ-centered vision. The moment the Lord made this vision more and more certain in my heart was the graduation service held on the afternoon of June 27th last month and the scholarship service held last Sunday afternoon. While holding those two services, I prayed especially for the young adults and youths of our Victory community whom I love. In particular, while fellowshipping with senior pastors from Westminster Theological Seminary last Tuesday, I heard from one pastor that the lifespan of an immigrant church is 50 years. As the church celebrated its 30th anniversary, we were reminded once again that what we need to do is to prepare for the next generation. Then, how are we to raise leaders with a Christ-centered vision? To do so, we must study the leaders with a Christ-centered vision in the Bible. One of those leaders is apostle Paul.

Who is Paul, a leader with a Christ-centered vision? To answer this question, we must look again at Romans 1:1, which we have already meditated on. There, Paul writes a letter to the Roman saints and introduces himself in three ways: (1) "a servant of Jesus Christ", (2) "an apostle", (3) "set apart for the gospel of God". What is interesting is that Paul comes to the concluding part of Romans, Romans 15:14-33, and restates who he is. In particular, in verse 16, Paul introduces himself to the Roman saints as "a minister of Christ Jesus." Focusing on this introduction of Paul, I want to think about who the minister of Christ Jesus really is. I hope and pray that we will not only be raised up as ministers of Christ Jesus, but also devote ourselves to raising up our next generation brothers and sisters as ministers of Christ Jesus with a Christ-centered vision.

First, the ministers of Christ Jesus are those who, by the grace of God, remind us of the truth of God.

Look at Romans 15:15 - "I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me." As Paul writes to the saints in Rome, he comes to the conclusion (15:14-33) and says that he wrote boldly and roughly to remind them of the truths they already knew. Although Paul was already convinced that the Roman saints were full of goodness and full of all knowledge, able to exhort one another (v. 14), the reason why he boldly wrote to them to remind them of the truth of God is that they could easily neglect or forget the truth they already knew (MacArthur). Apostle Peter also tells the recipients of his letters why he writes two letters, 1 Peter and 2 Peter: "Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles" (2 Pet. 3:1-2). The reason why Peter writes two letters to his letter recipients is to make them think (remember). What were je trying to remember? In a word, it is the word of God's truth. This is what you and I, the ministers of Christ Jesus, must do. That is, as we become brothers and sisters in Christ, accepting and loving each other, we must become people like Paul who remind us of the truths of God. In order for us to be reminded of the truths of God, we must speak the truths of God boldly like Paul did. Like the Roman church saints, we must become people who encourage one another in the knowledge of God's truth and in the full of goodness (v. 14). How should we exhort it? We must boldly exhort with the truths of God. How is this possible? This is possible only with the grace God has given us (v. 15). In other words, the ministers of Christ Jesus know that they have become ministers of Christ Jesus by the grace of God, and by the grace of God, they exhort their brothers and sisters in the Lord. He exhorts his brethren with the truth of God so that they may learn and abide in convictions (2 Tim. 3:14). To do so, the ministers of Christ Jesus must be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2:1).

I am reminded of 1 Corinthians 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." We must not use God's grace in vain. We must not make God's grace cheap. To do so, we must work harder and harder with the power of God's grace. We know that we ourselves have become ministers of Christ Jesus by the grace of God, and by the grace of God we speak the truths of God boldly to our brothers and sisters. As we exhort each other with God's truth, we must be people who remind us of God's truth. Therefore, we must all be full of the knowledge of the truth of God. Also, in the midst of such fullness of knowledge, we must be full of goodness, a beautiful Christian virtue. In a word, we must be people who remind us of Jesus.

Second, the ministers of Christ Jesus are those who carry out the priestly duty of the gospel of God.

Look at Romans 15:16 – "to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of

proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." Paul writes a letter to the saints in Rome, and here at the conclusion, he says that it is by the grace of God that he has become a minister of Christ Jesus. In other words, he is saying that it was God's sheer grace that made him an apostle to the Gentiles. And he also says that through this grace of God, God gave him the priesthood of the gospel of God. Indeed, what is the priestly duty of the gospel of God that Paul is talking about here? It refers to the sacred office of preaching the gospel of God. In other words, Paul is telling the Roman saints that he is now fulfilling the sacred duty of preaching the gospel of God as a minister of Christ Jesus by God's grace. That sacred duty is the ministry of reconciling God and man by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ (Park). In other words, the purpose of Paul's priestly ministry of the gospel of God was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles so that they would be offered as a sacrifice worthy of God's acceptance.

What kind of offering is worthy of God's acceptance? It is those who have received Jesus as their Savior through the gospel of Jesus Christ and have been born again and have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Now, as an apostle to the Gentiles, Paul is telling the Roman church saints that it is his mission and duty to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, the priestly office of the gospel of God, to regenerate them, and to offer them up to God as a living sacrifice of the holy God. That's why Paul said in Romans 12:1 – "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship." Now this task has been given to you as well as to me. Although we are not apostles to the Gentiles like Paul, we are sent by the Lord to all people in this world. Therefore, we have the duty to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and present unbelievers as worthy to be accepted by God because of the work of regeneration and sanctification of the Holy Spirit. We are responsible for fulfilling this duty faithfully. I hope and pray that, like Paul, all of us faithfully fulfill the priestly duty of the gospel of God, so that "you whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown" (Phil. 4:1).

Third and last, the minsters of Christ Jesus are those who boast in the things pertaining to God in Christ Jesus.

