

# **Those Whose Hearts Are Broken**

**James Kim**

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## **Conclusion**

## Introduction

'He who fixes the broken heart, Lord Heavenly Father, supervise me, Lead me to Your path and make me free. Do a new thing and revive me.' (Gospel song: 'The broken heart').

I don't know why there are so many things in this world that hurt so many people. Their hearts are being troubled and going through so much by their beloved people. In fact, they are hurt deeply by so many times by their beloved people. In this world of suffering, there are many times in which we experience suffering from the heaviness and crushing of the heart, as well as stress, wounds, pain and tears from many human relationships. Also, when hard and difficult things suddenly come together at once, we feel overwhelmed and don't know what to do. There are so many hardships and a lot of things that make us feel discouraged in this world. Not only that, they are things that happen suddenly that make our hearts afraid. Although we know that we should be anxious of anything, there are so many things that make our hearts anxious and even depress. Not only that we get depressed, we even can be in despair. Sometimes we feel so hopeless because we are trapped. Wherever we look, whether east, west, south and north, there seems to be no solution. Why does God allow us to go through this pain and adversity? What is God's will? Sometimes our hearts are so distressing that we want to die because we are suffering from deeper spiritual depression and because we cannot understand what God's will is. At that time, we are so mourning that we do not want to receive any comfort from anybody else. We even want to blame on God. What should we do? How can our broken heart be healed?

Our God is the God who is near to the broken heart. Only the Lord heals the brokenhearted. Only the Lord can free us. I hope and pray that the Lord will heal our broken heart and set us free.

A few days ago I thought of my books titled "Those Whose Hearts are Pure" (40 Days Meditation) and "Those Whose Hearts are Wise" (The Book of Ecclesiastes). After I thought about these two titles, the title of the book I thought was "Those Whose Hearts are Broken". When I thought about this title, I determined to search and pick all the meditation writings that I wrote that seem to be related to that topic of "Those Whose Hearts are Broken". So found and picked some of the writings and compiled those meditations in one place under the heading of "Those Whose Hearts are Broken". It is not enough and lack in many ways, but I tried to gather them together in one place with the thought that the Lord can use this compiled writings to heal even one person whose heart is broken. May the Lord use this book "Those Whose Hearts are Broken" as a tool to heal and free the broken heart.

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(In the Victory Presbyterian Church Shepherd's Room)

## God who is near to the brokenhearted

**“The LORD is near to the brokenhearted And saves those who are crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all” (Psalm 34:18-19).**

Only God and we know our deep wound in our hearts. There is times when we receive deep wounds in our hearts, so that we refuse to be comforted by anybody else who are around us (Ps. 77:2). In my case, I didn't want to receive any calls for a week after my first baby Charis died. I didn't want to get anybody's comfort. I still remember that when I came back to my apartment after Charis' funeral, I asked my wife to put away all the Charis' pictures away because it was very hard for me to see her pictures. So my wife took all the baby Chris' pictures and arranged them in an album until the next day morning even though I am sure she was going through much more pains than me. I still cannot forget her and what she did. I think the death of a beloved child hurts our hearts very deeply. Of course, it doesn't seem that a father and a mother are equally hurt by their child's death. I think that each person has a pain. Their ears can be different.

In our life of faith, there is much suffering like the psalmist. There were many trials in our lives. There are many trials in the present as well. And there will be more trials in the future. One of the things that makes us suffer from such trials is that God doesn't answer our prayers according to our expectation of deliverance but that He gives greater trial in our lives. Then we are both troubled and confused. We can't understand the will of God. So we ask ourselves, 'Why doesn't God answer my prayer and deliver me from my suffering? Why does God make me to suffer harder troubles?' That was what happened to the Israelites too. When they cried out to God in their sufferings in Egypt (Exod. 3:7), God sent Moses to Egypt to deliver them out of Egypt. But in the Israelites' perspective, when the king of Egypt, Pharaoh, made the Israelites to work harder (5:9) God wasn't delivering them out of Egypt but made them to suffer more (v. 21). Likewise, even though we cry out to God in our sufferings and expect His deliverance, sometimes God lets us go through the greater suffering than before. As a result, our hearts are torn down without hope, in a state of total disintegration.

If we are now in such a pit, how should we look at ourselves and our situation? I think of two things.

- (1) First, we should be grateful for losing our ability to look at ourselves when we are in a 100 meter deeper pit instead of a 10 meter deep.

We must be grateful for realizing that everything we depend on is useless in deeper pit. And we must acknowledge our inability before God and be grateful for repentance in our inability. Of course, even that thanksgiving is impossible without the grace of God.

- (2) Second, we must be grateful for being able to obey the truth that we can only look toward God and rely on Him in the pit of our deep affliction.

When we are in the pit of our deep affliction, we can only rely on God and God's glory, not our glory, will be manifested as we pray, expect and wait upon God. There is a difference in God reaching out and delivering us from the 10-meter pit, and God reaching out and deliver us from the 100-meter pit. There can be a difference in God's powerful work of delivering us from the deeper pit of 100-meter

compare to the 10-meter pit. Maybe that's why God does allow us to go through the greater suffering and pain. I think the greater wound is an opportunity to see the greater glory of God and to experience His presence. But the question is whether we can feel the great glory and nearness of God when we are in great suffering and pain. This also is impossible without the grace of God.

May God pour out His grace upon those who are suffering and hurting so that they may experience God's nearness and presence and their wounds may be healed.

## **“Many are the afflictions of the righteous”**

### **[Psalm 34:15-22]**

Can suffering be light? If you answer "Yes" to this question, how is this possible? As I was reading what Pastor Nam-joon Kim said, I got some answers on how suffering can be light. This is what Pastor Kim said: ‘The depth of sin in the world becomes clearer in the sufferings of the righteous. ... The suffering of the righteous is a sense of atonement for the sins of the world. There is sure punishment for evil is human feeling, intuition and belief. But the world is tainted with evil. Then isn’t this world supposed to be perished? The fact that the world is evil and is not being perished means someone is paying the price for sin. That is the meaning of the sufferings of the righteous. The suffering of the righteous is to bear the sins of the world and pay the price instead. Whether the righteous intended or not, he is acting as a sin offering. That’s how the righteous saves the world. The righteous have many hardships. But the hardships that he doesn’t want save the world.’ Our sufferings can be light when we look at Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world in our sufferings. In other words, our sufferings can be light when we pay for the sins of others like Jesus who suffered and died on the cross to pay for our sins, then our sufferings can become light.

I think there are two kinds of suffering. The first suffering is the result of my sin, and the second suffering is participating the suffering of the Lord, not the suffering of my sin. Participating in Jesus’ suffering is God’s grace (Phil. 1:29). To those who enjoy such grace, suffering is light. The reason is because they enjoy the grace of suffering. And that grace of suffering is to experience the presence of God.

In Psalms 34:15-22, we see a psalmist David who enjoyed the grace of suffering. He said in verse 19, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous”. Based on this word, I want to think about what kind of God we meet when we are suffering under the title “Many are the afflictions of the righteous”. May we be able to experience God’s presence as we meditate this Word of God.

### **First, the God whom the righteous meet in suffering is the God who is near to the brokenhearted.**

Look at Psalms 34:18 – “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted And saves those who are crushed in spirit.” The God the psalmist David met in his afflictions is the God who is near to the brokenhearted. Why was David heartbroken? Why was he crushed in spirit? I think it was because he sinned against God. Of course, we don’t know for sure what the sin of David was in today’s text. I don’t know whether he was pretended to be ‘crazy’, whether he lied and sinned, or whether he couldn’t get rid of his sin in his suffering, or he committed sin with his lips (vv. 13-14). But one thing is clear is that the righteous David was brokenhearted in in many afflictions (v. 18). And when he was going through many afflictions, he was crushed in spirit. This is the sacrifice of God. Look at Psalms 51:17 – “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.”

Our hearts need to be broken. Our spirits need to be crushed. Like an older ground that to needs to be cultivated, our harden hearts should be broken. Whether through God's rebuke or through his discipline, our hearts need to be hurt and be broken. But we don’t feel this necessity because we don’t consider our sins to be sin, or because we sin and hide from God and don’t confess. We must confess our sins to God. We must seek God's mercy and grace in our crushed spirit and broken heart.

In Isaiah 57:15, the author Isaiah equates the 'contrite in spirit' with 'lowly in spirit'. That is, a humble person is a contrite person. The Lord comes near to those who are humble, who have brokenhearted and the contrite spirit and restores their hearts (Isa. 57:15). Not only does our Lord restore our contrite hearts but He also heals our brokenhearted and binds up our wounds (Ps. 147:3).

'The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and he saves those who are truly contrite.  
Blessed are the poor in spirit, For the comfort of the Lord will surround him.  
The Lord of love defies pride but searches for those who mourn.  
Will you share the cup of suffering for the Lord and for your neighbor?  
What is so good that you are laughing? The Lord is crying for those lost souls'

(Gospel song "To the brokenhearted").

### **Second, the God whom the righteous meet in suffering is the God who hears the cry of the righteous.**

Look at Psalm 34:15, 17: "The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous And His ears are open to their cry. ... The righteous cry, and the LORD hears And delivers them out of all their troubles." The Bible says in Exodus 3:7, "The LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings." When we see this, we can see that the God of Israel or our God see the suffering of the righteous, and that when they cry out, He is the God who hears their prayers. David already said in Psalm 34:4, 6 that God is the God who heard him, answered his cried out and saved him out of all his troubles. When we look at Psalms 34, David mentioned prayer four times (vv. 4, 6, 15, 17). This shows that he offered many earnest prayers in many afflictions. These many afflictions make us to pray for more, earnest prayers to God. This is the secret of victory when we are afflicted. The secret is to cry out to God. In doing so, our God listens to our cry (v. 15).

If God is listening to us and hearing our cry, there are no prayers that God cannot listen. I think that there is a prayer that God doesn't answer even though He hears all our prayers. That prayer is the prayer that we offer to God without repentance in the contrite spirit. Look at Isaiah 59:1-2: "Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear." The lesson that this truth teaches us is that God doesn't listen to our prayers no matter how we cry to God in the absence of brokenhearted and crushed spirit. Therefore, repentance prayer is important. When we go to the holy God and first repent of our sins with the brokenhearted, we should look to our gracious God and ask His salvation. In doing so, our God will hear our prayers and answer our prayers.

### **Third, the God whom the righteous meet in suffering is the God who delivers the righteous from all his afflictions.**

Look at Psalms 34:17, 19, 22: "The righteous cry, and the LORD hears And delivers them out of all their troubles. ... Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all. ... The LORD redeems the soul of His servants, And none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned." After we repent our sins with the brokenhearted and contrite spirit, when we ask God for His grace of salvation, God delivers us from all our afflictions. The surprise is that God's salvation is sure and clear. The Bible clearly says that God delivers us from all our hearts (v. 4) and out of all our troubles (v. 6). The Bible says even though there are many afflictions of the righteous, the Lord delivers us out of all our troubles (v. 17) and out of all the afflictions (v. 19). In short, the Bible tells us that those who seek the Lord, those who cry out to Him shall not be in want of any good thing (v. 10).



God, who hears our prayers and saves the brokenhearted, destroys the wicked. In other words, our God saves the righteous by destroying the wicked (v. 16). God is the God who reveals His holiness in saving the righteous. Therefore, the wicked cannot exist before God's holiness. That's why God cuts off the memory of the wicked from the earth. After all, the wicked are slain because of their evil: "Evil will slay the wicked; the foes of the righteous will be condemned" (v. 21). But our God surely protects the righteous: "he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken" (v. 20). God who sees us in distress is God who saves us.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but they enjoy the God's blessing in their afflictions. And the blessing that they enjoy is experiencing God's presence. Our God is the God who is near to the brokenhearted, the God who hears their cries, and the God who delivers them from all their sufferings. The righteous people who meet this God take their suffering lightly. The reason is because they know that Jesus endured their sufferings instead. When we look to Jesus Christ suffering on our behalf on the cross by faith, we must think of God who has distanced Himself from his Son Jesus who was brokenhearted. Furthermore, we must think of our Father in Heaven, who has forsaken Jesus who was brokenhearted. Our Heavenly Father didn't answer Jesus' cry and save Jesus when He cried on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mk. 15:34). Why didn't Heavenly Father answer Jesus' prayer on the cross and save Him? It is because of us. It is because of all our sins. Jesus bore all our sins and died on the cross in order to wash away all our sins. And the Lord has blessed us with all good things by delivering us from all afflictions, tribulations, and fears (Ps. 34:10; Eph. 1:4). Therefore, we can only praise God (Ps. 34:1-3).

## Purpose of suffering

**“But they will become his slaves so that they may learn the difference between My service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries” (2 Chronicles 12:8).**

In a book called "Suffer" by Rev. Thomas Case, a Puritan doctor of soul, he talks about the 21 lessons God teaches his people through the situation of suffering. I was afraid as I was reading those 21 lessons. So I wrote these words: It is terrible that I don't know why I am being discipline by God. But the more fearful thing is that I have not learned the teachings of God even after I was disciplined by God.' The reason for this fearful thought is that because many times we don't realize our sins that we have committed against God even though we are disciplined by God. That's why we are wondering why these painful situations have come upon us in situations where we are suffering from discipline by God. And we complain and grumble because of the painful situation we face. There is surely a God's good purpose of suffering given to us in the sovereignty of God, but there are so many times that we don't realize that purpose. That's why we wander. That's why we ask so many questions: 'Why does God give us suffering?', 'Could it be that we are suffering because of our sins?', 'What should we do if it is because of our sins?', 'And if we were delivered from the suffering by the grace and mercy of God, what is the lesson of God that we must learn from that suffering?' etc..

If we look at the context of 2 Chronicles 12:8, king of Judah Rehoboam and Israel suffer greatly. And their great suffering was the crisis of destruction (v. 12). The great suffering was that God had forsaken Israel and put them in the hands of Shishak king of Egypt (v. 5). Why did Rehoboam and Israel face the crisis of destruction? The reason was because they had forsaken God (v.5). In other words, because Rehoboam and Israel forsook the law of God (v. 1), they were forsaken by God (v.5). Why then did Rehoboam and Israel forsake the law of God? It was because the kingdom of Rehoboam was established and strong (v.1). In other words, the reason why Rehoboam and the people of Judah sinned against God by forsaking the law of God was pride (v. 2). Therefore, God was angry (v. 12) and caused the king of Egypt Shishak to strike Jerusalem (vv. 2-4).

As I was meditating on this word, I had another fearful thought. That fearful thought was "familiarity". Just as Rehoboam and Judah were established and strong which they were accustomed to and thus became arrogant and forsook the law of God, I am afraid that I can become accustomed to the peace, abundance, and firmness of my family and my church and thus become arrogant without realizing it. Furthermore, I am afraid that the seeds of my pride in my heart have become bitter and fruitful, and that in the end I will refuse the Word of God and intentionally disobey God and sin against God. Clearly holy and just God knows that I am proud and I am guilty of forsaking the Word of God in my pride. Therefore, I am worried that God will take a stick of discipline and disciple me, my family, and my church which I serve. I am concerned about my holy God disciplines me because I am getting so accustomed to such peace, abundance and firmness of my life.

What should we do? As Rehoboam and the princes of Judah gathered in Jerusalem in Judah (v. 5) humbled themselves (v. 6), we must also humble ourselves before God. We must lower ourselves before the righteous God (v. 6). In particular, we, husbands and fathers, pastors and elders, who are leaders of our homes and churches, must humble ourselves. And we must confess our sins in the presence of God and confess and repent of the sins we have arrogantly forsaken God's Word and forsaken God. This is the purpose God gives us suffering. The purpose of our Heavenly Father who disciplines us, who are proud, disobedient, and sinful is to make us to realize our sins against the righteous God, to turn from our sins, to repent and return to our Heavenly Father and to obey the Word of God. In the end, God didn't destroy all the kingdom of Judah, because Rehoboam humbled himself and there were some

good in Judah (v. 12). In other words, God didn't pour out all his wrath on Rehoboam and Judah and destroyed them all (v. 7). Rather, God saves them roughly (v. 7). Isn't it interesting neither God destroy them totally but also save them completely? Why did God do that? Why doesn't God completely deliver us from our sufferings even though our expectations are complete salvation? The purpose is to teach us the difference between serving God and serving the kings of other lands. Look at 2 Chronicles 12:8 – "But they will become his slaves so that they may learn the difference between My service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries." The reason why God didn't destroy Rehoboam and Judah completely but saved them roughly was so that they might learn the difference between serving Shishak the king of Egypt and serving God (v. 8). Do we realize this deep will of God? Are we learning the difference between serving God in suffering and serving riches, successes, and idols of this world?

Now we the church needs Jesus who is the true doctor of our souls. That's because we are spiritually sick. Now we are so accustomed to God's grace and blessings. Now we are so accustomed to peace, abundance, solidity, and strength. Therefore, we become so proud that we are forsaking the Word of God and forsaking God. And now we are too worldly. Now we are sinning against our righteous God. That's why we are being disciplined by God. God is now striking us with the stick of the world. Nevertheless, we aren't humbling ourselves before God. We are still stiff-necked people who don't realize our sins before our holy God. Also, we are complaining and grumbling rather than repenting. We still can't distinguish the difference between serving God and serving the world. What must we do? Is there any hope for us?

## Why should we suffer?

**“but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it” (Matthew 14:24).**

Why do we Christians suffer? How should we understand our suffering? What is God's will? Why does God make us or allow us to suffer? What is the purpose of suffering?

Our God has a profound knowledge that our human being cannot fathom (Ps. 92:5; Eccle. 3:11). We cannot fathom the things that He does (Job 5: 9; Ps. 145: 3). We cannot understand His will fully. We don't know why God allowed Job to suffer (Job 1:13-19; 2:7-8), why He threw the great wind on the sea so that the ship that Jonah was aboard was about to break up because of the great storm (Jonah 1:3-4). Who could understand the will of God fully who gave suffering to Job and to Jonah? So this is what Apostle Paul said in Romans 11:33-34: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?” Although we cannot fully comprehend the heart of God who gives us suffering, we can speculate about His mind in the Bible about why God allows us to go through suffering.

For example, in the case of Job, we can assume that God's purpose in allowing him to go through suffering is to make him to come forth as gold (Job 23:10). In the case of disobedient Jonah, we can assume that God made him to go through from one suffering [the ship that he was aboard was about to break up because of the great and wind and the great storm that God sent (Jonah 1:4)] to another suffering [in the stomach of the great fish (ch. 2)] so that he could pray in the stomach of the great fish (ch. 2) and could have the second opportunity to obey the God's command (ch. 3). The Psalmist understood his suffering as follow: “Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word. ... It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes” (Ps. 119:67, 71). He knew that he had suffered because he went astray. In other words, he accepted that suffering was the result of his sin. Nevertheless, David said that it was good for him to suffer. The reason was because he learned God's statutes through suffering, and after the suffering he kept the word of the Lord. How should we understand the suffering that we are going through now?

In Matthew 14:24, we see the Jesus' disciples suffering. They were suffering because the boat they got into (v. 22) was buffeted by the waves because the strong wind was blowing (Jn. 6:18) and it was against the boat (Mt. 14:24). So the disciples were straining at the oars (v. 48). When I was meditating on this, I remembered the words of Jonah 1:13 – “Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before.” d

Even though the prophet Jonah told the Gentile sailors, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea ... and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you” (v. 12), the sailors did their best to row back to land instead of throwing him into the sea (v. 13). But more they rowed back, the sea grew even wilder than before (v. 13). It seems to me God is fighting with the sailors. The reason I think this way is because it was God's will for the sailors not only to throw the cargo into the sea to lighten up the ship (v. 5) when God threw the great wind on the sea (v. 5) but also ultimately to throw Jonah into the sea (v. 12) but they didn't. “Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before” (v. 13). Who won this fight? Of course, God did. Eventually after the sailors cried to the Lord, they took Jonah and threw him overboard (vv. 14-15). And the result was “the raging sea grew calm” (v. 15). The Jesus's disciples in Matthew

14:24 also strained at the oars because the wind was against them (Mk. 6:48). And it seems to me that they were fighting against Creator God who created the sea. The reason is that Creator God sent the strong wind that was against the disciples and the disciples strained at the oars (v. 48) and had rowed three or three and a half miles (Jn. 6:19). They did so until the fourth watch of the night (3-6 am) (Mt. 14:25; Mk.6:48). So they wrestled with the great winds and waves of God that were against them. How draining this wrestling was both physically and mentally. Didn't Jacob also wrestle with the angel of the Lord till daybreak? (Gen. 32:24). When Jesus' disciples were wrestling with the wind that was against them by straining at the oars (Mk. 6:48), Jesus approached the boat by walking on the water (Jn. 6:19). When I was meditating on this, I remembered the words of Exodus 3:7-8: "The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey--the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites." God saw the misery of his people, the Israelites, in Egypt. He heard them crying out. He had concerned about their suffering. So He came down and called Moses and sent him to Egypt in order to deliver the Israelites out of Egypt and to lead them to the Promised Land, the land of Canaan. Like this, God sees our sufferings, hears our cry out, knows and concerns about our suffering and comes down to deliver us. Jesus saw that His disciples were suffering and walked on the sea and came near to them (Mt. 14:25; Mk. 6:48, Jn. 6:19). At that time, the disciples were terrified and cried out in fear because they thought Jesus who was walking on the sea was a ghost (Mt. 14:26). To those disciples who were in terrible fear, Jesus immediately said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid" (v. 27). Peter replied to Jesus, 'Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water' (v. 27). Jesus said to him, "Come" (v. 29). "Then Peter got down out of the boat and walked on the water and came toward Jesus" (v. 29). "But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and , beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!'" (v. 30) Then Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him and said, "You of little faith ... why did you doubt?" (v. 31) When we think about Peter, we think that he wasn't of little faith. Who would come down from the boat like Peter when Jesus said "Come"? I don't think we won't even move one step because we firmly believe that inside the boat is much safer than the outside of the boat. Especially, since we firmly believe that it's much safer to stay inside the boat than to step outside of the boat and try to walk on the water like Peter did, we won't obey Jesus' command "Come" (v. 29). We won't get down out of the boat at all. Actually, we won't even ask Jesus 'Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water' (v. 28). But we have to think about this: 'Is the ship that Jesus is not, safer than the water that Jesus is?' Here, the important matter is not staying in the boat or walking on the water but whether Jesus is with us or not (cf. Exod. 33:15). At least Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water, and went to Jesus when Jesus said "come" (Mt. 14:29). But immediately Jesus reached out his hand and rescued Peter and said "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" (v.31) Then, Jesus and Peter climbed into the boat and the wind died down (v. 32; Mk. 6:51). Here, Jesus and Peter climbed into the boat means they both walked on the water and climbed into the boat. When Peter walked down on the water alone and tried to go to Jesus, he was afraid because of the wind and fell into the water. But until he climbed into the boat with Jesus, the Bible doesn't mention that Peter saw the wind and he was afraid. At that time when Jesus got into the boat with Peter, the disciples were utterly astonished because the wind stopped (Mk. 6:51). "Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God'" (Mt. 14:33).

The disciples of Jesus suffered because of the great winds and waves. Why did they suffer? We cannot fully understand God's unfathomable wisdom why He made them (or allowed them?) to go through suffering. But what we can speculate is that the purpose their suffering was so that they could confess that Jesus is "the Son of God". In other words, the purpose of the Jesus' disciples' suffering was to know who Jesus is. Therefore, when we are suffering, we must ask the question "Who is my God?" instead of "Why?" (Why did this trouble happen to me?) or "How?" (How did this happen to me?) and "What?" (What is God's will?). As we do so in our suffering we must meditate on the Word of God more than before. Thus, we should be able to make the same confession as Apostle Paul did because we grow in the knowledge of God more through suffering: "What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I

consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ” (Phil. 3:8). I hope and pray that we may grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ through suffering.

## Why does God troubling us with every kind of distress?

**“One nation was being crushed by another and one city by another, because God was troubling them with every kind of distress” (2 Chronicles 15: 6).**

What is "reform"? What is the reform that many pastors are crying for? According to Pastor Seo Moonkang, who have translated the various works of the Puritan's books in his lifetime and introduced them to this world, said that reformists are those who want to reform themselves first and foremost (Internet). I totally agree. How can we reform our homes and the church without reforming ourselves? So what must we do to reform ourselves? First of all, we must go back to the Scripture. And we must live the Word of God. That was what happened during the 16th century Reformation. Therefore, if we really want reformation, we must return to the Word of God. And we must live in obedience to the word of God.

Today's text 2 Chronicles 15:6 is the word of the prophet Azariah when the Spirit of God came upon him (v. 1) that he proclaimed to King Asa who was reforming and to all Judah and Benjamin (v. 2). This is what the prophet Azariah: "... because God was troubling them with every kind of distress" (v. 6b). I started reading from Chronicles 15: 1 last night, and then my gaze stopped and meditated in the words of the second half of this verse 6. Then I thought, 'Why did God trouble the people of Judah with every kind of distress?' I wondered why the God of love troubled the people of God, Judas and Benjamin, with every kind of distress. So I read the context of verse 6 again. When I did so, I thought that the reason was verse 3: "For a long time Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach and without the law." In other words, the reason God troubled the people of Israel with every kind of distress was because they were without the true God, without the priests to teach and without the law for a long time. I didn't understand well. How did the Israelites who have believed in God live without the true God for a long time? Weren't God, the priest and the law very important to the Israelites? Then how could they live without God, without the priest to teach and without the law for a long time? I think the reason was idol. We can know this by what King Asa did after he heard from Prophet Azariah, "But as for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded" (v. 7). He took courage and removed the detestable idols from the whole land of Judah and Benjamin and from the towns he had captured in the hills of Ephraim (v. 8). He even deposed his grandmother Maacha from her position as queen mother, because she mad a repulsive Asherah pole. And he cut the pole down, broke it up and burned it in the Kidron Valley (v. 16). In the end, God troubled the Israelites with every kind of distress because of their sins of idolatry. That was why in those days, it wasn't safe to travel about because all the inhabitants of the lands were in great turmoil (v. 5). "But in their distress they turned to the Lord, the God of Israel, and sought him ..." (v. 4). I think this is the providence of God. God troubled the Israelites, who were without the true God, without the priest to teach, without the law and committing the sins of idolatry, so that they might return to God and seek God. And God made King Asa to take courage through Prophet Azariah so that King Asa removed the detestable idols from the whole land of Judah and Benjamin and from the towns he had captured in the hills of Ephraim (v. 8). In addition to that, God made King Asa to make a covenant to seek the Lord the God of their fathers, with all their heart and soul (v. 12). So all who would not seek the Lord, the God of Israel, were to be put to death, whether small or great, man or woman (v. 13). After all, the people of Judah had sworn it wholeheartedly. They sought God eagerly, He was found by them. "So the Lord gave them rest on every side" (v. 15). So there was no more war again until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign (v. 19).

We who wants God's reformation must return the Word of God. And we who want to live according to the Word of God must repent our sins. We must repent our sins of loving and serving idols rather than God as we have lived without God, without His Word and without a Bible teacher who teaches us the Word of God. We must turn

from our sins. We must return to God. And we must seek God. As we receive the Word for our true God and the teaching from our true Shepherd Jesus Christ, we must live for the glory of God by believing in only Jesus Christ. To do so, we must realize that when God troubles us with every kind of distress (Jer. 10:18). We must realize that we have sinned against God. Therefore, we must not sin more against God like King Ahaz (28:22). Instead, we must seek God like King Manasseh and completely humble ourselves before God (33:12). I hope and pray that we may humble ourselves before God when we go through every kind of distress.



## The blessing of suffering

**“Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, ‘Why will you also go with us? Return and remain with the king, for you are a foreigner and also an exile; return to your own place. You came only yesterday, and shall I today make you wander with us, while I go where I will? Return and take back your brothers; mercy and truth be with you’” (2 Samuel 15:19-20).**

Suffering is painful, hurtful and hard at the time. But God, who is a potter, molds us through suffering in our lives. In particular, God breaks our stubborn hearts through suffering and melts our hearts to give us a gentle heart. In other words, God molds our hearts through suffering.

In 2 Samuel 15:19-20, we see King David speaking to Ittai the Gittite: “Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, ‘Why will you also go with us? Return and remain with the king, for you are a foreigner and also an exile; return to your own place. You came only yesterday, and shall I today make you wander with us, while I go where I will? Return and take back your brothers; mercy and truth be with you’.” We may wonder what great meaning there is with the David’s word to Ittai. Especially, since we don’t even know who Ittai is, what great meaning there can be what David said to Ittai. I’ve been reading this word of David to Ittai so far without noticing it at all. But today, during the Morning Prayer, the Spirit of God gave made me to notice these verses 2 Samuel 15:19-20 and gave me an insight as I was meditating on them. And the insight is that God molded the heart of David through suffering and gave him the heart of considering one soul very precious.

**I want to think about the David’s suffering. We can think about his suffering in two ways:**

- (1) David’s first suffering was when King Saul tried to kill him, the sufferings that he went through while he was running away in fear.

Why did David suffer? The reason was that when David killed the Philistine Goliath in the name of God (1 Sam. 17:45-50), the women came out from all the towns of Israel and sang, “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands” (18:6-7) and from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David (v. 9). So King Saul tried to kill David, and David began to run away from Saul. From then on, David began to suffer. However, in the midst of the sufferings, God molded the David's heart and made David to consider King Saul precious (24:10; 26:21, 24) and treated him well (24:17).

- (2) David’s second suffering was the sufferings that he received after he became a king of Israel and when he was running away from his own son Absalom who rebelled against him (2 Sam. 15:12, 14).

Why did King David suffer? This was because David saw Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, bathing (11:2-3), took her to be his own wife and killed her husband Uriah, a loyal soldier, with the sword of the sons of Amnon (12:9). At that time, King David heard of Uriah's death, and said to the general of Joab through the messenger: “Thus you shall say to Joab, ‘Do not let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another; make your battle against the city stronger and overthrow it’; and so encourage him” (11:25). He didn’t consider the life of Uriah, a loyal soldier. Because of

what David did, even in the sight of the Lord (v. 27), the child that was born between David and Bathsheba died (12:14, 18). Also, Amnon the son of David violated and laid with Absalom's beautiful sister Tamar (13:1, 14) and after two full years (v. 23) Absalom killed Amnon (v. 29). In the end, because what David did, adultery and killing, in his children generation did adultery and killing too. How painful it was to David? But Absalom, who had planned to kill Amnon for about two years and who hadn't yet seen the face of his father David for two years (14:28), conspired to rebel against David and overthrow his throne (ch. 15). So he stole away the hearts of the men of Israel (15:6). And he brought Ahithophel, David's counselor, from his city Giloh (v. 12) to be his counselor. Ahithophel was an important figure because his advice was as if one inquired of the word of God (16:23). As a result, the Absalom's conspiracy grew strong because the people increased continually with Absalom (15:12). The hearts of the men of Israel were with Absalom (v. 13). David, who heard this news through a messenger, he quickly ran away with all his servants who were with him in Jerusalem (v. 14). In the midst of this fleeing, King David said to Ittai, the Gittite, "Return and remain with the king .. return to your own place ... Return and take back your brothers; mercy and truth be with you" (vv. 19-20).

### **As I was meditating on these words, God gave me two insights:**

- (1) First, when King David was in the palace, he didn't even regard his own loyal soldier Uriah as a valuable person; but when he was running away from Absalom, he even regard the Gentile Ittai as a valuable person.

Isn't this interesting to see that David, who regarded King Saul's life as a valuable person, also regarded Ittai as the valuable person when he was running away from his son Absalom. When King David was living in the palace in peace without any suffering, he committed adultery with Bathsheba in the lust of the eyes and the lusts of the flesh. And as he tried to cover it up his sin, he eventually killed Bathsheba's husband Uriah. David didn't regard Uriah's life precious. So he let the Gentiles to kill Uriah during the battle. As a result, God punished him and David had to run away from his one son Absalom. As he was doing so, David regarded the Gentile Ittai's life precious. Isn't this interesting work of the Lord? This is the blessing of suffering. Through suffering, God molded the heart of David. Through suffering, God raised David to be a man who didn't consider a man precious to be the man who considered the man precious.

- (2) Second, I think David considered King Saul's son Jonathan's loves more precious when he was running away from his own son Absalom after he became the king of Israel.

The reason I think this way is because when his own son Absalom was trying to kill David, Jonathan even tried to help David when his father King Saul tried to kill David and was even almost got killed by his own father Saul. So I am sure when David was being chased by Absalom, he probably longed for Jonathan's love which was more wonderful than the love of women (1:12). How precious was that love? I think David considered Jonathan's love very precious when he was running away in sufferings. I think David experienced God's everlasting faithful love in the wilderness of suffering more in depth (15:23; Ps. 63:3). Eventually, the blessing of suffering is the experiencing and realization of God's eternal love. Even though David was driven out of the wilderness by his own son Absalom, he became aware of the lovingkindness of God in the wilderness of suffering that he didn't understand in his kingdom palace.

May we also have blessings of suffering like David. I hope and pray that the Lord raise us to be people who regard one person as very precious through our suffering. The reason why we need this edification is because we don't seem to value a soul nowadays. In particular, we the Church leaders say with our lips that a soul is very precious but we actually don't consider a soul very precious with the heart of God the Father and with the affection of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:8). Especially, the more the number of the church members, the more we do not seem to value a soul. As a result, it seems that there are more people in the church who are getting hurt by the leaders. That's why we also need the blessing of suffering that God gave to David. We desperately need a heart that values a soul. We need to realize more deeply, broadly, highly and profoundly the love of God through suffering. In particular, we must become more aware of His wonderful and amazing love of salvation in our suffering as we look upon the suffering and the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. In doing so, we will become a garden of love, and we will be able to love one soul through the full love of God. I hope and pray that this blessing of suffering is with us.

## **The benefit of suffering (1)**

**“It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes” (Psalms 119:71).**

I came to hear news that I am deeply disturbed even today through the internet news. A 34-year-old father stabbed his 8-year-old daughter and 9-year-old daughter's friend, a woman, with a knife each 20 and 11 times, in a small town in Chicago. I heard the news that this cruel father who killed even his own daughter stabbed her eyes with a knife. When I heard this, I was angry because I couldn't believe how evil human could be in committing such horrible crime. My reaction was: 'Is this man really a human?', 'Is he really qualified to be a father?' In order to drive a car, we need to get a driver's license. But there is no such thing as a license to be a father. That's why we don't study to become a father. This night, this horrible news reminded me another news that I heard last time which was about a mother, who beat her daughter 's head and left her two days to die in the living room, cut her neck and threw away. I wonder if we the parents are qualified to be parents.

The Bible Ephesians chapters 5 and 6 teach us that we the men are responsible for nurturing our wives and children. Here, 'to nurture' in Greek has a meaning 'narrow'. That is, we the husbands and the fathers must show our wives and children the narrow path that Jesus walked, the cross. In other words, each one of us must take our own cross and walk the path of suffering. But we have an instinct not to walk the path of suffering. We intend to avoid it deliberately. This is because they don't know the benefits of suffering. Furthermore, since we haven't experienced the benefit of suffering, we are unable to walk by faith the path of suffering patiently.

Today I would like to think of two things under the title of "The benefits of suffering (1)" based on the words of Psalm 119: 65-72.

### **First, the benefit of suffering is that it reminds us our going astray.**

Look at Psalms 119:67 – “Before I was afflicted I went astray, ....” We often don't know that we are going astray until we have suffered. Of course, it is true that there are times when we know that it is a deliberate wrong way to walk but we still walk that path. But many times, we don't walk on the path of the narrow cross that the Lord has walked but sway to the left or to the right because we are spiritual blind and deaf. Then, through the suffering that the Lord gives us, we become spiritual awaken. Like a good shepherd who tends his sheep when the sheep goes astray, our good Shepherd Lord us the stick of loving discipline to tend us and to make us to walk the right path of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what the prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 53:6 – “All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; ....” Because we are foolish sheep, we are busy going astray. We are walking the broad road of this world instead of the narrow path of the Lord Jesus Christ. At that time, the suffering that is given to us reminds us of our going astray.

### **Second and last, the benefit of suffering is it makes us to keep the word of the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 119:67 – “... But now I keep Your word.” Here we need to think about how suffering makes us to keep the word of the Lord in six ways:

(1)  suffering makes us believe in the Lord's commandments.

Look at Psalms 119:66 – "... For I believe in Your commandments." The suffering that awakens us to the fact that we are walking on the wrong path makes us to make U-turn and enable us to believe that only the Lord's commandments are the true path. Every day we choose to take one of two paths: the narrow path of the Lord and the wide path of the world. In other words, every moment of our lives we choose either the Lord's commandments or Satan's or the world's words. The suffering not only makes us to realize our wrong choices, but also helps us to believe that the Lord's path of commandments and to walk in that right path.

(2) Suffering teaches us "understanding and knowledge".

Look at Psalm 119:66 – "Teach me good discernment and knowledge ...." There are so many of us who have lost discernment and knowledge and are walking in the wrong way in ignorance. The loss of spiritual discernment brings confusion and not conviction. Eventually, it will make us not to walk in the way of the Lord's commandments in a consistent way. Rather, the loss of spiritual discernment causes us to wander the way of the world, the way of confusion. To us, the Lord, through suffering, rescues us from the swamp of loss of our ignorance and of good discernment. In the end, the Lord gives us good spiritual discernment and knowledge to know the will of the Lord and causes us to run to His Word.

(3) Suffering makes us taste the goodness of the Lord.

Look at Psalms 119:68 – "You are good and do good ...." The greatest benefit to us in our suffering is to experience the goodness of the Lord (Ps. 34:8). We experience the Lord's goodness as God causes all things, even our suffering, to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). Especially when we are going through most difficult time of our lives, we experience God's goodness by seeing God's glory that manifests to us brighter than before. That is why even in our great suffering we are able to praise God "God is so good, God is good, God is so good, He so good to me."

(4) Suffering makes us hate the lie of the proud.

Look at Psalms 119:69 – "The arrogant have forged a lie against me ...." Before we suffer, the lies of the proud are so clearly heard in our ears that we often walk the false path of the proud. Aren't we now busy in running the path of lie, the lie of the proud of this world, because we are confused and accept the lies as the truth and choose to go astray? Even though we use to run the path of the false success of the pride of the world and the path of worldly glory and mammonism, but after suffering, we hate all the path of lie of all the proud. The reason is that through hardship we become aware of the true path and the way of the Lord. The path of the Lord is the narrow path of the cross shown by the humble Jesus in the Bible. And it is death, after all. How different is this with the end of the world's road? Do you feel spiritual charm? Do we feel spiritual charm that the climax of our narrow path is death? Do you feel attracted to the fact that a sinner like us can be martyred for His glory? This truth cannot be accepted by anyone. The proud cannot accept this truth. But the Lord is planting this truth in our hearts through suffering. As He plants this trust, the Lord makes us to hate the lie of the proud.

(5) Suffering removes 'fats' in our hearts.

Look at Psalms 119:70 – "Their heart is covered with fat ...." Obesity became a major problem in the United States. So many people try to lose weight by diet and exercise. Some people even have an operating to remove fat. While so many people are trying to get rid of the fat of the flesh, we Christians

have to devote ourselves to remove the fat in our hearts. If we have the fat of the flesh, how uncomfortable it is and how many adult diseases do we end up with? But the fat of our hearts seems to be giving birth to a greater sin that weighs down the sinful consequences that makes our Christian life very uncomfortable. I think that suffering is the best medicine to our spiritual condition to remove fat from our hearts. We must remove the fats in our hearts even through suffering.

(6) Suffering makes us to realize the greatest value of the Word of God deeply.

Look at Psalms 119:72 – “The law of Your mouth is better to me Than thousands of gold and silver pieces.” At the time of the Exodus, the Israelites understood through their 40 years of hardship in the wilderness that “man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD” (Deut. 8:3). Likewise, as we walk through the narrow path of the Lord in this world of wilderness and as we encounter many and varied afflictions, we must understand that we live by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. When we understand this, we will be able to confess that the value of the Word is more precious than our life. How can we compare the eternal Word of God with our lives in this earth? Suffering makes us to understand the preciousness of the Word of God and the supreme value of the Word rather than the riches of this world.

This socially disturbing world, a world that is moving toward the end, and we Christians who believe in Jesus, will have a greater affliction than the past and the present as we walk on the narrow path of the Lord Jesus Christ. But if we receive the grace and blessings of experiencing the benefit of suffering, then we can become the people of suffering who enjoy the benefits of suffering. As the psalmist said in Psalms 119:65, if we experience God dealing well with us according to His word, then we will be able to confess from the depths of our hearts that "God is good All the time" while we are experiencing His goodness even in the suffering. May God bless us with such blessings of suffering.

## **The benefit of suffering (2)**

**“and he said, "I called out of my distress to the LORD, And He answered me I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; You heard my voice” (Jonah 2:2).**

How do we respond to the hardships we have in our lives? Henry Nowen suggests to respond in four ways in his book, "Turn My Mourning into Dancing." There are 4 steps to dance with God:

(1) The first step is to grieve the pain and suffering we go through.

We have to cry when we have to cry. We must weep in front of the cross. And when we go through pain and suffering, we must go to our Heavenly Father and tell him what we are going through. But I think many of us don't want to acknowledge our pain and suffering, but rather try to deny, ignore, or suppress them in our hearts deeply. If we do, then our sufferings will not benefit us. Rather, as in the case of the Israelites in the Old Testament, there will be a greater likelihood of committing sin to God by grumbling and complaining.

(2) The second step is to face the causes of pain and suffering.

We must look straight at the hidden loss of injustice, shame and guilt that paralyze us. What causes pain and suffering? We must know what the cause is so that we can look straight to our pain and suffering. Many times we seem to be unaware of the cause of our suffering and pain. So we cannot face the causes of pain and sorrow, and even though we know the cause, our human instincts are familiar with avoiding the cause rather than directly look straight at them. We cannot enjoy the grace given by God through pain and suffering until we face the cause of the pain and suffering that we are experiencing.

(3) The third step is to go through pain and suffering, loss and wound and pass through it.

We should never pour too much energy into denying our pain and suffering. Rather, we must enter into the suffering, pain, loss, and wounds as we acknowledge them. We should not evade anymore. We must enter the tunnel of pain and suffering. Though it may be dark and frightening, we still have to enter that tunnel. Without entering the tunnel of pain and suffering, there is no benefit of the suffering.

(4) The last fourth step is to meet Heavenly Father in pain, suffering, loss and wound.

We must enter into the tunnel of suffering, pain, loss and wound and feel the pain, suffering, loss and wound of Jesus. Then, there is healing in our pain and wounds. Furthermore, we can be used as a tool of the Lord as a wounded healer.

**We can summarize the sufferings of Jonah in four parts:**

(1) First, the suffering of Jonah was the stomach of the great fish.