Look at Romans 15:17-18: "Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed." Writing to the Roman church saints, Paul boasts of the things pertaining to God in Christ Jesus after saying that he became a minister of Christ Jesus by God's grace and also received the priesthood of God's gospel by God's grace. What is the things pertaining to God that Paul boasted about here? It refers to God's revealed power and success in preaching the gospel. In other words, Paul boasted in Christ Jesus that when he preached the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the truth of God, to the Roman saints, God displayed His supernatural power and the Holy Spirit led those who heard the gospel to repent and return to God. In particular, he boasted of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ that appeared while fully preaching the gospel of Christ (v. 19) to Illyricum, which is about 1,000 miles in all directions from Jerusalem (MacArthur). In a word, Paul boasted that the power

of the Holy Spirit, the power of God, and the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ had been revealed to the Roman church saints. He boasted to the Roman saints how, when he boldly proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ as an apostle to the Gentiles, the Holy Spirit showed his power and the Gentiles repented and returned to God.

Do you and I really have this kind of boasting? Do we really have anything to boast about in the power of God revealed when we preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to dying souls? What should we do? Like Paul, we must preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. We must believe in the power of the gospel and preach it boldly. While preaching, like Paul, we must strive to go to places where the gospel has not entered and preach the gospel (v. 20) (Park). Our church should make preaching the gospel to unbelievers the main purpose (v. 21) (MacArthur). We should boast in our Lord Jesus Christ.

At this point, after the 30th anniversary of Victory Presbyterian Church, we must think seriously while praying. What should we pray for and think seriously about? That is the vision of our church. In other words, it is to build the leaders. First, all of us must be raised up as leaders with a Christ-centered vision. And all of our future generations must be raised up leaders with a Christ-centered vision. In particular, in today's text Romans 15:14-21, we learned who the ministers of Christ Jesus are: (1) The ministers of Christ Jesus are those who, by the grace of God, remind us of the truth of God, (2) The ministers of Christ Jesus are those who carry out the priestly duty of the gospel of God, (3) The ministers of Christ Jesus are those who boast in the things pertaining to God in Christ Jesus. I earnestly hope and pray that all of us will be blessed to be established as such ministers of Christ Jesus.

Sharing is caring.

[Romans 15:22-29]

There is a Naver blog website that I personally operate. The motive for starting the website was a challenge from a nephew of an elder of our church a few years ago while staying overnight at the elder's house. According to that brother in Christ, in Korea, the Koreans do not use the search engine google.com like in the US but use naver.com more. So, I opened the Naver blog website and started this blog ministry with the hope that by posting all the articles I have posted on our church website, such as sermons, meditation, family stories, etc., it will be beneficial to many people in Korea, their spiritual life, and their family life. And actually, it seems that the average number of people who come to my website every day now is about 450-500 people a day. And it seems that these people come not only from Korea, but also from international students here in the US or people who use the Naver search engine. And when I look at the people who comment or scrap my writings, they mostly take the Psalms that I meditated on every Wednesday prayer meeting every week, or they say 'Thank you for helping me meditate on the words'. As those of you who have visited it once know, the title of my Naver blog website is "Sharing is Caring," which is the title of today's word meditation, that is, "Sharing is caring." The reason I chose this title is to reach out to people through my personal Naver blog website by sharing the word of God and family stories. And the person who taught me this title is Karis, my youngest daughter. One day, Karis came home and chatted with her sister Yeri for a while. And then Karis said "Sharing is caring" to her sister, probably because Yeri did not give her something. I think Karis said that Yeri had something she wanted to keep, but she didn't give it to her. So, she might have learned from her teacher at school that 'Sharing is caring'. Lol. When I first heard that word, I thought, 'This is such a cool word'. So, this word I heard at that time became imprinted on my mind, so I set them as the title of my Naver blog website. And I am still managing the blogging ministry. What do you think? Do you really think that sharing is caring? If you think so, what are you sharing with your loved ones in your life? What do your spiritual members share with the brothers and sisters of the church community while living a life of faith?

In today's text, Romans 15:27, Paul writes a letter to the saints in Rome and comes to this conclusion to talk about how Jewish and Gentile saints can be a model to share with each other. What kind

of sharing can serve as a model? Look at verse 27: "Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things." Here, Paul explains that the model of sharing that the Roman saints should imitate is that the Jewish brothers share "the Jews' spiritual blessings" with their Gentile brothers, and the Gentile brothers share "the Gentiles' material blessings" with their Jewish brothers. Then, the question we cannot help asking here is what the spiritual blessings the Jewish brothers shared with their Gentile brothers, and what the material blessings the Gentile brothers shared with their Jewish brothers.

First of all, what are the spiritual blessings that the Jewish brothers shared with their Gentile brothers?

That spiritual blessings are, in a word, the spiritual grace through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Think about it. How did the gospel of Jesus Christ spread to the Gentiles? Isn't it because of the Jews? Looking at Romans 1:16, the gospel, which is the power of God for salvation to all believers, was first preached to the Jews. Although Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles, he preached the gospel to the Jews first. In a word, the Gentile brothers were indebted to their Jewish brothers (15:27). What did the Gentile brothers owe to their Jewish brothers? It was the gospel and a spiritual blessing. What do you think of when you hear "spiritual blessing"? On the first day of the 30th anniversary sermon meeting of Victory Presbyterian Church, I remembered the sermon title of the guest speaker, "A Spiritual Blessing from Heaven." Where is that title based? It is based on Ephesians 1:3 – "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ." What is the spiritual blessing that the Jewish brothers shared with the Gentile brothers, that is, the spiritual blessing of heaven? That is, in a word, "salvation" (eternal life) that the Gentile brothers enjoyed by hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ and accepting Jesus as their Savior. God loved from before the foundation of the world (v, 4) and chose (v, 4) and predestined (v, 5) those whom He loved not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles (v, 5), gave them redemption through the blood of Jesus, the forgiveness of sins (v, 7), and made them God's children (adoption) (v. 5). Therefore, Paul is now writing a letter to the Roman church saints, thinking especially of the Gentile saints in the Roman community, saying, 'You owe spiritual blessings to your brothers, the Jewish saints.

Then, how should the Gentile saints, who owe these spiritual blessings, repay their debts to their brothers, the Jewish saints? What should the Gentile brothers who owe spiritual blessings share with their Jewish brothers?

They are "material things" (Rom. 15:27). Paul says, "they (the Gentiles brothers) are indebted to minister to them (the Jewish brothers) also in material things" (v. 27). What are the material things that Paul is talking about here? Paul is telling Gentile saints to share with their Jewish brothers, the material blessings they have received by grace from God. Isn't that interesting? The Jewish saints already shared spiritual blessings with Gentile brothers, and the Gentile saints shared material blessings with Jewish

brothers. As Paul writes a letter to the Roman church saints, he gives an example of this, saying that it is proper for Gentile brothers to share material blessings with Jewish brothers. One example is the almsgiving donation that the Gentiles, the Macedonians and Achaia people, joyfully collected for the poor among the Jewish believers in the Jerusalem church (v. 26). At the time of Paul, there was a severe famine in Judea due to a famine (Acts 11:28-30). As a result, the Jewish believers of the Jerusalem church suffered great hardship (Ref.: Gal.2:8-10). At that time, the Gentile brothers in Macedonia and Achaia collected alms money to help the Jewish believers of the Jerusalem church financially. And Paul intended to take the alms money and deliver it to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem (Rom.15:25). And he says that when he goes to Rome, he will go in the fullness of the blessing of Christ (v. 29). What does it mean? It means that Paul will go to Rome full of spiritual grace and share it with the Jewish believers there (Park).

How beautiful is this? How beautiful is it to see Paul, the spiritual leader, exhorting the saints in Rome to live a life of sharing with each other, while wanting to take and share the full spiritual grace with the Jewish and Gentile saints in Rome? Just imagine. First, as a leader, Paul fully shares spiritual grace with the Roman church saints, both Jewish and Gentile, who have become one in the Lord. When you think that the Jewish saints share spiritual things with their Gentile brothers, and the Gentiles share material things with their Jewish brothers, what a beautiful community this is. Personally, I think the beauty of the church community is right here. The church is beautiful when we obey Jesus' command to love each other as ourselves. Now, as Paul writes letters to the saints of the church of Rome, he already exhorts them in Romans 13 with "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another" (v. 8) and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (v. 9). And when he comes to Romans 15, he says 'please one another' (vv. 1-2), and "Accept one another" "just as Jesus Christ accepted you" (v. 7), and then in verses 22-29, he exhorts them to 'share with each other'. In the end, I think that the message that Paul is giving to the Roman church saints and our church members is telling us to 'pay each other a debt of love' or 'love one another'. Briefly put again, Paul is now reminding the Roman church and our church of Jesus' second commandment, 'Love your neighbor as yourself'. And I believe that when the church loves each other according to the commandment of Jesus, the church will not only be beautiful in the eyes of God, but also attractive to the world. Wouldn't you like to dream of a church like this? Do you not want to participate in the ministry of the Lord who is building such a church?

I came up with these thoughts while meditating on the words of Isaiah 5:2 during the morning prayer meeting last Thursday. God put all His heart and effort into me and planted the choicest vines in this American land and wants me to bear good grapes. At that time, the voice of God heard was the first half of Isaiah 5:4 – "What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? ..." What does it mean? God loves you and me and devotes all His sincerity and effort like the finest products. He even gave up His only begotten Son, Jesus, on the cross for our salvation. What else does God have to do more? If God shared the life of His only begotten Son, Jesus, for the sake of those who are weak, sinners, and enemies like us, what more could He share? Today, this God wants you and me to share Jesus. God wants us to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. God wants to share eternal life. I hope and pray that we are able to share this amazing love of God with our neighbors.

Please join me in prayer in my fight

[Romans 15:30-33]

Why do you pray? Are you not crying out to God because you are in a situation where you have no choice but to pray to God? As I meditate on the words of Psalms 116:1-12, I am taught that we, too, must dedicate ourselves to prayer, just as the psalmist decided, "I will call on Him as long as I live" (v. 2b). Now is the time for us to pray. It is time for all of us to gather together and cry out to God. And what we must keep in mind is that prayer is a battle. Prayer is fighting our own old habits and fighting the old sinful instincts within us. Also, prayer is fighting the sinful world, fighting those who oppose the gospel, and further fighting Satan. The community of the church is a gathering of militant Christians who take the victorious Jesus as their captain and wage spiritual warfare. In other words, you and I are Christians fighting in spiritual warfare with the assurance of victory. Therefore, we are fighting a spiritual war against ourselves, sin, the world, death, and Satan today. As militant soldiers of the cross fighting this spiritual war, what we need is the full armor of God (Eph. 6:11, 13). And among the full armor of God, what we want to focus on today is intercessory prayer. Regarding this intercessory prayer, Paul says in Ephesians 6:18-19: "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel." Our church must pray to God for each other's brothers and sisters, and also intercede for pastors and church leaders.