Look at Jonah 2:1 – “Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish.” Jonah's first suffering was "the depth of Sheol" (v. 2). Like a darkened cave, Jonah, who was in the stomach of the great fish deep in the sea, was struck by the painful situation that looked around the north, south, west, and there seemed to be no solution. He was imprisoned like the Israelites who had been imprisoned in front of

the Red Sea at the time of the Exodus (though this was King Pharaoh's thoughts and not the thoughts of the Israelites). Everything Jonah believed in this world was cut off. When we are in hopeless desperate situation like Jonah, we must look to the Lord who is our true Hope. This is the first benefit of suffering.

(2) Second, the suffering of Jonah was the Lord's wave.

Look at Jonah 2:3 – “For You had cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the current engulfed me All Your breakers and billows passed over me.” Here the word “breakers” refers to God’s given waves that were breaking Jonah (Park Yun-sun). Not only God was breaking the ship that Jonah was aboard, but also Jonah's heart as well. God was breaking the harden heart of Jonah, who forgot the Lord's mission and disobeyed God's command and running away, so that he might soften Jonah’s heart in order for him to obey God’s command. This is the second benefit of suffering.

(3) Third, the suffering of Jonah was the feeling that Jonah was expelled from God’s sight.

Look at Jonah 2:4 – “So I said, I have been expelled from Your sight ....” Jonah had this feeling because he was running away from God (1:3). In other words, Jonah was trying to flee from God’s presence so he felt that God had left Him and was far away from him. In a word, Jonah felt that God forsaken him. So are we. When do we feel that we have been forsaken by God? It is when we disobey God's commands like Jonah and flee far away from God's presence we can feel that God has forsaken us. Especially when we are in trouble, no matter how we pray to God, we receive no answer of our prayer from God. Then we can feel that God has hid his face from us and God has forsaken us. That was how the psalmist felt. That was why he cried out like this in Psalms 22:1 – “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning.” We can have a feeling that God has forsaken us when there is no answer of prayer from God and no help in spite of groaning and crying. This feeling of being forsaken by God must have been greater pain than physically suffering by God’s wave and being in the stomach of the great fish. It is the most painful feeling that we have been forsaken by God than any discipline, as if we were stuck in a dark room when we were disciplined by our father, and felt that we were abandoned by our beloved father rather than discipline by our father's stick. But in this suffering, the blessing that God gives us is that we may hear the cry of Jesus “‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’-- which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” of the crucified Jesus (Mk. 15:34). When we hear this voice of Jesus Christ on the cross, we are convinced and assured that we are not forsaken by God forever because of Jesus, the only begotten Son of God was forsaken by his own Father God for us. This is the third benefit of suffering.

(4) Fourth, the suffering of Jonah was that he was fainting away.

Look at Jonah 2:7 – ““While I was fainting away, ....” The word 'faint' here means 'to decline'. This word tells that Jonah was in an extreme discord. The situation of Jonah's suffering could not escape (or be saved) by the power of man in his total incompetence, and it was an extreme despair that such a situation was three days old. In the desperation of experiencing total helplessness and total incompetence, the grace that God gives us is to look to Him who is the hope of salvation. And by looking at the Lord of salvation, God enables us to confess from our hearts and lips that "Salvation is from the Lord" (v. 9). This is the fourth and great benefit of suffering.

We must enjoy the grace of God through suffering in our lives. In particular, like Jonah, when we are running away from God by disobeying God's command, we must enjoy the benefits of God's suffering while dancing with God through the great winds of suffering that God gives us. Hence, we also pray that we may confess like the psalmist: “It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes” (Ps. 119:71).



## Thanksgiving in suffering

**“Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish, ... But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving That which I have vowed I will pay Salvation is from the LORD” (Jonah 2:1, 9).**

Suffering is painful and distressful. And when we are in pain and distress, we usually groan in wounds and tears. We even make a grudge. We blame on others. We have to blame somebody for it. We blame a situation too, not just the people. We blame the people and the situation, but we do not blame ourselves. The reason is that if we are so painful and distressful, we tend to become more selfish. And if we are selfish, we will not only be able to think that suffering has come because of ourselves, but we cannot. That's why we cannot learn through suffering. Not only that we cannot learn about ourselves through suffering, but also we cannot learn the Word of God. As a result, we are not thankful to God in suffering.

But the prophet Jonah decided to give thanks to God in the midst of suffering and to offer sacrifices to God in thanksgiving (Jonah 2:1, 9). How is this possible? How could Jonah be determined to give sacrifice to God in thanksgiving (v. 9), in the situation where he was hurled into the very heart of the seas and the currents swirled about him (v. 3) and he was inside the fish (v. 1)? How could Jonah have been thankful to God in the painful feeling of being expelled from God's sight (v. 4) and when his life was ebbing away (v. 7)? What was the secret?

**First, the secret was because Jonah remembered the grace of God's salvation, which he had already experienced.**

Isn't this something we cannot understand? Wasn't Jonah in the stomach of the great fish and suffering? Then how can we talk about Jonah's experience of salvation? God saved Jonah by preparing the great fish and commending the fish to swallow Jonah (1:17). Jonah, who experienced this past grace of salvation, was able to give thanks to God (2:1) [The Hebrew word for "prayer" is used as a meaning of thankful prayer (1 Sam. 2:1; 2 Sam. 7:27)]. How could Jonah be grateful for God's salvation of being swallowed by the great fish and was suffering in the stomach of the great fish? Isn't the salvation that we usually pray for and expect deliverance from suffering like a "big fish stomach"? But Jonah didn't offer the prayer of thanksgiving when he was on the dry land (Jonah 2:10), but when he was still in the stomach of the great fish (vv. 1-9). Although he was saved from one suffering from another (greater) suffering, he was able to give thanks to God in such suffering because he remembered the grace of God's salvation that he had already experienced. Even in the midst of suffering, those who remember the past grace of salvation and celebrate in the present cannot but give thanks to God. Let us give thanks to God even in the greatest sufferings as we remember God's grace of salvation that we have experienced in the past.

**Second, the secret was because Jonah had the assurance and hope of God's salvation for the future.**

The reason why we can give thanks to God in the midst of suffering is not only because of the grace of salvation that God has given us in the past, but because we believe that God, who saved us in the past, will also save us from our present sufferings. Because of this conviction and hope of salvation, we are able to praise and pray in thanksgiving to God, even though we are now going through

suffering. That's what Paul and Silas did in Acts chapter 16. Paul and Silas prayed and praised God (Acts 16:25), although they could have been executed the next day in prison. How could this be possible? It was because they had confidence and hope of God's salvation. Especially because Paul believed that God would lead him to Rome and stand before Caesar, he was sure that God would save him from the prison in Philippi. That was why he was able to pray and praise God. Likewise, Jonah was able to give thanks to God in hope of salvation because he believed that God, who had saved him in the past, would also save him from the stomach of the great fish (Jonah 2:1, 9). In other words, he believed and hoped for God's faithful love of salvation, so he decided to give thanks to God and to offer a sacrifice to God with the voice of thanksgiving in the midst of suffering. We believe that the faithful God who saved us in the past will not only save us in our present sufferings but will also save us from the sufferings we will face in the future, because our God of salvation is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). When we believe and hope in this faithful God of salvation, we can eagerly desire and hope in God of salvation and give thanks to God even though we are in the midst of such 'a stomach of a great fish' that seems despicable.

### **Third and last, the secret is because Jonah kept the grace of God in his heart.**

Look at Jonah 2:8-9: "Those who regard vain idols Forsake their faithfulness, But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving That which I have vowed I will pay Salvation is from the LORD." Here the phrase "vain idols" is described in two Hebrew words: (1) 'Hebell': Breath that evaporates quickly; (2) 'Sseo': emptiness, void. In other words, vain idols mean something like vanishing as quickly as breathing. Those who serve vain idols that vanish as quickly as breathing abandon God's grace. For example, if we love material more than God, and worship false material, we abandon the grace that God has given us. As a result, we cannot worship God with the voice of thanksgiving. When we live in this world, pursuing the vainly worldly things from Monday to Saturday, we are forsaking the God's grace that God is giving us on the Lord's Day. If we fail to keep God's grace in our hearts from Monday to Saturday, then we cannot have thanksgiving in our hearts when we go to church on the Lord's Day and worship God. Not only that we cannot come in before God with thanksgiving in our heart but also we cannot praise and worship God with the voice of thanksgiving. But if we keep in our hearts the grace that God has given us, we can thank God in the Lord's presence on Sunday and give thanks and praise to God. Interestingly, idol worshipers abandon the grace of God and worship the things that quickly disappear like breathing, but God worshipers go to God and worship Him with thanksgiving in their hearts by keeping God's faithful covenant love (Hebrew: "Hesed") in their hearts. It was Jonah who worshiped God. He was able to give thanks to God in his sufferings because he kept the grace of God in his heart. Jonah determined to offer sacrifice to God with the voice of thanksgiving because he realized little bit of God's covenant love of not forsaking Jonah who disobeyed God's command and forsook his mission and tried to flee from God. In the end, those who have experienced the grace of God cannot but offer a prayer of thanksgiving and decide to worship God with thanksgiving in their hearts. We must also give thanks and prayer to God as we experience God's grace in our lives. To do so, we must faithfully keep the grace of God in our hearts.

Though suffering is painful and distressful, we must glorify God through our suffering. To do so, we must look to the God of salvation in suffering. And we must remember the grace of salvation that God has given us in the past and celebrate those graces in our present sufferings. As we faithfully hold on to the past graces God has given us, we must be convinced in the present suffering that our faithful God of salvation will save us now in our present afflictions. When we have this conviction of God's salvation, then we can hope in God in despair. When we have this hope of salvation, we can endure our suffering with faith. We can look at God's salvation quietly. We must look to the God of salvation in suffering. We must remember the past grace of God's salvation, the present conviction of salvation, and the hope of future salvation. In doing so, we will be able to pray and worship God with thanksgiving in our hearts.

## A fearful situation

### [Psalms 27:1-6]

Are there any of you who are in a fearful situation in these days? If you are, why are you afraid? The reason we are mostly afraid is that fear, anxiety, and worry cause fear in our hearts. One of the bible passages that comes to my mind regarding "fear" is Isaiah 41:10 – “Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” Also, when I think about “fear”, I personally like 1 John 4:18 – “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.” Obviously the Bible says that there is no fear in love. But why are we afraid? The reason is lack of perfect love. Although the Bible says that “perfect love casts out fear”, the reason we have fear is because God’s perfect love has not been made perfect in us.

According to the “Letters for Christian Business Leadership Development” (No. 64), unconscious fears within us can largely devastate our lives in four ways: (1) First, fear paralyzes our potential. It ties us down and makes us reluctant to use the gift that God has given us, so that we cannot use it for the glory of God. Like a man who received one talent in a talent parable. (2) Second, fear destroys our relationship. Fear prevents us from being honest with others. Fear makes us to be afraid of being rejected, so it makes us to wear a mask, to pretend to be someone else and to deny our true feelings. Fear never lets us make perfect love. (3) Third, fear interferes with the happiness we enjoy. Happiness and fear cannot coexist. (4) Fourth, fear interferes with our success. We often prepare for failures by focusing on what is going to happen, rather than focusing on what we want to happen. Fear creates fear (Internet).

How should we overcome the fear that devastates our lives? When we look at Psalms 27:1-6, we see David in a fearful situation. I want to think about what David did in that fearful situation in three ways. I hope and pray that we may be able to learn these three lessons and apply them in our lives.

### **First, David was confident in his fearful situation.**

Look at Psalms 27:3 – “Though a host encamp against me, My heart will not fear; Though war arise against me, In spite of this I shall be confident.” How could David be confident in the fearful situation?

- (1) The first reason is because David looked at God. Therefore, we must look to God in our fearful situation in order for us to be confident.

David looked at God quietly, who is his light and his salvation, the defense of his life, in the fearful situation (v. 1). The first way in which we can be confident in our fearful situation is to look at God, who is our light, our salvation, and the defense of our life. David's situation was really dark. Look at Psalms 27:2-3: “When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh, My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell. Though a host encamp against me, ....” David was in trouble (v. 5). In the day of trouble, David looked at God. And he acknowledged that God is God, and he wasn't afraid but was confident in the day of trouble.

It is not easy to be in a fearful situation like David. We cannot help but be afraid at the moment when we encounter the fearful situation. It is our weakness that we worry, be anxious and be afraid. Like Jesus' disciples who were afraid when they saw wave even though Jesus was with them inside the boat, we cannot help but be afraid when the sinful waves of life surges in our lives. There are times when we are afraid of the inside but pretend to be casual on the outside. The reason is that we don't like to acknowledge our fears in front of others. But we must remain quietly in the presence of God as we honestly acknowledge all our fears in our hearts. As we do so, we must look to God who is the light. Here, the "light" implies that it automatically drives away darkness. Here "darkness" refers to David's enemy. David said his enemies in a war situation are darkness. David was confident that this darkness would be driven away by the light of God. Like the darker the darkness is the brighter the light is, the more fearful the situation is, the more glowing God causes the darkness to go away. David, who looked at the God of salvation and of light, was confident that God would save him by giving him victory in the battle against his enemies. It was because he completely relied on God who was able to give him victory. And he looked at God, the defense of his life and his refuge and his stronghold. In other words, David was confident that God would protect him in any battle situation. We must look to God, who is the Light, no matter how dark the situation we are in. Like the darker the situation is the brighter the light of God's salvation is, we must rely on the power of God's salvation more. Then the power of God that enables us to win will guard our minds, emotions, thoughts and our whole personalities in Christ Jesus. Therefore, we will not be afraid, but we will be confident in the Lord.

(2) The second reason is because David looked back at the past grace of God's salvation. Therefore, we also need to remember the experience of victory (salvation) of the past in order for us to be confident in the fearful situation.

Look at Psalms 27:2 – “When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh, My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell.” As David looked back at the past of the dark situation that he faced and remembered how God made his enemies to stumbled and fell, he was confident in his fearful situation. Like David, in order for us to be confident in our fearful situation, we should reflect back and remember God's salvation in the past instead of thinking about our present dark situation and worry about our future. By doing so, we must have conviction of God's salvation and victory.

(3) The third reason is that David relied entirely on God. Therefore, we must leave our future to God in order for us to be confident in our fearful situation.

David said that “Though a host encamp against me, My heart will not fear” (v. 3). The reason is because he trusted God completely, who is the light, the savior, and the defense of his life. Like David, we must be confident in our fearful situation. I have confidence in my heart. It is Philippians 1:6 – “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” Also, I am confident in the Lord's promise that He gave to our church, ‘I will build my church’ (Mt. 16:18). I am sure that the faithful Lord will surely accomplish His promise to us. It is my prayer and hope that whatever dreadful situation that I may face, the Lord leads me with His promise word that is in my heart so that I may stand firm and be courageous in participating His ministry in building up His church.

## **Second, David sought God in his fearful situation.**

Look at Psalms 27:4 – “One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD And to meditate in His temple.” In his fearful situation, David asked God for one thing. And that one thing was that he may dwell in the house of the

Lord all the days of his life and to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord. Why should we seek the house of the Lord in our fearful situation?

- (1) First, we should seek the house of the Lord in our fearful situation because when we look at the face of our Heavenly Father, the fear of our hearts will fade away and there will be peace in our hearts.

David meditated on the beauty of the Lord in all his days of life, even in fearful circumstances. Those who meditate on the beauty of God's revelation, who is full of grace, experience the peace of God in their hearts in fearful circumstances (Park, Yun-sun).

- (2) Second, we should seek the house of the Lord in our fearful situation because we long for God's protection.

Look at Psalms 27:5 – “For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; In the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock.” The reason why David sought to dwell in the house of the Lord and to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord was because he longed for the protection of Heavenly Father. The reason why David wanted to have fellowship with the Lord in the temple of God (v. 4) was because he believed that it was the way to be saved in all its dangers (Park Yun-sun).

When my first baby Charis was suffering from her diseases and slowly dying, I enjoyed listening to the gospel song “Under the Shadow of Your Wings”. This is the text of the song: “Under the shadow of your wings Here in the secret place of your holiness I will wait on You, O Lord, my God and King Here in the Holiest of All You draw me near with love To abandon all for the sake of knowing You, my God and King Hide me in the shelter of your love Deep in the centre of your heart, my Lord How I want to know You more And keep me in the shadow of your wings Safe in the secret place of Holiness How I need You more and more.” Every night when I came out of the hospital intensive care unit after I saw Charis, I heard this song and sang along as I looked at the sky. This was my earnestly prayers to God that when I and my wife couldn't be with her I hoped that God protected her under the shadow of His wings, “Here in the secret place of your holiness”.

- (3) Third and last, we should seek the house of the Lord in our fearful situation because we hope God to bring victory to us by defeating our enemies.

David sought the house of the Lord in his fearful situation because he hoped the Lord to bring victory to him by defeating his enemies. Look at Psalms 27:6 – “And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me, ....” This is what Dr. Park Yun-sun said about his verse: ‘This means that he will not fall down before many enemies, but rather live in perfectly calm life in hope.’ We cannot live in a dark environment without hope. But we have the Lord who is our hope. Therefore, we must lift our heads and look to Him in hope.

Like David, we must ask God in fearful situation. We must seek God in the hope of dwelling in the house of the Lord and looking at the beauty of God. Especially, we should pray to God in our fearful situation as we remain quietly before God and earnestly seek the glory of God. The more sinful waves hit us, the more we cannot help but seek God and his house. I remember the words in hymn that say “My heart has no desire to stay Where doubts arise and fears dismay; Tho' some may dwell where these abound, My prayer, my aim, is higher ground.” In this world there are many troubles and death. How can we not ask God for His beauty and glory? We must ask God in fearful circumstances like David.

### **Third and last, David praised God in his fearful situation.**

Look at Psalms 27:6 – “... And I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.” David, in fearful circumstances, longed for the temple of God and desired his protection and victory (v.5). And by faith he vowed thanks and praise for the fulfillment of his future wishes (v. 6, Park Yun-sun). This was the act of offering sacrifice of thanksgiving to God by the victors (Park, Yun-sun). How was this possible? How could David vow to give praise to God in thanksgiving as the victor in the midst of dark afflictions because of his enemies of evildoers? It was because David was confident that God who saved him before was able to save him and to give him victory not only in his present fearful situation of darkness but also in his future fearful situation. Isn't it amazing? The situation has not changed, but David's heart has changed. The fear in his heart has changed to confidence. This is the attitude of the true believer who seeks God.

Here we must think of Acts 16:25 – “But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.” Paul and Silas were able to pray and praise God even when there were imprisoned because they believed in God of salvation rather than being dominated by their fearful situation. David in Psalms 27 believed in God who controlled the situation rather than dominated by it. David praised God in faith even in the dark circumstance he faced because he had absolute faith in God. Likewise, those who pray to God in faith can praise Him. Those who pray can praise God. Therefore, we must also praise God in faith even we are in fearful situation.

God said to us, “Do not fear, for I am with you ...” (Isa.41:10). Whatever fearful situation that we may be in or we will be in in the future, let us pray to God in faith and be confident in Him. And let us praise and worship God by faith. May God raise us to be His true worshipers.

## **When I am greatly afraid and distressed**

**“Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed ... "Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, that he will come and attack me and the mothers with the children”(Genesis 32:7a, 11).**

Are you afraid of death? Are not you afraid of your own death as well as the death of your family members? If you are afraid in a turning point of life and death and don't know what to do in that crisis, what would you do?

In Genesis 32:7a, 11, Jacob prayed to God when he was greatly afraid and distressed. The reason why Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed was because the messengers whom he sent before him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom (v. 3), told the news that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men (v. 6). So Jacob prayed to God when he was greatly afraid and distressed and when he couldn't understand how to solve the fear of death and the crisis of life and death. How did he pray to God? There are three things we can think of:

**First, when Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed, he prayed God, remembering all the grace God had given him.**

Look at Genesis 32:9-10: “Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your relatives, and I will prosper you,' I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness which You have shown to Your servant; for with my staff only I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two companies.” When Jacob left his uncle Laban's house and was heading toward to Canaan, his hometown, he heard from his messengers that his brother Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men (v. 6). So he was greatly afraid and distressed (v. 7). At that time, Jacob offered a prayer of thanksgiving to God as he remembered all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness which God had shown to him (v. 10). Twenty years ago, when Jacob deceived his brother Esau and stole his blessing from his father Isaac, he ran away to the house of his uncle Laban out of fear of death because Esau wanted to kill him. And when Jacob was in his uncle's house for 20 years, God blessed him so much that “for with my staff only I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two companies” (v. 10). When Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed, he prayed to God as he remembered God's abundant grace and blessing.

I still remember what my grandmother said to me and my wife when my grandmother was hospitalized many years ago. At that time, my grandmother was lying down on the bed side and she was crying. I thought she was crying because she was afraid of death. So I asked her why she was crying. My grandmother told me that ‘God loves our family so much that God raised several pastors. And I am so thankful to God and that's why I am crying.’ The tears that my grandmother shed were tears of thanksgiving. I don't know if I can shed tears of thanksgiving to God before death. Not only in my grandparents but also in those old church members who already passed away and those who are still alive, I see a glimpse of God's abundant grace in their lives especially during the time of the Japanese occupation and the Korean War. Through what I heard from them, I saw little bit how God kept them alive as they were going through those difficult times and brought them all the way to America. I still remember that some of them were thankful to God and praised God even before their imminent death. I want these memories to be remembered more vividly in front of my own impending death. Therefore, I also want to thank God and offer a prayer to God before death in remembrance of all the grace God has given me.

**Second, when Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed, he prayed to God as he was holding onto the promise word of God.**

Look at Genesis 32:12 – “For You said, ‘I will surely prosper you and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which is too great to be numbered.’” Jacob was great afraid that his brother Esau would come with his 400 men and kill all his wives and children (v. 11). But Jacob overcame this fear of death by praying to God by holding onto the promise word of God. In fact, Jacob refused to be drawn to his feeling in the very frightening situation, and petitioned God by faith in the fact of God's promise. He was able to do this because he prayed to God as he remember “all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness with You have shown to Your servant” (v. 10).

Like Jacob, I want to pray to God as I remember all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness that God has shown me when I am greatly afraid and distressed. By doing so, I want to be led by the Word of God's Truth rather than my emotion so that I may overcome the terrible fears in me. I don't want to be afraid of the waves that come into my life, not knowing what to do. Rather, I want to cry out to God by being led by His promise word of two fish and the five loaves (Jn. 6:1-15) that is written on my heart, as I remember His grace. Just as Jacob, who longed for the grace of God's salvation (Gen. 32:11), prayed to God as he took hold of the promises of God, I also want to hold onto the promised Word of God, John 6: 1-15, for myself and Matthew 16:18 for our church, and go to God in prayer. By doing so, I want to enjoy the calm peace of God, like the calm waves in the depths of the sea, even in the storms of life.

**Third and last, when Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed, he persistently cried out to God without giving up until God blessed him.**

Look at Genesis 32:26 – “Then he said, ‘Let me go, for the dawn is breaking’ But he said, ‘I will not let you go unless you bless me’.” Jacob took his family and all his possessions and sent them across the ford of the Jabbok and he was left alone wrestled with an angel of the Lord until daybreak (vv. 22-24). And when the angel said, “Let me go, for the dawn is breaking”, Jacob said “I will not let you go unless you bless me” (v. 26). What does this mean? Jacob was determined to not let him go and continue to pray until he was blessed by God. Do we have this determination and persistence?

We must also hang on to God with this kind of determination. We must ask God with determination that we will not stop praying until God answers our prayers. We should never stop praying. We should not give up praying so easily. We must ask God persistently. We must be patient and pray to God. God will faithfully fulfill His promise to us. We must pray to this faithful God, 'We will not give up praying to You until You answers our prayers.'

I don't want to fear the death. I don't want to be afraid of my own death as well as the death of my beloved wife and children. Rather, I want to be afraid that my dear friends do not believe in Jesus and die forever. I fear that my beloved church members' families and relatives who do not believe in Jesus will taste eternal death without believing in Jesus. I want to be more and more afraid and my heart to become more distressed. Therefore, I may be able to ask God in extreme fear and in the despair of my heart. I want to pray earnestly to God for their salvation with love of soul, like Moses and Paul, even to the point where I will be cut off from Christ and my name will be wiped out of the book of life. I want to remember the grace of God's salvation that God has given me, and ask for the grace of salvation to the dying souls whom God loves. I want to pray to God by faith who is faithful in fulfilling His promises to me until I receive His answers of my prayers.



## Why are we in need?

**“Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David sought the presence of the LORD. And the LORD said, "It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he put the Gibeonites to death” (2 Samuel 21: 1).**

The world is in financial need nowadays. Hence, many people are suffering from extreme stress and they are under financial pressure. In addition to this economic deprivation, too many people are experiencing mental and emotional need. Therefore, many of them are mentally and emotionally unstable and show different kinds of symptoms. But the most serious of all this poverty is that the whole world is in spiritual need. It seems to be this world is in a state of spiritual illusion as people are pursuing many different kinds of spirituality and the world is in spiritual emptiness. Why did this ‘spiritual famine’ come to us? Why?

When we read the Bible, we often see the words "famine" or "drought." For example, when we look at the Old Testament Genesis 43, we can see the famine in the land of Canaan in Jacob's time (Gen. 43:1). Also, when we look at Luke 15 in the New Testament, we see that there was a great famine in the place where the prodigal lived (Lk. 15:14). Why do these famines come about? Is it coincidence? It is no coincidence at all. There is a clear purpose why Creator God gives us famine. The purpose can be divided into two broad categories: (1) the famine of training and (2) the famine of correction. The famine in Genesis 43 was a famine of correction for Joseph's old brothers, but the main purpose of the famine was a famine of training for Joseph. I think this famine is the famine which has led Jacob and Joseph and their family members to experience the work of God's salvation so that they could trust and depend on God more. Through that famine not there was progress of their faith but also they could come out pure as gold. On the other hand, the famine in Luke 15 is a famine that caused the prodigal son to repent and return to his father. If you are facing famine now, what kind of famine do you think you are facing?

I think that the famine in 2 Samuel 21:1 is the famine of correction. The reason that I think this way is because of what God said to David who prayed to Him: “... It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he put the Gibeonites to death” (v. 1b). Faithful covenant God gave the famine in the days of David for 3 years because King Saul broke the covenant between the Israelites with the Gibeonites and “sought to kill them in his zeal for the sons of Israel and Judah” (v. 2) and actually consumed them and exterminated them from remaining with any boarder of Israel (v. 5). So King David called the Gibeonites (v. 2) and asked them, “What should I do for you? And how can I make atonement that you may bless the inheritance of the LORD?” (v. 3) At that time the Gibeonites said to King David “let seven men from his(Saul’s) sons be given to us” so that they could hang them before the Lord in Gibeah of Saul (vv. 5-6). When David heard this, he gave them seven of the sons of Saul (vv. 8-9). But he spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the oath of the Lord which was between David and Jonathan (v. 7). Then the Gibeonites hanged the seven sons of Saul in the mountain before the Lord (v. 9). And Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, (v. 11) allowed neither the birds of the sky to rest on the seven dead bodies by day nor the beasts of the field by night (v. 10). When it was told David what Rizpah had done (v. 11), he went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabesh-gilead (v. 12) and brought them up and buried them with the bones of those had been hanged “in the country of Benjamin in Zela, in the grave of Kish his father” (vv. 13-14). And after that God was moved by prayer for the land (v. 14).

As I was meditating on this Bible story and got the answer to the question "Why are we in need?" The reason why we are in need spiritually, mentally and financially is because of our sin. And that sin is breaking the covenant that we made before God. Of course, the famine in the case of David was due to the slaughter and

destruction of the people of Gibeon, when Saul and his house broke the covenant made between the Gibeonites and Joshua and the house of Israel before God (v. 2). Therefore, I don't know if we can say that the poverty in our lives is the result of our fathers' sins. But I think the focus here is on the covenant made before God. In other words, God values the covenant made in His Name. Although the Gibeonites had made a covenant with Joshua and the house of Israel by deceiving them, God is the God who values the covenant. That's why I think God heard the grudge of the Gibeonites who was slain by King Saul. And God heard through the grudge of the Gibeonites in the days of David by giving famine. What a faithful God to the covenant? Our holy God is faithful in blessing those who keep His covenant but also faithful in cursing those who don't keep His covenant. Therefore, we must keep the covenant with others (for example, a marriage covenant made by a married couple before God) or a covenant with God (for example, our vow to God). In particular, we must faithfully keep the covenant that God made with us in Jesus Christ. We must obey the command given to us by the covenant God. If we don't, then there will always be famine and poverty in our lives. Why then can we not faithfully keep covenant with God like King Saul? The reason is because of wrongful zeal (v. 2). Just as Saul (later Paul) who persecuted the church in his zeal (Phil. 3:6) before he met the resurrected Jesus on the road in Damascus, King Saul slaughtered the Gibeonites who made a covenant with the Israelites out of wrongful zeal. The problem is not zeal itself, but wrongful zeal. It is dangerous. It is dangerous because we may think that we love the Lord and His church so we serve His and His church with zeal but not according to His will but our will. So when we see those who break the order and the peace of the church and cause problems and conflicts are those who have wrongful zeal for the Lord and His church. Why is it wrong? The reason is that they don't consider the covenant made before God very important and valuable like God does. Although the Gibeonites deceived Joshua and the Israelites, Joshua and the leaders of Israel also didn't ask God before making a covenant with them. Although both of them did wrong, King Saul should have kept the covenant because it was made before God. But King Saul ignored the covenant and slaughtered the Gibeonites for the sons of Israel and Judah. When we commit sins, we always have our own excuses that seem good to us. But God does not and cannot overlook the sins of breaking the covenant and vow that we made to God with all kinds of excuses. The reason is that our God is holy, justice and loves us. Besides, our God who heard the Gibeonites' grudge will also hear the grudge of the non-believers who have made promise with us. Therefore, we should ask God in prayer for why we are in need, like David, and we should meditate on such Words of God like this passage and desire for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. Then the Holy Spirit will give us enlightenment and enable us to hear the voice of God through the Word of God. Then we should humbly listen to the word of God and obey him like David. But we must obey the word of God without breaking the covenant (promise) made with others like David. What is the reason? The reason is because our God is God of covenant.

## When difficult things come together at once

**“... If you will not believe, you surely shall not last” (Isaiah 7:9b).**

I don't understand why difficult things come together at once. I thought everything was going fine and suddenly I don't know what to do when things go off here and there. I cannot afford to take care even one of those things. But since there are several, I cannot bear them any longer. Both my mind and body are exhausted. My heart is heavy and discouraged in distress. I shed my tears in pain. I remember the song 'You are my son': 'When I am hard, disappointed and exhausted, when I fall and there is no strength to arise, the Lord comes quietly to me and holds my hand and speaks to me', 'When I am disappointed by myself, when I am weak and tired, and when I shed tears in pain, the Lord wipes away my tears with His hand that has nail scar and speak to me ...' What should we do? We must hear the voice of God who speaks to us. And we must obey the voice of the Lord.

When we read the Bible, we often see Satan battling united front when attacking us who believe in Jesus. For example, when we look at Nehemiah 4, the people who opposed Nehemiah and the people of Judah united their fronts when Nehemiah and the people of Judah were rebuilding the Jerusalem and its wall. Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites (Neh. 4:7) were against Nehemiah and the people of Judah, to prevent them from rebuilding the city of Jerusalem. We can see this kind of association of the enemies coming together also in Luke 23:12 – “Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other.” In the persecution of Jesus, Herod and Pilate who were enemies with each other became friends and held united front against Jesus. Even now, the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the Lord's church are joining together to attack the church together to prevent the church from being rebuilt. Likewise, Satan is doing evil to prevent our faith from being established. One of the ways of Satan is to make us to suffer from hardships and tiredness by bringing us many difficulties things together at once. Satan's intention and purpose is to shake our faith in Him by making us to be confused. And the reason why Satan wants to shake our faith in Him is to make us to leave the Lord and His Church. What should we do? We must hear the voice of God speaking to us. And we must obey the voice of the Lord.

When we look at the background story of Isaiah 7:9, King of Israel Pekah came up to Jerusalem to wage war against King Ahaz, king of Judah, but couldn't conquer Jerusalem (v. 1). So King Pekah made an alliance with Rezin, king of Aram, and together they invaded Judah. When it was reported to the house of David, saying, “The Arameans have camped in Ephraim,” King Ahaz's heart and the hearts of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind (v. 2). At that time, God spoke to Ahaz, the king of Judah, and the people of Judah, through prophet Isaiah. From what God said to Ahaz through prophet Isaiah, I would like to take three lessons on what to do when difficult things come together at once:

### **First, we must not be afraid and lost heart.**

Look at Isaiah 7:4 – “Say to him, 'Be careful, keep calm and don't be afraid. Do not lose heart because of these two smoldering stubs of firewood--because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and of the son of Remaliah.’” God spoke to King Ahaz through prophet Isaiah to be careful, keep calm and don't be afraid and don't lose heart. Can you imagine what will happen to a country when a king of that country is afraid and lost his heart? What would happen if the leader dwells in fear and discouragement and not being careful, not keeping calm but speaks his fears

and discouragements to his people? Wouldn't his people also be afraid and discouraged as well? So God said to King Ahaz, 'Don't be afraid. Don't lose heart' (v. 4).

We must not be afraid and not lost heart as the Word of God says even though the situations that we are in are fearful and discouraging. Especially if we are leaders in a family and an organization, we should not be afraid and be discouraged more than others. For example, when there are many difficulties in the home, what would happen to our wives and children if we were afraid and discouraged? Although the leaders are in fearful and discouraging situation, they must overcome their fear and discouragement as the Lord says. This is very challenging for me because I tend to get discouraged. That's why I cannot but meditate on the Word of God more and more day and night. The reason is that the more I meditate on the Word of God, the more I will have faith and trust in God (cf. Ps. 1, Jer. 17). And the more I trust in God, the more I will not be afraid and not be discouraged in fearful and discouraging situations. I want to be courageous rather than afraid. I also want to be hopeful rather than be discouraged. I hope and pray that I will look upon my Lord who is my hope and boldly walk by faith as I endure and persevere any kinds of hardships and difficulties.

### **Second, we must believe the words of the Lord as it is.**

Look at Isaiah 7:7 – “thus says the Lord GOD: "It shall not stand nor shall it come to pass.” Another word God spoke to King Ahaz of Judah through the prophet Isaiah was that the plan of the king of Israel would never stand nor would it come to pass according to the plan of Aram (v. 7). Here, the plan was evil against King Ahaz (v. 5) and the plan was to go up against Judah and terrorize it, “and make for ourselves a breach in its walls and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it” (v. 6). But the word of God that came to Ahaz king of Judah was ‘the plan would never stand and come to pass according to their plan’ (vv. 5-7).

The truth we should believe is that only the plan of the Lord stand firm forever (Ps. 33:11). And the Lord can do all things and no plan of his can be thwarted (Job 42:2). Though a man has many plans and he plans his course in his heart “but the Lord determines his steps” and “it is the Lord's purpose that prevails” (Prov. 16:9; 19:21). Our Lord who has planned it will surely do it and bring it to pass (Isa. 46:11). Apostle Paul had this faith. Since he had appealed to Caesar (Acts 26:32), he was in a ship to be sailed to Italy (27:1). But the ship met a violent wind (v. 14) and thus there was damage and loss (v. 21). At that time, among the 276 people who were aboard on that ship, except Paul, the rest of the 275 people lost their hope of being saved (v. 20). These 275 people gave up their lives and waited for death without the hope of salvation. Because of the violent wind called Euraquilo (v. 14), the people in the ship threw the cargo overboard (v. 18). “On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands” (v. 19). But neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging. So they finally gave up all hope of being saved (v. 20). The reason is that they looked at the big storm than Creator God who made the heaven and the earth. But Paul had the hope and conviction of salvation. The reason is that he heard the voice of God (vv. 23-24). That was why Paul confidently said to the rest of the 275, “So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me.” I also seek the same faith and confidence as Paul. I believe that the Lord will fulfill His promise word of John 5:1-15 that he gave to me during the church college retreat in 1987 and of Matthew 16:18 that he gave to me during the church leaders' retreat in 2003. In times of hardship and difficulties, not only that the Lord has comforted me with these words of promise but also restore and revive my soul and brought me thus far by His grace. I hope and pray that I will continue to advance by faith until the day that the Lord will fulfill the promises which He has given me.

### **Third and last, we must stand firm.**

Look at Isaiah 7:9 – “... If you will not believe, you surely shall not last.” God told Ahaz, the king of Judah, through prophet Isaiah that the capital of Aram is Damascus and Rezin, the king of Aram, would not be able

to widen its territory and the Israel would be too shattered to be a people within 65 years (v. 8). After saying that, God encouraged King Ahaz to firmly believe and stand firm. If not, King Ahaz surely would not last (v. 9).

We must firmly believe and stand firm. Although our enemies the Satan's people are united front and attack us in order to shake our faith, we must stand firm and should not be shaken. We must not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but should be strengthened in our faith and give glory to God (Rom. 4:20). We must hold fast to the word of the promise, and we must keep it (Prov. 4:13). And we must hold unswervingly to the hope we profess because He who promised is faithful (Heb. 10:23). We must hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first (3:14). We must stand firm in the Lord as we trust God (2 Chron. 20:20, I Thess. 3:8).

When difficult things come together at once, we can be afraid, worry and be filled with anxiety. So we try our best to endure all the difficult things. But when we cannot endure any longer, we fall down in despair. At that time, we must look to the Lord. And we must listen to the voice of the Lord. Today, at this very moment, the Lord is speaking to us: 'Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged', 'You must believe my words', 'stand firmly' (Isa. 7:4, 7, 9). I hope and pray that we hear these words of the Lord and obey Him.

## **‘In their distress’**

**“But in their distress they turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him, and he was found by them” (2 Chronicles 15:4).**

It is easy to be discouraged when we are in distress. If we falter in times of trouble, we are showing that our strength is limited (Prov. 24:10). Therefore, we should not be discouraged. Rather, we must cry out to God in times of trouble (Ps. 120:1). We must always strive to pray in times of trouble (Rom. 12:12). In doing so, God will answer us (Ps. 120:1).

When we look at Chronicles 15:4, the Bible says “in their distress”. Here, “in their distress” means in those days of Israel when “it was not safe to travel about, for all the inhabitants of the lands were in great turmoil” (v. 5). In those days “One nation was being crushed by another and one city by another, because God was troubling them with every kind of distress” (v. 6). At that time the people of Israel were troubled by various hardships (v. 6). Why did they suffer? What caused their distress? This was because for a long time Israel was without true God, without a priest to teach and without the law (v. 3). At that time, King Asa heard the prophecy of Azariah son of Oded the prophet (vv. 1, 8) and he took courage (v. 8). And he reformed the Israel. “Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God” (14:2). He removed the foreign altars, the high places, incense altars in every town in Judah and smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles (vv. 3, 5). And he commanded Judah to seek the Lord, and to obey His laws and commands (v. 4). To what extent did King Asa make the people of Judah seek God was “All who would not seek the LORD, the God of Israel, were to be put to death, whether small or great, man or woman” (15:13). So the people of Judah took an oath to the Lord (v. 14). Since they sought God eagerly, God was found by them. So the Lord gave them rest on every side (v. 15). In the end, the kingdom of Judah was at peace under King Asa (14: 5). God gave peace to Asa, and the land was at peace, and there was no war for many years (v. 6). In other words, since King Asa and the people of Judah sought the Lord, He gave them rest on every side (v. 7). So in the days of Asa the country was at peace for 10 years (v.1). To King Asa and the people of Judah who were enjoying such peace met a great trial. The trial was Zerah the Cushite marched out against them with a vast army and 300 chariots, and came as far as Mareshah (v. 9). At that time King Asa sought God. He cried out to the Lord as he relied on Him: “LORD, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. O LORD, you are our God; do not let man prevail against you” (v. 11). As a result, not only did the Cushites flee because the Gods had struck them before King Asa and the people of Judah (v. 12), but they were all fallen and did not survive (v.13). Like this, the beginning of King Asa was great. He was a king who sought God by relying entirely on God. He was the king who cried out to God. Therefore, God delivered the Cushites and Libyans a mighty army with great numbers of chariots and horsemen into the Asa’s hand (16:8). And God gave peace to Asa and his kingdom (14:1, 5, 6, 7). However, King Asa's end was weak. Since larger numbers had come over to King Asa from Israel when they saw that the Lord was with him (15:9), Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and fortified Ramah to prevent anyone from leaving or entering the territory of Asa king of Judah (16:1). At that time King Asa took the silver and gold out of the treasuries of the Lord’s temple and of his own palace and sent it to Ben-Hadad king of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus (v. 2) instead of seeking the Lord his God. And this is what King Asa said to King Ben-Hadad: “Let there be a treaty between me and you,” he said, “as there was between my father and your father. See, I am sending you silver and gold. Now break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel so he will withdraw from me” (v. 3). In other words, King Asa didn’t rely on God when Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, but relied on the king of Aram (v. 7). “At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him: “Because you relied on the king of Aram and not on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your

hand. Were not the Cushites and Libyans a mighty army with great numbers of chariots and horsemen ? Yet when you relied on the LORD, he delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war” (vv. 7-9). When King Asa heard the Hanani’s words, he was so angry with Hanani that not only he put him in prison but also he brutally oppressed some of the people (v. 10). And in the 39<sup>th</sup> year of his reign when Asa was afflicted with a severe disease in his feet he didn’t seek help from the Lord, but only from the physicians (v. 12). As a result, in the 41<sup>st</sup> year of his reign Asa died (v. 13). Like this, King Asa was very weak toward the end of his life. At the beginning, he who had relied on God relied on the king of Aram and the physicians. At the beginning, he sought God but at the end he sought people. At the beginning, he enjoyed the peace that God gave him, but later he loses that peace and he died.

The Bible Revelation 2:5 came into my mind: “Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first ....” When I consider the beginning and the ending of Asa, I cannot help but think about where he had fallen. I am wondering how could King Asa who sought and relied on his God at the beginning of his reign but later he sought and relied on the people. So I think about the words of Azariah, the son of Oded the prophet, again: “... Listen to me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you” (15:2). In other words, the beginning of King Asa was great, but the reason why the later became so weak was because he forsook God. Because he wasn’t with God and didn’t seek God he was forsaken by God. Why did King Asa start with God at first, seek God with all his heart, and then was with the people and sought them? Where did he fall? As far as I am concerned, King Asa sought God wholeheartedly when the great army of the Cushites and Libyans came up against Judah. Therefore, God made him and the people of Judah victorious (14: 9-15). When they were victorious, the men of Judah carried off a large amount of plunder (v. 13). They destroyed all the villages around Gerar and plundered all these villages (v. 14). They also attacked the camps of the herdsmen and carried off droves of sheep and goats and camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem (v. 15). After the victory, King Asa’s material became more numerous and he also became proud. So he no longer turned to God and sought Him (15:4). At that time he had no true God, no teaching priest and no law (v. 3). He didn’t seek God (cf. 14: 4), he confined God’s seer Hanani in prison (16:10) and didn’t obey the God’s law and command (cf. 14:4). As a result he fell. He had sinned against God. He lost his first act (Rev. 2:5). Didn’t we, like King Asa, lose our first act? Didn’t we also fall? Aren’t we also no longer rely on God but rely on people? Aren’t we obeying God’s commands any longer? Aren’t we meeting God anymore because we no longer seek God? If so, then we must now face troubles. And we must return to God and seek Him in times of trouble. When we do so, God will surely meet us.