In today's text, Romans 15:30, we can see that Paul continues to write letters to the saints in Rome, exhorting them like this: "I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me." What Paul is admonishing the saints in Rome here is to pray together in his fight. Of course, in the Korean Bible, it says, 'Join me in your prayers and pray to God for me,' but in the original Greek Bible, the first word in this sentence is " $\sigma \nu \alpha \gamma \omega \nu i \sigma \alpha \sigma \theta \alpha i$." This word is a compound word and its literal meaning is "Along with" (together) + "Agonize" (to agonize, struggle). This means 'fighting together' or 'struggle together' rather than simply interceding for a struggling brother or sister. The word was originally used by wrestlers or boxers to fight each other in athletic competitions, especially gymnastics (MacArthur). Therefore, the reason Paul used this word when admonishing the Roman church saints was that he wanted them to help him and fight his battle with great effort (Freiberg).

Now, Paul is going to go to Jerusalem to serve the Jerusalem church saints (vv. 25, 31) with the relief money that his gentile brothers, the Macedonians and Achaeans, gathered with joy (v. 26). Here, in order to understand Paul's exhortation in more detail, we must ask two questions: (1) What does "my service" that Paul is referring to in verse 31? (2) Why did Paul ask the saints in Rome to join him in praver in his fight? First, "my service" that Paul is talking about refers to "the service of the saints" in verse 25. To explain more specifically, Paul now goes to Jerusalem with the relief offerings collected by the Gentile believers (Acts 11:28-30) and delivers them to the poor among the Jewish believers of the Jerusalem church (v. 26), who were suffering greatly from the famine (Acts 11:28-30), so that he could serve the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. This is "my service" or "serving the saints" that Paul is talking about. To answer the second question, 'Why did Paul ask the saints in Rome to pray with him in his fight?', we need to know what Paul's conflict was in wanting to go to Jerusalem to serve the Jewish saints. Look at Acts 20:22-23: "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me." Paul's conflict was in serving the Jewish saints in Jerusalem. Paul's opponents, who did not obey the gospel, would bind and persecute Paul as soon as he arrived in Jerusalem. And I think he didn't fight with himself to handle the mission given to him even in this situation. Paul, who did not regard his life as precious in order to finish his course and the mission he received from the Lord Jesus, that is, to testify to the gospel of God's grace (Acts 20:24), I think he was more concern about whether or not to fulfill the mission given by the Lord than whether or not to lose one's life through tribulation and persecution. Then, what was the prayer topic that Paul asked the saints in Rome to join him in his fight in prayer? There were two prayer topics:

(1) The first prayer topic was God's deliverance.

Look at Romans 15:31a – "Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea ….." Why did Paul ask the saints of the Roman church to pray together in his fight so that when he goes up to Jerusalem, there he will be delivered from the hands of his enemies who disobey the gospel of Jesus Christ? The reason was because he desperately wanted to complete the mission given to him by the Lord (MacArthur). God heard and answered this prayer of Paul and the Roman church saints, and when Paul arrived in Jerusalem, God delivered Paul's life from the hands of the Jews from Asia who disobeyed the gospel. Although they saw Paul and stirred up the crowd (v. 27), stirred up a commotion, seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple (v. 30), and eventually had the commander of the Roman army seize Paul, bind him with two chains, and put him in prison (vv. 31-33, 23:11) (MacArthur), God forbade them to touch Paul's life.

(2) <u>The second prayer topic was that the Jewish saints in Jerusalem receive Paul's</u> <u>service.</u>

Look at Romans 15:31b - ... and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there." Now Paul wanted to take the relief offerings he had collected from the Gentiles and

deliver them to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. The prayer he asked the saints in Rome was not only to pray for the Jewish saints in Jerusalem to receive economic help, the gift of love from the Gentile saints to their Jewish brothers, but also to ask the saints in Rome to pray together. We may think that Paul asked the Roman saints to join him in prayer while worrying about this, but from Paul's point of view at that time, he could not help but pray in agony. The reason was because there was tension in the relationship between Jews and Gentiles at that time. Just as the tension between the Jewish and Gentile believers in the Church of Rome prevented them from having one mind in the Lord, such tension existed between Jewish and Gentile believers at the time of Paul. Therefore, Paul could not help but worry. He prayed that the Jewish brothers would receive the relief offerings with a happy heart, as the Gentile believers made almsgiving offerings for the Jewish brothers with a willing heart. Therefore, Paul wanted them to realize and know that they are one brother and one community in Christ. What is the ultimate purpose of these two prayer topics of Paul? Look at verse 32: "so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed." The purpose of Paul's two prayer requests to the saints in Rome was to go to the Roman saints with joy and take a rest to recharge with them after his service work in Jerusalem was safely finished. Here, the recharging rest that Paul was talking about was that Paul imparted some spiritual gift to the Roman saints to persevere, so that they could gain comfort because of their faith (1:11-12). That is why Paul, writing this epistle to the Romans to the saints in Rome, said in the first half of 1:10-11: "in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you. I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong." This true recharging rest is to be comforted by each other's faith through meeting each other in the Lord. When we do so, truly "the God of peace" (15:33) gives us the peace of the soul that the world cannot give. For this, Paul wrote a letter to the Roman saints and asked them to pray for him in his fight for Jerusalem.