## “My weakness”

**"And I say, 'My weakness is ... '(Psalm 77:10) (Young's Literal Translation).**

As time goes by, I am becoming more aware of the fact that we human beings are very weak. Especially in adversity and suffering, I feel my own weakness much deeper. In particular, if the adversity and suffering I cannot bear alone, I cannot help myself but feel strongly how helpless I am. What should I do then? What would you do?

In Psalms 77:10, the psalmist Asaph acknowledges his weakness. In Psalms 77:1-9, he expresses his weakness in four ways:

### **First, Asaph was disturbed.**

Look at Psalms 77:3a – “When I remember God, then I am disturbed; ....” In this world there is too much sorrow and hardship. And there are too many things that make us uneasy and disturb. Why are we disturbed within us? One of the reasons for this is that we are abandoned by our beloved person or people. Especially the reason why we Christians feel uneasy and disturb is because we feel that we are rejected by our beloved God (Ps. 43:2). In the text today, the psalmist Asaph sought the Lord in his day of trouble (Ps. 77: 2). But he was disturbed because of God’s response of his prayer (v. 3). It seems to Asaph that God wasn’t answering his prayers. The disturbed heart is indeed weak heart.

### **Second, Asaph’s spirit grew faint.**

Look at Psalms 77: 3b – “... When I sigh, then my spirit grows faint. Selah.” In the day of his trouble, the psalmist Asaph was not only disturbed but also his spirit grew faint. So he couldn’t sleep and couldn’t speak because he was very troubled (v. 4). We cannot sleep and cannot talk if our mind is so distressed. I still remember having failed to sleep properly for 3 weeks when I was having difficulty in my ministry. I remember experiencing extreme stress that I couldn’t eat the food in front of me. Many people are so hard and painful that they cannot sleep and they cannot eat well. If we say to our beloved ‘I am in trouble these days,’ it may not be so painful. Some distress is so painful that we cannot even say anything. Such distress makes us silent. It makes us silent not only before people but also before God. Distress breaks our spirit. And the broken spirit is a weak heart.

### **Third, Asaph refused to be comforted.**

Look at Psalms 77:2b – “... My soul refused to be comforted.” The psalmist Asaph refused to be comforted because he was in agony. He, who was disturbed and whose spirit grew faint, was in trouble and his heart was broken in which his soul refused to be comforted. I remember the words of Job. When he was in great pain and distress, his friends came to comfort him. But Job referred to them as “miserable comforters” (Job 16:2). People don’t want to be comforted by anyone if they are in such painful and extreme suffering. The reason is that they think no one can comfort them. We too have times when we don’t want to be comforted by anybody else. We refuse to be comforted to anyone because we believe that only God can comfort us. Those who refuse to be comforted are those who are in frailty.

### **Fourth, Asaph doubted God.**



Look at Psalms 77:7-9: “Will the Lord reject forever? And will He never be favorable again? Has His lovingkindness ceased forever? Has His promise come to an end forever? Has God forgotten to be gracious, Or has He in anger withdrawn His compassion? Selah.” The psalmist Asaph cried out to God when he was in trouble, but because there was no answer, his heart and soul became weak. Therefore in the midst of such weakness Asaph began to doubt about the salvation of God. In other words, Asaph was shaken in the assurance of salvation. This uncertainty tells us that his heart was weak. When our hearts are weakened, then there are two minds. One mind seems to believe in God and another has distrust in God. In the end, the mind that has anxiety, brokenness, and worries and refuses to be comforted is bound up with buds of distrust.

What should we do when we are so weak?

### **First, we must remember the deeds of the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 77:11a – “I shall remember the deeds of the LORD ....” When we are so troubled and distressed, we must remind ourselves of the grace of salvation that God has given us in the past. When I am going through very difficult times in my life, I personally think of the first baby, Charis, who died in the past. The reason is that I have not had the pain that had been so painful like her death in my life. But there is no pain in my heart anymore. But only the grace and love God has given to me and my wife remains in our hearts. So I remember and I commemorate. When I remember the past grace and love of God that He showed me through Charis’ life and death while I am going through very difficult time in present days, I experience my heart and my spirit being restored and revived. I get strength again. When I remember God’s grace and love, the strength of God appears in my weakness.

### **Second, we must say what God has done.**

Look at Psalms 77: 11b – “Surely I will remember Your wonders of old.” Here, the word “remember” can mean “say”. We must not only remember what God had done for us in the past but also able to say what He had done. Sometimes my church elders tell me why am I still speaking about my first baby Joo-young (Charis) who passed away long time ago. Nevertheless, I sometimes speak about her in my sermon. The reason is because I believe God wants me to share His amazing love and grace that He has given me through Joo-young’s life and death. I cannot help but to boast of the Lord because I have seen the glory of the Lord as her name Joo-young mean, ‘The Lord’s glory’. For if the Lord had not been with me and my wife, then we couldn’t overcome the great pain of Joo-young’s death. That’s why I share about what God did through her life and death during my sermons as I remember His amazing grace and love. As we remember and share what God has done in our lives in the past, we experience God's work of strengthening our weak minds.

### **Third, we must meditate deeply on all the works of the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 77:12 – “I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.” The psalmist Asaph not only recalled the things God had done in the past in the midst of affliction and of his weakness and said what God had done, but he also meditated God who works in the present suffering more comprehensively. Indeed, when we focus on the painful environment that we face in the midst of frailty, we see nothing God does. But when we focus on what God had done in the past, we will be able to see and believe what the same Lord is doing in our present. But Asaph didn’t stop there, but he pondered and meditated on what God would do in the future. This meditation is a deep meditation that cannot be done without faith in the Lord. This kind of meditation is possible only by faith. This is the secret of overcoming our weaknesses. We can overcome our weaknesses when we deeply meditate on all the works of God.

As time goes by, our bodies are getting weaker and weaker and we are struggling in anxiety and worries. In the midst of it, sleepless nights and suffering from untold bitterness are increasing. In our broken hearts, we sincerely seek God, but God's response is slow. So we get depressed and we refuse to be comforted by anyone. Moreover, we start to doubt about God. In those times, we must remember God's deeds in the past and say what He did for us. And as we meditate deeply what He had done, we must believe what He is doing and what He will do in and through us. I hope and pray that we may be able to overcome our weaknesses by deeply meditating on everything God has done in our lives.

# Burnout

## [1 Kings 19:1-14]

Psychologists say that stress can have disillusion, self-deprecation, and cynicism when it exceeds the threshold. There's an article that summarizes the seven signaling signs of stress (Internet): (1) He considers himself to be indispensable, (2) He tries to do too many things and has not time to deal with important things (3) He has constant pressure on himself, (4) He feels uneasiness that he is always behind and is not the best, (5) He habitually sits long while he is working, (6) He feels guilty when he gets home early, and (7) He takes his worries home. If we ignore these danger signals and continue working then we will eventually be burnout. What is burnout? Burnout is a feeling of fatigue and asthenia throughout the emotional, physical, and social life, literally devoid of power and energy. When a pastor gets exhausted and burnout, he loses his motivation for ministry and causes physical illness and conflict between husband and wife. How many ministers are suffering from this burnout now?

In 1 Kings 19:1-14, we see the prophet Elijah who is burnout. After the victory against 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah on the Mount Carmel (1 Kgs. 18), Elijah ran away in fear because Queen Jezebel, the wife of King Ahab, threatened to kill him (19:2-3). And he himself went into the desert and prayed that he might die: "I have had enough ... Take my life" (v. 4). In this image of Elijah who prayed for his own death, we can no longer see Elijah on Mount Carmel.

As I see this Elijah, I thought about four symptoms of burnout:

### **The first symptom of burnout is a fear.**

Prophet Elijah was afraid when he received the message of the threat from Queen Jezebel (1 Kgs. 19:2-3). This image of Elijah is in stark contrast to the image of Elijah in 1 Kings 18. Elijah, who received the Word of the Lord and boldly went to present himself to Ahab (18:1-2) ran away for his life when he was threatened by Ahab's wife Queen Jezebel (19:2-3). Elijah was afraid. He was afraid of death. So he fled for his own life (v. 3).

This first burnout of Elijah appeared after the great victory on Mount Carmel. When I meditate on this fact, I thought about devoting myself in keeping God's grace that I received from the Lord. If we don't keep our heart after receiving God's grace, then we will be at risk of being tempted and sin against God. Also we will be like Elijah running away from our fearful situations. We will avoid or escape our problems.

### **The second symptom of burnout is despair.**

Prophet Elijah fled and came to Beersheba in Judah, where he left his servants there while he himself went a day's journey into the desert (vv. 3-4). And in the desert, he sat down under a broom tree and prayed: "'I have had enough, LORD ... Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors'" (v. 4). How disappointed and discouraged that he petition to die? He prayed to God, "I have had enough, Lord", which means "It is enough" (NASB). Elijah was no longer able to minister as a prophet. He was exhausted and depressed and fell to the ground and begs God to take his life.

For the minister, disappointment or despair is truly dangerous. However, I also think that it cannot be avoided for some reason. I am sure all ministers have experience disappointment and despair at least once in their

ministries. But I cannot understand Elijah's burnout to the point of asking God for his own death since I have not yet experienced it personally. However, I expect that I will experience despair like Elijah at least once in my future ministry.

### **The third symptom of burnout is the weakness of the physical body.**

When Prophet Elijah went into the wilderness himself and was sleeping under the broom tree, an angel touched him and woke him up and said "Get up and eat" (v.5). And the angel gave Elijah a cake of bread baked over hot coals and a jar of water (v. 6). Elijah ate the bread and drank the water and laid down again (v. 6). After that, the angel came back a second time and touched Elijah and said "Get up and eat" (v. 7). This shows that Elijah was exhausted physically. So he got up and ate and drank. He was strengthened by that food (v. 8).

Many pastors are physically tired and exhausted. And they are suffering from many kinds of diseases. As a result, they cannot but to lay down their ministries for a while. When we think about them, we can understand little bit why Elijah was physically exhausted from burnout.

### **The fourth symptom of burnout is extreme loneliness.**

After Prophet Elijah ate and drank that were supplied by the angel, he gained strength and traveled 40 days and 40 nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God (v. 8). There he went into a cave and talked to God. Then he repeated this to God two times: "I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too" (vv. 10, 14). Elijah told God that the Israelites killed all the prophets of the Lord and he was the only one left. When I thought about this, I felt like Elijah blaming God in extreme loneliness. When Elijah was alone in the cave in Horeb, he seems to have had extreme loneliness.

#### So what should we do about our burnout?

#### **First, we must go into the desert.**

Look at 1 Kings 19: 4a – "while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. ...." When we are burnout, we must go into our own desert where we can remain silent before God alone. We need to put down our ministries too. We should not be too busy to work like Martha. We need to leave a bit of a complicated living environment and go to a quiet place. We need time and space alone. We must stop everything and go quietly before the Lord and have time to meditate on the Word of God and pray to Him.

#### **Second, we need physical rest.**

Look at 1 Kings 19:5-7: "Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat. He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." We need to know when and how to rest in order to prevent the weakness of our bodies which is one of the signs of burnout. To those work-oriented ministers like Martha, resting can be a pain in itself. But we must lay down our work like Mary and sit quietly before Jesus to hear His voice. And when we have to sleep, we should sleep. How many ministers are physically tired because they cannot get enough sleep, so their body and mind are sick? Like Elijah, we need to go into our own desert and sleep. And we should eat well. We must be faithful in taking care of our health care as God's stewards for the glory of God. We must strive not to offer the sick body to the Lord. Of course, as the time goes on,

our physical bodies will become more and more fragile, but we still need to take care our bodies as much as we can and live well for the glory of the Lord.

### **Third, we must listen to God's gentle whisper.**

Look at 1 Kings 19:12 – “After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.” Prophet Elijah was physically strengthened and went to Horeb, the mountain of God (v. 8) and heard the God's gentle whisper (v. 12). We must go into our own desert and quietly stay in the presence of God. And we need to listen to the voice of the Lord in the midst of meditation of His Word and prayer. There is no joy except the voice of the Lord. We must hear the voice of the Lord and rise again to fulfill His mission.

A righteous man falls seven times, and rises again (Prov. 24:16). The reason is that although we are burnout and fallen, the Lord will raise us up again. We must get up and move forward. When we fall, the Lord will raise us up again. Even though we may be afraid, discouraged and lonely, the Lord will raise us up again. Let's go into our own desert by ourselves and listen to the Lord's gentle whisper as we have our physical rest so that we may be recharged and fulfill the Lord's mission wholeheartedly. Victory!

## If you get discouraged

**“If thou lovest courage in the day of trouble, thy strength is small” (Proverbs 24:10)** (Darby Translation).

Living in this world, we surely can get discouraged when we face difficulties. Especially when the difficulties are too difficult for us to handle alone, we can get discouraged when we try to get help around but don't get any help. Then we need to ask the Lord when we realize that there is no one but the Lord who can help us. However, no matter how many times we pray to God, we may become more discouraged when there is no response from the Lord (Lk. 18:1). When we are so discouraged and depressed, our strength will be weakened so much that we may give upon ourselves.

This is what David said to King Saul in 1 Samuel 17:32, “Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.” Here “this Philistine” refers to “Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath” (v. 23). To the Israelites who saw Goliath and ran from him in great fear (v. 24), David told them not to lose heart and he would go and fight Goliath (v. 32). What do you think of David's words? If you were there, would you listen to David and not be discouraged by Goliath? When everyone saw Goliath around them, they were afraid and flee before him. Can you not be afraid, not flee and not be discouraged? In our lives, when we are faced with great difficulties such as Goliath we can get discouraged, exhausted and frustrated, especially if those difficulties have to do with our family members we love. What should we do then?

We need to be thoroughly aware of how weak we are through our great discouragement (Prov. 24:10b). That is because we depend entirely on the hopeful Lord only when we fully realize how weak human beings are. As the years go by, we become weaker and weaker, and we can face even greater difficulties than before. Then we realize how little our faith is. Although our bodies and minds will become weaker and weaker as the years go by, our faith in Him must be strengthened. But through our greater difficulties, we see ourselves in a state of anxiety and discouragement, and we realize how little our faith is. At that time, we realize that we can only depend on the Lord. And we ask the Lord for help: “Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God” (Ps. 42:5, 11; 43:5). So when I am discouraged, I pray like this: ‘James, why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed with me? Put your hope in God.’ At that time I experience God's help in restoring my discouraged soul with the promise of the Lord (19:7). The Lord raises my discouraged soul with the promise He has given to him (Jn. 6:1-15) and He gives me hope again to persevere in faith.

Because of Goliath, all Israel were very afraid and fled from before him. But when the boy David saw Goliath, he wasn't scared or discouraged. So he told King Saul that he would go out and fight him. And this is how King Saul responded to David: “You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth” (1 Sam. 17:33). Think about it. A mighty man Goliath fought from his youth and David was just the boy. Who would win the fight? In common sense, of course Goliath would win. This wasn't even a fair fight. And our instinct is we don't even try to fight with such man like Goliath because we know we will lose. So we can get discouraged even before the fight. But David didn't. How could he try to fight with Goliath without being discouraged and fearful? I found that answer in 1 Samuel 17:37a – “The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine. ....” David believed in the God of salvation. He believed that God would deliver him out of the hands of Goliath. Because of this assurance of salvation, David not only did not fear Goliath but also he wasn't discouraged.

This is what Apostle Paul said in Galatians 6:9 – “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” We can get discouraged while we are doing good because of hardships and difficulties. Even so, we should not be discouraged and we should not give up. Rather, we must rely entirely on God and trust Him like the boy David who fought against Goliath. Therefore, we should not be discouraged, but rather boldly overcome difficulties by faith. Let us all move forward with boldness and confidence through faith in the Lord (Eph. 3:12).

## **Downcast and disturbed**

**“Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God” (Psalms 43: 5).**

There are many reasons why people are downcast and disturbed. One of them is being abandoned by the beloved. For example, we may be downcast and disturbed when we feel that we have been abandoned by our beloved spouse. The same is true of children. If they have been abandoned by their beloved parents, they may feel downcast and disturbed. But what if we feel that we Christians have been forsaken by our Heavenly Father?

In the context of Psalms 43, the psalmist was downcast and disturbed because he felt that he had been forsaken by God. He said, “You are God my stronghold. Why have you rejected me? ...” (v. 2). He had been suffering because of “deceitful and wicked men” (v. 1). And he was going about mourning because of oppression by the enemy (v. 2). In the midst of such oppression and suffering, the psalmist was downcast and disturbed because he thought that the Lord, who was his stronghold, was not rescuing him. He felt that God was abandoning him because God’s salvation was slow. That was why when the psalmist was downcast and disturbed, this was what he asked God: “Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell” (v. 3). The psalmist looked at the guidance of the Lord's light even in the darkness of his mind when he was downcast and disturbed due to the deceitfulness and wicked actions of his enemies. He wanted to be led by the Lord so that he might reach the altar of God, to God, his joy and his delight (v. 4). And he wanted to praise God who is his joy and his delight.

We are downcast and disturbed when we feel that we have been forsaken by God. We are downcast and disturbed when God's salvation languishes in suffering and adversity. Especially when we feel that God, our stronghold, is no longer saving us from ungodly and wicked people who oppress us we can be downcast and disturbed. Then we should speak to our souls like the psalmist: “Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God ...” (v. 5). We must speak to our souls that are downcast and disturbed “Put your hope in God”. We have to shout to our souls. We should no longer be downcast and disturbed but proclaim to our own souls to put our hope in God. In doing so, we will praise God rather than be downcast and disturbed.



## A heavy thing for a person

### [Ecclesiastes 6:1-6]

What is making your heart heavy these days? What is a thing that weigh your heart down? Yesterday Tuesday, I took my children to the academy for their lessons. And when they were getting lessons, I went out to make a phone call. Then after the conversation was over my youngest child, who came out of the room, talked with me. When the phone call was over, she said to me 'let's go and sit down under the tree'. So we sat down under the tree and I asked her, "How is your life?" Ans she said, "Good". So I asked her, 'What is good?' And she said: 'Actually I am tire'. Even six years old kid's life seemed to be tiresome. Haha. How about you? Aren't your lives tiresome too? Don't you have burden in your hearts? If you do, I hope that you can response to the invitation of Jesus who says in Matthew 11: 28-30 as follow: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

According to Ecclesiastes 6:1, this is what King Solomon says: "I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on men." We have already thought about the fact that King Solomon saw "a grievous evil under the sun" in Ecclesiastes 5: 13-20 during the last Wednesday night prayer meeting. The grievous evil was "wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner" (v. 13). What King Solomon saw in this world was that it was the grievous evil that the owner of the wealth tried to keep his wealth to the point of even harming himself but eventually lost all his wealth due to the calamity and thus he had no wealth to pass on to his own son. So King Solomon said, "This too is a grievous evil" (v. 16) that "Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand" (v. 15). What does it do when you keep all your riches to such an extent that it harms you? What good is it if there is no wealth to pass on to your son because of the disaster and the loss of it? Indeed, it is the grievous evil that our lives come with empty-handed and depart with empty-handed. And in Ecclesiastes 6:1, King Solomon saw another grievous evil in this world, which weighs heavily upon man ["... though a man's misery weighs heavily upon him" (8: 6)]. What is that grievous evil that weighs heavily upon man? Look at Ecclesiastes 6:2 – "God gives a man wealth, possessions and honor, so that he lacks nothing his heart desires, but God does not enable him to enjoy them, and a stranger enjoys them instead. This is meaningless, a grievous evil." The grievous evil that weighs heavily upon man is even though he received wealth, riches, and honor from God, and thus is not lacking in the wishes of the heart, but has not been able to enjoy all of them. Rather, God has made others to enjoy all of them. To whom does God make to enjoy all his wealth, riches, and honor? Look at Ecclesiastes 2:26 – "To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, ...". God causes sinners to labor, to gather them up to build up wealth, and eventually to give all that wealth to those whom God is pleased with. King Solomon said this is meaningless (6:2) and "evil of affliction" (Swanson).

Moreover, the grievous evil that King Solomon saw was a man with all these possessions, riches, and honors as well as he had hundred children and lived many years; yet no matter how long he lived, he could not enjoy them (v. 3). Please think about it. What evil of affliction is this if you have received the blessings of wealth, riches, honor, children and long life from God and you cannot enjoy them all? Furthermore, not only can he not enjoy all these blessings, but if his body can not be properly buried at the time of death, what kind of grievous evil will this person suffer? At that time in the East, it was the most humiliation if the dead body could not be buried properly. So King Solomon says that "the miscarriage" is better off than" those who can not enjoy all the riches and who can not be buried properly at their death (v. 3). How can the miscarriage is better than those who cannot enjoy all the riches and who are not buried properly at their death? Look at Ecclesiastes 6:4-5: "for it comes in futility and goes into obscurity; and its name is covered in obscurity. It never sees the sun and it never knows anything; it is better off than he." According to Pastor John MacArthur, no matter how long a person lived and how many children there were, if there were no one who was saddened when he died which honor, then he was considered worse than a miscarriage baby. Although the miscarried baby in his mother's womb comes in futility and goes into obscurity (v.4), the baby is better off than those who have all the wealth, riches, honor and blessings of children who have not enjoyed all these blessings and are not buried properly in their death because the miscarried baby has peace. In other words, the miscarried baby is better off than all those who have all the wealth, riches, honor and blessings of children

who cannot enjoy all these blessing and are not buried properly in their death because the baby has never seen the evil activity that is done under the sun (4:30). No matter how long they live in this world, they will not be able to enjoy all the wealth and riches, but they will see the wickedness, sorrow, and suffering of all the evil done in this world. And they won't be buried properly in their death. But the miscarried babies are better because they are free from the worries and pain of this world and from their hardships and sufferings. In this way King Solomon asks the conclusion question in Ecclesiastes 6:6 – “Even if the other man lives a thousand years twice and does not enjoy good things--do not all go to one place?” Eventually whether the miscarried baby or those who were blessed with all the wealth, riches and honor and live thousand years but cannot enjoy and die aren't all of them go back to the same place that is dust? Therefore, King Solomon says this is the grievous evil and burdensome.

One day, when I praised “I must tell Jesus all of my trials” in my church, I remember that one of my members told me that if I sang that hymn, he felt a little sinking. In fact, one of the reasons I am singing this hymn is because my heart is heavy. So I praise it so:

1. I must tell Je-sus all of my tri-als, I can-not bear these bur-dens a-lone;  
In my dis-tress He kind-ly will help me, He ev-er loves and cares for His own.
  2. I must tell Je-sus all of my troub-les, He is a kind, com-pas-sion-ate Friend;  
If I but ask Him, He will de-liv-er, Make of my troub-les quick-ly and end.
  3. Tempt-ed and tried I need a great Sav-ior, One who can help my bur-dens to bear;  
I must tell Je-sus, I must tell Je-sus, He all my cares and sor-rows will share.
  4. O how the world to e-vil al-lures me! O how my heart is tempt-ed to sin!  
I must tell Je-sus, and He will help me O-ver the world the vic-t'ry to win.
- {Chorus}
- I must tell Je-sus! I must tell Je-sus! I can-not bear my bur-dens a-lone;  
I must tell Je-sus! I must tell Je-sus! Je-sus can help me, Je-sus a-lone.

When I did so, I focused on my heavy burden instead of laying down my heavy burden before the Lord. So while singing this hymn, I often had a heavy heart. However, when I went to the mission field, where my father was several years ago, I fell asleep in the room around 4:00 am and heard my father singing this hymn in the morning prayer with disabled people. And there was power in his voice when was singing this hymn. It was a strong praise and I could not feel the heaviness at all in his voice. So I thought about how he could praise God with such strong voice without any heaviness in his heart. My conclusion was since he laid down all his burden before the Lord humbly in obedience to Jesus' invitation of “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-burden, and I will give you rest” (Mt. 11:28) so that he was able to enjoy rest and peace in the Lord. I hope that all of us can humbly receive Jesus' invitation and go to Him when we are weary and heavy-burden. And let us lay down all our weariness and heavy-burden before the Lord so that we may enjoy God's given rest and peace in our hearts.

## The heavy burdens of this world

**“Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. 'Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians” (Exodus 6:6-7).**

“Tempted and tried, I need a great Savior, One who can help my burdens to bear; I must tell Jesus, I must tell Jesus; He all my cares and sorrows will share. I must tell Jesus! I must tell Jesus! I cannot bear my burdens alone; I must tell Jesus! I must tell Jesus! Jesus can help me, Jesus alone” (Hymn “I Must Tell Jesus” verse 1 and chorus). It is only labor and sorrow that this world can give us (Ps 90:10). This world of distress, afflictions, sinfulness, and mortality afflict our minds and only gives us heavy burdens on our shoulders. However, it is the worldly church that is more heavily weighted on our shoulders than this world. Especially when I see and hear the sinful things happening in the church these days, my heart is heavy. My heart is heavy when these sinful things appear and are heard from my beloved co-workers, the churches they serve and the believers' homes. We are being secularized and our hearts are heavy and sad. In the heaviness and sadness of this heart, I write down again as I am meditating on Exodus 6:6-7, which I meditate and preach at the morning prayer meeting.

God had surely seen the affliction of His people who were in Egypt, and had given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters (Exod. 3:7). God was aware of their sufferings (v. 7). He had seen the oppression with which the Egyptians were oppressing the Israelites (v. 9). So God called Moses (v. 4) and persuaded him (3:11-4:17) to go to Pharaoh, a king of Egypt. So Moses went to Pharaoh with his brother Aaron and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness” (5:1). “But Pharaoh said, ‘Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go” (v. 2). When I thought about the Pharaoh’s response “Who is the LORD” and disobedience in his ignorance (v. 2), it reminded me Moses’ response “Who am I” (3:11) and his disobedience. This reminds me what John Calvin said that by knowing God, I know myself and by knowing myself, I know God. I realized that if I don’t know God, I will eventually disobey God’s Word. King Pharaoh who didn’t know God not only disobeyed God’s word and didn’t send the Israelites, but he also made their labor to be heavier (5:9) because he thought they were lazy and that was why they said “Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD” (vv. 8, 17). His purpose was to keep the Israelites from listening to the "lies" that Moses and Aaron said "Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD" (v. 9). As a result, the Israelites were discouraged because of cruel bondage (6: 9) and they blamed on Moses and Aaron (5:21). When Moses heard their voice of their resentment, he returned to the Lord and said: “O Lord, why have You brought harm to this people? Why did You ever send me? ‘Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done harm to this people, and You have not delivered Your people at all” (vv. 23-24). When Moses saw that Pharaoh was more abusive to the Israelites because what he said to him in obedience to God’s calling and sending, he thought that God wasn’t delivering his people (v. 24). So the covenant God reminded Moses of his promise to save the Israelites (6:1-5), spoke this word to him in Exodus 6:6-7: “Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. 'Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.” The heart of the word is the God’s promise that He would bring the Israelites out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. The God’s plan of salvation was to take the Israelites out of

the heavy burdens of the Egyptians and lead them to the land of Canaan, which He swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (v.8). Moses obeyed God's command and proclaimed to the Israelites. But they didn't listen to Moses because of their discouragement and cruel bondage (v. 9). In the end, the Israelites couldn't hear the God's promise of 'I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians' because their hearts were heavy and broken due to the heavy burdens of the Egyptians.

Do you hear the promise of God's salvation in your ear? Or do you not hear the voice of God's salvation because of the heavy burdens of this world? Why is it that we aren't being persuaded by the God's promise of salvation even though our God is God of salvation? It is because of the heavy burden of this world in our hearts. Through his servants like Pharaoh, Satan is making our burdens heavier in this world. As a result, Satan is making us unable to go up to the day of the Lord and worship Him. Satan is making us to be lazy and prevents us from worshiping God by making us to be very busy in this world. Also, Satan constantly whispers in our ears that the word of God's truth is a lie, making us unable to offer worship to God that is the purpose of our salvation. In the end, Satan is hurting our hearts by making us to bear the burdens of this world so that we will be able to hear the word of God. What should we do? We need go to God who is able to deliver us out of heavy burdens of this world (6: 6-7). By faith we must put our broken hearts in prayer before the Lord. God will surely answer our cry as he sees our affliction, hears the cry of our broken hearts and knows our sufferings (3:7, 9). And God will come down and will rescue us (v. 8). I hope and pray that this grace of God's salvation be with you all.

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart,  
and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.

For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Mt. 11:28-30).

## The heavy burden that cannot be carried alone

**“So Moses said to the LORD, "Why have You been so hard on Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all this people on me? ... "I alone am not able to carry all this people, because it is too burdensome for me” (Numbers 11:11, 14).**

Check for symptoms that persist in you at least two weeks: (1) continuing depression, anxiety, or emptiness; (2) lost interest and excitement of hobbies, the things I had fun time including sex, (3) desperate feeling, pessimistic thinking, (4) guilt, no value or helplessness, (5) sleeplessness, early morning wakefulness or excessive sleep, (6) decreased appetite, weight loss, overeating or weight gain, (7) Feeling weak, tired and sagging, (8) Thinking about death or suicide, attempting suicide, (9) Nervousness, easily annoyed, (10) difficulty in concentration and memory, difficulty in making decisions, (11) headache, digestive disorders or chronic pain, etc., (12) physical symptoms that do not respond well to treatment continually. This checklist is a depression symptom checklist. If you checked more than two on the list above, you have a sign of early depression. And if you checked more than five, you have severe depression (Internet). After reading this article and looking back at myself, I wrote on my personal Facebook homepage: "Today's Facebook Discussion Question: Depression?" The reason I posted it was to discuss the depression with my Facebook friends. And one person said: 'I think I am depressed. My body and my mind are so tried that everything that is given to me is not a gift but a burden. I just want Jesus to come soon even though my hope is little bit different from the healthy believers' hope of Jesus' second coming.' As I was reading this comment, I could not help but agree that "everything that is given to me is not a gift but a burden." I thought whether I consider my beloved wife and three children as burden instead of gifts from God. I also thought my church members whether I considered them burdens instead of gifts from the Lord. Although all my family members and church members are God's precious gifts to me, but I cannot help but confess that there was a time when my dear family and church family would be considered burdensome to me. And the reason didn't have to do with them but myself. In other words, I have considered my precious family and the church members as burdensome not because of them but because I am disappointed and depressed as I see myself as a leader of the family and the church. So one day, when I was sing the hymn "I must tell Jesus", I cried because my heart was very heavy. Especially when I sing the hymn chorus, I remember praising God with heartache: "I must tell Jesus! I must tell Jesus! I cannot bear my burdens alone; I must tell Jesus! I must tell Jesus! Jesus can help me, Jesus alone."

In Numbers 11:11, 14, we see Moses suffering from heavy burdens. He said to God, "Why have You been so hard on Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all this people on me?" (v. 11) Moses considered the 600,000 Israelites as a burden rather than a gift (v.21). Why did Moses consider the Israelites as burdens? The reason is that the Israelites wept again and grumbled, saying "Who will give us meat to eat?" because the rabble who were among them had greedy desires (v. 4). When the people wept throughout their families, each man at the doorway of his tent, Moses was displeased (v. 10). Can you imagine 600,000 people weeping? In my experience, when my three children were babies and when they were crying, I am sure my wife had hard time but I also had hard time as well. But when 600,000 Israelites were crying at their doorways, I am sure Moses was very troubled. That was why Moses said to God, "Why have You been so hard on Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all this people on me?" (v. 11) Moses laid down his agonizing heart to God and said "I alone am not able to carry all this people, because it is too burdensome for me" (v. 14). Moses was no longer able to bear the number of Israelites alone. Therefore, he even asked God, "So if You are going to deal thus with me, please kill me at once, if I have found

favor in Your sight, and do not let me see my wretchedness” (v. 15). Moses pleaded with God to die. Doesn't it seem that depressed a person is asking for death? When our hearts are crushed by our heavy burdens, and we are unable to carry our heavy burdens alone anymore, we cannot help but be in despair. At the same time, we can no longer trust God, and are disturbed in doubt and distrust. Moses also seemed to doubt the power of God. When God told the Israelites that they would eat meat for a month until it comes out of their nostrils and becomes loathsome to them (v. 20) because they grumbled and said “Who will give us meat to eat?” (v. 4), this was what Moses said to God: The people, among whom I am, are 600,000 on foot; yet You have said, 'I will give them meat, so that they may eat for a whole month.' 'Should flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to be sufficient for them? Or should all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to be sufficient for them?'" When I think about Moses' position, I think it is the understandable question to God. How could Moses get meats in the wilderness that could feed 600,000 people for a month? As Moses said, where could they get flocks and herds that could be slaughtered for 600,000 people for a month? And how could they gather “all the fish of the sea” since they are in the wilderness and not the sea? Then God said to Moses: “Is the LORD'S power limited? Now you shall see whether My word will come true for you or not” (v. 23). So what God did first was He took the Spirit who was upon Moses and placed Him upon the 70 men from the elders of Israel so that they could bear the burden of the Israelites with Moses (vv. 16-17, 25). And then God fed the Israelites meat for a month until it came out of their nostrils and became loathsome to them (vv. 31-33). Is God's hand short? The words of Isaiah 59:1-2 came to my mind: “Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.” Our iniquities have made a separation between God and us. What are our iniquities? It is a complaint and a grudge in our discontent against God and the servants of God. What is our sin? It is our distrusting God and disobedience to His commandments. In the end, our grievances, complaints, disbelief, and disobedience not only make us dwell in a spiritual depression, but also make our spiritual leaders dwell in spiritual stagnation. And one of the fundamental causes is that we live in a mixture with the people of the world and are greedy as they are (v. 4). We must bear in mind that "when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death" (Jam. 1:15). After all, the greedy people were buried in Kibroth-hattaavah because the anger of the Lord burned against the people and He struck them with a severe plague (Num. 11:33-34).

The Lord Jesus continues to invite you: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Mt. 11:28). Our Lord, the God of salvation, who delivers us from the burdens of this world, as He did to the people of Israel out of the heavy burdens of the Egyptians (Exod. 6:6-7). In particular, our Lord is God who saves us from the heavy burdens of our sins. And our Lord is the Lord who bears our burdens daily (Ps. 68:19). Therefore, let us cast our burdens to the Lord (1 Pet. 5:7). The Lord who saves us will care for us and will give us rest from all our weary and heavy burdens (Mt. 11:28). Our Lord will give us rest (v. 29). Our Lord will revive our discouraged souls (Ps.19:7). The Lord is our strength (Jer 16:19). Therefore, we will confess, "I love you, O LORD, my strength" (Ps. 18:1).

## A dismayed heart

### [Psalms 143]

One of my cousins was really afraid of a dark room when he was a child. As I know, the reason he was afraid of the dark room was because his father used to put him in the dark room as a discipline when he didn't listen to his parents. As I was meditating on Psalms 143, he came into my mind because the psalmist David said in verse 4, "So my spirit grows faint within me; my heart within me is dismayed." The meaning of the word "dismayed" here according to a Korean dictionary is (a) very dark and (b) horrible, and according to the Korean-Chinese dictionary (a) darkness and dreariness, (b) cruel and helpless or (c) miserable (Internet). In Psalms 143:4, the psalmist said his heart is "dismayed". Here, the word "dismayed" in Hebrew has meaning the psalmist David's heart was afraid because of great disaster of God's judgment due to his sins. In other words, David wrote this Psalms 143 when he was in the darkness of his life, when his spirit grew faint and his heart was dismayed due to the disaster he met as a consequence of his sins.

According to Psalms 143:4, this is what the psalmist David said about his condition: "So my spirit grows faint within me; my heart within me is dismayed." David's spirit grew faint and his heart was dismayed. Not only David said in Psalms 142:3 that "my spirit grows faint within me", also in Psalms 143:4, "my spirit grows faint within me" again. Why did David's spirit grow faint? Why was his heart dismayed? This is what David said in verse 3: "The enemy pursues me, he crushes me to the ground; he makes me dwell in darkness like those long dead." The reason David's was dismayed was because his enemy was persecuting him. Here the enemy of David is probably Absalom, the son of David. It is because in couple of copies of the Septuagint, the title of this psalm says, 'When his son Absalom tries to catch him' in title (Park Yun-sun). When we think about David who was persecuted by King Saul (Ps. 142) and by his own son Absalom after he became a king (Ps. 143), there were persecutions and sufferings that made his spirit grow faint and his heart dismayed. But clear difference is that when David was persecuted by King Saul, it wasn't because he committed sins against God but when he was persecuted by Absalom, it was due to his sins. Therefore, today's text Psalm 143 is the last of the seven repentance psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143) (Park Yun-sun). David knew that the persecution he was suffering, and therefore his spirit grew faint and his heart was dismayed because of his sins. That was why he was sadder, bitter and desperate. How terrible was this situation where the one who wanted to kill his life was his own son Absalom? Can you imagine that the enemy who persecutes his life is his own blood? Once I imagined myself in David's position. I thought of David, who was running away from his son Absalom. How miserable and desperate the situation might be? In this situation, David said that his enemy Absalom made him dwell in darkness like those long dead (143:3).

What did David do in this painful and terrible situation? We can think of two things based on Psalms 143:

### **First, David remembered what the Lord had done in the past.**

Look at Psalms 143:5 – "I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done." As I continued to meditate on the Book of Psalms, I often saw the pattern of the Psalmist's prayer. One of the patterns of prayer is to remember the past work of the Lord in prayer. I am personally learning to look back on my past and trying to remember what God's had done in my life as I pray to God. Before I meditate on the Book of Psalms and learn to remember what God had done in my life when I pray to God, I used to focus on my sinful memories and bad memories of my past. But now the Spirit has changed the focus while meditating on the Book of Psalms. Now, when I pray the Holy Spirit in me enable me to look back on the past and focus on God's

actions on how He delivered me when I was going through difficult time in my life. The grace that is given to me as I was doing so, the Spirit enabled me to focus on who God is more than what He had done in my life.

I am not sure, but when I think about David in Psalms 143:5, remembering the days of long ago and meditating of all God's works and considering what God's hands had done, he might have remembered, meditated and considered what God had done such as delivering David from King Saul who tried to kill him in Psalms 142. One of the reasons why I think this way is because the two cases are very similar. In other words, Psalms 142 and 143 are similar in a way that David was persecuted by King Saul (Ps. 142) and Absalom (ch. 143) and David's spirit was faint (142:2; 143:4) and he was in misery. These similar situations are repeated in David's life so that he could remember the grace of God's salvation in the past and trust God in his prayers to Him. I believe that there is God's providence when similar things happen in our lives and it is for us to remember, meditate and consider God's gracious salvation of our past so that we can trust God and His salvation in our present difficulties. As a good example, I remembered John 21:9. When Jesus appeared to His disciples in the Sea of Tiberias after His resurrection from the dead, Jesus asked Peter three times, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" (Jn. 21:15, 16, 17). This situation was so similar when Peter denied Jesus three times (Lk. 22:55-60). In both situations there was "a fire" (Lk. 22:55; Jn. 21:9). Look at Luke 22:55 and John 21:9 – "But when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them" (Lk. 22:55) and "When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread" (Jn. 21:9). I think when the resurrected Jesus asked Peter 'Do you love Me?' three times in front of the fire of burning coals, Peter probably remembered the past when he denied Jesus in front of fire in the middle of the courtyard. I think Jesus intentionally reproduced the similar situation and asked Peter 'Do you love Me?' three times so that He could free Peter from his guilt and give him a new and a greater mission just following Him and be His disciple. What an amazing God's love and His providence? Therefore, we, like psalmist David, must remember the grace of the past that the Lord gave us when we were suffering and our hearts were from an adversity in our lives. When we are in a terrible circumstance, we must remember the grace that the Lord has given us in the past, especially in a more difficult circumstance that the present situation, and must celebrate God's salvation and deliverance in the midst of our present difficult situation. God who answered our prayers and delivered us from the past difficult circumstance is able to deliver us whatever difficult circumstances we are in now. I hope and pray that the Lord gives us assurance of salvation as we meditate on God's deliverance in the past.

## **Second and last, David prayed to the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 143:6 – "I spread out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. Selah." In the midst of persecution by his enemies, David spread out his hands to the Lord as soul thirst for Him. When he was in despair and when his soul grew faint, David longed for the Lord and prayed to Him. David sought the Lord and expected Him to answer him quickly (v. 7). It was such a desperate situation. David described this desperate situation like this: "Answer me quickly, O LORD; my spirit fails. Do not hide your face from me or I will be like those who go down to the pit." Here, let's meditate on David's prayer in four ways and apply it to the life of each of our prayers:

- (1) David prayed to God by relying on God's faithfulness and righteousness instead of his unfaithfulness and unrighteousness.

Look at Psalms 143:1 – "O LORD, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy; in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief." When David's soul grew faint and was dismayed, he looked upon the Lord who is in control instead of focusing on his difficulty circumstance. He prayed to God as he depended on God's faithfulness and righteousness. As we learn from Psalms 142 that when David prayed



to God, he proclaimed who God is, David also proclaimed God is faithful and righteous in Psalms 143:1 when he prayed to God.

This should be our prayer habit. Like David, when we pray to God we need to proclaim who God is. When we are in a painful situation our instincts are easy to grumble and complain without know that it is the consequence of my unrepented sins against God. We should not do that. Instead, we should take that painful situation as an opportunity to reflect ourselves before God. And we must realize our unfaithfulness and unrighteousness. In doing so, we can only rely on God's faithfulness and righteousness.

(2) David pleaded with God to hear the Word of the Lord in the midst of his spirit growing faint and his heart dismayed.

Look at Psalms 143:8 – “Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.” In the midst of his spirit growing faint and his heart dismayed, David prayed to God as he relied on God's faithfulness and righteousness. As he was doing so, David asked God to let him hear the Lord's word of unfailing love. Why did David want to hear His Word of unfailing love? The reason was because he wanted to be led by His Word. In other words, David wanted to hear the Lord's Word of His unfailing love because he wanted to learn His will and do His will (v. 10). That was why he prayed “Show me the way I should go” (v. 8).

When we are being disciplined by God for our sins, there are times when our spirits are faint and our hearts are dismayed. At that time, we must cry out to God and seek His word as David did. Why? The reason is that we must realize the way we must walk through His Word and turn to the way that He wants us to walk. Although we have sinned against God and went astray until we suffer, we must pray to God by relying on His faithfulness and righteousness and must walk in the path of God's faithfulness and righteousness as the Lord leads us by His Word.

(3) David asked God to save him.

Look at Psalms 143:9 – “Rescue me from my enemies, O LORD, for I hide myself in you.” When David's spirit was faint and he was dismayed in the persecution of his enemies, he hid himself in the Lord. Even when he was running away from King Saul in Psalms 142, David took refuge in the Lord because he knew he had no refuge (142:4-5). Likewise in Psalms 143, David took refuge in the Lord when he was running away from Absalom and asked Him to rescue him from his enemies (143:9). Look at the David's prayer of salvation in Psalms 143:11 – “For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life; in your righteousness, bring me out of trouble.” Not only David, but we also can pray to God like this because our God is our Savior. Therefore, the God of salvation will save us from our sins when we repent of our sins and turn to Him.

(4) David asked God to judge his enemies.

Look at Psalms 143:12 – “In your unfailing love, silence my enemies; destroy all my foes, for I am your servant.” David asked God to silence and destroy his enemies who were afflicting his soul. He was able to pray like this because he was the servant of the Lord. This means that since David was the Lord's servant, but David's enemies were not, he asked the Lord to destroy his enemies but save him by remembering His chosen servant David by His lovingkindness. This should be our prayer. We should pray for God to save His chosen servants according to His lovingkindness but destroy our enemies who aren't chosen.

Therefore, God's lovingkindness and righteousness must be manifested. That is, the glory of God must be manifested through God's salvation through His judgment.

I hope and pray that all of you may be able to experience God's salvation as you remember the saving work of the Lord in the past and cry out to Him, no matter what terrible situations you may be in.

## **. When I was forsaken for a brief moment, I grieved in spirit**

**"For the LORD has called you, Like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, Even like a wife of one's youth when she is rejected,' Says your God. 'For a brief moment I forsook you, But with great compassion I will gather you. In an outburst of anger I hid My face from you for a moment, But with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you,' Says the LORD your Redeemer" (Isaiah 54:6-8).**

One day I meditated on Isaiah 48:9 in the Morning Prayer meeting: "For the sake of My name I delay My wrath, And for My praise I restrain it for you, In order not to cut you off." When I preached this Word of God to those who came to the Morning Prayer, I was actually preaching to myself so that we might together be slow to anger for the name of God and the glory of God. However, on that day I got angry when I was driving to go exercise after the Morning Prayer. I was angry in ignorance at a driver who pressed a honk behind me and I didn't even know I was wrong. My heart was heavy due to the conscience-stricken. I was dismayed of myself because I disobeyed what I preached during the Morning Prayer as soon as I came out of the church. But more discouraging thing was I committed another sin against God during the lunch time, thinking that I already sin in the morning so mind as well. My conscience was again pierced and my heart was heavy and depressed. When my conscience was pierced I confessed my sins to God and ask Him forgiveness and grace of repentance because I knew that I have no power to turn back from sins. After these sins that I committed during morning and lunch time, it was only in the afternoon that I suddenly recalled the words of Isaiah 48:9 that I meditated in the Morning Prayer. Then I thought that God was slow to be angry and long-suffering with such sinner like me. Before this thought came into mind, I only thought about the fact that I wasn't slow to anger for God's name and His glory. But later that afternoon, the thought that God was slow to be angry and long-suffering with me came into my mind. At that moment I thank God for helping me to realize the abundant grace of God. How could I not give thanks to God who had been very patient and long-suffering with me and slow to anger with such sinner like me who continually disobeyed the Word that I preached and thus covering the glory of God and bringing shame on His holy name. So I had no choice but to thank him for his grace.

As I remember this grace of God again, I read and meditated on Isaiah 54:6-8 at the Morning Prayer meeting yesterday. I thought about God who is not only gracious and slow to anger, but also who brings us back with deep compassion (v. 7) after an outburst of anger (v. 8) and abandoning us briefly (v. 7). When I sin against God and not repent, God not only exposes my sins with His Word but also reproaches me with His love. The indwelling Spirit gives me the conscience-stricken with the word of God and makes me to acknowledge my sins. Therefore, I confess my sins to God and ask Him for forgiveness. However, because I cannot make a true repentance that turns away from sin, I again commit the same sin again and again to God. Although God warns me with His Word, I ignore His warnings and sin again. As a result, in His time God disciplines me in holy anger. At that time I cry out to God in pain, but I think God don't listen to me but ignores me. And I feel desperate as the pain grows longer. And I even think that God has forsaken me. At that time I have no choice but to be sorrowful in my heart as a wife who is forsaken by her husband and grieved in spirit (v. 6). Like the husband who receive his wife again who was forsaken and grieved in spirit, God receives me again with His great love and has compassion on me with His everlasting lovingkindness (v. 8). My Redeemer Lord (v. 8) is angry with me for a while and forsaken me for a moment, but he calls me again, welcomes me with great love, and merciful with me with His eternal mercy.

However, this kind and compassionate God poured out all His wrath on His only begotten Son Jesus on the cross. At that time Jesus cried out to Father God on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46). But God ignore His Son Jesus' cry out even though He heard the Son's voice. God didn't have mercy on Jesus. Heavenly Father forsook His only begotten Son Jesus. Heavenly Father left His only begotten Jesus to die on the cross. I am the one who deserves eternal punishment, and Jesus has received that penalty for me. Therefore, God called me and greeted me with His great love. And God has been merciful to me with His eternal mercy. God will continue to have mercy on me now and forevermore.

## When my heart shakes

**"Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. Selah" (Psalms 62:8).**

I remember a teaching that says we should be careful after receiving God's grace. My heart was shaken after returning to the US in the midst of grace that I received in Korea as I was reaching out to people during the internet ministry in 2016. I saw myself getting depressed without knowing myself. Although my flesh tiredness was recovering a lot, but I didn't know why my heart was getting depressed again. Then, as I was reading Psalms 62, I became interested in verse 3: "How long will you assault a man? Would all of you throw him down-- this leaning wall, this tottering fence?" The psalmist David was getting attack by his enemies. His enemies were united and attacked to kill David. And David described his situation as a "leaning wall" and "tottering fence". The reason was that not only did his enemies tried to topple him from his lofty place but also they who delighted in lies blessed David with their mouths but in their heart they cursed him (v. 4). In other words, David's enemies tried to shake David, like shaking the shield, such as a wall or a fence to overturn. This is the Satan's strategy and work. Satan is constantly attacking us and our hearts, which is the source of our lives (Prov. 4:23) in order to shake the walls and fences of our hearts. Also Satan continues to attack our hearts, diligently trying to make us discouraged, depressed, and even despairing. As a result, sometime our hearts shake. What should we do when our hearts shake?

### **First, when our hearts are shaken, we must quietly trust in God.**

Look at Psalms 62:8a – "Trust in him at all times, O people ...." When our hearts are shaken by the attack of Satan, we must realize two truths at the same time: (1) that we should not depend on the riches even if increase (v. 10) but (2) that we should depend on God only. (vv. 1, 2, 5, 6). Satan attacks us many times, especially with the temptation of money. Especially when we are in material poverty, Satan diligently tempts us with money. Satan tempts us even to increase our wealth, and in the end Satan is trying to make us to serve both the Lord and the riches. This temptation of Satan can shake our hearts enough. But as the Bible says, we should not depend on wealth even though it increases (v. 10). Rather, we must rely solely on God, as David did (v. 8). When our hearts are shaken, we should look to Lord quietly (vv. 1, 5). We should only look to the Lord silently (vv. 2, 6). How is this possible? How can we only look to God when our hearts are shaken? The Scripture Psalms 42:5, 11 and 43:5 came to my mind: "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God." I often pray to God like this. Especially when I am depressed and insecure in my mind, I will pray to God as I declare to my own soul: 'James, why are you downcast and why are you so disturbed within me?' When I do that, I experience God's help. I experienced God restoring my downcast and disturbed soul with His promise Word and raise me up. Likewise, when my heart shakes, I want to proclaim to my own soul and to go to God in prayer, like the psalmist David, "Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him." Why should we quietly look only to God? This is because "my salvation" and "my hope" come from the Lord (vv. 1, 5). The reason is that only the Lord is "my rock" and "my fortress" (vv. 2, 6). Therefore, we will not be shaken as we quietly trust God and gaze Him quietly (vv.2, 6). Rather, we will gain strength (Isa. 30:15).

### **Second and last, when our hearts are shaken we must pour our hearts to God.**

Look at Psalms 62:8 – "Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. Selah." Many members in the church are unable to share their concerns and struggles. The reason they cannot do this is because they know that when they share their concerns and struggles, what they have shared can

become a rumor in the church and eventually hurts them. That's why without sharing their hearts they just live day by day with their own struggles and troubles. The church needs to be a community of sharing, and it seems that there is not a church culture that can deeply share each other's struggles and troubles. It is a sad reality. But in this reality, we are not frustrated because we can go to God and pour out our hearts to Him. That's why I like the hymn "Go, carry thy burden to Jesus". This is what the chorus says: "O, steal away softly to Jesus, To Him let thy heart be outpoured; Thy Father, who seeth in secret, Shall give thee a gracious reward." How grateful we are that we can quietly go to Him and pour out our hearts. It is a privilege and a blessing for us to be able to cry out in prayer to our Lord who loves us the most and knows us best. The psalmist David has always encouraged the Israelites to trust in God and to pour out his heart before God because God is their refuge (v. 8). He was able to exhort them to pour out their hearts to God (v.7) because he trusted God who was his power and rock and refuge in the midst of his enemies attacking him (vv. 3-4). When he did so, David heard the word of God. The words that he heard were two: That power belongs to God (v. 11) and (2) Lovingkindness is God's (v. 12). When our hearts is shaken, we must pour out hearts to God as we trust Him. As we do so, we will be able to experience God's power and God's lovingkindness (Ps. 63:3).

We are like fading walls and shaking fences (62:3). Satan and our enemies are constantly attacking us (v. 3). They are deceitful fools who delight in falsehood and try to drop us from the faith (v. 4). They can make our hearts shake enough. In this time, we must quietly trust God (v. 8). We must look quietly to God who is our salvation and our hope (vv. 1, 5). And we must pour out our hearts before Him (v. 8). In doing so, God will hold onto our hearts by His power and lovingkindness (vv. 11-12). Therefore, we will no longer be shaken (vv. 2, 6).

## **‘When my heart is faint’**

### **[Psalms 61]**

These days, I am reading a book called "The Christian Warfare" by Pastor Lloyd Jones. The reason I am reading this book is because I felt the need to know more about the spiritual warfare as I was sharing stories of Job and about the Satan's forces with my beloved co-worker. According to Rev. Lloyd Jones, who also talked about the book of Job, said that the devil clearly had some power over nature. As an example, when Satan began to strike Job under God's permission, one of Job's servants came to Job and saw that his ox and donkey had been taken away, and the servants were dead. "While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, 'The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!'" (Job 1:16). Here, it clearly teaches that the task of causing lightning and destroying by lightning is in the domain and power of the devil. It is the fact that the devil with this remarkable ability is more interested than anything else, attacking with intense cunning and terrible power, the best gift of humanity. In particular, the devil attacks our minds with various tools, one of which is to suppress us as the spirit of terror. The reason why Peter, who said he would not abandon the Lord at any time, eventually denied the Lord three times and said he didn't know the Lord at all was because of the fear of the devil's terrifying spirit caused him to fear about losing his own life (Jones). And Rev. Jones gave these bold words to the church these days: 'The church is anesthetized, confused, fell asleep, and never knows the spiritual warfare.'

The devil that always puts a trap and a snare seems to be succeeding in the church now. Rev. Lloyd Jones said, 'The depression, the discouragement, the defeat and the complete despair are the result of the activities of the devil in general.' How many of us Christians are discouraged and depressed and living in defeat? How many of us are experiencing despair? We must fight with the power of the Lord Jesus who already won the victory in this spiritual battle with the devil. We must live a militant Christian life with the conviction of victory. We are to have a spiritual warfare. One of the examples is in Psalms 61. When we look at Psalms 61:2, the psalmist David said "when my heart is faint". Here, the word "faint" means "self-enveloping". This refers to the state of being disheartened and despairing surrounded by his various struggles and troubles (Park Yun-sun). David had been despairing because of the persecution of his enemies (v. 3). When our hearts are faint like David by the devil's evil forces, how should we fight them? I want to receive four lessons from Psalms 61:

### **First, when our hearts are faint, we must cry out to God.**

Look at Psalms 61:1 – "Hear my cry, O God; Give heed to my prayer." I still remembering saying many times to my church members and others that when are in discouraged and in despair, we should take that as an opportunity to seek God. When our hearts are anxious, depressed, and despair because of the various hardships and suffering of life, we must cry out to God like David. And when we cry out to God, we must pray, remembering that 'God desire me more than I desire God.' But somehow we seem to forget that God desires us when we are so hard and painful. So David said, "From the end of the earth I call to You when my heart is faint" (v. 2). Why did David say "from the end of the earth"? The reason was that David felt so desperate that God had forsaken him, and therefore felt that God was too far away from him. In the midst of that feeling, David didn't throw himself out of despair. Rather, he cried out to God, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I" (v. 2). In the midst of deep despair, David cried out to God as he was looking at the rock that is higher than him.

Although we are in deep despair like David, we must yearn for God. We must cry out to Him. Although we may feel that we have been expelled from God's sight, nevertheless we must look again toward God (Jon. 2:4) and cry out to him.

### **Second, when our hearts are faint, we must take refuge in God.**

Look at Psalms 61:4 – “Let me dwell in Your tent forever; Let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings. Selah.” What we can do in despair is to cry out to God and to take refuge in Him. The reason is that only God is our protector. So in the midst of extreme despair, even in the sense of being far from God, David confessed, “For You have been a refuge for me, A tower of strength against the enemy” (v. 3). How could David confess that God is his refuge and a tower of strength? I found the answer in verse 7: “... Appoint lovingkindness and truth that they may preserve him.” David was able to confess that God is his refuge and tower of strength because God preserved him with His lovingkindness and truth when his heart was faint. Therefore, David was able to cry out to God and took refuge in Him because he was being protected by the lovingkindness and truth of God even in a state of his heart was faint. Here, the lesson we can learn is that we should hold on to God's lovingkindness and truth even when our hearts are faint. In other words, we must take refuge in the Lord by believing that God who unconditionally loves us will faithfully carry out His promise of deliverance according to His perfect plan (Park Yun-sun).

We must hold on to God's eternal love and truth in the midst of our life's desperation. In the midst of that we must be led by the hope that we will dwell in the tent of God forever (v. 4). We must look at God's eternal dwelling tent in the midst of our temporal despair.

### **Third, when our hearts are faint, we must remember the grace of God that he gave in the past.**

Look at Psalms 61:5 – “For You have heard my vows, O God; You have given me the inheritance of those who fear Your name.” This refers to the government of Israel that went to the unfaithful Absalom for a moment is being restored to David (Park Yun-sun). In other words, David remembered the grace of God's deliverance from the rebellion of his son Absalom in the past (Park Yun-sun). David remembered what God did for him in the past rather than remembering what he had done for God when his heart was faint due to his enemy (v. 3). This is by no means our instinct. Our instinct is to pray to God when our hearts are faint and to prove our actions and talk about our own merits. As an example, we can see Elijah in 1 Kings 19. Elijah was afraid and ran for his life because Jezebel threatened him (vv. 2-3). He went into the wilderness (v. 4) and then all the way to Mt. Horeb (v. 8). Then when he went into a cave, the word of the Lord came to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (vv. 9, 13). Elijah then complained, claiming his act (or merit) for God in answer, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts" (vv. 10, 14).

One of our problems is forgetting what we must not forget and not forgetting what we should forget. For example, even though God not only forgave our sin that we repented but also forgot our sin, but we still remember it and talk about it. On the contrary, even though we should not forget God's grace in the past, we tend to forget His grace too soon. We must remember God's grace in our past life as David did. Especially when our hearts are faint like David, we must look back on our lives how God had been shown His grace of deliverance we must endure the present desperate and difficult situation. When our hearts are faint, the despair of our hearts must turn to hope as we remember the memories of God's grace that were given to us in the past.

### **Fourth and last, when our hearts are faint, we must seek the eternal kingdom of God.**



Look at Psalms 61:7 – “He will abide before God forever; Appoint lovingkindness and truth that they may preserve him.” David asked God to increase the king’s life and his years for many generations (v. 6). In other words, He asked God to extend his life to the God who controls life and death. In short, David asked God to bless him with long life. Furthermore, David asked God for him to abide before God forever (v. 7). Imagine David, who was in despair because of his enemies, but he looked to God in the midst of it and had hope in Him. And he asked God for him to abide before God forever as he remembered the grace given to him after he took a refuge in Him. We, like David, must also pray for us to abide in Him forever when we are in a momentary despair. In particular, we should pray that the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus Christ who rules over the kingdom of God forever, that we will live forever in the kingdom of God as kingdom people. As we pray for this, we should also pray that the Lord taught us to “Thy kingdom come”. And we must confess as Apostle John did, “Amen, Come, Lord Jesus,” in response to what Jesus said, “Yes, I am coming soon” (Rev. 22:20).

When David’s heart was faint, he cried out to God and took refuge in Him. Then he remembered the God’s grace of the past and longed for God’s eternal kingdom. And if God answered his prayer, guiding him, protecting him and giving him the grace of salvation, then David determined to this: “... I will sing praise to Your name forever, That I may pay my vows day by day” (Ps. 61:8). Therefore, we also, like David, must cry out to God when our hearts are faint, and take refuge in Him who is the tower of strength. And we must remember the God’s grace in the past so that we may live forever in the presence of God.

## **‘Daily pressure on me’**

**"Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:28).**

I became a pastor without knowing anything. My experience of associate pastor is only one year. It is also an experience that I have been serving as a pastor for only one year while my father is serving as pastor in Victory Presbyterian Church where I grew up all along. And after one year, I was burnout and disobeyed my father's word and fled to Korea like Jonah. When I went to Korea, I served as an educational part-time pastor in Seohyun Church, responsible for English Ministry and newly wedded couple group. And I only served there about two years and nine months. Of course, I know that being a pastor is not just an experience. But that was how much I was lack in not only experience but a lot of thing. In year 2003, the Lord gave me the promise of Matthew 16:18 through the guest speaker at the church renewal pastor association retreat, so I came back to Victory Presbytery Church again. And my father retired and I became a new senior pastor. It is already more than 15 years ago. When I think about the past years, I still remember what my wife said to me: 'James, you have changed'. My wife told me that I changed after I became a senior pastor. Not only I didn't deny what she said, but I couldn't deny it. That's because I knew I was different. For some reason, the position of being a senior pastor seemed to have made me into someone else. When I saw myself, I couldn't speak with my brothers and sisters in the Lord as before, and I couldn't even have fellowship with them. Instead, I stayed in my shepherd room most time. So I wondered why I was like that. I couldn't believe what the senior pastor position could do to me. I think one of the reasons was the pressure being a senior pastor. I think there were many mental pressures in particular of being senior pastor. As a senior pastor, I felt more responsibility than ever, and I felt that I had a lot of pressure on myself. Often I had more things to worry about and a lot of stress that made my heart very heavy. To put it another way, there were a lot of daily pressure before me and even now too. And yesterday night as I was preparing for the Morning Prayer meeting, I happened to read 2 Corinthians 11:28.

In 2 Corinthians 11:28 we can see that Apostle Paul facing daily pressure. It was a concern for all the churches. Paul had intense concern about the weak believers led into sin. Look at 2 Corinthians 11:29 – “Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?” In such Paul's intense concern and worries, there was fear. Paul was afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, Satan might tempt the believers to be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ (v. 3). He was afraid that the believers might depart from the true gospel of Jesus Christ that he preached and might accept a different gospel (v. 4). The reason why he had to worry about this was because there were false apostles who disguised themselves as apostles of Christ and were deceiving the church members (v. 13). Since Satan disguised himself as an angel of light, it wasn't surprising for Paul that if his servants also disguised themselves as servants of righteousness (vv. 14-15). And Paul was afraid that Satan and his servants would deceive the believers and would make them to depart from the truth and their faith. Because of this, there was the daily pressure on Paul of concern for all the churches (v. 28).

We the senior pastors must have this kind of pressure. We must have this daily pressure of concern for our church members. We must worry and be afraid that disguised Satan and his servants may deceive our church members, especially those who are weak in faith, and make them to depart from the truth and their faith. Of course, besides this concern, there are many other concerns when we are in ministry. But what we need to worry about most is their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our greatest interest must be in their salvation. We should be very interested in whether our beloved brothers and sisters in Christ are standing firm in their faith. In doing so, I am sure there are

many worries and fears because of the daily pressure of concern for them. But I believe that the Lord will restore our souls and will refresh us. The Lord will revival our hearts. May these blessings be with you all.

## **"When my spirit was overwhelmed within me"**

### **[Psalms 142]**

Don't you have a lot of pain these days? I think life is like a thorny bush that is tangled up with many different pains. As a result, many people are suffering from anxiety, worry, stress, and so on. So I think life is like a thorny bush. Often times these things get tangled and tangled, making our hearts hard. We then have these thoughts: "Why is my life so tangled?" It really is a life like the thorny bush. Then why my life is like the thorny bush? I find an answer in the Jesus' parable of the seeds. Look at Matthew 13:22 – "'And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.'" The cause is the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth (Internet). As we live in this world, we fall into various kinds of worldly temptations. And because we have sinned against God, there are times when these and other painful things continue to be entangled in our lives. Then we try to solve the tangled things with our own strength, but the more we try to untangle them, the more tangled we are. What do we do?

In Psalms 142, the psalmist David was tangled like a thorny bush. How can we know this? We can tell from verse 2: "I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare my trouble before Him." Here, the word "my complaint" in Hebrew means "bush" (Park Yun-sun). This "bush" means that in David's life, there were many painful things so that he was in a state of suffocation because of he was entangled like thorny bush (Park Yun-sun). Why did David have so many painful things as to be in such suffocation? The reason was because David was persecuted by King Saul (v. 6, Park Yun-sun). King Saul and his people who were David's persecutors (v. 6) even hid a trap for David to catch him (v. 3). King Saul was looking for David's life (1Sam. 18-24), and David was hiding from King Saul in the cave of Adullam (22:1). It seemed that David's situation was a desperate situation without hope if God didn't intervene (MacArthur). And that desperate and hopeless situation was described like this in Psalms 142:6 – "... I am brought very low ...." In other words, David was very lowed and weak in the persecution of King Saul (v. 6, Park Yun-sun). Externally, David's very lowed and weak state was that face that he was in the cave of Adullam to escape from King Saul [(v. 7) "Bring my soul out of prison ..."]. And internally, David's heart was trouble and his spirit was overwhelmed (vv. 2, 3). In the midst of that, we can see from Psalms 142:4 that David was completely abandoned: "Look to the right and see; For there is no one who regards me; There is no escape for me; No one cares for my soul." When David looked around, there were no one who cared about him, no one who wanted to help him and no one to comfort him. What a miserable situation David was in. But here was the providence of God. It seemed like God was blocking everything around David. Why? The reason was that God had been working in David's life so that he might pour out his broken heart and the contrite spirit into prayer only to God. Look at Psalms 142:1-2: "I cry aloud with my voice to the LORD; I make supplication with my voice to the LORD. I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare my trouble before Him." In his humble state, David wasn't discouraged. Rather in hope, he poured out all the things in prayer before God without hiding (Park Yun-sun). Look at verse 3: "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, You knew my path In the way where I walk They have hidden a trap for me." David was pouring out his heart to God in prayer. The reason was because his heart was broken. David's heart was hollow (v. 2) and his heart was injured. Then he poured out his heart to God in his heart. Because he had complaint, his heart was broken. That was why he was pouring out his heart to God.

Here I would like to think of three things about David's prayer. In other words, I want to think about David's prayer in Psalm 142:5-7 and apply to our lives:

### **First, David's prayer was a prayer that acknowledged who God is.**

Look at Psalms 142:5 – “I cried out to You, O LORD; I said, “You are my refuge, My portion in the land of the living.” David began his prayer by acknowledging and proclaiming who God is. In other words, he began his prayer with the belief that God is his refuge and his portion (v. 5). David looked at his God who is a true refuge when there is no one who regarded him, no escape for him and no one cared for his soul (v. 4). When your heart is broken, when you have complaint, do you pour out your heart to few people around you? Do you consider them as your refuge? I think it is dangerous to make people a refuge. That is building a house on sand. It is fragile and cannot but collapse. It is bound to fall in the more miserable state. We should only make God our refuge. Only the Lord, who is the refuge, will protect us, help us and comfort us. David prayed to God not just believing that God is “my refuge,” but also believing and acknowledging that God is “my portion”. What does “my portion” means here? It means that God is the source of life, so only those who have God can enjoy the true life (Park Yun-sun). So I occasionally sing this hymn: “My com-fort by day, and my song in the night, My hope, my sal-va-tion, my all! ....” We must go to God, who is our refuge and our eternal life with our broken hearts and contrite spirits and pour our hearts to Him.

### **Second, David's prayer was a prayer for God's salvation.**

Look at Psalms 142:6 – “Give heed to my cry, For I am brought very low; Deliver me from my persecutors, For they are too strong for me.” David, in his very lowly state, cried out to God to save him from King Saul. The reason why he had to cry out to God in this way is because King Saul and his people who were persecuting him were much stronger than him. Because David was severely weakened by their persecution, he took refuge in God and cried out to Him, asking for Almighty God’s grace of salvation. I often think of the gospel song “You are my all in all” in the fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ who are in the midst of struggling and suffering: “You are my strength when I am weak You are the treasure that I seek You are my all in all ....” Maybe the reason I remembered this gospel song is because I see a glimpse how God is making them to realize their weaknesses through their struggles and sufferings. Also, God allows me to see little bit how He is strengthening them when they cried out to God in their weaknesses. And I am grateful for God's work of deliverance when I see a glimpse of their strong inner man through the power of God. I firmly believe that God has strengthened them and I am grateful. Therefore, we don’t have to be afraid of getting very weak. Rather, when we are severely weakened, we must make it an opportunity to desire the grace of God's salvation. When we are weak, we must ask Him for His strength. In doing so, God will rescue us from our weaknesses.

### **Third and last, David's prayer was a prayer with conviction that God’s goodness would be with him.**

Look at Psalms 142:7 – “Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name. Then the righteous will gather about me because of your goodness to me.” Although David was hiding in the prison-like cave of Adullam, he believed that God would deliver him and free him from his prison. In a word, David had assurance of deliverance. Not only David was convinced of this deliverance, but also he was convinced that the Lord would surround him. What does it mean? David, who said that there is no one who regarded him and no one who cared for him in verse 4, confessed that God is his refuge and he took refuge in Hi in verse 5 and then in verse 7 he was sure that God would surround him with the righteous. How was this possible? It was because David believed in God’s goodness (v. 7). Like David, we must return to peace in our souls as we believe God’s goodness and pray to Him when our hearts are broken. As we pour out our complaints and cry out to God and thus experience His deliverance, we should enjoy the peace of God that the world cannot give.

This world has many troubles and distresses. Also there are a lot of sinful thing and a lot of death in this world. Our life in this world is like a thorny bush. There are times when our soul is tangled into such painful things of this world. We often experience loneliness and there is no one to go to and to pour our hearts. So our spirit is overwhelmed within us. When our spirit is overwhelmed with us, we must pour out our hearts to God in prayer. As we do so, we must first acknowledge who God is and proclaim by faith that God is God. God is "my refuge". God is "my portion". We must cry out to God who is our refuge and portion to deliver us. We must cry out to Him with assurance of salvation. The reason is that our God is the God who is good to us. I hope and pray that you may experience the grace of God's salvation.

## **When my soul is bowed down**

**"They have prepared a net for my steps; My soul is bowed down; They dug a pit before me; They themselves have fallen into the midst of it. Selah" (Psalms 57:6).**

There are times when it is unfair. I did nothing wrong with him, but he hates me and harasses me. I don't know why he hates me. I don't know why he is harassing me. I wish I could know why, but for no reason he hates me and harasses me. But he doesn't seem to be satisfied there. He gathers his own people and makes story about me and they slander me and blaspheme me together. And they are making bad rumors about me. They unite together and try to throw me down and even they try to put me in a crisis. I have no place to stand. I cannot take it anymore. My heart is very hard and distressed. I am under false accusation. I am suffering unfairness. What should I do when my soul is suffering unfairness?

In Psalms 57:6, the psalmist David says, "My soul is bowed down". Here, the word "bowed down" refers to a bird or other beast that is lying flat on the ground because of the fear of the hunter's net (Calvin). This means David bowed down in fear of King Saul who was searching him in order to kill him. Then why did David say "My soul is bowed down"? The reason is because David didn't do anything wrong but King Saul tried to kill him. Actually, David gave Israel a victory by defeating Goliath in the name of God. But when the women sang "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands", King Saul kept a jealousy eye on David (1 Sam. 18:7, 9). That was why King Saul tried to kill David even though he didn't do anything wrong. So when David was in the cave in order to escape from King Saul, he wrote this poem of Psalms 57 and appealed to God for his suffering unfairness. So I want to think about what David did when his soul was bowed down and receive 5 lessons from it.

### **First, David took refuge in God when his soul was bowed down.**

Look at Psalms 57:1 – "Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me, For my soul takes refuge in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge Until destruction passes by." When David's soul bowed down, he longed for God's grace. He earnestly sought God to give him grace. As he was doing so, David took refuge in God. He took refuge in the shadow of God's wings until destruction passed by (v. 1). We also should take refuge in God when our souls are bowed down. The reason is because God has been our refuge, a strong tower against the foe (61:3). When a storm of life comes over us, we must quickly take refuge in God until the storm passes by all the way (55:8). We must find refuge in the shadow of God's wings (36:7). When our souls are bowed down, we must trust in Him all times who is our refuge (62:8). Then the Lord will keep us under the shadow of His wings (17:8) and will protect us and will keep us safe.

### **Second, David cried out to God who accomplished all things for him when his soul was bowed down.**

Look at Psalms 57:2 – "I will cry to God Most High, To God who accomplishes all things for me." David cried out to God who accomplished all things for him when he was in the cave, fleeing from King Saul. How could David cry out to God like that? If David had been looking at his situation with his own physical eyes, David would never have professed faith that God is God who accomplishes all things for him. If David had looked only at the situation he was in, in a cave imprisoned, he couldn't have sought God's will in his misery. But because David looked to God Most High in faith, he was able to seek God's will and not his own will. And he believed that God

would accomplish His good will no matter what. We must have this faith too. I remember Paul and Silas in Acts 16. They prayed and sang hymns of praise to God in the inner prison (Acts 16:24). It is understandable that they prayed to God. But I wonder how they could praise God in such circumstances. I think those who believe that God's will be done even in whatever circumstance they are in, they can praise God even in prison. It's because they trust and rely on God that they praise Him in faith. Their praise is not based on the circumstance but based on who God is. We must know that our God is worthy to receive praise from us no matter what circumstances we are in. Therefore, we must praise the Lord's greatness in whatever circumstances we may be in. We must cry out to God Most High with the faith that God will accomplish His will for us, even in the calamities we have encountered.

### **Third, David believed that God would send forth His lovingkindness and His truth when his soul was bowed down.**

Look at Psalms 57:3 – “He will send from heaven and save me; He reproaches him who tramples upon me Selah God will send forth His lovingkindness and His truth.” David had assurance of salvation. Although he was in the cave and was hiding from King Saul, he believed that God would deliver him from that situation. Not only that, David also believed that God would send His lovingkindness and His truth (v. 3). Here, what does it mean to say that God sends His lovingkindness and His truth? I personally experienced God's lovingkindness and His truth when my first baby Charis was suffering from a disease. The word of truth that God sent to me was Psalms 63:3 – “Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You.” After my wife and I received this truth on Monday morning, we decided to let Charis die quickly [The day before, on Sunday afternoon, when I went to see Charis in the Children Hospital Intensive Care Unit, her doctor asked me whether to let Charis die quickly or slowly because there was nothing the doctor could do. So I answered her ‘slowly’]. So we called the doctor and told her our decision. Then I call some family members and we gathered around Charis and worshiped God. After the nurse turned off all the machines and took out all the hoses, she gave Charis to me. And she died in my arms. After we cremated Charis, we went and spread her ashes on the water. As we were returning to the land, God made me to praise God's amazing and wonderful saving love. In the end, God sent His lovingkindness and His truth to us so that we were able to praise God in the greatest crisis of our married life. Therefore, I believe that crisis is a good opportunity to experience God's love and God's truth.

### **Fourth, David sang praise to God with his steadfast heart when his soul was bowed down.**

Look at Psalms 57:7 – “My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises!” Not only David believed that God would accomplish His will for him in the midst of disasters, he also believed that God would send forth His lovingkindness and His truth to him (vv. 1-3). David, who had been enjoying God's grace in the midst of disasters, became convinced in his heart that his heart was steadfast (v. 7). Not only he had the assurance of salvation, but he also believed that God would accomplish all things for him and that he would experience God's lovingkindness and His truth in the midst of disasters. In this conviction, David determined to praise God (v. 7). As a result, David's soul which was bowed down awakened and thus he awoke the dawn (v. 8). Our souls must be awakened and we must awake the dawn too. Our souls should no longer bow down, but we must praise God's greatness with conviction in our hearts.

### **Fifth and the last, David prayed for God to be exalted above the heavens and for His glory to be above all the earth when his soul was bowed down.**

Look at Psalms 57:5 and 11: “Be exalted above the heavens, O God; Let Your glory be above all the earth. ... Be exalted above the heavens, O God; Let Your glory be above all the earth.” It is interesting that David, who



was hiding in the cave against King Saul, exalted God above the heavens and asked God's glory to rise above all the earth. In particular, it challenged me that David gave thanks to God among the peoples, sang praises to Him among the nations (v. 9) and exalted Him above the heavens and asked God's glory to rise above all the earth (vv. 5, 11) in the midst of running away from King Saul and of going through the disasters. When I think about how David could have done that, I think it was possible because he had experienced God's lovingkindness and truth (v. 3). Look at verse 10: "For Your lovingkindness is great to the heavens And Your truth to the clouds." David was able to confess this because he had experienced God's lovingkindness and His truth when he cried out for God's grace and God's will to be done in the midst of disasters that he was going through and when his soul was bowed down. As a result, he was able to ask God, " Be exalted above the heavens, O God; Let Your glory be above all the earth" (v. 11).

I have an unforgettable memory in my heart regarding my third uncle. I recall the moment when I was praising God "O, Lord my God! When I in Awesome Wonder" during his view service. In particular, I cannot forget the experience of the indwelling Holy Spirit worked in my heart to praise "Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee How great Thou art, how great Thou art!" I also remember the time when my third uncle was alive, we went down to Tijuana, Mexico and he praised chorus of "O, Lord my God! When I in Awesome" in Spanish in front of the disabled people. And I remember he praised the same hymn during the New Year whole family worship even though he was suffering from cancer. How could a cancer patient suffering from illness praise God's greatness? How could we sing God's greatness at our beloved family member's funeral service? I got challenge by David who had been hiding in the cave from King Saul, but was able pray for God's exaltation and His glory to be manifested above all the earth. It was because he didn't focus on the catastrophic situation, but looked up to the God of salvation, God who sent His lovingkindness and His truth to David. I also realized that the scope of my prayers was so limited, focusing on my situation and ministry. Now I would like to pray that the whole world will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14). I pray that God will enlarge the scope of my prayer so that the world will be filled with the greatness of the Lord and His glory.

It is a world with full of unfairness. Even in the church, people are being treated unfairly. I don't know why people's tongue is like a sharp sword (Ps. 57:4). I don't know why people are slandering each other. The people are trying to dig a pit in front of a person so that s/he may fall into it (v. 6). So there are members who are greatly hurt in the church. And there is no one to talk to about what they are going through in the church. So there are members who eventually leave the church. Not only this. There are many members in the church suffering from disasters. They don't know what they supposed to do. We must look to God only and cry out to Him. We must take refuge in Him. God will accomplish His will for us. God will also send His lovingkindness and His truth to us when are in deep disasters. Therefore, our hearts will praise God with a determined and convinced manner: "Be exalted above the heavens, O God; Let Your glory be above all the earth" (v. 5).

## **"While he was still confined"**

**"Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the second time, while he was still confined in the court of the guard, saying" (Jeremiah 33:1).**

Sometimes I feel like I'm in jail. There are times when I cannot see the solution of the problem even if I look around everywhere. At that time, I don't know what to do so I just sit down without doing anything.' The reason is that I feel a lot of my own incompetence and helplessness in a situation where everywhere looks like a wall. What I can do then is to meditate on the Word of God and to ask God for help. Especially I ask God for help in the Morning Prayer meeting when I don't know what to do with family ministry and church ministry and when I feel helpless and powerless. When I do that, the Holy Spirit who dwells in me makes me to hold onto the promise Words He gave me. At that time I hold onto that Words of God and proclaim to God in prayer. Then the grace of God I enjoy is that I am strengthened a little more by His promise Words and more firmly believe that God will fulfill His promises to me in His time. And in this faith God makes me endure patiently.

In Jeremiah 33:1, prophet Jeremiah, the servant of God, was confined in a royal prison. There, I am sure Jeremiah could ask God like this: 'God, why should I be in prison now?', 'What have I done wrong that I am going through this right now?', 'Why should I be subjected to this unfair thing? Didn't I obey You and proclaimed Your Words that You wanted me to proclaim?' etc.. And he could have blamed on God. Like the Israelites, who were "hemmed in by the desert" (Exod. 14:3) and were terrified by the Egyptians and thus cried out to the Lord (vv. 8-12), Jeremiah could have been afraid and blamed on God too. But he was not afraid, and he didn't blame anyone. Rather, he received the word of God when he was imprisoned in the royal court (Jer. 33:1). When we feel like we are hemmed in by surround circumstance in which there seems to be no solution to the problems, it may be a good opportunity to receive the Word of God. The reason is that even though we can be imprisoned by various problems, the Word of God is not imprisoned (2 Tim. 2:9). I have briefly meditated on the Word of God in two ways that came to prophet Jeremiah who was confined in the royal prison:

**First, the God who spoke to Jeremiah, who was confined in the royal prison, was "the Lord who formed it to establish it".**

Look at Jeremiah 33:2 – "Thus says the LORD who made the earth, the LORD who formed it to establish it, the LORD is His name." The Lord made the earth. Although prophet Jeremiah couldn't do the Lord's work because was imprisoned, God did His work. Not only God made the earth, but He also formed it to establish it. Our God does the work of God. Although we feel like we are in prison like Jeremiah, the Lord does His work. The Lord may use us or not use us. We are just the Lord's tools. And we, as the Lord's tools, are used by the Lord if He wants to but cannot be used unless He uses us. No matter what, we should be thankful to God. And our concern is not that we are used, but the will of the Lord is done on earth. In fulfilling His will, the Lord does His work, even though we are in a difficult situation. And that work of the Lord is salvation. Apostle Paul described this salvation work as "good work": "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Phil. 1:6). We must have this assurance like Paul. We must have conviction that the Lord who has begun to save His people, He will bring it to completion whatever circumstances that we may be in. In particular, we pray that we will accomplish the work of the Lord by faith, even though we feel imprisoned, and we should praise God in the confidence that the Lord will do.

## **Second, the word of God that came to Jeremiah, who was confined in a royal prison, was, "Call to Me."**

Look at Jeremiah 33:3 – “Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” God said to prophet Jeremiah, who was confined in the royal prison, "Call to Me." This reminds me Prophet Jonah, who disobeyed the God’s command and ran away from God through the ship, was thrown into the sea (Jon. 1:15) because a great storm would rise in the sea so that the ship would almost break (vv. 1-4). Then God prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah (v. 17) and Jonah prayed to God in the belly of the great fish (2:1). He was trapped inside the stomach of the great fish, but there he prayed to God. He looked again at the Lord's temple (v. 4). And the conclusion of his prayer was "Salvation belongs to the LORD" (v. 9). As a result, God commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land (v. 10). Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time and Jonah obeyed and went to Nineveh and proclaimed to the people of Nineveh what God had commanded him (3:1-4). Looking back on our lives, it was very difficult time like feeling imprisoned for us when we cried out to God. The only thing we could do in that situation was to cry out to God. When we looked around, north, south, east and west, there was no solution to the problem. So we had to look up to the Lord and asked God for help. When we think about that time, we can understand why God said to Jeremiah who was confined in the royal prison, "Cry out to Me." Why then did God tell Prophet Jeremiah to cry out to God while he was in the royal prison? The reason was that God promised Jeremiah that He would tell him great and mighty things, which he didn’t know (Jer. 33:3). What was God's "great and mighty things" here? It was about the discipline of God toward the people of Judah and their restoration. When they came to the temple of God, they worshiped God with their lips. But when they were outside of the temple, they worshiped idols and did evil in the sight of God. So God sent his servants diligently to tell the people of Judah to repent and return to God but they didn’t listen. As a result, God promised them that He would use the Babylonians as His instrument of discipline of love to invade Judah, and that Jerusalem would be burned and destroyed and that the remnant would be taken captive to Babylon. But besides this promise of discipline, God promised to restore the people of Judah to Jerusalem after seventy years. In the context of Jeremiah 33:1, one of the words of the restoration that God promised was to heal the city of Jerusalem, and to show them the abundance of peace and truth (v. 6). What is interesting is that God used the Babylonians to discipline the people of Judah, so that their remnants are captive in Babylon so that they might realize their sins and repent. And God promised them that He would make them clean and forgive them from all the sin they have committed against God (v. 8). And God promised them to restore the fortune of Judah and of Israel and would build them as they were at first (v. 7). God promised to bring them to health and healing and God would reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth (v. 6). This promise of restoration was received by Prophet Jeremiah as God’s answer of his cry out in the royal prison.