What will you do? Wouldn't you like to join each other in prayer in each of our spiritual battles? I want you to join me in prayer in my fight. My struggle (concern) is for all members of our victory community to receive Jesus Christ as my Savior and live with the assurance of salvation. Also, all of our hearts are to become militant Christians who fight and win with confidence in the spiritual war against ourselves, sin, the world, death, and Satan. I hope and pray that all church members will be established as the glorious church, the holy bride of Jesus, the bridegroom, with the confidence of God's guidance, so that when Jesus returns, we can all enter that heaven and live forever with the Lord. Until then, at this time when there are many grains to harvest but not enough workers to harvest, I hope and pray that all members of Victory Presbyterian Church will be raised up as workers with a Christ-centered vision and participate in building the church, which is the body of the Lord, so that we can be used to expand the kingdom of God.

A recommendable woman

[Romans 16:1-2]

Have you ever written a letter of recommendation for someone? Most of the students in our church's English Ministry probably know that I did not write the letter of recommendation as a senior pastor, but my wife did for those who needed to submit university applications or for those who were looking a job. All I did was when my wife finished the letters of recommendation, I just signed them. Haha. Still, before I signed, I read what my wife wrote about the student she recommended. And what I felt was that my wife had written a good recommendation letter. The reason I thought so was because I thought that the brothers and sisters that my wife recommended are well drawn out and described well in English sentences that are commendable. I even wrote a letter of recommendation myself. However, the letter of recommendation I wrote was written in Korean. Haha. But there was a 'recommendation case' (?) that I would never forget. It was one day when an alumnus pastor of a seminary was looking for a place for ministry and asked me to recommend him to the pastor in charge of the church which he wanted to submit a resume in order to serve there. The reason he asked me like this was probably because the pastor in charge of the church he wanted to submit a resume for was a pastor of our presbytery whom I knew. But at that time, it was difficult for me to write the letter of recommendation, so I was unable to do so. The reason was that I thought that the assistant pastor I was looking for in that big church and my alumni pastor were not compatible. At that time, I was very uncomfortable. Do you have the same experience as me? Have you ever had a hard time recommending someone who asked you to do so?

When we recommend someone, why do we recommend them? Isn't it because we acknowledge that person as much as we do? When we see a lot of commendable parts in that person, don't we recommend him positively? In today's text Romans 16:1, apostle Paul greets the saints of the church in Rome and says: "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea." As Paul is now finishing his letter to the Romans, he comes to chapter 16 and begins to say, 'I recommend' while greeting the Roman saints. Then, who is the person Paul recommends to the Roman saints? It is a woman named "Phoebe". In a word, a woman named Phoebe was a person

whom Paul would recommend to the Roman church saints. Who was Phoebe that Paul could recommend like this? What kind of person was she that Paul recommended to the Roman church saints like this? Today's text tells us in two ways:

First, a woman named Phoebe was "a servant of the church."

A female disciple named Phoebe was a member of the "Cenchrea" church (v. 1). The city of Cenchrea was a port city adjacent to the city of Corinth. While Paul was writing the letter to the Romans from Corinth, he wanted to have Phoeberan, who served in the church at Cenchrea, deliver it to the church in Rome after he finished writing the letter. Looking at the fact that Paul asked Phoebe, a servant of the Cenchrea church, for such an important task, we can guess how well she was recognized by Paul.

In this age we are living in, the harvest is plentiful but the workers are scarce (Mt. 9:37). In other words, there is a serious shortage of workers in the church today. From my point of view, you and I may have many church members, but there are very few church workers. To borrow the words of a pastor, the number of church workers is only 10%. That means that if there are 100 church members, there are only 10 church workers. Therefore, we must devote ourselves to the work of raising up workers in the church. So, our church is using this to raise up workers with Christ-centered vision. In the midst of that, when I thought of the church worker of Phoeberan recognized by Paul in today's text, I remembered 2 Timothy 2:15 – "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." Shouldn't we be raised up as workers approved by God? Also, shouldn't we devote ourselves to raising up workers who are recognized by God? Who is a worker approved by God? This is the one who rightly discerns the word of God's truth. Also, workers who are recognized by God have nothing to be ashamed of. Shouldn't our church be dedicated to raising such workers?

Second, a woman named Phoebe was a helper to the church worker.

How do we know this? Look at Romans 16:2 – "I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me. When we look at the second half of Romans 16:2, Paul introduces Phoebe to the Roman church saints, "for she has been a great help to many people, including me." Here, the original meaning of the word "help" is "a patroness," and Phoebe is described as a worker who devoted herself to helping Paul and many others with her resources (Friberg). According to Pastor John MacArthur, female workers in the early church took care of sick believers, the poor, strangers, and people in prison (MacArthur). When I think of the early church women who diligently cared for others like this, I thought of a gift that is very important and necessary for us living in the 21st century. That gift is none other than the gift of helping one another: "And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those

speaking in different kinds of tongues" (1 Cor.12:28). The more workers who have the gift of helping in the church, the more they help many people like Phoebe, so the church can establish a community of love and shine a light in this dark world where love is growing cold. When I thought of a woman named Phoebe whom Paul recognized, praised, and recommended to the Roman church, I remembered Matthew 5:16 – "In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." The reason this word came to mind is because the name "Phoebe" means "bright and radiant." Just like the meaning of the name Phoebe, you and I are God's light children who have to pay our debts brightly in this dark world. Therefore, like the woman of Phoebe, we must become church workers serving the church, the body of the Lord, helping each other with the love of Christ.