When I was meditating about Prophet Jeremiah being in the royal prison, I remembered the story of Joseph in Genesis 39. The reason was that Joseph was also imprisoned. Although Joseph didn’t do anything wrong, he was falsely accused and was imprisoned in the place where the king’s prisoners were confined (Gen. 39:14-20). He could have grumbled in dissatisfaction with God's guidance and lead since he couldn’t understand what God’s will was and what He was doing in his life. But Joseph didn’t do that. How was this possible? Joseph also had two years in the prison (41:1). Think about it. If we didn’t do anything wrong but we have been falsely accused of being imprisoned for two years. Then I am sure we will have a lot of thought in our minds. In particular, if I were in Joseph's situation, I would think probably that I am wasting my life in prison for two years. But as we know, God never wastes His time. Joseph, who had been loved by his father Jacob more than any other brothers (37:3), had two dreams when he was seventeen (vv. 1, 5, 9). So his older brothers hated him (v. 5) and eventually they sold him into slavery in Egypt (vv. 25-28), and he was put to jail and spent two years in prison (39:7-23, 41: 1). And thirteen years later, when Joseph was thirty years old, God made Joseph to interpret King Pharaoh’s dream, so Pharaoh established Joseph as the prime minister of Egypt (ch. 41). Thus Joseph's ages from 17 to 30 years, 2 out of 13 years, he was in prison. It seems like Joseph wasted his two precious years at his young age. But when we think about it in faith, God didn’t waste those two years of his imprisonment. During that time, Joseph met the King Pharaoh's cupbearer and

the baker (40:1-4). And Joseph interpreted their dreams (vv. 5-15). As a result, two years later, after the restoration of the Pharaoh's cupbearer's former position (v. 21), Joseph interprets the King Pharaoh's dream as well (41:9-36). As a result, Joseph became prime minister of Egypt (v. 41). Why did God work right this? What was God's purpose or God's will? Listen to what Joseph told his brothers who came down to Egypt: "Please come closer to me." And they came closer. And he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life" (45:4-5). In the plan of God's great salvation, Joseph was in prison for 2 years in the process of being prepared to be used by God. When I think about this, I get encouraged and have hope. Although I sometimes feel like I am trapped in prison and I don't know why God allows me to go through this kind of trial in my life in which I feel incompetent and helpless, God is giving me faith to believe and to have confidence in Him that He has perfect plan for me. So by faith, He encourages me and strengthens me to endure the trials with patience and hope. In doing so, my prayer is that, like Paul and Silas who were imprisoned unfairly, I want to pray and praise God (Acts 16:25). It is understandable that they prayed to God in prison, but I don't understand how they praised God in such circumstance. But when I think of the Psalmist, Paul, and Silas based on the book "the Book of Psalms"(written by Mark D. Futato), I believe in God's grace that when He gave them faith, they could not only pray but also to praise God even though they were in the difficult situation of confinement in prison. To do so, like the psalmist David and Paul and Silas, we should pray to God by faith in Almighty God who can deliver them out of the prison. We need to stand firm in faith, completely trusting in God of salvation when we pray to Him. I think Paul and Silas were able to praise God in the prison not because their situation had changed, that is they were freed from the prison, but because their hearts were changed or I should said their hearts were strengthened by God. As a result, not only did Paul and Silas enjoy freedom from the prison, but also the prison guard and his whole family came to believe in Jesus Christ and enjoyed the freedom from sin (Acts 16:26-34). What amazing providence of God and His work of salvation?

## **God who extends kindness to him when he is confined**

**“But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer” (Genesis 39:21).**

My heart is hard sometimes. The reason is that I see my loved ones suffering from sickness and lying at the crossroads of life and death. There are times when my heart is heavy and painful when I see them going through the unbelieving pain of their bodies. There isn't much I can do for them except to praise God by their side and pray to God for them and to preach the word of God. As I do so, there are times when I cannot bear the tears that come out especially when I pray for them. Then, when the loved ones leave us, God guides me to lead the funeral service with the power of His grace. But when I come to the church on Sunday morning after their funerals and see their vacancy, my heart longs for them due to their memories again. But the amazing grace is that God gives me His love a little more, a little deeper, a little greater when my heart is hard and difficult. In particular, at the end of last year, I have experienced God's love more deeply as I sent off one of my church brother in Christ to God. It was the grace of God. The small enlightenment God gave me was that the harder my heart is, the more God gives His love to me.

In Genesis 39:21, we see Joseph who has been imprisoned under a false accusation. Since Joseph was handsome in form and appearance (v. 6), his master Potiphar's wife looked with desire at Joseph (v. 7). So she spoke to Joseph day after day to “Lie with me” but Joseph didn't listen to her not only to lie beside her but also even be with her (vv. 7, 10). The reason was because Joseph didn't want to do this great evil and sin against God (v. 9). But one day, when Joseph went into the house to do his work, “none of the men of the household was there inside” (v. 11). And the Potiphar's wife caught Joseph by his garment and said “Lie with me!” (v. 12) So Joseph left his garment in her hand and had fled outside (vv. 12, 13). So she called to the men of her household and lied to them, saying Joseph tried to sleep with her (v. 14). And when her husband Potiphar came home, she told him that Joseph tried to make sport of her but she screamed for help and Joseph left his cloak beside her and ran out of the house (vv. 16-18). As a result, Joseph was imprisoned in the prison of the king's prisoner (v. 20). But the Lord was with Joseph and He showed him kindness and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer (v. 21). “The chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible for it. The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper” (vv. 22-23).

The secret of prosperity is that God is with us (vv. 2, 3, 21, 23). We are prosperous because God is with us (v. 2). Even the non-believers around us see that God is with us and that God gives us success in everything we do (v. 3). And God gives us favor in the eyes of them (vv. 4, 21). But we must remember that there can be temptations and under a false accusation (vv. 7-20). As a result, we may be stuck and face difficulties that we cannot escape by our own strength even if we look at the north, south, east, and west. What is surprising, however, is that God gives kindness to us in such adversity (v. 21). What a wonderful God's love. Therefore, although we may be trapped, it may be a best opportunity to experience the love of God more in depth and greater, so that we endure our hardship with the love of God. And finally, God will make us to open our hearts and lips to praise and worship Him because His eternal love is better than our lives (Ps. 63:3). Hallelujah.

## **'O Lord, I know I shouldn't worry but I still worry.'**

**“If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters?”  
(Luke 12:26)**

One of my concerns nowadays is brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering from depression, panic anxiety and dementia. I also worry when I think of family members who take care of them with love. When I think about how hard it must be for both who are going through depression, panic anxiety or dementia and those family members who love them, I become anxious and keep on worrying about them. Even though I know that the Bible says “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Pet. 5:7), I still worry. Even though I keep on trying to hold on to this Word of 1 Peter 5:7 and pray for them, I still worry after I have prayed for them when I think about them. It is because I am not casting all my anxiety on the Lord as the Bible says. It is because of my lack weak faith.

When we look at the context of Luke 12:26, which is verses 22-34, Jesus is saying to his disciples, ‘Do not worry.’ Jesus is also saying to us, “do not worry about your life, as to what you will eat; nor for your body, as to what you will put on” (v. 22) and “And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying” (v. 29). Why? What are His reasons? I think there are at least five reasons: (1) It is because we cannot add a single hour to our life’s span by worrying (v. 25). What’s the use of worrying about this and that. It’s no use. It doesn’t help us at all. We know this but we still worry. We cannot help ourselves from worrying. (2) It is because we cannot do even a very little thing (v. 26). I don’t know why I worry about other things because I cannot do such a small thing (v. 26). (3) It is because the non-believers run after all these things (Mt. 6:32). (4) It is because Our Father knows that we need them (Lk. 12:30). Heavenly Father knows what we need, so we shouldn’t be worried. But we still worry. The reason is because we have little faith (v. 28). Because we have little faith, we worry about our lives, what we will eat; or about our body, what we will wear (v. 22).

What should we do? We should consider the ravens (v. 24). We should look at the birds of the air (Mt. 6:26). I still remember. Last time I went to a mountain for the English ministry retreat, I looked at the birds sitting on a tree in the morning as I sat on a chair in the porch outside the house and the Bible Matthew 6:26 came in to my mind: “Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?” So when I looked at the birds and meditated for a while, I thought to myself: ‘Since Heavenly Father raises the birds, will He not raise me who is much precious and honorable than these (Isa. 43:4).’ Actually all my life, God has provided me daily food for me so I have never been without food. Also, Heavenly Father always has provided me something to wear, so I had never been naked. Rather, God allowed me to live in abundance and overflowing with food and clothes. Nevertheless, I worry about things like this. Also I worry about what to say to the other person in a relationship (Mt. 10:19). I am also concerned with the affairs of the world, that how I can please my wife (1 Cor. 7:33). Beside these things, I am concerned about our church (2 Cor. 11:28; cf. Lk. 10:41). I am very concerned and worry about a church member may not only leave the church but also leave Jesus (Deut. 29:18). Especially I worry that I will fall into the Satan’s temptations (1 Tim. 3:7). All these worries of life weight my heart down (Lk 21:34) and chock the word of God so that I cannot be fruitful (Mk. 4:19). Even though I know that I shouldn’t be like this, I am still worry about many things. To me this is what the Lord says: “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Mt. 6:34).

I don't want to worry about tomorrow. I want to live with all my worries left to the Lord. I don't know why I keep on worrying even though I know it's not going to get better. I don't know why I worry about other things even though I cannot do even the smallest thing. It is because of my little faith. I want to firmly believe in God who knows best what I need. So I don't want to worry about what to eat, what to drink and what to wear like non-believers and be busy in pursuing them. Rather, I want to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness (Mt. 6:33). And I want to prioritize my heart and my prayer straight in seeking His kingdom and His righteousness first as I trust His word that "all these things will be given to you as well" (v. 33). In order to do so, I want to devote myself more to meditating on the Word of God for the growth of my faith as well as for my firm faith in God (Rom. 10:17). As I do so, I want to see the birds flying in the air often. I also want to think about how the lilies of the field grow (Mt. 6:28). The reason is because I want to live by seeking God's kingdom and His will day by day with the conviction that the Father God will continually feed and clothe me, much more than birds and flowers.

## How can we rest when we are in such an uneasy situation?

**“Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him: With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah” (2 Chronicles 32:7-8) (KJV).**

“When I think about this, I am terrified; trembling seizes my body” (Job 21:6). If I think about the situation I am in now, I cannot sleep. I lost my appetite. I'm discouraged. It is out of my ability. I don't know what to do. I am disturbed and my spirit grows faint (Ps. 77:3). Prayer also does not come out; it is only a groaning (Ps. 38:8). How can you rest in such an uneasy situation?

In 2 Chronicles 32:7-8, Hezekiah king of Judah gathered all the people in Jerusalem to comfort them. All the people of Judah who listened to these words from King Hezekiah rested and were relieved. I wonder how this was possible. The reason for this is that the circumstances of King Hezekiah and the Jewish people were not in a state of relief when we rely on our understanding. The situation they were in was a major crisis. The great crisis was that Sennacherib king of Assyria invaded Judah and laid siege to the fortified cities, thinking to conquer them for himself (v. 1). When we encounter this kind of big crisis, our instincts is to ask the question "Why did this great crisis come to us?" Then, when God gives us grace, we come to God and pray, "What is God's will?", "Why is God giving (or allowing) this great crisis to us?" However, it seems that most of the time we cannot know the will of God even if we ask these questions so many times. So we ask ourselves, 'But I was serving God faithfully, and why this great crisis came upon me?' But we cannot understand the guidance of God with our own understanding.

In Hezekiah's view, he could have thought this way: 'God, I had reformed Judah (ch. 31), but why did You give us this great crisis when all this was finished?' (v. 1), 'How could You let King Sennacherib invade Jerusalem (32:1-2) after I done all these things faithfully, such as I broke the pillars in pieces, cut down the Asherim and pulled down the high places and the altars (31:1), after I appointed the divisions of the priests and the Levites by their divisions, each according to his service (v. 2), after I renewed the tithing (vv. 5-6), after I did what was good, right and true before the Lord my God (v. 20)?, after in everything that I undertook in the service of God's temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, I sought my God and worked wholeheartedly (v. 21) and after I did right in the sight of the Lord (29:2)?'

As I was meditating on this Word of God, I came to think of one interesting point. After King Jehoshaphat reformed Judah (19:4-20:1) the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to make war on Jehoshaphat (20:1-2), after King Hezekiah had so faithfully done reforming Judah (31:1-32:1), Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah, intending to make war on Jerusalem (32:1-2). When I saw this pattern in the Bible, I asked: 'Why did God allow this great crisis to happen in the life of the kings who had done the right thing in the sight of God?'. And I thought to myself, 'I am sure there is God's good, pleasing and perfect will (Rom. 12:2) for Job when he went through so many sufferings even though he was blameless and upright, feared God and shunned evil (Job 1:1, 8).' Of course, in the case of Job, I think God's good and pleasing and perfect will was "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you" (42:5). If we could actually experience God's presence, not just hearing about Him, through a great crisis and suffering in our lives, would we be willing to take on that great crisis and suffering? If it is the God's will, will we be able to endure any kinds of hardships and trust in God through faith



even in that great crisis and suffering? Maybe "After all that Hezekiah had so faithfully done" (2 Chron. 32:1) the reason why God allowed Hezekiah to suffer the great crisis might be that Hezekiah must trust in God with all his heart (Prov. 3:5). The reason I think so is because what Sennacherib king of Assyria said through his servants whom he sent to Jerusalem to Hezekiah king of Judah and to the crowd of Judea in Jerusalem: "... What do you trust? "On what are you basing your confidence ...?" (2 Chron. 32:9-10a) ["On what are you basing this confidence of yours?" (2 Kgs. 18:9)]. As Sennacherib said, what did King Hezekiah and the Jewish people trust? It was God who was with them (vv. 7, 8). They were not afraid or dismayed because they trusted Immanuel God (v. 7). In particular, King Hezekiah, the leader of the people of Judah, relied on Immanuel God with all his heart, so he could gather the people of Judah and comfort them in the square at the Jerusalem city gate (v. 6). And his comforting message was a sure word of trusting God entirely. It is that 'God, who is with us, is greater than the one with King Sennacherib and our God will help us and will fight our battles' (vv. 7-8). In fact, in 2 Kings 18: 5-6, the Bible says of King Hezekiah: "He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him. For he clung to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses." Therefore the LORD was with Hezekiah, and he prospered wherever he went (v. 8).

Since King Hezekiah trusted the God who was with him and the people of Judah, he was strong, courageous, fearless, and didn't dismayed (2 Chron. 32:7). That was why he was able to gather all the people in the city of Jerusalem to him in the square at the city gate and to speak to comfort them (v. 6). As a result, all of them could rest themselves upon the words of King Hezekiah (v. 8). In other words, all the people of Judah were able not to be afraid and dismayed, but rather to be strong and courageous, because they trusted God like Hezekiah (v. 7, note: 2 Kgs. 18:22, 30). All of them trusted Immanuel God who would help them and fight their battles (2 Chron. 32:7-8) and who would deliver them from the hand of the king of Assyria (v. 11; cf. 2 Kgs. 18:32). And because they rested themselves upon the words of King Hezekiah and had assurance of God's deliverance, they didn't fear King Sennacherib and his army but was strong and courageous (2 Chron. 32:7-8). This reminds me Joshua 1:9 – "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

When I personally experience disappointment and uneasiness, the Holy Spirit often reminds me Psalms 43:5 and helps me to hold on to that God's promise and pray to God: "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God." As I hold onto this Word and pray to God, this is how I pray: 'James, Why are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God!' At that time, the Holy Spirit restores and revives my soul and persuades me to look up to the Lord my Hope and not the discouraging and disturbed situation that I am in. Our faithful Lord tells us who are discouraged and anxious: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid" (Mt. 14:27), "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven" (9:2), "Take heart ... your faith has healed you" (v. 22). I hope and pray that we may hear the voice of the Lord so that our hearts may be comforted and be strengthened to be bold for Him and His glory alone.

## **When we do not know what to do**

**“O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you” (2 Chronicles 20:12).**

I sometimes do not know what to do. Actually, it seems that more and more I don't know what to do. When I immigrated to America at the age of twelve, I didn't even know any English alphabet. But when I went to school, a teacher said to all the class that there would be test next day, memorizing twenty English words. I didn't know what to do. I cried that night and barely memorized all twenty English words. Next day I went to school and tried to take the exam, but the teacher said I don't need to take the test because I came yesterday. I couldn't believe it. I still remember I couldn't adapt to American culture when I was adolescent. In addition, I didn't know what to do when I went to college because no matter how hard I studied I couldn't get good grades. After college, I went to the theological school and it was very hard studying and I was so stressed out that I got sick and had to do surgery. And after surgery, I didn't know what to do so I took off six months from school. The worst 'I didn't know what to do' time was when my first baby's doctor ask me to choose whether to let the baby die quickly or die slowly. At that time, I felt like I was hit by a hammer. I didn't know what to say to the doctor at that time. When I look at back my life, there were so many times I didn't know what to do. It is the same now. I still don't know what to do so many times. I still don't know what to do in my church ministry. Also I often don't know how to take care for my children, especially when I look at myself in the Word of God. There are more things that I don't know what to do. I think the more I live, the more I don't know what to do. What should I do then?

In 2 Chronicles 20:12, we can see Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and the people of Judah, who didn't know what to do. The situation, which they didn't know what to do, was that the Moabites and the Ammonites came together with some Meunites to make war against Jehoshaphat, king of Judah (vv. 1-2). King Jehoshaphat, who had been informed about the situation, was afraid and turned his attention to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah (v. 3). Then the people of Judah came to Jerusalem from all over the country to seek help from God (v. 4). When they gathered in the new courts of the temple of God, King Jehoshaphat stood in the crowd and prayed to God (vv. 4-12). One of the contents of the prayer is 2 Chronicles 20:12. I briefly summarized the prayer in three ways: (1) 'O our God, we are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us', (2) 'O our God, we don't know what to do', and (3) 'O our God, our eyes are on You.' God heard the prayer of King Jehoshaphat and answered to Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat through Jahaziel the son of Zechariah (vv. 14-15). Based on this God's answer, I want to think about three things about what to do when we don't know what to do. I hope and pray that God teaches us these three lessons so that we may obey them and able to overcome situations that we don't know what to do.

**First, when we do not know what to do, we must know that the fearful situation belongs not to us, but to God.**

Look at 2 Chronicles 20:15 – “and he said, "Listen, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: thus says the LORD to you, 'Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's.'" God, who heard the prayers of Jehoshaphat king of Judah and the people of Judah, answered them through Jahaziel and told them not to be afraid or be dismayed because of the great multitude of Moabites, Ammonites with some of the Meunites. And God told them that the great war against the great army that came against Judah was not their but God's (v. 15).

When I meditated on this, I thought, “Spiritual warfare belongs to God. The life and death belong to God. The ministry belongs to God. Therefore, I should not be afraid.” I am now in a spiritual war. I am fighting with myself, with sin, with the world, with Satan, and with death. In particular, I often don’t know what to do in a spiritual battle with my sinful nature. Although I know that I have to repent in my head, but my heart is not repenting my sins. I have no broken heart and contrite spirit to repent. I don’t know what to do when I see myself that I cannot even repent. However, the message of God gave me today through 2 Chronicles 20:15 is that the spiritual battle with my sinful nature is not of mine but of God’s. The same is true for life and death. I don’t know what to do when I think about my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering from sickness. So I am praying to God for them. When I think about those who were at the crossroads of life and death and then passed away to be with the Lord in heaven, I am beginning to realize the truth that our God is the God who controls life and death. In the midst of this, as I was reading 2 Chronicles 20:15, “... For the battle is not yours, but God’s” and was meditating on it, I thought that the life and death belongs to God. So is the ministry. One of my biggest concerns is my church ministry. There are many times when I don’t know how to handle pastoral ministry. So as I was reading 2 Chronicles 20:15, I thought that the ministry belongs not to me, but to God. When I thought of it, peace came to my heart. I remembered what Apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 5:7 – “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” I want to cast all my anxiety on Him. I want to cast my spiritual battle, my life and death and my ministry to God. And I don’t want to be anxious and afraid anymore. I don’t want to be afraid of any crisis that will come in my future life. I want to hold on to the promised Word of God that my mother is holding onto: “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” And I will live day by day, believing that everything belongs to God.

**Second, when we do not know what to do, we must believe that the God of salvation is with us.**

Look at 2 Chronicles 20:17 – “You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.” God, who heard the prayers of King Jehoshaphat and of the people of Judah, answered them through Jahaziel that they didn’t need to fight this battle. God told them to set their own position and see the deliverance of the Lord (v. 17). I thought about Exodus 14:13-14: “Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.” And according to the Moses’ faith, God of salvation covered the Egyptians with water, and none of them survived, and the Israelites were saved from the hands of the Egyptians (Exod. 14:27-30). The same God of salvation told King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah, “You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you” (2 Chron. 20:17). And God said to them, “Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you” (v. 17).

When I meditated on this, I thought to myself: “We are confronted with our great enemies without being afraid and not surprised because we believe that the God of salvation is with us.” If we have this Immanuel faith when we are in any crisis and adversity, we can look to the God of salvation. No matter how much we don’t have the power to overcome the crisis and adversity, and even if we don’t know what we should do, we can only look at the Lord with Immanuel faith. I remembered the gospel song “We will set our eyes on You”: “... Oh Lord, we know You’re watching us With Your eyes of everlasting love O Lord, we know You hear our prayers With Your ears of unfailing love You shed a light to the darkest path And You answer every prayer, big or small No matter when it is or where we stand We will set our eyes on You” (Internet). Our God is the God who always hears our prayers with His ears of unfailing love. And our God even hears our small sound of moaning and answers our prayers. This God is the God of salvation who is always with us, who never leaves us and forsake us (Josh. 1:5). And this is God who is with us and delivers us (Jer. 1:8). We must believe that this God of salvation is with us. We

should not rely on our understanding, but trust in God (Prov. 3: 5; 2 Chron. 20:20). If we confront the terrible situation we face as we trust God with Immanuel faith, God will surely rescue us.

### **Third, when we do not know what to do, we should praise and worship God with thanksgiving.**

Look at 2 Chronicles 20:18-19: “Jehoshaphat bowed with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the LORD. Then some Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood up and praised the LORD, the God of Israel, with very loud voice.” King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah, who heard the God’s word through Jahaziel, fell down on the ground and worship before the Lord and some Levites praised Him. On the next day, when Judah was about to leave for the Desert of Tekoa, King Jehoshaphat, in consultation with the people, appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise Him for the splendor of His holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: “Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever” (vv. 20-21). And as they began to sing and praise, God caused confusion among the invaders and caused them to strike one another (v. 22). When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked toward the vast army, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground, and there was no survivor (v. 24). So King Jehoshaphat and the men of Judah went to carry off their plunder, gathering great amount of equipment and clothing and also article of value, more than they could take away so it took three days to collect it (v. 25). And on the fourth day they gathered in the Valley of Beracah, where they praised God (v. 26). What a marvelous work of God’s miraculous salvation (v. 27). Thus, King Jehoshaphat and the men of Judah returned to Jerusalem joyfully and went to the temple of the Lord with harps and lutes and trumpets (vv. 27-28). “The fear of God came upon all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard how the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel” (v. 29). As a result Jehoshaphat ruled the country peacefully because God gave him rest on every side (v. 30).

As I meditated on these words, these thoughts came to me: “If I begin to praise God with thanksgiving in my heart because of His eternal love, trusting that the crisis that I faced belongs to God and He will deliver me from it, then God will save me” and “The Christians, who give praise to God in the midst of their fearful circumstance by faith in God, will taste the joy of salvation and the joy of victory.” How can we thank God when we are in fearful circumstance? How can we praise God in such circumstances? It is an act and a heart that we cannot understand with our own understanding. We can never thank God when we are controlled by fearful circumstances. If we have fear in our hearts, we cannot praise God wholeheartedly. In order to give thanks and praise God in our fearful situations, we must be governed by God rather than our fearful situations, and there must be trust in God of salvation rather than fear in our hearts. Look at Acts 16:25 – “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.” How could Paul and Silas who were in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stock, were able to pray and praise God? Of course, we will pray to God because we don’t know what to do when we are in a circumstance that is beyond our abilities to handle. But how can we praise God in such circumstance? This is impossible without the belief that God will save us from such fearful circumstance. And that faith is given by God as God’s answer to our prayer. After all, what we can do in that situation is to pray with our faith by looking at the God of salvation. And we will be able to praise God only when we are convinced that God will answer our prayers with His salvation. But I think more correct answer is that we can praise God in a fear circumstance because God makes us to praise Him. When my first baby Charis was at the Children Hospital Intensive Care Unit and her doctor asked me whether to let her die slowly or die quickly, I told her to let her die slowly. Then I read the Bible the next day and received grace in the words of Psalms 63:3 – “Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.” When I meditated on this word, this thought came into my mind: ‘The Lord’s eternal love is better than the Chris’ 55 days life in this earth so my lips will praise the Lord.’ So I spoke to my wife and told her to let her go. Then we contacted the doctor and told her that we would let Charis go quickly. And we call our immediate family members and we all gathered at the hospital ICU and had final worship beside Charis. After we worshiped God in the ICU, her nurse gave Chris to me and she died in my

arms of love. After that, we cremated her body and took a small box with her ash and spread in water. As we were coming back to the land, I was on the back of the boat driving it and my wife in front. And suddenly she looked at back and told me "Titanic" (Titanic movie). When I heard her saying that, the gospel song "My Savior's Love" (or "I Stand in Amazed") burst from my lips and I praised God. Even now, when I think about that moment, I cannot help but confess that God made me to praise Him even in such a terrible grief. Our God is worthy to receive praise and worship. Our God makes us to praise Him even in the great crisis of our lives. And He does so by enabling us to experience His eternal love in such great crisis. Thus, He enables us to praise Him with thanksgiving in our hearts for the love of God's eternal salvation. "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD" (Ps. 150:6).

## When He was oppressed and afflicted

**"He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7-9).**

What do you do when you are troubled? I liked to sing the gospel song "In these dark days lift up your eyes": "In these dark days lift up your eyes to Jesus, lift your eyes He's still upon the throne, And come what may, He never will forsake you For He is God to Him all things are known. Lift up your eyes He still is there, Be not dismayed He knows your weight of care, In these dark days lift up your eyes to Jesus And trust in Him He will your burden bear" (Internet). Are we lifting our eyes upon Him when we are troubled? Or are we committing sin against God in discouragement, disappointment, and pain by grumbling when we look at the painful circumstance that we are in?

In Isaiah 53:7, the Bible says that the Messiah "was oppressed and afflicted." I want to think about what He did when He was oppressed and afflicted in three ways so that we may learn and apply them in our lives.

### **First, we must not open our mouth when we are oppressed and afflicted.**

Look at Isaiah 53:7 – "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth." The Messiah was silent when He was oppressed and afflicted. The Bible says "He did not open His mouth" and "like a sheep that is silent" (v. 7). How could He be silent in the midst of oppression, affliction and judgement? (vv. 7-8) Our nature is to open our mouths and defend ourselves when we are oppressed and afflicted. This is an extremely natural behavior. For example, if we didn't do anything wrong but falsely accused and charged, we will stand in court and defend ourselves through a lawyer. But Messiah didn't open His mouth, even though He who had no sin became like a silent sheep that was taken to the slaughter. This is what Henry Nowen said in his book "The Only Necessary Thing: Living a Prayerful Life": 'I am so afraid to hear the words of the curse, or whether I am useless or inferior, I soon overtake the temptation to open my mouth again. It is to overcome my fear.' We have the instinct to open our mouths and to keep on talking when we are troubled because we are being oppressed and afflicted. But Messiah Jesus didn't open His mouth. He had acted beyond human instincts. How is this possible? I looked up the answer in Isaiah 30:15 – "... in quietness and trust is your strength ...." When we are oppressed and afflicted, our strength is to quietly trust God.

We must learn to be silent when we are oppressed and afflicted. To do so, we need to listen to Henry Nowen's words in his book, "The Only Necessary Thing: Living a Prayerful Life": 'The Word leads to silence, and silence leads to the Word. The Word is born in silence, and silence is the deepest response to the Word.' The phrase 'silence is the deepest response to the Word' is challenging to me. We must learn to be silent while quietly trusting the God's promise Word when we are oppressed and afflicted like Jesus and are troubled. We may hear many voices and we would like to say a lot, but we should be silent when we are oppressed and afflicted. In silence we must hear God's quite voice. And that voice is the voice of Heavenly Father which Jesus heard: "You are my

Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased” (Mk. 1:11). This is what Henry Nowen said: ‘It is not easy to listen to a small and intimate voice of God saying, ‘You are my child, whom I love; with you I am well pleased’ as we enter into silence and turn away the noisy and troublesome voices of the world. However, if we embrace solitude and make silence as our friend, we will know the voice.’ We must boldly embrace solitude and make silence as our friend.

### **Second, we must think when we are oppressed and afflicted.**

Look at Isaiah 53:8 – “By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.” The Jewish people at the time of Jesus thought wrongly that Jesus was “stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted” (v. 4). But actually He was stricken because of “the transgression of my people” (v. 8). In other words, Jesus, the Messiah, is desperately despised and persecuted for our transgressions. Jesus Christ is without sins who was oppressed and judged on our behalf and died on the cross in order to atone our sins.

We need to think about this. We must meditate on the sufferings of Jesus and the death of the cross in silence and think biblically. Especially when we are oppressed and afflicted, there is a danger of not being able to think biblically. So when we are oppressed and afflicted, we must think biblically in silence. Usually, when we are oppressed and afflicted, it is easy for us to grumble and complain. Also, we are more likely to be angry and be emotional than to think logically. Instead of thinking in terms of the Word of God, we are more likely to be guided by our emotion and commit sin against God. But when we are oppressed and afflicted, we must think of the Word of God. We must think about Jesus. We must meditate on Jesus' suffering and His death in silence when we are oppressed and afflicted.

### **Lastly, we must not commit sin when we are oppressed and afflicted.**

Look at Isaiah 53:9 – “He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.” It is easy for us to commit sins when we are oppressed and afflicted. We can sin against God with our lips and also with our actions. But Jesus did not sin when he was oppressed and afflicted. The Bible says that when Jesus was oppressed and afflicted, there was no deceit in his mouth. That is, Jesus didn't sin with his lips when he was suffering. Jesus also didn't do violence. Jesus did not sin with words or deeds when he was oppressed and afflicted. Jesus did not sin until death. Though his grave was with the wicked and buried in the tomb of a rich man named Joseph of Arimathea, Jesus did not sin against God in any way, either in lips or action. Is this really possible? A possible example is Job in the Bible. He didn't sin with his lips and actions by the grace of God. Since Job did it by God's grace, we can do it too by His grace. This is what the Bible Job 1:22 and 2:10 say: “Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God. ... But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips.” Rather, Job worshiped God when he was suffering (1:20).

Therefore, when we are suffering, we must not sin against God in our lips or actions. Rather, we must be silent. And we should hear in silence the Heavenly Father's quiet voice, ‘You are my beloved child, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’ We must remain silent before the throne of God's grace to hear the word of God's promise. In such a situation, we should be driven by the Word of God rather than by our emotions in response to our agonizing environment. We need to look at the painful situation with biblical thoughts. In particular, we must overcome our suffering environment by looking at Jesus who suffered. Victory!

## The Lord who gives peace to the afflicted heart

**"He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).**

I was afflicted. My heart was painful and heavy. Whenever I think of her whom I love in the Lord, I was very stressed and I had a sour stomach. It was painful for me to see her suffering so much. I didn't know what to do and how to help her so I prayed for her. But even while I was praying for her, my heart continued to be heavy and painful. Sometimes it was so hard to see her going through painful moments of her life. And I had the urge to avoid her. Although I knew in my head that she was the one who was suffering the most, but my heart was so painful that I even had a selfish idea of avoiding her. I even thought that she could die. I lived day by day without knowing when the Lord would rescue her and give me peace.

Then one day as I was driving to the place where I exercise, I heard a pastor's sermon from the Christian radio station in the car. When I heard it, I asked myself these questions: 'Do I really trust in God?', 'Maybe I am not casting all my heavy burden to God?', 'Maybe I am seeking my own will instead of God's will?' Having asked these questions to myself as I was driving toward the exercise place, when I arrived there and was exercising the Holy Spirit reminded me of 1 Peter 5:7 – "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." So I grabbed this word and prayed to God in my heart. I sought God's help. I asked God to help me to cast all my anxiety and heavy burden on the Lord entirely. Then I proclaimed to my own soul, saying: 'O James, cast all your burdens to the Lord. Why don't you cast all your burden to the Lord? Why are you still worried and anxious?' I confessed my weakness in my faith to God and asked him to have mercy on me and strengthen my faith. Although I was kept on praying to God, my heart was still without peace and was constantly heavy, hard, and tense. Then, on Saturday, in order to prepare Sunday sermons for English Ministry, I read and meditated on the 1 Peter 5:7 in English. As I was doing so, I read and meditated on the context of 1 Peter 5:7 too. As I was doing so, the verse 10 came to my mind: "... after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast." The Holy Spirit gave me faith and hope through this Word that the one whom I love would suffer a little while and after suffering God would restore her. Also the Holy Spirit made me to believe, hope and expect that God would make her strong and firm and steadfast. At that time I was strengthened by the Word of 1 Peter 5:10. And I remembered what I preached before: "for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord" (1 Thess. 3:8). From that time on, I felt better. I was able to breathe better. Then as I was proclaiming the word of God based on 1 Peter 5: 7, 10 in the Sunday worship service, I began to expect more and became more hopeful in my heart. And gradually, heaviness and bitterness disappeared in my heart and peace began to come in.

In Isaiah 53:7, Prophet Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would be oppressed and afflicted, yet He would not open His mouth. Also he prophesied that the Messiah would be led like a lamb to the slaughter, "and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth." According to this prophecy of Isaiah, Jesus Christ ("Messiah") answered Herod nothing when He was questioned by Herod (Lk. 23:9). Why did Jesus Christ remain silent? If Jesus was silent when he was oppressed and afflicted, shouldn't we be silent also when we are suffering? What is the reason? The reason is to listen to the voice of the Lord in silence when we are suffering and troubled. In other words, when we are troubled, we need to be quiet in order to hear the Lord's voice. Though we have a urge to speak this and that not only to those close to us but even to the Lord when we are suffering and troubled, we must overcome that impulse and listen to the word of God in silence. We must be quiet and trust in God (Isa. 30:15). In doing so, we will be strengthened and will receive salvation (v. 15). I think that Jesus Christ suffered all kinds of



suffering and was silent first for the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 53:7, and secondly to hear the voice of God the Father in silence, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Mt. 3:17). I think Jesus obeyed His Father in Heaven to the death on the cross (Phil. 2:8) because of our transgressions and iniquities (Isa. 53:5) as His beloved and well pleased Son as He quietly looked to His Father. As a result, we have peace and we are healed (Isa. 53:5).

It is easy for us to sin with our lips if we open our mouths when we are afflicted and hard (v. 9). We can not only blame on people but also blame on God (Job 1:22). Thus, we need to be quiet when we are afflicted and hard. We must be strengthened by quietly trusting God (Isa. 30:15). We must obtain the strength to withstand the pain and suffering so that we may faithfully be able to fulfill the mission that the Lord gave to each one of us even in any painful and suffering situation. We must obey the Lord until death as we look upon the Lord who gives peace to our troubled heart. Therefore, we can hear the voice of God saying, 'This is my child, whom I love; with him I am well pleased' (Mt. 3:17).

## **When I want to die because of my burden**

**“So Moses said to the LORD, ‘Why have You been so hard on Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all this people on me? ... I alone am not able to carry all this people, because it is too burdensome for me. So if You are going to deal thus with me, please kill me at once, if I have found favor in Your sight, and do not let me see my wretchedness’” (Numbers 11:11, 14-15).**

Isn't there a limit to endure hardship? Aren't you very tired in your mind and body so you no longer can hold it anymore after thus far you have tried to the best of your ability to keep it up?

One of the first Korean word that I ever heard when I went to Korea in the early 2000's was 'Beo-ti-da'. Basically, it means in English 'Endure.' At that time, the impression that I got from some of the young people whom I met in my church ministry were constantly enduring their hardships in their own tough situations. I wondered how hard it was to use the word 'Beo-ti-da'. Of course, I knew that I couldn't fully understand at all what they were going through. It was just that my heart went out to them and I just wanted the Lord to use me to comfort them and encourage them. So I had fellowship with them in the Lord. And through that fellowship, I saw them living with heavy burdens of the inside. I was sure that it wasn't easy at all for them to bear their heavy burden alone. But I was proud of them because they were enduring their hardships and faithfully doing their best to live their Christian life. At the same time, I was worried about how long they could endure.

In Numbers 11: 11, 14-15, we see Moses, who alone couldn't able to bear the burden of all the Israelites, praying to God to kill him so that he didn't need to see his wretchedness anymore. How burdensome and painful was Moses that he prayed to God that he would kill him immediately? How heavy was his given responsibility that he had to bear so that he had to ask God to kill him immediately? What was the reason? The reason was that all the Israelites whom God had entrusted to Moses became to Moses as very heavy burden (v. 11). Moses couldn't carry them anymore (v. 12). He could no longer carry them in his bosom as a nurse carried a nursing infant, to the land with God swore to their fathers (v. 12). The reason was because of the rabble who were among them had greedy desire, the Israelites wept again and said “Who will give us meat to eat?” (v. 4) Then they missed the food they had when they were in Egypt, when they were slaves in the past (v. 5). The Israelites no longer wanted to eat the manna that God gave them from heaven (vv. 6-9). So each one of them wept at the doorway of his tent (v. 10). When Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, he was displeased (v. 10). The Israelites, who refused the manna that God gave them from heaven because of their greed desire wept again in complaints, became big burden to Moses that he could not bear alone. Where could Moses find meat to feed that many Israelites? He could no longer able to bear responsibility for the Israelites because it was too burdensome for him (v. 14). So since he no longer wanted to see his wretchedness, he asked God to kill him (v. 15). To this Moses, whose heart was so heavy that he wanted to die, God said three things:

**First, God told Moses to gather for Him 70 men from the elders of Israel, whom Moses knew to be the elders of the people and their officers and bring them to the tent of meeting.**

Look at Numbers 11:16 – “The LORD therefore said to Moses, "Gather for Me seventy men from the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and their officers and bring them to the tent of

meeting, and let them take their stand there with you.” The reason God told Moses like this was so that Moses didn’t have to bear the burdens of the Israelites alone but to share the burden of the Israelites with the 70 men (v. 17). Thus, God raised the 70 leaders who could share the Moses’ responsibility so that Moses didn’t have to bear it by himself any longer. When I meditated on this word, I remembered Prophet Elijah who sought to die under a broom tree (1 Kgs. 19: 4). After the victory over the Baal prophets in Mount Carmel, the queen of Jezebel threatened to kill Elijah so Elijah ran for his life because he was afraid (vv. 2-3). And he went into the desert and said to God, “I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too” (vv. 10, 14). When Elijah was chased by Jezebel and went into the desert, he thought that all the other prophets were killed by the sword and he was left alone. Then God said to Elijah, “Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel – all those knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him” (v. 18). Although Elijah thought that all the other prophets were slain and he was left alone, God left 7,000. I applied these two words of Moses and Elijah to the leaders of the church as I was meditating on them. I think the church leaders can be discouraged and burn out because they can consider serving the Lord’s sheep too heavy to bear as they feed them the Word of God. And I think their feeling of aloneness can make them even harder in that discouragement. In other words, they can go through extreme loneliness. Although they can be many people around them, the church leaders can still feel extreme loneliness and even depression when they think no one understand them. And they can experience despair in loneliness and burnout, deepening their discouragement. Although this is a great crisis for the church leaders, God can make the great crisis as an opportunity for them. And the opportunity is that God gives the church leaders the opportunity to yearn for God again, to hope for God, and also to revive their anxious and depressed soul by the Word of God. In the process, God knows that they can no longer bear the burden of their great responsibility alone so God raises or sends the helpers or co - workers to them. Therefore, God helps the church leaders to continue to serve the Lord’s church. This is God’s grace and comfort to the church leaders.

**Second, God told the Israelites through Moses that He would give them meat for a whole month, until it comes out of their nostrils and becomes loathsome to the Israelites who were complaining because they were badly influenced by the rabble among them who had greed desires.**

Look at Numbers 11: 18-20: “Say to the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat; for you have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, ‘Oh that someone would give us meat to eat! For we were well-off in Egypt.’ Therefore the LORD will give you meat and you shall eat. ‘You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, but a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you; because you have rejected the LORD who is among you and have wept before Him, saying, ‘Why did we ever leave Egypt?’” I don’t understand why God gave the Israelites the meat they wanted in greed. In particular, I don’t understand why God gave them the meat when they cried before God, saying, “For we were well-off in Egypt” (v. 18), “Why did we leave Egypt?” and they had rejected the Lord who was among them (v. 20). Shouldn’t God punish the Israelites who rejected Him instead of giving them the meat? Why did God hear their prayers in tears and grumbling before God? (Cf. Exod. 16:7-9, 12). Maybe it was for them not to complain to Moses anymore so it could be less burdensome to Moses? I think I can find the answer in Exodus 16:12 – “... and you shall know that I am the LORD your God.” That is why God responded their prayers in tears grumbling before God, because God wanted them to know that He is God. I meditated on this word and applied it to the church members. If the church members are influenced by non-Christians in this world and cry out to the leaders of the church in greed to give them more than a daily bread, I wonder how the leaders will response. Furthermore, if the church members cry out to the church leaders in such a way that they ate and lived better before they believe in Jesus, how would the church leaders respond? If the church leaders feel so much burdensome to the church members and come to God and say, ‘God, are they my children? Am I their father? Why do you ask me carry them into the kingdom of heaven with them as a nurse carries a nursing infant?’ I wonder how God will respond to them. Will God listen to the prayers of the church members who cry in complaints even though it is petition in

dissatisfaction? Will God answer their prayer even though their prayer is out of their covetous hearts? In light of today's text, I think God will listen to such prayers and answer them. And I think God will make them not to complain to the church leaders anymore, and will ease the leaders' burdens and their heavy responsibilities. The purpose is so that the church leaders can continue to serve the sheep that the Lord has entrusted to them. It is God's grace and comfort to the church leaders.

**Third, God said to Moses, who couldn't believe the Lord's power, "Is the Lord's power limited? Now you shall see whether My word will come true for you or not."**

Look at Numbers 11:23 – “The LORD said to Moses, "Is the LORD'S power limited? Now you shall see whether My word will come true for you or not.” When the Israelites were weeping and said, “Oh that someone would give us meat to eat! For we were well-off in Egypt”, God heard their cries and told them He would give them meat for “a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you” (vv. 18, 20). But Moses said, “The people, among whom I am, are 600,000 on foot; yet You have said, 'I will give them meat, so that they may eat for a whole month'” (v. 21). What does this mean? Moses meant that in his human calculated mind with all the fish of the sea be gather together for the Israelites and flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, it's not sufficient for them to eat for the whole month (v. 22). In this impossible situation, Moses didn't fully trust God. He didn't believe in the power of God. So God said to Moses, “Is the LORD'S power limited? Now you shall see whether My word will come true for you or not” (v. 23). And God sent forth a wind and drove the quail from the sea into the camp and let them fall beside the camp, “about a day's journey on this side and a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp and about two cubits deep on the surface of the ground” so that the “people spent all day and all night and all the next day, and gathered the quail” (vv. 31-32). In the end, God made not only Moses but also the Israelites to know God's omnipotence and faithfulness as He promised. I meditated on this word and applied it to the church. Although the Lord gave me the word of promise that He will build His church (Mt 16:18), often time I doubt and didn't believe in the Almighty God that He has been fulfilling His promise as I focused on the church circumstance instead of the Lord. Then time to time, the indwelling Holy Spirit let me remember the promise Word of the Lord ‘I will build my church’ (Mt. 16:18), and help me to hold on to that promised word. And the Holy Spirit makes me to expect and wait in prayer. The Lord will build His church in the Lord's way in the Lord's time. The Lord will make me and my church members to see what the Lord has accomplished as He promised in Matthew 16:18. This is the total grace of God and comfort to our church members.

I remembered the gospel song "You are my son": “When I wept in pain, Disappointed with myself and enfeebled, He said to me, wiping away my tears With His nailed hands. When I was weary and fell in despair, without strength to get up, He came silently and spoke me, holding my hands. You are my son, I formed you today. You are my son, my beloved song” (Internet). I hope and pray that the Lord speaks to those who are weeping in pain, are disappointed with themselves and enfeebled in this desert-like world and fulfills His promise words to them. I also hope and pray that the Lord helps us no to bear a heavy burden by ourselves but to bear it together so that they may work together as a team. May the Lord expose our covetous hearts by answering even our complaining prayer and discipline us in love so that we may be satisfied with the Lord alone and may learn the secret of contentment. I hope and pray that the Lord fulfills the promise of Matthew 16:18 to me, who is a leader of the church, and to all those in our church so that we may learn the truth that the Lord's power is not limited. I pray that we will always walk by faith with the Lord and be victorious.

## **When all the hope of the world is cut off**

**“Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish, and he said, “I called out of my distress to the LORD, And He answered me I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; You heard my voice.” (Jonah 2:1-2).**

Our people live with hope. We cannot live without hope. Because we have hope, we are eating, drinking, working and living day by day. The hope that some of us have is hoping to 'get better' and strive to overcome the current adversity and painful environment. Others are not giving up their lives but endure and persevere in the midst of difficulties with the expectation that "I will be able to succeed someday". There is hope for something in us, so we are enduring day by day. If this hope in us dies, we are alive but actually we are good as dead. That's why we are struggling to keep hope in us. But what would we do if we lose even the hope that we struggle to keep alive?

In Jonah 2: 1-2, Jonah, who had been disobedient to God's command and was on a ship and fleeing to Tarshish in the opposite direction of Nineveh (1:2-3), was eventually thrown into the sea by the sailors (v. 15) and prayed to the Lord in the stomach of the great fish (2:1). In other words, he prayed to God when all the hopes of the world had been cut off. Jonah looked at God and prayed to him in an impossible situation where there was no hope of living any more in human's perspective. Jonah looked at God and asked God for help in the life and death situation where he could not save himself and no one could help him. What is surprising is that even in such circumstances Jonah offered a thanksgiving prayer to God. How can we know this? The Bible says, "Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the stomach of the fish" in Jonah 2:1. Here the word "prayed" was used as a prayer of thanksgiving (1 Sam. 2:1; 2 Sam. 7:27). How could Jonah be able to give thanks to God even when all the hope of the world was cut off? There were two reasons:

**First, Jonah was able to give thanks to God even when all the hope of the world was cut off because he repented of his sins through God's given suffering.**

When Jonah disobeyed God's command and was running away from the presence of God, God threw the great wind on the sea. As a result, all the Gentile captain and the sailors were in danger because of Jonah. When they were suffering because of the great storm, God made Jonah to confess his sins to the sailors. Moreover, God made Jonah to show the action of his repentance by making him to be thrown into the sea by the sailors. And when he was thrown into the sea God provided a great fish to swallow Jonah (1:17). As a result, Jonah was able to give thanks to God in his prayer inside the stomach of the great fish even though he was in a situation where all the hopes of this world had been cut off. Although he was cut off from all the hopes of the world, he was able to give thanks to God because he enjoyed freedom from sin by repenting his sins of disobedience.

We can offer a thanksgiving prayer to God, even when we have lost all hope in the world. Though our circumstances seem to be hopeless, if we can confess our sins and repent, we can give thanks to God. Even if our hope of the world is cut off, we can give thanks to God if the problem of our sin can be resolved in Jesus Christ. If we are cut off from everything we believe in because of our sins, we must believe in Jesus who is our true hope. And we must confess our sins to God by relying on the merits of the cross of Jesus. We must show the actions of repentance. We must make a decision. If the problem of our sins can be resolved in Jesus Christ, we must thank God, even though all the things we believe in and all our hopes are cut off. We must give thanks to God for our true hope Jesus Christ who

crucified on the cross and shed his precious blood for forgiveness of our sins and our salvation, even all the hope of the world is cut off.

**Second, Jonah was able to give thanks to God even when all the hope of the world was cut off because he looked again toward God of salvation in his suffering.**

Jonah didn't look toward God when he was disobeying God's command. Rather, he fled to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord (1:3). He also didn't look toward God, even though the ship was nearly broken due to the great wind and the great storm that God threw on the sea. But God didn't give up on Jonah, and eventually made him to look toward God inside the stomach of the great fish. What kind of God did Jonah look toward? He is the God of salvation (2:9). He looked toward the God of salvation, who could save him from his sins. At last, Jonah looked toward God of salvation from the stomach of the fish that was deep in the sea. Jonah sought the God of salvation in the situation that all the hope of the world was cut off. And he prayed to the God of salvation. He gave a prayer of thanks to God. And he confessed, "Salvation is from the Lord" (v. 9). Although Jonah wasn't saved yet and was still inside the stomach of the great fish, he gave God a prayer of confession that salvation is from the Lord. When he did, God saved Jonah not only from his sin, but also from the stomach of the great fish what was in the deep sea where all the hope of the world was cut off. Unlike Jonah, who disobeyed God, the great fish obeyed God's command and vomited Jonah upon the dry land (v. 10).

We must look toward the God of salvation, even when all the hope of the world is cut off. When there is no hope of salvation in this world, we must look to Him who is the hope of true salvation. There is no salvation of the world. When no one in the world is able to save us, we must look to the Lord, the true savior. And we must pray for the salvation of God by faith. In doing so, God will not only save us from our sins, but He will also deliver us from the situation in which all our hopes of the world are cut off. Victory!

## Prophet Elijah with bipolar disorder?

**“And he was afraid and arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers” (1 Kings 19:3-4).**

There was a woman who had been suffering from bipolar disorder used to come to our church. When she was happy, she was very good to her apartment neighbors. So I think she did her best for a year or so to three women in her apartment complex and eventually brought them to our church. But when she was in bed mood in her depression, she had a big fight with those three women and all of them left our church. Several years ago, she tried to take her own life. So our church elder and my wife went to her apartment immediately. After all, she had a big head injury and went to the hospital for surgery. And after the surgery, she had to go into the nursing home. In the process, I got her phone book from someone and thus tried to contact the Korean phone numbers there in order to find her relatives. But I couldn't reach anyone because all the phone numbers were old and disconnected. I still remember when she called me from the hospital and I went and prayed for her before she went into the operating room.

Nowadays I have become more interested in mental illnesses than before such as depression. As of last year, I have personally bought books on depression and read many articles about mental illness from the internet. By doing so, I began to realize little bit how serious mental illness is. Also I see a little how dangerous the mental illness is. I have heard from people around me that bipolar disorder is much more frightening than depression. And I agree with what they said because what I have actually seen someone suffering from depression and suffering from bipolar disorder. When I saw the internet, I read a definition of "bipolar disorder": ‘Bipolar disorder is a disorder in which mood, energy, thinking, and behavior change dramatically. There are usually two "mood states" of depression and bipolar disorder. When people are in bipolar disorder state, they are energetic and very active. On the other hand, when they are depressed, they are very sad, desperate, and annoying "(Internet). I still remember I didn't know what to do when my church member with bipolar disorder was very happy and then changed to very depressed mood.

As I was reading 1 Kings chapters 18 and 19 in the Morning Prayer today, I wondered how to adapt and respond to Prophet Elijah appearing in those two chapters. The reason was that Prophet Elijah in 1 Kings chapter 18 obeyed God's Word (v.2) of “Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth” (v. 1) and without any fear he boldly said to King Ahab “I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, because you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and you have followed the Baals” (v. 18). But Prophet Elijah in 1 Kings chapter 19 “was afraid and arose and ran for his life” (19:3) because King Ahab's wife Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me and even more, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time” (v. 2). How could the appearances of Elijah be so different in these two chapters? I felt like this is too extreme. Don't you think Elijah had a bipolar disorder?

When he confronted the 450 prophets of Baal in Mount Carmel (18:20, 22), he prayed to God with faith (vv. 36-37) and thus he witnessed “the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench” (v. 38). So Elijah brought the prophets of Baal down to the brook Kishon and slew them there (v. 40). But when Queen Jezebel told him “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” (19:2) Elijah was afraid and ran for his life (v. 3). Was it because Queen Jezebel killed other prophets of God before? (18:4, 13) If I express little bit extreme way, did Elijah run away out of fear because he knew that Jezebel was God’s prophets-killer? I wondered how many God’s prophets Queen Jezebel killed so that “Obadiah had taken a hundred prophets and hidden them in two caves, fifty in each, and had supplied them with food and water” (v. 4). Certainly she would not have killed only one or two of God's prophets. If we think about the fact that Obadiah hid 100 prophets in 2 caves and what Elijah said to God, “he Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too” (19:10, 14; Cf. 18:22), we cannot help but think that there were many prophets of God who were killed by Queen Jezebel. Then when she heard that 450 of her prophets of Baal were killed at Mount Carmel from her husband, King Ahab, she said to Elijah that she would kill him like the Baal prophets who were killed (v.1). I am sure Prophet Elijah was afraid enough to run for his life (v.3). So when he ran away for his life he himself went a day's journey into the desert and sat down under a broom tree (v. 4). And he prayed that he might die: “I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors" (v. 4). How could he prayed to God to take his life under the broom tree after he told the people on Mount Carmel “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him” (18:21)? How could he be so extreme? He didn’t only ask God for him to die, but also he said he was no better than his ancestors (v. 4). Why did he compare with his ancestors? Why did he compare with them and say that he was no better than them? Was it because when he saw himself running for his life out of fear of death, he thought about how weak and pathetic he was? Why did Elijah, who didn’t even care when Obadiah might be killed (18:12) when he was obeying God's word and boldly show himself to Ahab in faith, care about his ancestors (19: 4)? Was it because he was very weak in many ways such as spiritually, mentally and physically? One obvious thing was that Prophet Elijah was physically weak. That was why Elijah fell asleep under the broom tree (v. 5). So an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat” (v. 5). So Elijah got up and ate and drank and then lay down again (v. 6). “The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you” (v. 7). So Elijah got up and ate and drank (v. 8). Looking at these facts, we can imagine that Elijah was very tire and hungry. Maybe he was in a state of exhaustion. The reason why I think so is that after Elijah told King Ahab "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word" (17: 1), he had to escape to the Kerith Ravine as the Lord commanded him (v. 2). But when the brook dried up because there was no rain in the land (v. 7) the Lord commanded him to Zarephath of Sidon and met a widow (v. 9) and miraculous he and the widow and her son ate food for many days (v. 15). In short, the reason what I think Prophet Elijah was in the state of exhaustion was because he had escaped from evil King Ahab for at least three years who was looking for him (18:1). But then again, when Queen Jezebel said that she was going to kill him, Elijah was afraid and fled. So I am sure he was physically exhausted. But when I was reading 1 Kings 19:1-7, I though Prophet Elijah was depressed. I thought like what Rev. Lloyd Jones' book title says, Elijah was undergoing a "spiritual depression". This is what an internet sermon says about spiritual depression:

‘In our journey of faith, spiritual depression can happen all the time. And it isn’t easy to treat when it occurs. The causes of spiritual depression also vary. Sometimes long-term physical illness can be a cause of spiritual depression. To some people depressed temperament may be the cause. But it is clear that the obstacles and sins that obstruct the relationship with God are the direct factors that cause spiritual depression. Spiritual depression doesn’t start with a great sin. Small sins can slowly distance the relationship with God. If we fall into a spiritual depression, we will lose our passion for worship and our prayer life can be decreased or disappeared. And as spiritual depression deepens, we can become indifferent to other souls and focus on our problems. Our soul is disturbed and dismayed. We will lose the joy of our Christian life and our spiritual state will become dry "(Internet).



Indeed, didn't Prophet Elijah indifferent to other souls, like a man in spiritual depression, and focused on his own problems? Look at 1 Kings 19:10 – “He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.” Didn't Elijah lose his joy in his life of faith and his spiritual condition dried up, as his soul became uneasy and fell into pain, like a man in spiritual depression?

As I saw Elijah who looked like a man with spiritual depression and with bipolar disorder in 1 Kings chapters 18 and 19, I wondered how God raised him even from the point of asking God for him to die under the broom tree. One of the more curious reasons is because of a sermon titled ‘Elijah who arose back’ by my beloved co-worker in Christ who suffered from mental illness, and then passes away with cancer. I cannot forget that sermon title. Maybe it would be more appropriate to say it was unforgettable sermon title. In this morning, when I was praying, I thought about him. And when I thought how much he suffered from mental illness as well as cancer, my heart went out to him in tears. But when I thought him smiling at me and hugged me in my dream soon after I led his funeral, my heart was comforted. On top of that, I prayed to God, thinking about those who now going various mental illness such as depression, bipolar disorder, panic anxieties and etc.. I am sure they are the ones who now are going through most difficult time. So I prayed to God for them since God knows them, who knows what they are going through and who only can comfort them. I pray that God will touch each one of them, comfort them, give them hope, deliver them, and heal them. I want to think about three things as to how God revived Prophet Elijah who seemed like a person with bipolar disorder from the spiritual depression:

### **First, God sent His angel to touch Elijah.**

The angel of the Lord touched Elijah who asked God for him to die and who lay under the broom tree and fell asleep (vv. 5, 7). When I was meditating on this, I thought that God's children who are suffering from spiritual depression and other mental illness need to be touched by God. We must pray and bear with each one of them with the heart and love of our Heavenly Father who are suffering. Through such affection and prayer, those who are suffering need to feel God's warm and tender love.

### **Second, God sent his angel to Elijah to make him eat and drink.**

The angel of the Lord not only touched Elijah when he lay down and fell asleep, but also woke him up and said to him, ‘Get up and eat (vv. 5, 7). And the angel of the Lord supplied Elijah with “a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water” (v. 6). Because of this provision of God, Prophet Elijah was strengthened by eating bread and drinking water twice (v. 8). And he traveled 40 days and 40 nights until he reached Horeb, the Mount of God (v. 8). When I meditated on this, I became more aware of the importance of physical strength to the children of God who are suffering from spiritual depression or mental illness. I remember someone who went through depression before told me that it is important to exercise when people are depressed. Of course they have to eat well in order to exercise. That's why I think it is important that the angel of God woke Elijah while he was sleeping, and then told him to eat and drink. People who suffer from spiritual depression or mental illness must eat and drink well and exercise regularly to promote physical health.

### **Third, God spoke to Elijah.**

Prophet Elijah, who got up and ate and drank and strengthened by that food, walked 40 days and 40 nights and reached Mount Horeb (v. 8). “There he went into a cave and spent the night” (v. 9). When he was in the cave, the word of the Lord came to Elijah: “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (vv. 9, 13) Elijah, who heard the word of the Lord, said to God, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now

they are trying to kill me too” (vv. 10, 14). Then God said to Elijah, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by” (v. 11). And He let Elijah to hear “a gentle whisper” (v. 12). I think this is the blessing of the desert. It is the blessing of the desert that God let Elijah to hear the gentle whisper. How can we know it? We know this by looking at Hosea 2:14. When the Israelites used to serve both God and Baal, God disciplined them by leading them to the desert and spoke to them kindly (Hos. 2:14). In this way, God comforts the man whom He loves by leading them to the desert and speaks to them tenderly. God spoke to Elijah, who said “I am the only one left” (1 Kgs. 19:10, 14), with the gentle whisper (v. 12), that “Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel--all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him” (v. 18). What a great comfort to Elijah. How encouraging was this to know by Elijah, who thought that he was the only one left, that there were 7,000 in Israel whose knees had not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths had not kissed him. When I meditated on this word, I thought again that we needed to go into the desert when we were suffering from spiritual depression or mental illness. We need to go into the desert and stand alone and kneel down in front of God when our minds and bodies are exhausted and when we are in despair. And we must listen to God's gentle whisper in silence. The indwelling Holy Spirit will remind us of the Word of God recorded in the Bible, and make us realize it and hold onto it in confidence. We must not only hold on to the Word of God by faith, but also be help up by that Word. In doing so, we will experience the salvation (healing, deliverance) of God. God will restore and revive our depressed souls with His Word.

I thought about a person with bipolar disorder who is suffering because she cannot control her ups and downs of emotional change. I also thought about the Christians who suffer not only the emotional ups and downs but also the spiritual ups and downs. How hard and painful that is. I am sure it is distressful for us if we start our Christian life with passion and zeal but later on we start to live a religious life because our passion and zeal has cooled down and our hearts is cold. In the case of Prophet Elijah, in 1 Kings 18, he was obedience to the Word of God in faith. He boldly appeared to King Ahab and rebuked him without any fear of death. But in 1 Kings 19, when King Ahab's wife Queen Jezebel said she would kill him, Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. Prophet Elijah, who confronted and defeated the 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel in 1 Kings chapter 18 asked God for him to die under the broom tree in 1 Kings 19. How could he be so different? It looks as though he is suffering from spiritual bipolar disorder. To this Elijah, the angel of the Lord came and touched him and provided him food and drink. And God spoke gently to him who entered the desert. God's gentle whisper restored and revived his soul. I hope and pray that the same restoration and revival will be in our lives as well, especially those who are suffering from their spiritual bipolar disorder.

## When you think you have been abandoned by God

**“The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, ‘The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior.’ Then Gideon said to him, ‘O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian” (Judges 6:12-13).**

I don’t think we can imagine the pain and scar of those who are being abandoned by their loved ones, especially if their loved ones are their parents when they were growing up, their boy/girlfriend when they were dating and/or their spouse when they are married. In such a shock and wound, can we still believe that God is with us?

When we look at Judges 6:12-13, we see Gideon who thought that God abandoned the Israelites. The reason he thought so was because God gave the Israelites into the hands of Midian for seven years (Jdg. 6:1) so the Israel was brought very low (v. 6). The Israel was brought very low because when Israel was sowing, the Midianites came up with the Amalekites and the sons of the east and went against the Israelites and destroyed the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and left no sustenance in Israel as well as no sheep, ox, or donkey (vv. 3-4). And because of Midian the sons of Israel made for themselves the dens which were in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds (v. 2). So the Israelites cried out to the Lord (v. 6) and this was what He said to them through a prophet: “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘It was I who brought you up from Egypt and brought you out from the house of slavery. I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and from the hands of all your oppressors, and dispossessed them before you and gave you their land, and I said to you, ‘I am the LORD your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But you have not obeyed Me” (vv. 8-10). Then one day, an angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon the son of Joash, who was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites (v. 11): “he LORD is with you, O valiant warrior” (v. 12). At that time, after Gideon had asked two questions to the angel of the Lord (v. 12), he said that God abandoned the people of Israel and gave them into the hands of Midian (v. 13). I want to think about these two questions that tell us why Gideon thought God had abandoned the Israelites.

**The first question was this: “O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us?”**

Look at Judges 6:13 – “Then Gideon said to him, “O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? ...” When the angel of the Lord said to Gideon, “The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior” (v. 12), Gideon said to the angel of the Lord, “O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us?” (v. 13) Here, “all this” refers to the very low life of the Israelites (v. 6) due to the very cruel Midianites (v. 2) who oppressed the Israelites for 7 years (v. 1). In other words, Gideon thought that because the Lord wasn’t with the Israelites, the Midianites were dominating them for 7 years and the Israelites were very low. And he thought that God wasn’t with the Israelites because He abandoned them (v. 13).

I think what Gideon said makes sense. If we think logically with our limited intellect in Gideon’s perspective, I think we could have thought the same that God had abandoned the Israelites. Indeed, we can ask God, ‘O God, if You are with us why are we agonizing ourselves in a poverty.’ The reason is because we think that if

God is with us, we shouldn't suffer the poverty. We can surely ask God, 'If God is alive and loves us and He has saved us even by giving His only begotten Son Jesus to die on the cross on behalf of us, then how can God allow us to suffer in poverty?' And we can doubt whether God is with us or not. Of course, this question and doubt presuppose that we aren't aware that the suffering and poverty we are going through is a discipline of God's love for our sins. Because we aren't aware of our sins, but only the consequences of our sin that we ask God why all this happened to us if God is with us. But there is at least one very important fact that we don't realize here. It is the fact that God is with us who have sinned against God and are receiving the God's discipline. In other words, we don't realize how great God's grace is that the holy God is with the unholy sinners like us. God called Gideon "valiant warrior" (v. 12) even though his family was the least in Manasseh, and he was the youngest in his father's house (v. 15) and give him a mission: "Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian" (v. 14). In other words, God showed his grace by being with Gideon (v. 12) and raised him as a judge in order to save the Israelites from the Midianites (v. 14). Isn't this God's great grace that the Lord considered us faithful, appointing us to his service (1 Tim. 1:12) even such useless sinners like us? By this grace, the Lord disciplines us in love for our sake because He is treating us as his sons and daughters (Heb. 12:6, 7, 10). God disciplines us for our good that we may share in His holiness (v. 10). As a result, "all this happened to us" (Jdg. 6:13).

**The last and second question was this: "And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?'"**

Look at Judges 6:13 – "... And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian." Gideon heard through the prophet whom the Lord sent saying, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'It was I who brought you up from Egypt and brought you out from the house of slavery. I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and from the hands of all your oppressors, and dispossessed them before you and gave you their land'" (vv. 8-9). So Gideon said to him, "And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?'" (v. 13) Here, "all His miracles" refer to all the miracles that God had revealed by delivering the Israelites out of Egypt through Moses and led them into the promised land of Canaan. From Gideon's point of view, if God was with the Israelites, then where are the miracles that had appeared in the past when the Lord brought their fathers out of Egypt and brought them into the land of Canaan in the midst of suffering of the Israelites by the Midianites? In other word, Gideon was asking God why He didn't do any miracle to save the Israelites from the hands of Midian. Gideon thought that because the Lord was not with the Israelites, they were oppressed by the Midianites for 7 years (v. 1) and became very low (v.6). And he thought that the reason why God wasn't with them was because God had abandoned them (v. 13).

I think what Gideon said make sense. If we think logically with our limited intellect in Gideon's perspective, I think we could have thought the same that God had abandoned the Israelites because in Gideon's perspective there were no miracles which his fathers told them about God's miracles that He showed during the Exodus. Like Gideon, we can think that God has abandoned us when we are going through suffering and there is no deliverance from God. In other words, we can think that if God really is with us, then He must do the miracles in our lives, delivering us from our pain and poverty, and leads us. This is what we ask God and expects Him to answer but if there is none, then we can think that God is not with us and He abandons us. But there is a very important fact that we forget. That very important fact is the biggest miracle is that Jesus died on the cross and gave us eternal life. But it seems like we forget about this greatest miracle in our lives and continue to seek out other miracles. In other words, despite God's best miraculous salvation already given to us in Jesus Christ, we are asking for and looking for additional miracles. For example, even though we have already experienced God's forgiveness of our sins and received God's salvation in Christ Jesus, we keep seeking other miracle of solving our problem of suffering and pain. But if there is no miraculous deliverance from the Lord, we get discouraged and even blaming on God and think that God has abandoned us. And we commit a sin of abandoning God. The problem is we don't

realize the fact that we must humbly repent our sins as we look to Jesus on the cross in faith even though the suffering that we are going through is the consequence of our unrepented sins. How can we expect miraculous salvation of God when we are going through the consequences of our unrepented sins? We must first confess our sins and repent. In other words, we must first confess our sins to God with the assurance of forgiveness of our sins as we humbly trusting in the merit of the cross of Jesus. In doing so, we will experience God's miraculous salvation work in God's way in God's time according to God's will.

How can we overcome the pain of our hearts when we think that we have been abandoned by a loved one? Especially when we think that we have been abandoned by our beloved God, how can we endure the pain of our heart and overcome it? Obviously, our God is Immanuel God, and if God is with us, why are we suffering so much pain and poverty? Why doesn't God show His miracle and deliver us? Maybe God doesn't love us anymore? What should we do when we think we have abandoned by God? We can cry out to God like a psalmist: "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?" (Ps. 22:1-2) At the same time we must think of Jesus' words of crucifixion to Heavenly Father: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46) By faith, we must humbly look to Jesus Christ who bore our sins and died on the cross and receive God's full wrath and was forsaken by His own Father God. We who are forgiven because Jesus was forsaken by His Father God must confess and repent our sins instead of thinking that God abandoned us when we are going through the consequence of our unrepented sins. In doing so, God will solve the problem of our sins before the problem of our suffering, and then He will solve the problem of our suffering as well. God will save us. The reason is "Salvation comes from the Lord" (Jonah 2: 9).

## **'Why then has all this happened to us?'**

**The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, 'The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior.' Then Gideon said to him, 'O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian'" (Judges 6:12-13).**

When we are going through hard time in our lives, there is a thing that makes us harder. And it is a word from our beloved one. For example, when a woman is having a hard time, let's say her husband comes up to her without really knowing what she is going through and says, 'Well, it will okay. It's not a big deal', how will she feel? I am sure what he said will make her more difficult. Rather than trying to sympathize with her and trying to be in her shoe, if the husband spits out a word too quick without that much thinking, then her heart will be harder and very difficult. Although it's hard for her not getting any comfort from her husband, much harder think for her is that she cannot understand why her beloved God makes her to go through difficulties in her life. No matter how she thinks about it, if she cannot understand why God has given her such difficulties then she may go through much deeper pain and hardship. Why are hard and painful things happening to us? Why is all this hard work happening to us?

In Judges 6:12-13, when the angel of the Lord said to Gideon "valiant warrior" (v. 12), Gideon said to the angel "O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us?" (v. 13) If we try to stand in Gideon's perspective, we can understand why Gideon answered the God's angel like that. In Gideon's perspective, he couldn't understand that if God was with the Israelites, then why the Israelites had to make the dens, the caves and the strongholds for themselves because of the Midianites (v. 2). If God was with him and his people, the Israelites, then he didn't understand why the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern people invaded the country and ruined their crops all the way to Gaza and didn't spare a living thing for Israel? (vv. 3-4) In Gideon's perspective, he couldn't understand that if God was with the Israelites, why Israel was brought low because of Midian (v. 6). So the Israelites cried out to God (v. 6). They cried out to God because of the Midianites (v.7). Then God sent a prophet to the Israelites, and he said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'It was I who brought you up from Egypt and brought you out from the house of slavery. I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and from the hands of all your oppressors, and dispossessed them before you and gave you their land, and I said to you, "I am the LORD your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But you have not obeyed Me" (vv. 8-10). Why did God say this to the Israelites? Maybe God was telling the Israelites why all this happened (v. 13). Maybe God was saying to them all this happened to them because they disobeyed God like their ancestors during the Exodus time who disobeyed God's command "you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live" (v. 10). Gideon didn't know that the Lord gave the Israelites into the hands of Midian 7 years because the Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord (v. 1). That was why he asked the angel of the Lord, "O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?" (v. 13) Then he asked the angel of the Lord, "And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?'" (v. 13) Gideon still didn't know that the Lord gave the Israelites into the hands of Midian 7 years because the Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord (v. 1). Without knowing the Israelites' sins and repent their sins, Gideon asked the angel of the Lord where all His miracles which their fathers told them about during the time of God delivering them out of Egypt when the he and the Israelites were going through the consequence of their sins. So Gideon thought that the Lord had abandoned them and given them into the hand of Midian (v. 13). He thought that God abandoned them because he believed God wasn't with Israel and God was not

showing any miracles. So he thought that Israel was going through all the suffering, adversity, and poverty by the Midianites (vv. 2-6). Was this thought of Gideon God's thought?

When I was meditating on this, the fact that God is with us, like the people of Israel, who kept sinning against God is God's grace. I don't understand how holy God is with such sinners like us who keep sinning against God. It is only by the merit of Jesus Christ on the cross. Although we keep on disobeying God's words as we compromise with this sinful world instead of living holy life, amazing God's grace is that He is with us. Another thought that came to my mind as I was meditating on this word is that when we sin against God repeatedly, God gives us into the hands of non-Christians so that we may be subjected to severe poverty and that is God's love for us. In other words, God makes us want because He loves us. If we sin over and over again, but we still are in abundance, we will not seek God. And if we do not seek God, we will repeatedly sin against God without realizing that we are sinning. That is why being in need or even in severe poverty as a result of our unrepented sins, it is a good opportunity for us to cry out to God and to realize our sins through the Word of God. In a word, it is the love of God who makes us realize our sins and makes us repent, that the righteous God causes us to suffer as a result of our sin. One more thought in meditating on this word is that we can misunderstand that God has forsaken us. But I completely believe that God never abandons us nor can He do so. Although we are suffering poverty because of our sin, we are not aware of it. Instead, we are complaining that God is not with us and that there is no miracle of God. And in the end we say God has abandoned us. We must believe that God is with us even in the midst of our suffering and we must seek God's forgiveness of our sins when we realize our sins, rather than seeking His miracles. Also when God hands us over to non-Christians of this world and when we suffer, instead of thinking that God is abandoning us we must think about Jesus Christ who was forsaken by His own Father God. As we do so, we must realize our sins are forgiven because of Jesus' suffering and death on the cross and we became righteous because of His resurrection (Rom. 4:25). We must be convicted that we cannot be separated from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord "(Rom. 8:39). God can never forsake us (Deut. 31:6, Josh. 1:5, Ps. 94:14, Heb. 13:5).

We don't know why all these hard things are happening to us even though God is with us. Our intellect cannot comprehend why all these difficult things are happening to us so we cry out to God to deliver us from all our hardships. Then, through the Word of God, God exposes our sins and makes us to look at Jesus. God makes us to confess our sins by making us to trust in the merits of Jesus Christ who was died on the cross. And God makes us realize that all these hard things have happened to us as a result of our unrepentant sins. Not only that, God gives peace to us as He trains and strengthens us in the midst of we are going through all these difficult things. And God delivers us from all these hardships in His way and in His time. Therefore, we must praise this God of our salvation with faith and thanksgiving.

## **‘They have no comforter’**

### **[Ecclesiastes 4:1-3]**

Two things happened after the end of the New Year the church leaders’ prayer meeting. One thing is that one of the women in the church took a lot of sleeping pills and attempted suicide. On that Sunday afternoon my wife, our church elder and two young ladies went to her apartment and helped her. The next day, when my wife went to visit her apartment, the woman was already on the ambulance and went to the hospital. Now she is in the nursing home. Another thing I heard was that one of the college students who went to the church in Korea where I used to serve went to a mission field and drowned. I used to serve the English Ministry (EM) with his mother and I remembered seeing him few times during the EM worship. So when I heard the news about his death, I was very shocked. So I thought about how to comfort his parents and his older sister. And I wrote a letter to them and I prayed to God. “Abba Father,” I pleaded with God the Father, asking God to comfort them and his friends and church members.

Indeed, this world is a full of anxious thing, of painful thing and of sinful thing. As we begin the New Year, we see our beloved brothers and sisters in pain and suffering. How can we comfort our beloved brothers and sisters in Christ who are in pain and suffering? When I think about the word “comfort”, it reminds me Job’s friends in Job 162 and Barnabas in Acts 4:16. When we look at Job 16:2, Job said that his friends who came to comfort him are “sorry comforters”. And when we look at Acts 4:16, the author of the Book of Acts Luke said that Barnabas is “Son of Encouragement”. Although the Job’s friends were the sorry comforters, Barnabas in the early church was a true encourager. So when I personally pray for myself, I pray to God like this: ‘Lord, help me be to be an encourager and an evangelist who is fire for You.’ But so many times, I don’t know how to comfort my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ around me who are in pain and suffering. Although I want to love them and comfort them with the Lord’s love, so many times I don’t know what to do.

In the book ‘Spirituality of Comfort’ by Rev. Robert Strand, there are 101 stories about comforting a wounded soul. The book’s preface was written by a priest Henry Nowen, who says that, the word “comfort” means ‘to be with a lonely man’. He also says that comforting does not mean taking pain away, but rather being together. And being together, according to Nowen, refers to as “care of soul”. And caring soul means crying together, suffering together, feeling together and sympathizes. Priest Henry Nowen said: ‘Often our sorrow makes us to dance. And our dance creates space for our sadness. In the tears of losing a loved one, we find joy that we do not know. In the middle of a party celebrating success we can feel deep sorrow. Like a clown’s face that seems to be sad and rejoicing in order to make us to be sad or to laugh, sadness, dancing, bitterness, laughter, mourning, and joy belong to a single place. We can see the beauty of life where grief and dancing touch each other’. Do you and I live in the beauty of life where sadness and dancing touch each other?

The Teacher King Solomon in Ecclesiastes 4:1-3 also said what he saw: “Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun: I saw the tears of the oppressed-- and they have no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors-- and they have no comforter” (v. 1). What he witnessed in this world was the abusing of the tyrants. In other words, he saw the abused people. And he saw the tears of the abused people. But the problem was there is no one who comforts these abused people. King Solomon saw this. He saw that the abused people had no comforter. And this is what he said: “And I declared that the dead, who had already died, are happier than the living, who are still alive. But better than both is he who has not yet been, who has not seen the evil that is done under the sun.” What does it mean? It doesn’t mean that it is better to die than to live as getting abused. King



Solomon never encourages suicide, saying that suicide is better than being abused. The world we live in these days is a world that encourages suicide. How do you know this? If you look at the internet these days, there is a suicide website. What is surprising is that even if people do not know each other they meet through suicide web sites and commit suicide together. I have heard through people I know that there are few people who have committed suicide. Maybe this world is getting harder and harder now, and many people in life are trying to take their precious lives in suicide. So it seems that the success of suicide is increasing. Maybe for these people, Ecclesiastes 4: 2 might be misinterpreted from the viewpoint of suicide, saying, 'Ah, the wise King Solomon said it is better to die than to be abused'. So you should not take your life, thinking that it is better to die than to live like this. In today's passage, King Solomon never recommends suicide. Rather, when he saw the tears of those who are being abused by those who are in power in this world, he is saying that the lives of such abused people are less than death. In other words, King Solomon does not say that God's given life itself is not better than death, but that the painful life of unjustly oppressed is less than death (Park Yun-sun).

What kind of life would it be if we suffer pain that we could not die? When I think about this question, the North Korean defectors came into my mind. I read an article in the Wall Street Journal regarding the North Korean defectors who entered the United States for the first time according to the North Korean Human Rights Act on May 1, 2006. The articles had the testimonies of the defectors who lived the miserable lives in China. The article introduces the woman, a 36-year-old woman, who was a teacher in Pyongyang. She went to a cloth shop to help her with difficult living. She went to a border town to get a cloth and lost consciousness during dinner. When she woke up, she was already trafficked and was in China. From there she was sold to a Chinese man and the Chinese husband said, "Killing a North Korean woman like you is easier than killing a chicken." She was beaten so badly that her bones broke and she thought of suicide once. Wouldn't there be many more testimonies from many other defectors as well? Although I don't know well, I still remembered what a pastor said to me: 'Because I saw the defectors, now I was able to read the Book of Exodus.'

How much more feelings and sympathy with these words in Ecclesiastes 4:3 is true for these people who suffer so much? It is better for those who have not yet been born who have not seen the evil that is done under the sun than those who are still alive (Eccle. 4:2-3). If the defectors were not born at all, they didn't have to see the evil done in this world and didn't have to suffer to the point of wanting to die? How about you? When you look back on your past life, did you ever live because you couldn't die? Have you ever been so painful that you feel it is worse than dying? So, did you ever stay in tears? But when we suffer so much to the point of wanting to die, more than suffering itself, the thing that makes us very difficult is that there is no comforter. It is the fact that when we are the hardest, the most painful, and the heart aches, our hearts are getting more and more troubled by the fact that no one really understands, sympathizes, and comforts us with our hardships, pain and suffering. What is more distressing is the fact that there are those who love us around and try to comfort us, when no one truly comforts us (or perhaps we are so distressed that we are refusing their comfort). When the evil of the wicked does not seem endless, and when the act of abuse and oppression does not show signs of ending, we no longer dream. We no longer have the hope. We end up with the last line of hope. This makes us depress. Life without hope is bound to despair. What should we do when we are in such despair? We can learn three things from the Bible:

### **First, when we are in despair we must speak to our soul.**

One of the books I still cannot forget is the book *Spiritual Depression* by Lloyd Jones. What I was challenged in reading the book is that when we are disappointed and depressed, we should speak to our soul like a psalmist. How should I say it? As an example, Pastor Lloyd Jones quoted Psalm 42: 5, 11; 43: 5 – "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God" (3x). So, when I sometimes become discouraged, I remember myself saying this prayer to myself, remembering this psalm: "James, why are you so downcast, O my soul. Why so disturbed within me? James, put

your hope in God.” And I try to pray with deliberate looking at the Lord who helps me. When I do, I often experience God's help. You can try it. When your heart is discouraged and in despair, why don't you proclaim the word of God to yourself, like a psalmist. It doesn't have to be the Book of Psalms. If you have any God's promise that you want to hold onto, why don't you hold on to that promised Word of God and cry out to him. Whenever I am struggling with my church ministry, I am holding onto the His promise Word "... I ... build my church' (Mt. 16:18) and cry out to God. And I know that God certainly helps me.

### **Second, when we are in despair we must seek the Lord.**

When we are in despair we must desire Jesus. We should eagerly desire him. Especially when we are in despair because of pain, we must look to Jesus' suffering on the cross. Why is that? The reason is that when we meditate on His suffering, our suffering can be connected to the sufferings of Jesus, so that true comfort and healing can occur. When I personally feel depressed, I sometimes remember the words of Jonah 2: 4 – “I said, ‘I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple’.” The reason I think of this Jonah is because when I disobeyed the Lord's words like Jonah, and is in the midst of a chastisement discipline, I decided that I would look to the temple of the Lord again, because I desperately want to seek him. I hope that when you are depressed and despair, you will rely on this Jonah's word and look to Him again. I hope you can turn your despair into an opportunity to seek the Lord.

### **Third, when we are in despair we must hope in the Lord.**

Ultimately, I think desperation is making us to hope in the Lord. When we live in this world and are despaired because of these and other things, that despair is a good opportunity to seek the Lord. Also, I think despair is an opportunity for us to only look to the Lord and hope in Him. That's why we need to be thoroughly discouraged and in despair by this world. Furthermore, we need to be more or less discouraged and be in despair because of ourselves. The reason is that without such hopelessness, we rarely yearn for and hope in God. That's why I like the Hymn “My hope is built on nothing less” text 3 lyrics: “His oath, His covenant, His blood, Support me in the whelming flood; When all around my soul gives way He then is all my hope and stay.” I love this song because when all the things we believed in the world are cut off, we began to rely on the Lord more and more. By doing so, all our despair in our hearts fade away and our hearts are filled with hope in the Lord. In doing so, we can praise God this way: (1) “O! Thou, in whose presence my soul takes delight, On whom in affliction I call, My comfort by day, and my song in the night, My hope, my salvation, my all!”, (5) “Dear Shepherd! I hear, and will follow Thy call; I know the sweet sound of Thy voice; Restore and depend me, for Thou art my all, And in Thee I will ever rejoice.”

I hope that the Lord of hope will comfort you. I pray that our Lord will comfort you when no one can comfort you. When you refuse to be comforted by anybody else due to your great and unbearable pains, I pray that the Lord fills your heart with a longing for the Lord and a hope for Him. I pray that you can see the beauty of life, the beauty of Christians, where grief and delight touch each other. As I end this meditation of the Word, I want to share with you what I wrote as I thought about a sister in Christ who made me to see the beauty of the Christian:

You are beautiful. Even in the tears of the heart, You smile. You are beautiful.  
Even in the midst of your son's death, You give thanks to God, You are beautiful.  
You think about your church members More than your family, You are beautiful.  
You want to comfort others More than receiving comfort from others You love to give  
More than receiving, You are beautiful.  
You who hold the heart of Heavenly Father And use your strength to save souls,  
You are beautiful.  
You who are glorifying God, You are beautiful. I see Christ in you ...

# “When will You comfort me?”

## [Psalms 119: 81-88]

Have you ever felt the limitations of your patience? Therefore, have you ever prayed to God, 'O God, how long must I endure this affliction?' The longer we are in pain and adversity, the more we feel the limits of our patience. At that time, we cry out to God, asking, "How long?" The psalmist in Psalms 119 today cried out to God like that. Although he prayed to God for His salvation in hope of the Word of God but didn't receive any answer of his prayer even in waiting in expectation, he cried out to God like this: "My eyes fail with longing for Your word, While I say, "When will You comfort me?" (v. 82) I would like to think about two things "Limitation of Endurance" and "Challenge of Endurance" under the title of "When will You comfort me?"

### **First, let's think about the limitations of endurance.**

Look at Psalms 119:81-21: "My soul languishes for Your salvation; I wait for Your word. My eyes fail with longing for Your word, While I say, "When will You comfort me?" The psalmist was languished. He was exhausted and tired. Why was that? The reason was that the psalmist was persecuted by his enemies (v. 84). Who were his enemies who persecuted the psalmist? They were the arrogant who weren't in accord with God's law (v. 85). And they persecuted the psalmist for no reason (v. 86) and dug pits for the psalmist (v. 85). In other words, they plotted to harm the psalmist. And they almost destroyed the psalmist (v. 87). In other words, they almost killed the psalmist (v. 87). In this critical situation, even though the psalmist longed for God's salvation (v. 81) and God's word (v. 82) he didn't experience the God's salvation and the fulfillment of the word of promise. That was why he was languished (v. 81) and his eyes failed (v. 82).

There are times when our souls are languished and tired like a psalmist. Although we cry out to God in the painful situation we are in and when there seems to be no answer to our prayers, but our situation is getting worse, we get tired and exhausted both physically and spiritually. What is so dangerous at the time is disappointment and discouragement. The situation we are in is hard and painful, even though we cry out to God no matter what the answer seems to be. And when the situation seems to be getting worse, we can be depressed and even despair when we cannot bear it anymore. Especially when our proud enemies continue to slander us, "Where is your God?" (Ps. 42:10), we can be discouraged and even depressed. Especially when we think that God's judgment is slow enough to make us feel like the psalmist, 'When will God execute judgment on those who persecute me?' (v. 84), we can surely be depressed. What should we do then? No matter how we pray to God and wait for the salvation of God, there is no answer to prayer. What should we do when our soul is disturbed and depressed? What should we do when we wait for God's comfort but there is none and we cry out to God "When will You comfort me?" This is the challenge of endurance.

### **Second, let's think about the challenge of endurance.**

When we are tired of longing for the salvation of the Lord (v. 81), what should we do? When the comfort of the Lord is slow, and when we are waiting for the promises of the Lord to be fulfilled, when our eyes become tired (v. 82), and when I feel like I am useless (v. 83), what should we do? What should we do when arrogant people who don't keep the law of the Lord persecute us and have dug pits for us, but God's judgment to them is slow (vv. 84-86)? Even when they almost destroy us (v. 87), what should we do? What should we do when there is challenge of our endurance? Although we get tired and exhausted in seeking and waiting for God's salvation we

must trust in the word of the Lord (v. 81). This is because the Lord's commandments are trustworthy (v. 86). Also, when we wait for the promises of the Lord to be fulfilled (v. 82) and get tired but we must not forget the laws of the Lord (v. 83). Though our arrogant enemies persecute us and cause us to die almost without cause, yet we must not abandon the Lord's precepts (v. 87). In doing so, God will revive us according to His lovingkindness (v. 88). Then we will continue to keep the law of the Lord (v. 88).