In today's text, Romans 16:1, apostle Paul recommends Phoebe, a member of the Church of Cenchrea, to the Romans, and in verse 2, he exhorts them as follows: 'Treat Phoebe, the person I recommend'. Look at verse 2: "I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me." What does it mean? How does Paul exhort the Roman church members to treat Phoebe, a worker in the church at Cenchrea, whom he recommends? We can think of it in 2 ways:

(1) <u>Paul exhorts the Roman church saints to receive (welcome) Phoebe whom he has</u> recommended in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints.

Look at Romans 16:2a – "I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints" Here, "in a way worthy of the saints" is translated in Korean 'proper etiquette of the saints"? What does it mean? A long time ago, an elder I know who lives in Korea told me that he wanted to write a book on Christian etiquette and asked me to find out if there were any books on Christian etiquette in the United States. As far as I remember, the reason he wanted to write that book was probably because he thought we Korean Christians lacked in good manners. At that time, I heard his words and thought it was interesting. The reason is because I didn't think so important about the Christian etiquette. Then, when Paul exhorted the members of the church in Rome to receive Phoebe, whom he recommended, with the proper etiquette of the saints, how is it the proper etiquette of the saints to receive Phoebe that was in a way worthy of the saints? I looked for the answer in Philippians 2:29 – "Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him." We must welcome (receive) a worker (servant) like Phoebe or Ephephroditus with great joy. And as Paul said, we must honor such workers.

(2) <u>Paul's exhortation to the Roman church saints was to help Phoebe whom he</u> recommended as any help she might needed.

Look at Romans $16:2b - \dots$ and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me." What does it mean? The Greek literal meaning of this word is 'Stand by her in everything'. In other words, when she needs help no matter what, be by her

side and help her as much as she can. Then, why did Paul exhort the Roman church members to help Phoebe by a worker from the church at Cenchrea? The reason is because the woman named Phoebe helped not only Paul but also many of her brothers and sisters in Christ (v. 2). Therefore, Paul is saying that it is desirable for brothers and sisters to help each other in the Lord. Wouldn't God be pleased when brothers and sisters who have become one in the Lord like this, whether they are members of the Church of Cenchrea or the church of Rome, receive (welcome) each other in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and help each other with all their might?

As I meditated on this word, I asked this question: 'Is there a worker (a servant) in our church that I would recommend to other church members like Phoebe?' As I asked this question, I prayed to God like this:

"Father,

Let everyone in our church become Christians recommended by God. Just as God boasted about Job to Satan, please raise all members of our church to be church workers that God can be proud of. Please raise up all the workers who serve the church and help others so that we can all become bright and shining saints like the meaning of the name Phoebe. Therefore, when Jesus, the bridegroom who is the head of the church, returns, please build it into a glorious bride church. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen."

Those who serve together

[Romans 16:21-23]

Dr. Paul J. Meyer, whose life goal was to earn tens of millions of dollars and share all that money, as a millionaire who proved 'God gives more to those who give', wrote a book titled "25 Keys for Success" (Internet). In the book, Dr. Meyer, deals with the topic of 'heritage' based on Christian insight. In this book, which is a compilation of 50 years of faith and practice know-how, heritage includes everything we do, say, think, and plan. And he is asking in what form to leave a legacy that anyone can choose and nurture to future generations. Ultimately, it is a book that not only motivates useful methodologies to leave a good legacy, but also serves as a valuable guideline for those who want to live a spiritually rich life. Saying 'serving is good business', it offers seven guidelines for service: (1) Provide, (2) Protect, (3) Respect, (4) Trust, (5) Suggest direction, (6) Train, and (7) Think of people before products. As I read and read these 7 guidelines, I thought about what and how I should do as I applied them to our church and to the leaders who serve the church with me:

- (1) I must pay special attention to our church leaders and help them to build a group of people with a Christ-centered vision.
- (2) I must not cease to pray for the spiritual protection of our church leaders.
- (3) I must respect our church leaders so that they can commit with more confidence and creativity.
- (4) I must commit to trusting our church leaders by trusting God.
- (5) I must plant the goals and vision of our church in the minds of our church leaders.
- (6) I must faithfully train our church leaders.
- (7) I must think of church people before church programs.

As I applied these 7 things to our church, I also thought about what kind of church our church should be. It was that our church leaders, together with all church members, humbly and faithfully serve the church, which is the body of the Lord, with one mind and one will, so that the whole church should become a serving church.

In today's text, Romans 16:21-23, we see Paul's greetings to the church in Rome from those

who were with him in Corinth. Looking at the list of these people, I thought about what kind of people they were who served the Lord with Paul, and I thought about what kind of people they were, or what kind of people they should be, who served our church community with me. I have divided people into 5 categories:

First, those who served the Lord with Paul were "my fellow worker."

Look at Romans 16:21a – "Timothy, my fellow worker, …." Last Sunday, during the farewell sermon by the assistant pastor of our church, I heard that Timothy was the spiritual son of Paul. The basis for that statement is 1 Timothy 1:2 and 2 Timothy 1:2. In those verses, Paul refers to Timothy as "Timothy my true son in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2) or "Timothy, my dear son" (2 Tim. 1:2). Paul refers to this spiritual son as "my fellow worker" in Romans 16:23. In other words, Paul is referring to Timothy, his spiritual son, as a co-worker with him. Then, what kind of person was Timothy, the spiritual son who worked for the Lord along with Paul? In a word, he was 'a man with sincere faith'. Look at 2 Timothy 1:5 – "I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also." Like his mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, Timothy had "sincere faith" in his heart. What kind of faith is sincere faith here? That faith is sincere faith, faith without hypocrisy, faith that is not fake. Interestingly, the meaning of the name "Timothy" is "God's treasure" (Park). Indeed, Timothy, a fellow worker of Paul, was the man with precious sincere faith just like his name. It is a great blessing from God to serve the church, the body of the Lord, with such precious man of faith.