It is no reckless thing that God is patience with us. God never wastes His time but uses it in most precious way (Park Yun-sun). Although, from our standpoint, God's salvation, comfort, and help seem to be very slow and thus we ask God, 'Lord, when will you comfort me?', 'Lord, when will you help me?', 'Lord, when will you save us?', we must never forget His faithful commands and trust His words. We must never abandon His words. In His time, God will surely save us. Our faithful Lord will surely fulfill His promises to us. With this assurance of salvation, we must endure in tribulation and persecution with faith and hope. Though we may feel the limit of endurance, we shouldn't be discouraged, but we should yearn for the word of the Lord as we yearn for the Lord who is our true hope. The Holy Spirit of comfort will comfort us with the word of God which is living and active.

## **A mourner who refuses to be comforted**

**"So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, "Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son." So his father wept for him" (Genesis 37: 34-35).**

There was a grandmother in our church who lost her three children before her death. Her husband died early and had all three of her six children died when there were adults. The last son who died at the age of 56 years died as he was sleeping at her apartment living room. I still remember that moment when her son died. She was wailing and telling me, "Pastor, Pastor". I cannot forget what she said to me after her son's funeral service: 'Pastor, I am resentful to God.' I cannot imagine how much her heart was aching when I saw her wailing after losing her adult son. I am sure we cannot fully understand the parents' hearts of losing their beloved child. I am sure that a mother's pain and a father's pain are different. The problem is that no one can comfort the hearts of the parents who lost their children. Of course, the beloved family members, the relatives, the friends will try to comfort the parents who lost their children but that parents will refuse to be comforted because their hearts are so painful.

Jacob in Genesis 37: 34-35 was like that. He refused to be comforted by his sons who tried to comfort him. The reason his sons tried to comfort Jacob was because Jacob was mourning for his son Joseph (v. 34) whom he loved more than all his sons (v. 3) because Jacob thought that Joseph had been devoured by a wild beast (v. 33). In other words, Jacob refused to be comforted by his other sons when he was mourning for his beloved son Joseph's death. How painful was Jacob's heart that he refused to be comforted by his sons? This extreme suffering can only be comforted by the Holy Spirit. In other words, there is a mourning that can only be comforted by God, for which man cannot comfort. And that mourning is the death of a beloved child. The pain of separation on this earth with beloved child can only be comforted by God. That's why we are praying to God. There is nothing much we can do except praying to God to comfort those parents who lost their children. In doing so, God will answer our prayer and show mercy to those parents who lost their children by comforting their mournful hearts. Not only that, God will strengthen and hold them so that they can endure the great sorrow, pain and suffering and will overcome them. And through all this process, God will manifest His glory. As a result, we will see the beauty of Christians through our brothers and sisters in Christ.

There are many people around us who need comfort. There are a lot of beloved brothers and sisters in Christ around us who are in pain, sorrow and suffering. And God wants to use us His instrument to comfort them. Therefore, we should pray to God so that we can be used as a comforting instrument of God in order to comfort them rather than be comforted. In particular, we must acknowledge that we have brothers and sisters in Christ who are mourning whom we cannot comfort. So we should pray for them quietly and earnestly before God. In doing so, the Holy Spirit God will comfort them, and they will be able to comfort the mourners even in such painful situations.

## God who cannot bear our misery any longer

**"So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD; and He could bear the misery of Israel no longer" (Judges 10:16).**

What is the heart of Heavenly Father toward us? In particular, what is the heart of Heavenly Father, who is looking at us when we are in misery?

In Judges 10:16, Israel was in misery. Israel was greatly distressed (v. 9). The reason Israel was greatly distressed was because of God's anger against Israel and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites (vv. 7-8). The Philistines and the Ammonites afflicted and crushed the Israelites for 18 years (v. 8). And the Ammonites crossed the Jordan to fight against Judah, Benjamin, and the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was greatly distressed (v. 9). Then why was God angered against Israel? It was because the Israelites again did evil in the sight of the Lord, served the Baals and the Ashtaroth, the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the sons of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; thus they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him (v. 6). So the Israelites cried out to God in their misery, saying, "We have sinned against You, for indeed, we have forsaken our God and served the Baals" (v. 10). At that time God reminded them of the grace of salvation offered to the sons of Israel (vv. 11-12). Nevertheless, they forgot God's grace, and again they forsook God and serve other gods (v. 13). So God told them, "I will no longer deliver you" (v. 13). And God said "Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your distress" (v. 14). But the Israelites who heard it could never have cried out to the Gentile gods they chose. How could they cry out to the gods of the Philistines and the gods of the sons of Ammon, when the Philistines and the Ammonites were afflicting them and crushing them for 18 years? That was why the Israelites were forced to cry again to God: "We have sinned, do to us whatever seems good to You; only please deliver us this day" (v.15). So when they cried out to God, they put away the foreign gods among them and served God (v. 16). In the midst of the distress caused by the affliction of the Gentiles, the Israelites repented their sins and turned to God and cried out for God's salvation. At that time, God could bear the misery of Israel no longer (v. 16). Here, the word "no longer" in Hebrews means "impatient" (Park Yun-sun). In other words, God could bear Israel's misery no longer.

As I was meditating on this word, I thought about the Heavenly Father's heart to us, His children. When we repeatedly turn away from God and love and idolize the things of this world like the Israelites, I think God is patient with us for us to repent and return to Him. Although our God is the God who is patient with us for us to repent and return to God, we think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience (Rom. 2:4). In doing so, our God is no longer patient with us, but He is angry with us and disciplines us in love. And He disciplines us with the worldly things that we love and have idolized so that He makes us not to love and idolize them. And our merciful God makes us to repent our sins and cry out to Him. In particular, God who looks at our misery and cannot bear our misery any longer makes us to look to God and to long for God's salvation. At that time, God, who cannot bear our misery any longer, sends Savior to us so that we can be saved by His grace alone. God who has heard His one and only Son Jesus Christ crying out to Him on the cross "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mk. 15:34) and has not bore the Son's misery cannot bear our misery that is the consequence of our sins. This is the grace and love of God. He is our Heavenly Father who hears our cries and answers them by delivering us out of our misery. So we must go to God and repent our sins because of this great grace and love of our Heavenly Father who cannot bear our misery any longer.

## God who listens even to our grumbling prayers in tears

**“Was it I who conceived all this people? Was it I who brought them forth, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries a nursing infant, to the land which You swore to their fathers'? ... but a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you; because you have rejected the LORD who is among you and have wept before Him, saying, "Why did we ever leave Egypt?" (Numbers 11:12, 20).**

Why do babies cry? When I was raising my three children with my wife, I learned that the babies cry because of two reasons. The two reasons are: first, the babies cry because they are asking for a change of diaper due to urine or feces on the diaper; and second, the babies cry because they are hungry, asking for milk. Of course, other than that, the babies cry when they are tired and when they are unsatisfied. But this doesn't seem to be the thing that only babies do. We adults also complain if we are unsatisfied with something and cry in tears even as we blame on others. For example, we can cry even if we are too hungry, and economically too poor and hard to live.

In Numbers 11: 12 and 20, Moses said to God that the Israelites are like “a nursing infant” (v. 12) who had wept before God (v.20). The Israelites did not cry only once. How can we know this? When we look at verse 4, the Bible says, “and also the sons of Israel wept again”. They wept “at the doorway of his tent” (v. 10). And they wept before Moses (v. 13). Why did the Israelites weep? The reason was that they wanted to eat meat (vv. 4, 13, 18). In other words, the Israelites cried out to Moses in complaint, saying, “Give us meat that we may eat” (v. 13) because they weren't satisfied with the manna that God had sent from heaven at night (v. 6). Why did the Israelites cry out to God in complain that they weren't satisfied with the manna that God had sent from heaven? That was because they were greedy. Look at Numbers 11:4 – “The rabble who were among them had greedy desires; and also the sons of Israel wept again and said, “Who will give us meat to eat?” The Israelites were greedy because they were badly influenced by the rabble who were among them. As a result, they weren't satisfied with the manna, but complained and grumbled to Moses and said “Give us meat that we may eat” (v. 13). Then they thought of the past life in Egypt when they were slaves (v. 5) and said, “we were well-off in Egypt” (v. 18). This was rejecting the Lord who was among them (v. 20). So the anger of the Lord toward the Israelites was kindled greatly (v. 10). Moses, of course, was displeased (v. 10).

Imagine a baby who is crying constantly until his mother gives the milk to him. Today's text of Numbers 11:12, 20 tell us that the Israelites cried again to Moses for meat, just like the nursing infant. How couldn't Moses be troubled when 600,000 on foot of the Israelites (v. 21) cried against Moses, saying, “Give us meat that we may eat?” (v. 13). So Moses said to God: “Why have You been so hard on Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all this people on me?” (v. 11) He also said to God, “I alone am not able to carry all this people, because it is too burdensome for me” (v. 14). So Moses begged God to die in extreme suffering (v. 15). Then God said to Moses, “Gather for Me seventy men from the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and their officers and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you” (v. 16). The purpose was to bear the burden of the people with Moses so that Moses didn't have to bear it all alone (v. 17). And God heard the voice of the Israelites crying in complaint and asking for meat, and promised them to give them meat to eat (v. 18). It wasn't for one or two days, nor five days nor ten days nor twenty days but a whole month (vv. 19, 20). Why did God hear the grumbling prayers of the Israelites and answer their prayers? (cf. Exod. 16: 7-9, 12). The reason is written in Exodus 16:12 – “... you shall know that I am the LORD your God.” That is why God responded with the tears of the Israelites and heard the voice of grumbling

before God, because He wanted them to know that God was the Lord their God. What did God want to let the Israelites know about who He is? I found the answer in Numbers 11:23 – “Is the LORD’S power limited? Now you shall see whether My word will come true for you or not.” God wanted to let them know that His omnipotence and faithfulness not only to Moses but also to the people of Israel. In human calculation and common sense, no one can feed 600,000 pedestrians in the desert for a month even flocks and herds be slaughtered for them would not be sufficient for them (vv. 21-22). “The LORD said to Moses, ‘Is the LORD’S power limited? Now you shall see whether My word will come true for you or not’” (v. 23). So in the end, God sent a wind and drove a quail from the sea and let them fall beside the camp “about a day’s journey on this side and a day’s journey on the other side, all around the camp and about two cubits deep on the surface of the ground” (v. 31). So the Israelites spent all day and all night and all the next day, and gathered the quail (v. 32). But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the anger of the Lord was kindled against the Israelites, and the Lord struck them with a very severe plague (v. 33). As a result, the people with greed for meat were buried (v. 34). Therefore, the name of the place was called “Kibroth-hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had been greedy” (v. 34).

We must know who our God is. We must get to know that God is God. Our God is Almighty God. Our God is Almighty God, who is able to feed meats to 600,000 pedestrians of the Israel for a month. God is the God who reveals His power to us. The problem is that we aren’t completely trusting Him but doubting Him and disbelieving in Him. Also, the problem is we are also greedy and covetous like the people of this world. Therefore, we are crying in front of God while we are grumbling in dissatisfaction. This is rejecting God. This is sin against God. Nevertheless, our gracious God responds by hearing our prayers in grumbling. But God, who is righteous and just, disciplines us who have greedy desire. When we are being disciplined, we must learn that we can never be satisfied with our greedy desire like the people in this world, but rather greed will make us to dig our own graves. Also, we must learn to be content with the Lord alone, whether we are having abundance or suffering need (Phil. 4:11-12). We should not be greedy regarding the blessings of the Lord, but enjoy all spiritual blessings that God already gave to us with thanksgiving in our hearts (Eph. 1:3).



## God who knows my fear and gives me courage

**“But if you are afraid to go down, go with Purah your servant down to the camp, and you will hear what they say; and afterward your hands will be strengthened that you may go down against the camp ...” (Judges 7:10-11).**

It is a world of fear. They are so many fears in this world. They are so many waves in this world that threaten us. We Christians are riding the ship with the Lord our Pilot in this world that is like a dark sea and are striving to paddle toward the Heaven. But on the way to Heaven we meet a big storm that we didn't expect. Obviously, what we prayed and expected was a calm sea wave. Then we are afraid of the unexpected big storm of our lives. We are afraid to see the big storm. And in fear we try to battle against the great storm (Jonah 1:13). As we keep on trying desperately to row back to land, the sea is becoming even stormier against us (v. 13). At that time we cry out to the Lord in our incompetence and helplessness (v. 14). As we cry out to God, we no longer seek our own will, but God's will (v. 14). Then the Lord listened to our cry out and calms the great storm of our lives (v. 15). And eventually, God makes us not to be afraid of the great storm of our lives, but rather Creator Almighty God who can calm the great storm (v. 16).

In Judges 7:10-11, God told Gideon to go down to the camp of Midian, who were camping at the bottom of the valley from where Gideon and his 300 men were, because God had given them into Gideon's hands (vv. 8-9). And God told him “if you are afraid to go down, go with Purah your servant down to the camp” (v. 10). God knew that Gideon was afraid. In fact, Gideon was in a state of great crisis that he had to fear. That great crisis was that Gideon and his army were only about 300, but the enemies the Midianites, the Amalekites and all the people of the east were as numerous as locusts and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore (v. 12). The number of the coalition seems to have been about 135,000 (8:10). Can you imagine a war between 300 Israelites and 135,000 enemies? How can 300 soldiers battle against 135,000 enemies and win? I cannot help but think that this war is a war that the Israelites cannot win at all. In particular, considering the current situation in the eyes of the 300 Israelites, the number of Israelites who were gathered to fight the enemy at first was 32,000. But God said, “Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead” (v. 3). “So 22,000 people returned, but 10,000 remained” (v. 3). At that time, among the 10,000 people who went from 32,000 to 22,000 people, what would Gideon's 300 soldiers think? Did those 300 soldiers think that it was right thing to do, sending 22,000 people away from 32,000 people? But God said to Gideon again, “The people are still too many; bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there. Therefore it shall be that he of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go with you; but everyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go” (v. 4). How could God say that 10,000 of the Israeli army are still too many compared to about 135,000 enemies? Wasn't the number of Israelites too small? Eventually, God revealed to Gideon that only 300 men would go to war with him against the enemies and the rest of 9,700 men could not go. So God told Gideon, “I will deliver you with the 300 men who lapped and will give the Midianites into your hands; so let all the other people go, each man to his home” (v. 7). How could God tell Gideon to send 9,700 men? Didn't God tell Gideon to send those who were afraid and trembling so 22,000 men left? (v. 3) How could He tell Gideon to send 9,700 men among 10,000 men? How could Gideon's 300 soldiers fight against 135,000 enemies and win? With our reason, we cannot understand these actions of God.

As I was meditating on this word, I asked the following question as I applied this word to the church: ‘Don't we need a lot of people in the church so we can do more of God's work greatly?’ But maybe the Lord of the Church is saying to us that there are too many church members (v. 2), ‘let them return’ (v. 3), and ‘let all the people

go' (v. 7). The reason is that if we do the Lord's work with too many church members, we will become boastful of our own power (v. 2). So God said to Gideon, "The people who are with you (32,000 men) are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands" (v. 2), "Whoever is afraid and trembling (22,000 men), let him return and depart from Mount Gilead" (v. 3), "let all the other people (9,700 men) go, each man to his home" (v.7). As a result, only three 300 Israelites remained (v.7). With these 300 men, God promised to Gideon that He would deliver Israel and would give the Midianites into Gideon's hands (v. 7). And God, who gave this promise, said to Gideon that night, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hands" (v. 9). Why did God tell Gideon to go down to the enemy camp? Obviously God would not have sent Gideon alone to attack the Midianites. I think the reason God told Gideon to go down to the camp of Midian was to give Gideon courage since he was afraid to attack the Midian army (vv. 10-11). God knew that Gideon was afraid. Of course, in Gideon's position, he had to be afraid because he only had 300 men but the enemies had 135,000 soldiers. That was why God told Gideon, "But if you are afraid to go down, go with Purah your servant down to the camp, and you will hear what they say; and afterward your hands will be strengthened that you may go down against the camp" (vv. 10-11). So Gideon took Purah and went down near the enemy camp (v. 11), and there he listened to a man who was telling his dream to his friend and his friend's interpretation of that dream (vv. 13-14). When Gideon heard it, he bowed in worship and then returned to the camp of Israel (v. 15). And he said to his 300 men, "Arise, for the LORD has given the camp of Midian into your hands" (v. 15). Now he has the courage to attack the Midianites (v. 11).

The first thing that came to my mind as I was meditating on this word is that the Lord knows all my fear. God know when I am afraid of a fearful situation that is becoming more and more fearful. When the Spirit helped me to realize this, I was comforted in my heart. The second thought is that the Lord makes the situation fearful enough for me to realize that I cannot handle it by myself. It's like the Gideon's situation in which he had 32,000 men at first against his enemy who had 135,000 soldiers, but 32,000 men became 10,000 men and then became 300 men only. The situation got worse in which with 300 men there was no way he could win the war against his 135,000 enemy soldiers. As my fearful situation getting worse, I feel more helpless and powerless. I think that's what God does sometime to us. Why does the Lord reduce the people whom I rely on? Why does the Lord make me feel more and more incompetence and helplessness? The reason is because He doesn't want me to boast myself saying I accomplished this and that by my power and my strength. In fact, the Lord doesn't want me to be proud but wants me to be a humble person who totally depends on God. Fourth, one additional thought, is how God gave Gideon the courage to attack Gideon who was afraid. I thought how God changes my fear into courage. As I was thinking about this, the word that came into my mind was "conviction". God gave Gideon, who was afraid, the assurance of victory. God gave Gideon the assurance of victory by making him to go down to the enemy camp and let him hear the dream and its' interpretation. This assurance of victory made Gideon to attack the enemy with only 300 men who had no weapons but trumpets and empty pitchers with torches inside the pitchers (v. 16). What a reckless act. It is an act that cannot be understood by human reason and logic. How can 300 people attack 135,000 without any weapons? Gideon, with the conviction of victory, divided the 300 troops into three units, and with 100 men and his followers arriving on the outskirts of Midian's army (which was about midnight when the enemy had just posted the watch) and they broke the pitchers that they were holding (v. 19). At that time, the two other units also broke the pitchers and lifted the torches in their left hands and blow the trumpet in their right hands, saying, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon" (v. 20). "Each stood in his place around the camp; and all the army ran, crying out as they fled" (v. 21). When the 300 warriors of Gideon blew the 300 trumpets, God put the enemies in confusion and set the sword of one against another even throughout the whole army (v. 22). Eventually, Gideon's 300 soldiers defeated an enemy army of about 135,000. God gave victory to Gideon and his 300 men.

Living in this world, we can be afraid because of great difficulties and great adversity. And we can feel our own incompetence and helplessness because of the great difficulties and great adversity. At that time, God graciously makes us to cry out to Him and to rely on His Word. And God gives us His word of promise and gives us faith to believe in God who fulfills that promise. In fact, God gives us assurance and conviction regarding His promise Word. God will surely give us victory. When God gives us assurance of victory, not only that God gives

us peace in our hearts but also He changes our fears to courage. With that courage, we no longer avoid the fearful situation but face it. In doing so, God make us to endure and to overcome our great adversity and difficulties. And in the end, God will deliver us and surely will make us victorious.

# “Cast your burden upon the Lord”

## [Psalms 55]

The world makes us to carry heavy burdens on our minds gradually. This world can only give us anxiety, worry, sadness, and pain. But we Christians are laying down heavy burdens before the Lord continually and enjoying the peace that the Lord gives us. But somehow it seems that we are not good at laying down our heavy burdens. What do you think is the cause? I looked up the answer in Pastor Lee's book, 'Putting it down': 'Satan, who is the master of the world, tempts us to keep having it and to keep holding it.' I agree with this statement. Satan's work is constantly tempting us to 'hold on.' And among the things that Satan tempts us to hold on are 'past baggage', and hurt, pain, bitterness, anxiety, and worry that are heavy burdens on our mind.

But the Bible 1 Peter 5:7 says: “casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.” Our God is the God who cares for us. According to Psalms 139:17-18, God loves us so much that His precious thoughts toward us are more than sand. Therefore, we must lay down all our concerns to God who loves us and cares for us. And we shouldn't worry about tomorrow. The reason is that tomorrow will care for itself and each day has enough trouble of its own (Mt. 6:34).

According to Psalms 55:22, the psalmist David says: “Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.” I want to mediate on Psalms 55 under the title “Cast your burden upon the Lord” and receive God's grace.

### **First, what was the burden of David?**

There are two things we can think of:

#### (1) David's burden was "restless."

Look at Psalm 55:2 – “... I am restless in my complaint and am surely distracted.” The Hebrew word for “restless” here means “bush” (Park Yun-sun). Dr. Park Yun-sun said that the word “restless” is used here because it is caused by complicated and confusing mind like a forest and thorny bush” (Park Yun-sun). What was the reason David was restless? Look at verse 3: “Because of the voice of the enemy, Because of the pressure of the wicked; For they bring down trouble upon me And in anger they bear a grudge against me.” David was restless because of the oppression and persecution of his enemies.

I am sure everybody has experienced restlessness. Shakespeare in the Great Britain said, ‘Restless is the enemy of life.’ A person with a lasting restless cannot be happy and enjoy his or her life. Restless can hinder health and shorten life and makes human beings unable to concentrate on new creative work. The measure of happiness is not in wealth, but in how much power do we have in order to overcome restlessness. A poor life without restlessness is more valuable than a rich life that is buried in restlessness. Aesop said, ‘A piece of bread that is eaten with relief is better than eating so many foods in a feast with restlessness’ (Internet).

#### (2) David's burden was 'anguish heart'.

Look at Psalms 55:4 – “My heart is in anguish within me, And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.” Not only David’s heart was in great pain due to his enemies’ oppression and persecution but also he felt the danger of his life. That was why he confessed that “Fear and trembling come upon me, And horror has overwhelmed me” (v. 5). If David had wings like a dove and he would fly away and be at rest. In a word, David’s heart was so heavy that he wanted to escape the present situation. David saw violence and disputes in the city, and suffered heartache because of sin, debauchery, malice, oppression, and deceit (vv. 10-11). In addition, David's heart was restless because of the betrayal from his friend. Look at Psalms 55:12-13: “For it is not an enemy who reproaches me, Then I could bear it; Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me, Then I could hide myself from him. But it is you, a man my equal, My companion and my familiar friend.” The deep wounds of David's heart were betrayed by his close friend who had walked in the house of God in the throng and had sweet fellowship together (v. 14). This good friend betrayed David by putting forth his hands against those who were at peace with him and violated his covenant (v. 20). The mouth of David’s friend was smoother than butter, but his heart was war, and his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords (v.21).

## **Second, how can we cast our burdens to God?**

David cast his burden to God in prayer. Look at Psalm 55:1-2: “Give ear to my prayer, O God; And do not hide Yourself from my supplication. Give heed to me and answer me ....” David cast all his heavy burdens to God in prayer. He cast his severe painful heart to the Lord in prayer due to his restlessness in his evil and sinful situation. In particular, he cast all his painful heart from the betrayal of his friend to God. Why did David cast all his heavy burdens to the Lord in prayer? The reason was that he believed only God could save him. Look at Psalms 55:16-17: “As for me, I shall call upon God, And the LORD will save me. Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, And He will hear my voice.” David set three times a day at evening, morning and at noon, and cried out to God. He poured out his restlessness, hardship, and pains to God in prayer. The reason was that he was confident that only the Lord is his Savior.

Prayer is an expression that we are relying on God. In other words, those who rely on God pray. The psalmist David cast all his heavy burdens, restlessness, and severe hardships of his heart to God as he trusted in Him (v. 23). We must cast all our heavy burdens to God in prayer as we trust in Him.

“Are you weary, are you heavy-hearted? Tell it to Jesus, Tell it to Jesus;  
Are you grieving over joys departed? Tell it to Jesus alone. Tell it to Jesus,  
Tell it to Jesus, He is a friend that's well known; You've no other such a friend  
or brother, Tell it to Jesus alone.”

(Hymn, “Are you weary, are you heavy hearted?”)

## **Lastly, what happens when we cast our burdens to God?**

When we cast all our burdens to God in prayer, God gives us two blessings:

### **(1) God sustains us.**

Look at Psalms 55:22 – “Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; ....” David also confessed in Psalms 54:4, “God is my helper; The Lord is the sustainer of my soul.” These two words tell us that David was convinced of God's help in the present threat and crisis as he remembered the past experience of God’s help in his tribulation. As David remembered the past grace of salvation, he was

convinced that if he cast all his heavy burdens to God then He would sustain him (55:22). What was the result? Look at Psalms 55:18 – “He will redeem my soul in peace from the battle which is against me, For they are many who strive with me.” As a result, David enjoyed the peace that God gave him. We, like David, cast all our heavy burdens to God in prayer. In doing so, God will sustain us and will keep us in peace in our hearts.

(2) God never allows us to be shaken.

Look at Psalms 55:22 – “... He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.” When we cast all our burdens to God in prayer, not only that God hears our prayers and sustains us but also He doesn’t allow us to be shaken. But those who don’t fear God (v. 19) and who don’t turn his wicked way, God will bring retribution by bring them down to the pit of destruction (v. 23). But those who rely on God will never be shaken. Look at Psalms 21:7 – “For the king trusts in the LORD, And through the lovingkindness of the Most High he will not be shaken.”

One of the songs I like to sing is “I Must Tell Jesus”: “I must tell Jesus all of my trials, I can-not bear these burdens alone; In my distress He kindly will help me, ...” This hymn was written by Rev. Elisa Hoffman. One day one of his church member came to him and asked, ‘What should I do? What am I supposed to do with my heavy burdens?’ After listening to his complaint for a long time, Rev. Hoffman prayed earnestly for him to the Lord of Consolation to work in his heart. After the prayer, he made a bright face and confessed: ‘Yes. I should tell my heavy burdens to Jesus, instead of bearing them alone.’ After he left, suddenly the inspirational Rev. Hoffman began to write a poetry of hymn: “I must tell Jesus all of my trials, I cannot bear these burdens alone; In my distress He kindly will help me.” This was how this hymn was born (Internet).

I heard my father singing this hymn at his mission field. At the time when my father encountered troubles in the mission field, he sang this hymn vigorously during the Morning Prayer. On that day, God gave us a way to escape from danger. Our God is the God who carries our heavy burdens. So let us cast all our heaven burdens to Him who cares for us. Let us cast our restlessness, our worries and our severe pains in our hearts to God in prayers. Then God will deliver us. And God will sustain us, will give us peace, and will make us strong so that we will never be shaken. Let us cast all our heavy burdens to God!

## **Do not grow weary**

**"But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good" (2 Thessalonians 3:13).**

We have been saved through faith by God's grace (Eph. 2:8). As God's masterpiece, we are created in Christ Jesus for good works (v. 10). Therefore, we must do good (Ps. 34:14; Rom. 13: 3, 1 Pet. 3:11). We must do good as we depart from evil (Ps. 37:27) as we delight ourselves in the Lord (v. 4). Those who do good belong to God (3 Jn. 11). However, there are times when we grow weary of doing good. Why do we grow weary? I thought about four reasons:

**The first reason why we grow weary of doing good is because the person who receives good from us doesn't appreciate us.**

We can be disappointed when we don't get any appreciation from the person whom we love, serve and do good with Christ's love. And the cause of our disappointment is because we expect something from that person such as appreciation. It is because our good deed is conditional. That's why we are sensitive to the reaction of the other party. And we are both disheartened and discouraged when we don't see any reaction as much as we expected.

**The second reason why we grow weary of doing good is because the person is not only appreciating us but also he criticizes us and condemn us.**

Of course, that person will not directly condemn us with a voice of criticism. But when we hear his criticism and condemnation through someone else, then we can be discouraged and grow weary. And the question that may arise in our mind is 'Why do I have to do good while listening this kind of criticism and condemnation from other people?' I think it is impossible for human being to keep on doing good to another person when he pays back our good with evil.

**The third reason why we grow weary of doing good is because we can't see any transformation from the person to whom we are doing good.**

We can grow weary when we don't see any good change in the life of the person to whom we diligently do good with Christ's love despite all the good work we did for him. It's like a farmer who planted seeds, gave manure and water, and waited and expected to bear fruit but where there is no fruit, he can get discouraged. Likewise, we as God's spiritual farmers plant the seed of His gospel and Word and diligently give tears of prayers and the Word. But if there is no good fruits but only the bad fruits, then we can be discouraged and grow weary.

**The fourth reason why we grow weary of doing good is because of "myself".**

My personal thought is that "myself" is the biggest reason why we grow weary in doing good. Whether the person to whom we do good appreciates us or not, whether he criticizes and condemns us or not, whether we see good fruits or bad fruits in his life, we just need to obey God's command of doing good to others unconditionally as we experience God's goodness in our lives (Ps. 34:8). But the reason we cannot do that is because we are not continually and fully tasting God's goodness in our lives. That's why we get discouraged and grow weary with various reasons. Especially when we cannot experience God's good work of causing all things to work together for

good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28), not only that we aren't but we can't do good to others. That's why not only we grow weary because of ourselves but we can be in despair.

We have to do good. And we should not be discouraged and grow weary when we do good. The reason is that our labors are not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58). I hope and pray that we may continually do good to others as we rely on God today and tomorrow.



## **Do not be afraid but remember well**

**“If you should say in your heart, 'These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?' you shall not be afraid of them; you shall well remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: the great trials which your eyes saw and the signs and the wonders and the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the LORD your God brought you out. So shall the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid” (Deuteronomy 7:17-19).**

When we experience great difficulties and hardships in our lives, we tend to worry, be in anxiety, be in fear and discouraged. And so many times we don't even know what to do. At this very moment, God speaks to our hearts. God speaks to us through His Word when we are in a great crisis. What is that voice of God? It is 'Do not be afraid but remember well'.

In Deuteronomy 7:17, when God speaks to the people of Israel through Moses, God knew what they were thinking in their minds. Their thought was that the Canaanites were more than the Israelites, so they were concerned about how they could cast them out. The reason why they were so concerned was that the Israelites heard the complaints from the ten spies (Num. 13:32; 14:36) and wailed all night long and blamed Moses and Aaron (14:1). The reason for their resentment was that the peoples in the land of Canaan were greater and mightier than the Israelites (Deut. 7:1) and their cities were great, fortified to heaven (vv. 1-2). Therefore, the Israelites were in distress and despair, worrying about how they could dispossess the Canaanites (7:17). God, who knew it, told them not to be afraid of the Canaanites, but to remember well (v. 17). What did God say to remember?

**First, God told the Israelites to remember well what God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt.**

Look Deuteronomy 7:18-19: “you shall not be afraid of them; you shall well remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: the great trials which your eyes saw and the signs and the wonders and the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the LORD your God brought you out. So shall the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid.” God told the Israelites to remember what God had done to Pharaoh and all Egypt (v.18). God told to them remember the signs and the wonders and the mighty hand and the outstretched arm (v. 19). God told the Israelites to remember the amazing power of God which God showed them in the past when they were in Egypt and delivered them. Why? This was because God would do the same to the Canaanites whom the Israelites were afraid of (v. 19). Therefore, God told the Israelites not to fear the Canaanites (vv. 18, 21). The reason was because the great and awesome God was among them (v.21).

The great and awesome God is with us. Therefore, we must fear God rather than fear the great difficulties and adversities we face. And we must remember according to the Word of God. We must remember God's deliverance and guidance in our past lives in great difficulty and adversity. And we must believe that God, who had delivered us and guided us in the past, will deliver and guide us in the great difficulties and hardships we face today.

**Second, God told the Israelites to remember all the way which God had led them in the wilderness for 40 years.**

Look at Deuteronomy 8:2-4: “You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years.” God told the Israelites who were in despair thinking about how to dispossess the Canaanites (7:17) to remember well what God had done for them in Egypt and how He had led them and protected them for 40 years in the wilderness. For 40 years in the wilderness, God didn’t let the Israelites’ clothes to wear out on them and their foot to swell (v. 4). Also God humbled them and let them be hungry and fed them with manna (v. 3). What was the reason? The reason was to teach the Israelites that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of God (v. 3).

We are the people of God who live by all the words that come out of God's mouth. We are the children of God who live day by day through the bread of life which Father God has given us from heaven (Jn. 6:32, 35). Therefore, we must remember. We must remember the God of Ebenezer. We must remember that God has helped us up to this point (1 Sam 7:12) and is still helping us (Ps. 121). And we must believe that the Immanuel God who is with us (Mt. 1:23) is walking with us (Exod. 34:9).

### **Third, God told the Israelites not to forget how they provoked God.**

Look at Deuteronomy 9:7 – “Remember, do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD.” Since the day the Israelites came out of Egypt, they were always disobeyed God (v. 7). They even provoked God in Mount Horeb (v. 8). Also they provoked God by quickly turning aside from the way which God commanded them and by making a molten image for themselves (v. 12). They had done evil in the sight of God to provoke Him to anger (v.18). The Israelites made God very angry (v.19). And when God sent them from Kadesh-barnea, saying, “God up and possess the land which I have given you” but they rebelled against the God’s command; they neither believed Him nor listened to His voice (v. 23). This was what Moses said to the Israelites: ““You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day I knew you” (v. 24). To these Israelites who had been rebelled against God, God told them to remember how they provoked Him (v. 7). Why did God tell the Israelites who were concerned about how to dispossess the Canaanites (v. 4) and who were in despair to remember how they provoked God in the wilderness? (v. 7) The reason was that God didn’t want them to commit a great sin against God again. Rather, God wanted the Israelites to go up to the land of Canaan, which God promised to give, by believing and relying on the Word of God, without provoking God anymore.

We must no longer provoke our God. We must no longer disobey the Word of God in our complaints and resentments because we have no faith in God. Our God is faithful God (7:9). God is a faithful God who fulfills His promises to us. Therefore, we must believe in the faithful God. We must believe in the promises God has made to us. And we must follow the Lord faithfully. We must obey the Word of God. Therefore, we must please God.

### **Forth and last, God told the Israelites not to forget Him, but to remember Him well.**

Look at Deuteronomy 8:11 – ““Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today.” God was worried that when the Israelites entered the promised land of Canaan and had eaten and were satisfied and had built good houses and lived in them (V. 12), and when their herds and their flocks multiplied and their silver and gold multiplied and all that they had multiplied (v. 13), then their heart would become proud and they would forget God (v. 14). God was worried that when their heart became proud, they would say in their heart “My power and the strength of my

hand made me this wealth” (v. 17). That was why God said to the Israelites, “But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day” (v. 18). The Israelites shouldn’t have forgotten but remember that God gave them power to make wealth. And by remembering God, they should have kept His commandments, His ordinances and His statutes which God commanded (v. 11). The reason was that if they forgot God and worshiped other gods, the Israelites would surely perish (v. 19).

We must not forget but remember God. Our God has chosen us to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth (7:6). God chose us, not because we were more in number than any of the peoples (v. 7) but because He loved us and wanted to keep the oath which He swore to our forefathers (v. 8). Our God is the God who loves us and bless us and multiplies us (v. 13). And because our God is faithful (v. 9), He will fulfill what He promised us. Even now, God is faithfully leading us into the Promised Land. Therefore, we must listen to the voice of the Lord, the Shepherd who guides us, and obey and follow Him.

We must not forget but remember God well. We must well remember the grace God that was given to us in our past lives. At the same time, we must remember that we sinned against God. And we must not forget that God, who saved us in the past in an awful situation and adversity, is the God of salvation who can save us now too. So let us not be afraid but let us remember our God. And let us move forward by faith toward Heaven, the true Promised Land.

## **Do not worry about tomorrow**

### **[Matthew 6:25-34]**

Do you know what will happen tomorrow? We can find the answer to this question in James 4:13-15: “Come now, you who say, “‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.’ Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.’” The Bible clearly says we don’t know what our life will be like tomorrow. Therefore, Proverbs 27:1 says, “Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth.” We don’t know what will happen not only tomorrow but also today. Therefore, the Bible tells us not to boast about tomorrow. Also, the Bible says not to worry about tomorrow (Mt. 6:34). Still, aren’t we worried about tomorrow? In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus is saying not to worry several times. In particular, Jesus says in verse 34: “So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” Today, I want to meditate on the three things under the heading “Do not worry about tomorrow.”

### **First, what should we not be worry about?**

In today's text Matthew 6:34, the Bible tells us that we should not worry about tomorrow. Here, what does Jesus refer to when He said “So do not worry about tomorrow”? Look at verses 25 and 31: “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ... Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’” What Jesus was referring to was that we should not worry about what we will eat, what we will drink and what we will put on (Lk. 12:29). In other words, Jesus is telling us not to worry about the needs of everyday life. Jesus is saying that “the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things” (v. 32). In other words, Jesus is saying that unbelievers are asking for these things because they are concerned about their daily needs such as food, drink, and clothes. Maybe we claim to have faith but like unbelievers we worry about these things as well.

In this world, there is a lot of worry. I cannot help but agree with what Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7:32-33: “But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife.” Also, when we do God’s work, we are like Martha in Luke 10:41, we are worried and bothered about so many things. This reminds me the hymn “My Soul in Sad Exile”: “My soul in sad exile was out on life’s sea, So burdened with sin and distressed ...” (Internet). What should we do in this world full of distress and worries? The Bible Luke 21:34 tells us to be careful. What should we careful? The Bible says we should be careful not to let our mind be dulled by the dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life (Lk. 21:34). If there are worries of life, our hearts will get dull. And when our hearts are dull, we are bound to lose spiritual sensitivity. As a result, we won’t be able to live according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit because we don’t understand it. So we will live according to our sinful nature. In the parable of the seeds in Matthew 13:22, Jesus says that the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word and it becomes unfruitful. Isn’t this true? Among the worries of our lives, especially when we are under financial pressure, we are more prone to be tempted by wealth. If we have the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth, then we cannot hear God’s voice even though we read the Bible and hear and study the Word of God. As a result, we will live a fruitless life of faith. Therefore, we should not worry about tomorrow, as Jesus said.

## **Second, why shouldn't we worry about tomorrow?**

In today's text Matthew 6:24-34, Jesus is telling us three reasons:

### **(1) The first reason is that life is more important than food or clothing.**

Look at Matthew 6:25 – “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” In general, I think it is normal for us to worry about what to eat, what to drink or what to wear for our own lives. This is because our people are eager to survive. But those of us with faith should think biblically rather than think generally. Biblical thinking is that we don't have to worry about what we eat or drink or what we wear for our lives because our Heavenly Father knows that we need all these things (v. 32). Moreover, since our Heavenly Father gave us eternal life in Jesus Christ, will He not give us the daily necessities to us? I think this is what Jesus meant by life is more important than food or clothing (v. 25). God has given even His begotten Son Jesus to the cross for our salvation (eternal life). “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?” (Rom. 8:32) Wouldn't Heavenly Father provide us with the daily bread we need? Wouldn't Heavenly Father who loves us and even gave His begotten Son on the cross for our salvation give something for us to wear? Our Heavenly Father, who gave us eternal life, is God who knows what we need and has no difficulty in providing to us.

### **(2) The second reason is that our Heavenly Father knows that we need all these things.**

Look at Matthew 6:32 – “For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.” According to Psalms 139, our God is the God who made us (v. 14) and who knows us (v. 1). He knows when we sit down and when we rise up. He understands our thoughts from afar (v. 2). He is intimately acquainted with all our ways (v. 3) and even before there is a word on our tongue, He knows it all (v. 4). The amazing truth is that God's precious thoughts to us are outnumbered the sand (vv. 17-18). Why does God have such vast thoughts toward us? It is because God who knows us the best loves us the most. Don't you think God who knows us the best and who loves us the most knows what we need in our everyday lives? Will your Heavenly Father not know the food and drink we need and the clothes we need to wear?

### **(3) The third reason is that each day has enough trouble of its own.**

Look at Matthew 6:34 – “So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” When I was meditating on this word, the Korean gospel song “I don't know about tomorrow” came into my mind: “I don't know about tomorrow, I just live from day to day. I don't borrow from its sunshine, For its skies may turn to gray. I don't worry o'er the future, For I know what Jesus said, And today I'll walk beside Him, For He knows what is ahead” (Internet). This song is written by Mrs. Hee-sook Ahn. I still remember reading her book ‘If I perish, I perish.’ As I was meditating on this word, I came to know the story which I didn't know about her before. The story is that she was scheduled for execution on August 18, 1945. The reason is that when Elder Park Gwan-jun and his son were calling out "Jehovah God's Great Mission" in the Capitol of Japan and threw a warning that ‘Japan would be ruined by sulfur' three guards ran to Elder Park and his son and capture them. Then a security guard asked Mrs. Ahn ‘Are you one of these people?’, she said ‘yes’. So she was arrested as well. And she was transferred to Pyongyang prison and imprisoned for 6 years. It was said that the execution was scheduled on the morning of August 18, 1945. However, on August 15, 1945, Japan surrendered to the

atomic bomb of the United States and Korea was liberated, and on August 17, the day before the execution, Mrs. Hee-sook Ahn was released (internet). Isn't this surprising? Isn't it surprising that she was rescued a day before her execution? That was why she wrote this song: "I don't know about tomorrow" came into my mind: "I don't know about tomorrow, I just live from day to day. I don't borrow from its sunshine, For its skies may turn to gray. I don't worry o'er the future, For I know what Jesus said, And today I'll walk beside Him, For He knows what is ahead." We are walking on this rough path that the Lord had walked on. There are times when it seems to be there is no end. And there are times when we get exhausted. But we must not worry about tomorrow because each day has enough trouble of its own as Jesus said. In fact, even if we are to be executed tomorrow, we should leave tomorrow to the Lord and not worry about it with the determination that if we perish we will perish. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

### **Lastly, what should we do to not to worry about tomorrow?**

When Jesus said not to worry, He gave us two examples: the first is the birds of the air (vv. 26-27) and the second is the lilies of the field (vv. 28-30). Consider the first example. Look at Matthew 6:26-27: "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?" When we consider the birds of the air, they don't sow, nor reap nor gather into barns like us. Can they farm like us? Of course, the answer is no. If the heavenly Father feeds the birds that can't farm, will He not feed us and take care of us who are formed in the image of God and who are more precious than those birds? In addition to this, what we should think about is who among us can add a single inch to our height by worrying? (v. 27) Here, the word "height" doesn't only refer to our physical height but also "the length of life" (Swanson). I thought of the word "height" primarily as the length of the body, but I think it is reasonable to interpret it as "the length of life". The reason is that when we think about what Jesus said, "Is not life more than food ..." (v. 25), I think Jesus is telling us that not only can we not be able to grow the body by worrying about it but also we can't extend our lives one more hour. So Jesus said "And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?" (v. 27). Can we extend our life for an hour by worrying about it? Isn't it worse for our health? Think about how the lilies of the field grow (v. 28). They don't toil nor do they spin (v. 28). Nevertheless, Jesus said that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these (v. 29). "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you?" (v. 30) To those who are worried about what to eat or what to wear, Jesus is saying "You of little faith!" (v. 30). That's why we should look at the birds of the air (v. 26). And we should observe how the lilies of the field grow (v. 28). We are more precious than them. We are those who are bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Bible says that God honors us (Isa. 43:4). If God feeds and clothe the birds of the air and the lilies of the earth, will He not feed us and clothe us? Therefore, when we are worry about tomorrow, as Jesus said, we should look at the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. When we do, we will not be worry about tomorrow.