Personally, when I think of Pastor Ham, who was the assistant pastor of our church, I think of him as a true believer like Timothy. I think his faith is sincere faith without hypocrisy. Therefore, I believe that serving Victory Presbyterian Church community, the body of the Lord, with Pastor Ham for about 5 years was a blessing from God. Now that Pastor Ham has left, I am praying that God will send such a faithful fellow worker to our church. Not only that, but I hope that all leaders of our church's Korean, English, and Hispanic ministries will be raised as men of sincere faith like Timothy. Then, when the fellow workers of Victory Presbyterian Church serve the church, the saints who are served also believe that the Lord will establish them as people with sincere faith. Furthermore, just as Timothy's sincere faith was passed on from his maternal grandmother, Lois, to his mother, Eunice, and thus to Timothy, I hope and pray that the sincere faith of all church members continues to be passed on to us, our children, and our children's children.

Second, those who served the Lord with Paul were "my relatives."

Look at Romans 16:21b – "… sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my relatives." Paul lists the names of those who greeted the Roman church saints, referring to his fellow worker Timothy, as well as Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, as "my relatives." Whom is he referring to by "my relative"? If we say "my relatives," we may think of family, relatives, and family members.

However, the "relatives" that Paul is talking about in today's text are not certain, but almost all commentators say that he refers to Paul's countrymen, the Jews. Of these Jewish Christians, Paul's fellow countrymen, we cannot know for sure whom Lucius was. We are not sure whether he refers to Luke, the author of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, or to "Lucius," the prophet and teacher of the Antioch church in Acts 13:1-3. However, through the Bible, we can find out who the "Jason" and "Sosipater" Paul is talking about are. A man named "Jason" was one of the first converts in Thessalonica and, in Acts 17:5-10, he invited Paul to his house and served him. And the man named "Sosipater", in Acts 20:4-6, is Sopater (a short form of "Sosipater"), the son of Pyrrhus, a Berean, who was a person who received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true (17:11). These two were not only close friends to each other, but also very close friends to Paul (MacArthur).

The relationship of fellow workers I personally pursue is a friendship of mutual trust in the Lord. Because I trust God, I want to serve the church, the body of the Lord, with such fellow workers who are committed to trust in each other and build friendships as friends in the Lord. I want to serve the church with one heart and one mind, sharing intimate fellowship in the Lord by opening the doors of each other's hearts and inviting each other into each other's hearts instead of just inviting each other to our homes. In doing so, we are pursuing a relationship of fellow workers who can truly feel the fact that we are one family in the Lord. It is to pursue a relationship with such a fellow worker who knows that we are one family in the Lord, transcending culture and language, even if we are not the same compatriots, that is, Koreans or Americans. In that respect, I think God has established the relationship between Pastor Gomez and me in our Hispanic Ministry. God made us believe that we are one family in the Lord. I think one of the reasons that made this happen was when Pastor Gomez and his wife were kicked out of their house a few years ago, they stayed at our house for about 3 months and made us feel that way.

Our victory community is one family in the Lord. Those in the Korean ministry, our children in the English ministry, and those in the Hispanic ministry, we are all one family in the Lord. Therefore, when we serve the church, the body of the Lord, we must serve as one family. By any chance, if some of you still think that Victory Presbyterian Church is a family church and that it is the church of me and my relatives as the senior pastor, then you who think that way must go beyond it. You must look at our Victory Community with the Word-centered perspective by receiving the Word of God with an earnest heart and examining the Scripture every day to see if this is so, like Sosipater the Berean. You must realize that the purpose of the existence of the physical family and relatives who serve with me in the church is also the church, which is the body of the Lord. Then, the entire church will be able to serve the church with one mind and one will as one family in the Lord.

Third, those who served the Lord with Paul were 'my secretary.'

Look at Romans 16:22 - "I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord."

Looking at this verse, we may think that the book of Romans was written by a man named Tertius, although we have known that Paul wrote it. But what we need to know here is that Tertius was just a man who dictated what Paul said. In a word, a man named Tertius was the secretary or amanuensis of the apostle Paul. In verse 22, we see him himself greeting the Roman church saints. Just as the sister Phoebe, who was a member of the Church of Cenchrea in Romans 16:1, had the privilege of delivering Paul's letter to the Romans to the saints of the church in Rome, Tertius enjoyed the privilege of transcribing the letter of Romans instead of Paul.

I believe that Tertius, Paul's secretary or amanuensis in Romans 16:22, was a privileged person. The reason I think so is because God the Holy Spirit was able to ghostwrite Romans, the holy word of God that God wanted to write through Paul. In other words, I think this is an amazing privilege that Tertius was used as the Lord's tool to write the book of Romans, the word of God. Just imagine. What do you think if you and I were born in Paul's time and became Paul's secretaries (amanuensis) and wrote one of Paul's letters? If it was me, I think I would have received grace by dictating Paul's words. Especially in the Book of Romans, Paul spoke under the theme of the gospel, and as I dictated those words, I think I might have received grace and experienced the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And furthermore, wouldn't I have been filled with gratitude and excitement when I thought that God used someone like me as Paul's secretary (amanuensis) to write the letter to the Romans, and that the gospel of Jesus Christ would be delivered to many people through the letters to the Romans? Perhaps that is why I personally meditate on the Word of God, write it down, and post it on the church website or on my personal websites. And some meditations on the Word, I share with many people through e-mail. Although the words I write and meditate on are very lacking, I am enjoying the blessing of joy and gratitude that comes when I meditate on and write down the words that God the Holy Spirit gives me to understand and share with other brothers and sisters in Christ. Perhaps that is why I personally hope that my fellow workers and church leaders who work with me will write down and share the grace they received while meditating on the Word of God. Of course, I don't think this is absolutely necessary. But since I believe that writing can be used as a precious tool for God, I would like to recommend that you write what you have meditated on the Word and share with others. I hope and pray that all of you and I will become the secretary of God the Holy Spirit and share the Word of God.

Fourth, those who served the Lord with Paul were 'my host.'

Look at Romans 16:23a – "Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you …." The person Paul is referring to here, "Gaius, host," was a person who entertained not only Paul but also the whole church, and it seems that the church gathered in his house (MacArthur). And scholars presume that Gaius was one of the people who received Jesus when Paul preached the gospel in Corinth and was baptized by Paul (1 Cor. 1:14) (MacArthur). Scholars also speculate that Gaius was "Titius Justus, a worshiper of God" who lived in the house next to the synagogue (Acts 18:7). Then his full name would be Gaius Titius Justus (MacArthur).

When I think of this host, Gaius, I think there must be people who treat others well among those who serve the church, which is the body of the Lord. In other words, the church needs workers with the gift of service who open their hearts and homes and enjoy serving people. There must never be a person like "Diotrephes" in 3 John 9 in the church community. Diotrephes was a man who loved to be first in the church, and not only refused to entertain his brothers, but also forbade those who did so and drove them out of the church (vv. 9, 10). If such a person is in the church, we will not be able to serve the church, which is the body of the Lord. However, if there are people in the church who have received precious gift of contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality (Rom. 12:13), we will be able to reveal the glory of the Lord with one heart and one mind in serving the church.

Fifth, those who served the Lord with Paul were "the city treasurer."

Look at Romans 16:23b – "... Erastus, the city treasurer greets you and Quartus, the brother." Here, the person "Erastus" was the treasurer of the city of Corinth, that is, the person in charge of the treasurer of the city of Corinth. Therefore, he was an important and high-ranking person in the city of Corinth. When I thought of the fact that a person of great importance and high position in the city of Corinth served the Lord together with Paul, I thought of the prophets and teachers of the Antioch church in Acts 13:1. The reason is because even among the leaders of the church in Antioch, there was someone in a high position. She was a woman named Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch. Considering the fact that these nobles served the Gentile Antioch church together with Paul, and Erastus, who was in an important and high position in the city of Corinth served with Paul (Rom. 16:22, I think that various workers served the church together in the Lord. And I think it's beautiful that these diverse people have become one in the Lord and served the Lord together. Regardless of whether or not we have a high position in the world, if we all serve the church humbly with one heart and one mind as those who serve the church, how beautiful is this service?

There is no high or low in the Lord. People in the world judge people by standards such as high status, education, fame, etc., but this is not the case in the church, which is the body of the Lord. From God's standards, all of us who have become sinners are only those who have been saved by God's grace. And those who receive and enjoy the grace of salvation cannot put themselves forward and serve the church with arrogance. Rather, we have no choice but to serve the church humbly like Jesus. Then, when various workers become one in the Lord and serve the church, it will be a beautiful service in God's eyes.

We are those who serve the Lord together as members of the church, which is the body of the Lord. Although each of us has different gifts, different cultures and languages, and different worldly positions, we must all serve the Lord with one heart and one mind. Also, as fellow workers in the Lord and members of one spiritual family, we must strive to treat each other with sincere faith and to share the word of God. Therefore, through our service together, the church is fully established, and eventually the kingdom of God must be established.

Conclusion

The grace that God has given us is that we have been justified by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ by the preaching of the gospel through the servants of Jesus Christ. In other words, we have been justified only by believing in Jesus. Now we are those who are in Christ Jesus. Therefore, we are no longer under God's wrath and God's judgment, but in God's inseparable love. And that inseparable love of God has been poured into our hearts. Therefore, we have become those who love God. Also, we have become lovers of one another. We have become people who accept each other. Also, because we share, we have become people who care for each other. In other words, we have become the Lord's community of love.

If we have received forgiveness of sins through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, we are credited to God for righteousness through His resurrection. Therefore, we are the happiest and blessed people. We are saved. We have eternal life. This salvation is a gift through the grace of Jesus Christ. We are given the best gift ever. Therefore, as those who have received the greatest gift, we must live a life worthy of the Lord. We must worship God with a grateful heart for the grace of salvation. And we need to change. We need to be transformed. We must lay down our will in front of the cross and seek the will of the Lord with one heart. And we must live according to the will of the Lord. We must live a life of service that pleases God.

We are all debtors. Therefore, we must submit (obey) the sovereignty of the Lord. We must live a life that bears fruit for God. We must preach the gospel boldly and not be ashamed. We must spread the word of faith. If God is for us, who will be against us? We are true Christians. Therefore, we must pursue the maturity of our faith. We must live by faith. We must live by the faith even against all hope. We must believe in the truth that there is no condemnation in Christ in the spiritual battle and live a victorious life. I hope and pray that we all live a life worthy of His gospel.