We must first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness in order not to worry about tomorrow. In other words, we must seek the kingdom of God and the righteousness of God, rather than worrying and seeking for what to eat, what to drink or what to wear, like unbelievers. If our priority is food, clothing and shelter, then we will worry all the days of our lives. But if our priority is His kingdom and His righteousness, then we will experience God's provision of our food, clothing and shelter. This is what Jesus said in Matthew 6:33 – "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." By believing in this Word of Jesus, let us seek God's kingdom and God's righteousness first. As we pray in faith "Give us this day our daily bread" (v. 11), let us all seek first the kingdom of God and live according to God's will (Park Yun-sun). In doing so, God will fill our daily needs with our food, drink and clothing. May we be able to experience this grace.

This is what the Bible says in 1 Peter 5:7, “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” and in Philippians 4:6-7, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” God is telling us not to be anxious about anything. He is telling us not to worry. Therefore, we should not worry about tomorrow. We should not worry about tomorrow what to eat or what to drink or what to wear. Our Heavenly Father knows that we need all of these things. God, who gave us the most important thing to us, that is salvation, eternal life, by giving His only Son Jesus on the cross, will give us all of these things. Therefore, let us first and foremost seek God’s kingdom and live according to His will for His glory.

## God will surely help us

**“With him is only an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles.” And the people relied on the words of Hezekiah king of Judah” (2 Chronicles 32:8).**

Do we surely believe in God's help? If so, we must cut off everything we depend on beside God. If we don't cut off them, that mean we don't fully believe in God's help. We should not be mistaken.

Hezekiah, king of Judah, did right in the sight of God, according to all that his father David had done (2 Chron. 29:2). He consecrated the Levites and the house of the Lord (v. 5). He cleansed the house of the Lord by removing every unclean thing in it (vv. 15-17). Also after he destroyed all the idols (31:1) he made the priests and the Levites not only to minister, to give thanks and to praise in the gates of the camp of the Lord (v. 2) but also he made them to devote themselves to the law of the Lord (v. 4). In one word, King Hezekiah reformed Judah. He did what was good, right and true before his God (v. 20). “Every work which he began in the service of the house of God in law and in commandment, seeking his God, he did with all his heart and prospered” (v. 21). But after these acts of faithfulness, Hezekiah had a crisis (32:1). The crisis was that Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah and besieged the fortified cities (v. 1). Isn't this strange? If Hezekiah had sinned against God by worshiping idols and by being unfaithful to God, we would understand that this crisis came to him. We can understand that because of his sin, he was in crisis as the discipline of God's love. But even though King Hezekiah did what was good, right and true before God (31:20) and reformed Judah, the crisis came to him. Why did he face such a crisis? Don't you think it's strange? One of the reasons was that God wanted Hezekiah, who walked faithfully in the sight of God, to trust God's help and completely depend on Him through the crisis so that he might see the glory of God. Indeed, King Hezekiah fully believed in God's help. That was why he took courage and rebuilt all the wall that had been broken down and erected towers on it, and built another outside wall and strengthened the Millo in the city of David, and made weapons and shields in great number (32:5). “He appointed military officers over the people and gathered them to him in the square at the city gate, and spoke encouragingly to them, saying, ‘Be strong and courageous, do not fear or be dismayed because of the king of Assyria nor because of all the horde that is with him; for the one with us is greater than the one with him. With him is only an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles.’ And the people relied on the words of Hezekiah king of Judah” (vv. 6-8). Hezekiah never expressed his faith in God's help with these words alone. Surprisingly, when he saw Sennacherib king of Assyria coming to Jerusalem, he decided with his officers and his warriors to cut off the supply of water from the springs which were outside the city (v. 3). This is just like suicide when we think in common sense. It was because when he cut off the water supply, not only the king of Assyria and his soldiers who came to battle the people of Judah outside the city couldn't get water but also King Hezekiah and the people of Judah who were inside as well. Why did King Hezekiah do this? What did he lead himself and his people to the crisis in which they might die by thirst (v. 11)? That was because King Hezekiah completely believed in God's help. He believed that God would help him and the people of Judah (v. 8). Do we really believe that God will help us?

After I proclaimed this message during the Morning Prayer today and as I was praying, I reflected on myself with this word of God. In doing so, I remembered the two promises God gave me to me (Jn. 6:1-15 and Mt. 16:18). And as I looked at the cross of Jesus Christ, I sought my God and asked Him for help. I asked the Lord to build His church as He promised to us in Matthew 16:18. As I was doing so, the thought that came to my mind was as King Hezekiah decided with his officers and his warriors to cut off the water supply from the springs which were outside the city (2 Chron. 32:3) maybe God wanted me and my church leaders needed to come together to discuss



and make wise decision for our church for His sake. The thought that came to my mind was if there was anything that we relied on more than God, we must decide to cut off all those things so that we might completely depend on God. We must cut off everything that we depend on besides God. If we aren't cut them off, the means we do not fully believe in God's help. But if we are convinced that God will surely help us, like King Hezekiah, we must cut off water sources, even if we may be thirst for water. When we cut them off, we will be able to receive true help through the God who made the heavens and the earth.

“I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From where shall my help come?  
My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth” (Psalms 121:1-2).

## God who comforts the depressed

**“But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus” (2 Corinthians 7:6).**

There are many things that discourage us. There may be a lot of disappointment in looking at the country in which we live, but there may also be discouragements to think about the Lord's church which we love and care for. Especially we can be discouraged because of our pastors whom we love and also we can be disappointed by our church elders. When we see the division of the church, we can become more and more depressed. These discouragements can be fatal to our life of faith. The reason is that big, deep and lasting discouragement can make us fall into spiritual depression. If we fall into a spiritual depression, then no one's consolation will be enough to comfort our depressed soul. Rather, we will refuse to be comforted by our close brother/sister in Christ who loves us, as well as even our beloved family members. Therefore, we must be very vigilant about spiritual depression. To do so, we must look more and more to the Lord when we are discouraged. We must go to the Father God and kneel down before Him and earnestly seek Him. The reason is that only our Lord can comfort our hearts of discouragement. Therefore, when we are discouraged and depressed, we must humbly look at God, who comforts us.

In 2 Corinthians 7:6, Apostle Paul said to the Corinthian church that God is the God “who comforts the depressed.” Here, who are "the depressed" whom Paul speaks about? I think he referred to two groups of people.

(1) The first group is Paul himself and his co-workers.

Why did they become depressed? Maybe they were depressed because they were in affliction (v.4). Especially when they came into Macedonia, their fleas had no rest, but they were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fear within (v. 6). But I think Paul and his co-workers were more discouraged because their beloved Corinthian church members had sinned against God. I think so because this is what Paul said in verse 1: “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” Think about it. Couldn't Paul and his co-workers be depressed to know that the beloved Corinthians for whom Paul and his co-workers were praying from afar, were sinning against God without living holy life but were defiling their bodies and souls?

(2) The second group is the Corinthian church members.

They are also thought to be "the depressed" (v. 6) as Paul and his co-workers were not only because they were sinning against God, but also because they were sorrow when they receive the Paul's letter (v. 8). Of course, wouldn't they be depressed when they saw themselves sinning against God? Wouldn't the believers in the Corinthian church have been depressed because they were reproved by Paul in love by Paul's letter? I think "the depressed" mentioned in 2 Corinthians 7:6 are primarily referring to Paul and his co-workers, but in context, it also refers to the Corinthian believers whom God comforted them.

How then did God comfort those who were depressed?

(1) How did God first comfort Paul and his co-workers?

God comforted them by the coming of Titus (v.6). God comforted them by letting them hear three things through Titus: (a) Paul and his co-workers were comforted by hearing the news through Titus that the Corinthian believers were sorrowful and repented their sins that was caused by the Paul's letter (vv. 8-10). Who made them to repent? Wasn't it God? God used the Paul's letter to make them to repent their sins and manifest their cleanliness (v. 11). (b) Paul and his co-workers were comforted because the Corinthian believers' earnestness on behalf of Paul and his co-workers might be made known to them in the sight of God (v. 12). (c) Paul and his co-workers were comforted because Titus' spirit had been refreshed by the Corinthian believers. So they rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus (v. 13). In particular, Paul and his co-workers rejoiced that the Corinthian believers received Titus in fear and trembling and were obedience to Titus and Titus's affection abounded all the more toward them (vv. 15-16).

(2) How then did God comfort the believers in Corinth?

(a) I think God comforted them using the Paul's letter to make them sorrowful and eventually make them to repent their sins (v. 9). In other words, God comforted them by making them to repent that led them to salvation (v. 10) and to bear the clean fruit of the righteousness of repentance (v. 11). (b) God also comforted the Corinthian believers by making them to receive Titus with fear and trembling and making them to obey Titus (v. 15). (c) And I think God comforted the Corinthian believers by making Paul to have confidence in them (v. 16).

There are lot things that make us discouraged and depressed as we live in this world. But in my case, I get most discouraged and depressed because of myself. That's because I disobey God's Word and sin against God. I am sure my family and church members would be disappointed and discouraged when they see me sinning against God. Also, those brothers and sisters in Christ who loves me will be disappointed and discouraged because of me. I hope and pray that God comfort all of you. May God of all comforts comfort you in all their afflictions (1:3-4). May God comfort you by letting you to hear the good news. May God enable you to hear the good news of your beloved brothers and sisters in Christ whom you have been praying for have repented their sins and are bearing the fruit of repentance. May God help you to hear the news of love that those whom you love are devoted to you. May God enable you to hear that those whom you love have deepened their trust in you.

## **The Comforter who can sympathize with our weaknesses**

**“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).**

Some of us are sick and unable to say we are sick. There are many people around us who cannot say ‘I am going to very hard time.’ Many people live with fear, pain and suffering. But the problem is that they cannot share their fear, pain and suffering with anyone. Perhaps that's because they don't have anybody whom they can share their hearts with. Why can't they share their hearts? Maybe it's because they think that even we open our hearts and share our fear, pain and suffering, the other person will not be able to understand or sympathize with them. So they are mainly covering that fear, pain and suffering deep in their hearts. And they live this way today.

As I meditated on Jesus during the suffering week under the title ‘the One who is familiar with suffering’ (Isa. 53:3), I was once again reminded that Jesus was the high priest who can be sympathize with our weakness. So I prayed to God that the Lord build me up as His instrument of comforting others who can sympathize with other's weakness like Jesus. After praying, I thought about how I could become a comforter who can sympathize with others.

**First, I must acknowledge my weakness before the Lord, who sympathizes with my weakness, in order to sympathize with other's weakness.**

Our instinct likes the city and not the wilderness. The reason is because the wilderness is lonely. Because there is nothing in the wilderness, we like to migrate to a city where there is many things to see and enjoy. But we need to go into the lonely wilderness. And in the wilderness there is nothing, we must go to the Lord the High Priest who is sympathizes with our weaknesses. In particular, we must humbly acknowledge our weakness in the wilderness and go to Him. We must humbly acknowledge to the Lord that we are vulnerable to the temptations of Satan. The reason is that if we don't acknowledge our weaknesses, we will never be able to experience the Lord who sympathizes with our weaknesses. Why do we go into the lonely wilderness? Aren't we going into the wilderness to experience the Lord who sympathizes with our weaknesses? We must go into the wilderness to make a lonely wilderness to the garden of solitude. And in the wilderness we must humbly acknowledge our weakness to the Lord.

**Second, we must experience the comfort of the indwelling Holy Spirit in order to sympathize with other's weakness.**

Our instinct likes to live in the city and to receive comfort from the people around us instead of comforting others. The reason is that when we live with people in the city, we become more and more selfish as we fall into the Satan's temptations. And the reason we become selfish is because we live in front of people rather than before God. This is a work of Satan. When Satan tempts us to live in front of people, we focus on people rather than focusing on God. Just as David, who looked at God in the wilderness but looked at Bathsheba in the palace and sinned against God, we also sinned against God living in the city because we focused more on the people around us than God. What sin do we commit to God? We live in a selfish way in front of people and commit sins that cause hurting, pain, and suffering to many people. When we do that, we also get hurt, pain and suffering. The reason is that we cannot love each other with the God's love. And the reason why we cannot love one another with God's love is because we

are not experiencing God's love. That's why we must go into the wilderness. We must go into the wilderness in order to live in the presence of God and love our neighbor with God's love. And we must confess and repent our sin of selfishness to the Lord in the wilderness when our holy God exposes them. Then the Lord will forgive our sins. And the indwelling Spirit of God will comfort our hearts. And when we experience the comfort of the Holy Spirit, we will be able to live an altruistic life, a life that loves one another.

**Third, we must bear the ministry of comfort through the heart of Heavenly Father in order to sympathize with other's weakness.**

Our instinct is to live our own way, never to live according to the will of our Heavenly Father. In other words, our instinct is not to feel what Heavenly Father feels, not listening to what Heavenly Father listens to, not seeing what Heavenly Father sees, but to live as we see, hear, and feel. However, those who see people in the city who are hunger for love, who are suffering and are weak go into the wilderness because they want to love them. And those who go into the wilderness themselves and make the lonely wilderness into the garden of solitude experience the presence of God. They realize the eyes of God, the ears of God, and the heart of God little by little. That is why we have to go into the wilderness. We must learn the heart of Heavenly Father in the wilderness. And we must see whom God see and hear what God hear and love them with God's heart. And we must go to the suffering souls to whom God sends us. We must be able to approach them with the compassion of our Heavenly Father and hear even their groaning with His ears. And we should be able to see the pain of their hearts. The indwelling Holy Spirit will help us to see and to hear. And the Holy Spirit will use us as His instruments to comfort them. Therefore, we must be raised to be used as instruments of the Holy Spirit to comfort those who need God's comfort. We must faithfully bear the ministry of comfort with the heart of Heavenly Father.

It is my hope and prayers that the Lord to raise me as His instrument of comforting those who are suffering. I want to be able to sympathize with other's weakness. So I want to go into the wilderness and look at myself through the Word of God and admit my weaknesses to my Heavenly Father as I pray to Him. In doing so, the Lord who sympathizes with my weakness comforts me with the heart of Heavenly Father. When I feel the heart of Heavenly Father, I will be able to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit, obey Him and endure the ministry of comfort. Although my instinct is to disappoint others, the indwelling Holy Spirit wants to use me to comfort them. Therefore I pray to Heavenly Father: 'O Lord, please raise me to be a comforter to be able to sympathize with other's weakness!'

## **Encourage them with these words**

**“He appointed military officers over the people and assembled them before him in the square at the city gate and encouraged them with these words: ‘Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles.’ And the people gained confidence from what Hezekiah the king of Judah said” (2 Chronicles 32:6-8).**

Someday I got a lot of encouragement when I was reading Job chapters 1 and 2. The first verse that made me to think the most was Job 1:5. I was surprised by the fact that Job rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of his children; for he said, “Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” How can parents know their children's hearts? How can they know whether their children are sinning against God in their hearts? But I didn't pray for my children at the Morning Prayer meeting as a father because they might have sinned against God in their hearts. The second thing that caught my attention was the Word of 1:20, which said, “Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped.” How could Job have fallen and worshiped God when he lost everything and all his children were dead? Further, I was amazed at the fact that Job 1:22 and 2:10 says that “Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God” (1:22) and “In all this Job did not sin with his lips” (2:10). In human thoughts, I think Job had enough reasons to blame on God but he didn't. Considering how we could comfort Job in this terrible affliction, what Job's friends said to Job came into my mind: “Then they sat down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great” (2:13). When I thought about his friends who had been with Job for a week and not having said a word, I could imagine little bit how much Job was suffering.

I remembered once using the phrase "refuse to be comforted" in proclaiming the word of God. We refuse to be comforted when we are in extreme pain. There is a time when we cannot be comforted by anybody, and nothing is comforting. In 2 Chronicles 32:6, King Hezekiah assembled the people before him in the square at the city gate and “encouraged them with these words.” So under the title “Encourage them with these words” I want to meditate on two things:

### **First, when should we comfort others with our words?**

King Hezekiah comforted the people with these words "After all that Hezekiah had so faithfully done" (v. 1). In other words, King Hezekiah comforted the people after he firmly established the reformation in 2 Chronicles chapters 31 and 32, and then when Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah (32:1). Why was it this time? Why did this difficult trial come to King Hezekiah after he made the Reformation for God's glory? May be God was testing whether reformation was firmly established or not through the invasion of King Sennacherib and his army. One thing for sure is that there is a time in our lives when we need the words of comfort. The time will vary, but when we think that something is going right and well, there may be a crisis or trials in our lives and we need comfort. Perhaps the crisis or trials we face is proof that something is going right and well.

### **Second and last, how should we comfort others with words?**

King Hezekiah assembled the people and comforted them with these words, “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him” (v. 7). How could King Hezekiah comfort the Israelites in the midst of such crisis? I think it was because King Hezekiah himself was greatly encouraged and comforted by the great God who was with him in the midst of a great crisis. Furthermore, I think King Hezekiah showed his people the faith in seeing the great God in the great crisis rather than showing unbelief by worrying and being discouraged as he focused on the great crisis. King Hezekiah, a true man of faith, had a firm conviction. And the conviction was that the Lord God is with him and the people of Judah and He would surely help them and fight on their behalf. How did King Hezekiah have this belief and conviction? When I think about this question the word “faithfully” in 2 Chronicles 32:1 came into my attention. In other words, King Hezekiah had true faith and confidence because he was faithful to God and faithful God gave him faith and conviction. However, this human faithfulness cannot be the object of focus. The reason is that our human faithfulness is incomparable to our Lord's faithfulness. Therefore, we must find the answer in the faithfulness of the Lord. In the end, the true faith of King Hezekiah and the basis of his conviction was the faithfulness of the Lord. The promise words of God such as He will be with us, He will surely help us and He will fight for us actually strengthen our hearts and make us courageous.

## **Crisis is an opportunity!**

**“For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.' Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told” (Acts 27:23-25).**

How should we view the crisis in our lives?

When we encounter a crisis, we often think, "Why did this crisis come to me?" When we do that, we sometimes blame another person for thinking that the crisis has come to us because of that person. If we do so, then we tend to focus on the crisis that we have faced. As a result, we don't see others other than ourselves in crisis. And we are even more depressed in despair by falling into the swamp of crisis and losing the desire of salvation. Is this the reaction of the crisis that God who controls the crisis wants from us?

### **The lesson is that crisis is a good opportunity to hear God's voice.**

When we look at the context of Acts 27:23-25, we see Apostle Paul and the 275 people who aboard with him faced a crisis. The reason why the crisis came was that the centurion of the Augustan cohort named Julius (v. 1), who was escorting Paul to Italy, believed more in the words of the pilot and the captain of the ship than Paul's words (v. 11). Here, the Paul's word was “with difficulty sailing” (v. 8) “the voyage was not dangerous” (v. 9). So Paul said to them, “Men, I perceive that the voyage will certainly be with damage and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives” (v. 10). But the centurion Julius didn't listen to Paul's words, but listened to the words of the pilot and the captain and sailed on (vv. 11-12). At that time, the centurion Julius, the pilot and the captain of the ship thought that since a moderate south wind came up they supposed that they had attained their purpose (v. 13). In other words, the centurion Julius, the pilot and the captains thought that their decision was right. “But before very long there rushed down from the land a violent wind, called Euraquilo” (v. 14). As a result, the ship was caught in it and couldn't face the wind (v. 15). Because of this crisis, the people were afraid (v. 17), and later their hope of being saved was gradually abandoned (v. 20). In the midst of this, Paul said to them, “Yet now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship” (v. 22). How could Paul have said this? It was because he heard through the messenger of God, “Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you” (v. 24). In other words, Paul heard the voice of God in crisis. This is the first lesson that today's text gives us. The lesson is that crisis is a good opportunity to hear God's voice.

What do you think? Do you think the crisis is a good opportunity to hear God's voice? Have you ever heard the voice of God in a crisis before? When I reflect back my life, I think I heard a lot of voices of my own voice or of situation, rather than listening to God's voice in my life crisis. When my first baby was lying in the intensive care unit due to illness, I looked at the sick baby and let the situation to speak to me rather than listening to God's voice. Then, after asking whether to let the baby die slowly or die quickly from the doctor in charge, I went home and the next morning God gave me the words of Psalm 63:3, “Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You.” Through this word, God taught that God's eternal love is better than the 55 days life of my first baby Charis, and that I and my wife should praise Him with our lips. So my wife and I decided to let Charis go quickly and let her doctor know our decision. Then, I called my parents, my siblings and had worship. After



worship, Charis' nurse took all the tubes out and turned off all the machines connected to my baby. And she fell asleep in my arms. Then, after cremating the baby, sprinkling the baby's ash into the water, as my wife and I were returning to the land, the indwelling Holy Spirit powerfully work in my heart to open my lips and praised God the gospel song "My Savior's Love". All of this was the grace that God let us enjoy in the midst of the crisis.

### **The second lesson is that crisis is a good opportunity to love our neighbors.**

We become self-centered when we face crisis. When we meet a crisis, we become self-absorbed. My wife and I were like that when my first baby Charis was in the children hospital intensive care unit for 55 days. I didn't know I was self-absorbed until my wife told me that we seemed to be "self-absorbed". At that time, even though I knew that my fourth uncle and my youngest uncle were in a very difficult situation with their business, I was concentrating on my first baby. And my excuse was that the life of a person is more important than a difficult situation of a company. But this was because of my insecurities and immaturity and I couldn't see the crisis as an opportunity. But a truly mature Christian can use his or her crisis as an opportunity to love his or her neighbors. That is what the apostle Paul did.

Apostle Paul loved his neighbor as Jesus commanded when he met the crisis. He encouraged the 275 people who were with him (v. 37), when their lives were in danger. Paul urges them to keep up their courage (vv. 22, 25). He was able to do so because he heard the voice of God through the messenger of God, and he believed God that it would turn out exactly as he had been told (v. 25). In other words, because Paul believed what he heard from the angel of God, "Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you" (v. 24), he was able to encourage the 275 people who were with him to keep up their courage. Those who have confidence in salvation can reassure those who are afraid of the uncertainty of salvation.

Those Christians who have received the God's saving love reach out to those who have no hope of salvation and share Christ's love. Those Christians who enjoy the God's saving love obey Jesus's command "Love your neighbor as yourself" by comforting, exhorting and encouraging those who don't enjoy His saving love. In other words, those Christians who experience the Gods' saving love and have assurance of salvation make their crisis as an opportunity to love their neighbors.

### **The third and last lesson is that the crisis is a good opportunity to experience the glory of God's salvation.**

Apostle Paul comforted those who had no hope of salvation because he had confidence in salvation. In the assurance and hope of salvation, he encouraged them to take some food, saying, "not a hair from the head of any of you will perish" (v. 34). After he said this, Paul took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all. And he broke it and they began to eat (v. 35). All the others were encouraged and ate the food (v. 36). How amazing is this? How can we thank God in the midst of a crisis at the crossroads of life and death?

We Christians can give thanks to God even in circumstances that seem ungrateful. The reason is that we have experienced the God's saving love and we have a hope and assurance of salvation. Furthermore, we can thank God even in circumstances that seem ungrateful for us because we see the glory of God's salvation and experience the presence of God in His actualizing the hope of our salvation. We cannot but give thanks, praise, and worship God when we experience the glory of God's salvation. In the end, the crisis in our lives is a good opportunity for us to be raised as true worshipers whom God seeks. In other words, through crisis in our lives, God is raising us up as true worshipers who give thanks to God.

We must take the crisis as an opportunity. We must make the crisis in our lives as the opportunity to hear the voice of God. We must be quick to listen to God's voice in the crisis. Also, we must make the crisis as the opportunity to love our neighbors. We must reach out to our neighbors in crisis and comfort them and encourage them with faith in God that it will turn out exactly as we have been told. In particular, we should give hope and assurance of salvation to our beloved neighbors who are suffering in despair with the assurance and hope of salvation even in crisis. Finally, we must make the crisis in our lives as the good opportunity to experience the glory of God's salvation. Our God is a good God. Our God uses even our crises and works together to do good. Our God is a faithful God who fulfills the promises which He has given to us. And this faithful God is the God of salvation who will surely deliver us from the crisis. Let us all experience the glory of God's salvation in expectation, waiting, and praying for the grace of salvation.

## Wisdom that shines in crisis

**“Go now, make more sure, and investigate and see his place where his haunt is, and who has seen him there; for I am told that he is very cunning” (1 Samuel 23:22).**

When I was little, my favorite TV comic program was "Tom & Jerry". And now my three young children (especially the youngest one in elementary school) love "Tom & Jerry". The reason I liked that cartoon was because it was so funny that Jerry, the rat, wins a cat called Tom who is much bigger than Jerry. In particular, I liked the scene in which Tom used all means to capture Jerry but clever Jerry not only escape the crisis but made Tom be in that crisis. When I think of this comic, I remember the battle of David and Goliath in the Bible. Perhaps because David was like Jerry and Goliath was like Tom. As we already know, David wins the battle against the Philistine Goliath. So King Saul set David over the men of war and "it was pleasing in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants" (18:5). And David went out wherever Saul sent him, and prospered (v. 5). But when David came back from killing Goliath, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing, dancing, and welcoming the king Saul, with tambourines, with joy and with music instruments, "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands" (vv.6-7). From that time on, Saul looked at David with jealousy eyes (v. 9). And King Saul was afraid of David when he saw that David had done all his work wisely and successfully in everything he did (vv. 14-15). The reason was because not only did all the servants of Saul, but Saul's daughter Michal loved David (vv. 22, 28) and because his name became highly esteemed (v. 30). How could David do everything wisely? How was David prospering in all his ways? It was because the Lord was with him (v. 14). "When Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him, then Saul was even more afraid of David. Thus Saul was David's enemy continually" (vv. 28-29). And Saul tried to kill David (19:1, 10). Therefore, from that time on, David became a fugitive and King Saul became a chaser.

When we look the context of the today's passage 1 Samuel 23:22, David was in Keilah (vv. 1-12), escaped from Keilah and went wherever he could go with his 600 men (v. 13) and came to the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh (v. 15). At that time, Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeath and told him that David was hiding with them in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which was on the south of Jeshimon (v. 19). They did so because they thought it was their duty to turn David into Saul's hand (v. 20). After hearing these words, Saul blessed them (v. 21) and told them to go and make sure and investigate and see David's place where his haunt was and who had seen him there (v. 22). The reason King Saul told Ziphites to do so was because he heard that David was very cunning (v. 22). And Saul told them look and learn about all the hiding places where David hid himself and return to him with certainty (v. 23). Here I meditated on three things that David was acting so wisely. And I called David's wisdom "Wisdom that shines in a crisis." I hope and pray that we learn the wisdom of David so that we may pursue his wisdom and that our wisdom also can shine in our crisis as well.

### **First, the wisdom that shines in crisis is asking God.**

Look at 1 Samuel 23:2, 4: "So David inquired of the LORD, saying, 'Shall I go and attack these Philistines?' And the LORD said to David, 'Go and attack the Philistines and deliver Keilah.' ... Then David inquired of the LORD once more. And the LORD answered him and said, 'Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the Philistines into your hand.'" This is what David asked God when he heard that the Philistines were fighting against Keilah and were plundering the threshing floors (v. 1). David asked God twice. In the first time, when David asked God, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" God said to him "Go and attack the Philistines and deliver Keilah" (v. 2). But why did David ask God again second time? It was because the David's men said to

David, "Behold, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more then if we go to Keilah against the ranks of the Philistines?" (v. 3) In other words, David asked God again if he should go to Keilah and strike the Philistines because he heard what his men said to him. And, logically, when we rely on human reason, as the David's men said, it was very fearful thing for them to go to Keilah and strike the armies of the Philistines. The reason was that if David and his men fight against the Philistines in Keilah, then King Saul would hear the news, and he would surely come down to Keilah to kill David and all his people. In this fearful situation, David asked God twice. So David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines, striking them with a great slaughter and delivered the inhabitants of Keilah (v. 5). But someone told Saul that David had come to Keilah and Saul thought "God has delivered him into my hand, for he shut himself in by entering a city with double gates and bars" (v. 7). So Saul and his men went down to Keilah to besiege David and his men (v. 8). When I meditated on this word, I remembered Pharaoh king of Egypt in the book of Exodus. The reason is because King Pharaoh thought that the wilderness had shut the Israelites in (Exod. 14:3). So he took all the chariots of Egypt and his army and chased after the Israelites (vv. 6-9). This is our human wisdom. King Saul's wisdom shows human limitations. Considering human wisdom, King Saul thought that David was confined in Keilah, and if he surrounded him, he thought that he could capture David. And indeed, as Saul thought, David could have been caught by Saul. But there is something Saul could not think of. It was the fact that God didn't deliver David into the Saul's hands (I Sam. 23:14). And God, who saved the people of Keilah through David, was delivering David out of Saul's hand (v. 5) so Saul could never catch David, and therefore could not kill him. Therefore, Saul could never defeat David with his wisdom. The reason was that David did all things wisely with the wisdom of God. And that wisdom of God was to ask God.

We must also ask God. Why should we ask God? It is because we depend on God and want to obey His will. Therefore, we must ask God with the attitude of obedience. This is the wisdom we must pursue that shines in the crisis. And the wisdom that we must pursue is to listen and obey the Word of God rather than the words of men (cf. Acts 5:29). Though people's words seem valid with our reason and God's Word gives us a great risk, we must hear God's Word and act in faith as we keep on asking God for His will. This is what we must do wisely in crisis.

### **Second, the wisdom that shines in crisis is not doing what God forbids.**

Look at 1 Samuel 24:6-7: "He said to his men, 'The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the LORD.' With these words David rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. ...." When David was in the Desert of En Gedi (v. 1), Saul took 3,000 chosen men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the Crags of the Wild Goats (v. 2). And when he saw a cave there, he went in to relieve himself but David and his men were far back in the cave (v. 3). Then the David's men said to David, "his is the day the LORD spoke of when he said to you, 'I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish'" (v. 4). "Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul's robe. Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe" (vv. 4-5). David said to his men: "The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the LORD" (v. 6). Then David forbade them to harm Saul (v. 7). How is this wisdom that shines in crisis? Shouldn't David kill Saul when he had a chance so that he might save himself from his crisis? Not only the David's men but even King Saul knew that God had delivered him into the hands of David (vv. 4, 18). Nevertheless, David didn't kill Saul, even though he had the opportunity to do so. He just cut off the corner of Saul's robe. Then David was conscience-stricken for having cut off the corner of Saul's robe (v. 5). It was because David feared God. And David, who feared God, didn't strike King Saul, the anointed of God, because it was forbidden by God. David was obedient to the Word of God, despite the good opportunity to ease his crisis. The reason was that David was a wise man who feared God. Therefore, he didn't disobey God's Word in order to save his own crisis momentary.

We too shouldn't do what God forbids. Even if the people around us say, 'This is God's opportunity' in the crisis situation, we must listen to God's voice rather than listen to them. If the voice of God tells us through the Bible that the Holy Spirit has told us, 'I forbid it,' we must give up even the opportunity and submit to God's command. That is the behavior of a wise man who fears God.

### **Third, the wisdom that shines in crisis is to dealing well with a person who deal wickedly with us.**

Look at 1 Samuel 24:17 – “He said to David, "You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you.” This is what King Saul said to David as he lifted up his voice and wept (v. 16), knowing that the Lord delivered him into David's hand and yet David didn't kill him (v. 18). Although King Saul were lying in wait for David's life to take it (v. 11), David didn't stretch out his hand against Saul because his eye had pity on King Saul (v. 10). Knowing this, King Saul said to David, “You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you” (v. 17). He also said to David, “May the LORD therefore reward you with good in return for what you have done to me this day” (v. 19). How could David deal well with King Saul who tried to take his life? Although David had not sinned against King Saul (v. 11), King Saul listened to the words of men, saying, “Behold, David seeks to harm you” (v. 9) and tried to kill David (v. 11). But David dealt with King Saul well. How could he do that? I found the answer in Genesis 50:20: “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.” This was spoken by Joseph to his older brothers who tried to not only harm him but to kill him after he tasted and saw that the Lord is good (Ps. 34:8). Because Joseph experienced God's goodness, he was able to not only forgive his older brothers but also he comforted them and spoke kindly to them (Gen. 50:21). How could David treat King Saul well, who was trying to kill him? That was because David tasted God's goodness (Ps. 34:8). Not only David tasted the God's goodness when he defeated Goliath, but also he experienced God's goodness even when King Saul tried to kill him. That was why even though King Saul dealt wickedly with him, David dealt well with him (v. 17). This is the act of wise men who live God-centered life. Not only Joseph lived God-centered life (Gen. 39:9), but David also lived God-centered life (1 Sam. 23). David wanted God to judge between King Saul and himself (vv. 12, 15). And he asked God to see and plead his cause and deliver David from King Saul's hand (v. 15). Also, David asked God to avenge David on King Saul (v. 12). Isn't it amazing that David didn't sit on the God's seat of judgment and killed King Saul when he had the opportunities to do so? If David sat on the God's judgment seat and killed King Saul, then he didn't have to run around anymore. But David asked God to be the Judge and said, “May the LORD judge between you and me, and may the LORD avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you” (v. 12). This is the act of the wise man whose wisdom shines in the crisis.

We must act wisely. Especially when we meet difficult things and we are in crisis, we must act wisely. Then what does it mean to act wisely? It is to be and do God-centered actions, just like Joseph and David. What does it mean by God-centered actions? It means not only that we ask God to be the Judge to judge between us and those who deal wickedly with us but also we deal well with those who deal wickedly with us. That is because our God is good. And as we have tasted the goodness of God (Ps. 34:8), and believe that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28), we must deal well with those who deal wickedly with us. This is wise action in crisis.

This world we live in is like Goliath. And we are like David. As we know, the fight between David and Goliath was a fight that David could not defeat in human thinking. Also, in human perspective, it was a fight that David could not defeat when King Saul was chasing him in order to kill him. Their fight looks like a fight between Tom and Jerry. Like the cat Tom, King Saul was pursuing David in order to kill David, while David, like Jerry, had to keep running away from Saul. Even in this crisis situation, David acted by asking God and did not do what God forbid. And by the goodness of God, David dealt well with Saul who dealt wickedly with him. This was the

David's wisdom that shone in crisis. I hope and pray that we, like David, act wisely in crisis with the wisdom of God so that we may not only be able to taste the goodness of God but also manifest His goodness to others, even those who deal wickedly with us.

## Persecution is an opportunity!

**”So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone” (Acts 11:19).**

“Faith of our fathers! Living still In spite of dungeon, fire and sword; O how our hearts beat high with joy Whenever we hear God’s glorious Word ... Faith of our fathers! We will love Both friend and foe in all our strife; And preach thee, too, as love knows how By kindly words and virtuous life” (Hymn “Faith our fathers”, verses 1 and 3).

We cannot but admit that it is God’s grace and love that we Christians are able to keep our faith even in persecution because we cannot do so with our own strength and power. That’s why we cannot help but be glad when we think about our faith that God has kept. Furthermore, when the believers love even their enemies and preach with kindly words and virtuous life even in their persecution are the wonderful work of the Holy Spirit. Not only that it is impossible for our power and ability to keep faith in persecution, but also it is impossible for our power and ability to preach this faith to those who persecute us. Nevertheless, when we see the Almighty God makes us to preach this faith with joy, we cannot but admit that this is clearly the work of the Holy Spirit. This amazing work of the Holy Spirit in spreading the gospel even through the martyrdom of the believers expends the Kingdom of God throughout the world - from Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth! (Acts 1:8).

In Acts 11:19, the Bible talks about the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen. (1) The first thing that happened was the people who were scattered went about preaching the word (8:4). Philip, one of those scattered people, went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed Christ to the people, so that the crowd would hear the words of Philip and watch the miraculous signs and wonders of his work, and many heavily demonized and paralyzed people were healed. As a result, there was much rejoicing in that city (vv. 5-8). When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John to Samaria and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (vv. 14-15). And they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord as they started back to Jerusalem and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans (v. 25). When an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, “Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza” (v. 26), Philip obeyed and met an Ethiopian eunuch (v. 27) and beginning from the Scripture Isaiah 53:7, 8 which the eunuch was reading Philip preached Jesus to him (v. 35) and then baptized him (v. 38). After the Holy Spirit snatched Philip away (v. 39) and he was found himself at Azotus (v. 40). As he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea (v. 40). (2) The second thing that happened was that Saul was converted, saved and called to be an apostle to the Gentiles on the way to Damascus (Ch. 9). When I think about this, I think that the Holy Spirit God has sovereignly worked in Saul’s life to have 4 meetings: (1) Meeting with the resurrected Jesus (vv. 1-9), (2) Meeting with a disciple named Ananias in Damascus (vv. 10-19), (3) Meeting with Barnabas (vv. 26-27) and (4) Meeting with the apostles of Jerusalem (v. 28). Through these meetings, the Holy Spirit was raising Saul as the apostle to the Gentiles. (3) Then the third thing that happened due to the persecution after the Stephen’s death was the Holy Spirit fell upon (v. 44) Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian cohort (v. 1), his relatives and close friends (v. 24) when they heard the Peter’s sermon (vv. 36-43). (4) Then the fourth thing that happened, from Acts 11:19 to 26, was establishment of the Gentile church, that is Antioch Church. The Holy Spirit scattered the early Church members through the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen, made them to preach the gospel, made Saul to be the apostle of the Gentiles, made Cornelius to hear the

gospel, and built the Gentile church, the Antioch church. When we look at this, persecution is an opportunity to scatter and to spread the gospel, to raise a leader, to expand the kingdom of God, and to build a church. Especially when I meditated on Acts 11:19-26, I came to think about four kinds of opportunities persecution can be:

### **First, persecution is an opportunity to scatter and to spread Jesus and His gospel.**

Look at Acts 11:19-20: “So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.” Because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen the early church members were scattered across the region and spoke the word to no one except to Jews alone (v. 19). But some of them went to Antioch and preached the Lord Jesus to the Greeks (v. 20). We need to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ as we scatter through the persecution rather than fighting and sinning in the church. We must preach the gospel to foreigners rather than just to the Korean people. Even if we cannot speak their languages, we must preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to them in the language of God's love. We need to broaden the scope of the preaching of the gospel. May the Holy Spirit enlarge the area of preaching the gospel even through persecution.

### **Second, persecution is a great opportunity to experience God's presence.**

Look at Acts 11:21 – “And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.” Because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen, the early church members were scattered and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. When some of them came to Antioch, they spread the gospel to the Gentiles and the amazing thing was that the hand of the Lord was with them and a large number believed and turned to the Lord. I personally think that crisis in our lives is an opportunity. And one of the opportunities is to experience God's presence. Especially when I want to give up because of hardship and adversity, I experience the God's presence that the God's right hand grabs my hand and lifts it up so that I can move on toward the goal that God has given me. At that time I truly believe that the crisis of life is one of the best opportunities to experience the presence of the Lord. When the early Church members were suffering, they preached the gospel and experienced the presence of God. They experienced the amazing power and glory of God by seeing many people believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and turned to God. May we be able to experience the God's presence even through crisis and to see the power and glory of God.

### **Third, persecution is a good opportunity for team ministry.**

Look at Acts 11:22 and 25-26: “The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. ... And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” Because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen, the early church believers were scattered, preached the gospel, expand the areas of preaching the gospel and experience the presence of the Lord. The large number believed in Jesus and turned to the Lord. When this news reached the ears of the Jerusalem church, they sent Barnabas, “a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith” off to Antioch (vv. 22, 24). And the Holy Spirit worked among the preachers of the Antioch church, Barnabas and Jerusalem church to be one team in evangelizing the Antioch and nurturing the Antioch church believers. The Holy Spirit worked in Barnabas so he brought Saul from Tarsus to Antioch and for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers (vv. 25-26). As a result, considerable numbers were brought to the Lord (v. 23) and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch (v. 26). Maybe we are all too comfortable to do team ministry. Because we, who are preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ in the church and in the mission field, cannot serve the Lord and our neighbors with one heart and one will, the evangelism ministry isn't good as Paul and



Apollos (1 Corinthians 3: 5-9). What is the problem? Why can't we cope with team ministry properly? Isn't it because of our arrogance? Why are we arrogant? Is it because there is no trouble or persecution? Maybe we need persecution like the early church believers so that the Holy Spirit uses it to bring us together with one heart and one will so that we may faithfully minister with the Lord's heart in reaching out to those dying souls and preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to them.

**Fourth and last, persecution is a good opportunity to build His church.**

Look at Acts 11:26 – "... and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." The Lord used the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen to scatter and to preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ even to the people in Antioch so that the Antioch church was established. As Jesus promised in Matthew 16:18, the Lord builds His church in His own way. What should we do when we see the Lord builds His church even through persecution? Should we stop participating in the Lord's ministry of building His church because of the persecution like the Israelites in the Prophet Haggai's days and run to our own houses and dwell in our paneled houses? (Hag. 1:4, 9) Maybe we need to have a sense of crisis even through persecution. Therefore, we must actively participate in the Lord's ministry in building His church by the Holy Spirit and serve diligently and faithfully for His glory. I hope and pray that the Lord builds His church as He has promised (Mt. 16:18).

## **‘The testing of your faith’**

**"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance" (James 1:2-3).**

How do we react when trials come? How do we react, especially when the trials are not one or two, but many? Isn't it so hard and painful that we aren't only discouraged, but even in despair? But the Bible James 1:2 says "Consider it all joy". How is this possible? How can we consider it all joy when we encounter various trials?

The reason we should consider it all joy when we are subjected to various trials is because the testing of our faith produces endurance (Jam. 1:3). And when we are patient to the end, we will be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (v. 4). In fact, when we are faced with various trials, we sometimes realize our shortcomings. For example, when we face trials we realize that our faith is small and scarce. Not only that, we sometimes realize how much wisdom is lacking when we are subjected to various trials (Jam. 1:5). How can we know if we lack wisdom? For example, if we are full of wisdom, we will hate evil (Prov. 8:13) because of we fear God (1:7, 9:10), no matter what trial we are subjected to. And we will not say "I am being tempted by God" (Jam. 1:13) when we are subjected to various trials. Therefore, we will not say "temptation" and "temptation to God" when we are trials (v.13). And we will not be carried away and enticed by our own lust (v. 14). We will not blame on God and commit sins with our lips (Job 1:22; 2:10). Rather, we will be slow to speak, slow to anger and quick to listen (Jam. 1:19). We will go to God, who gives to all generously and without reproach (v. 5), and will be quick to listen to God's voice (v. 19). Then we will ask God (v.5). But will not be double-minded people (v. 8). We will not doubt (v. 6) but we will pray, will expect and will wait upon the Lord. We will pray and expect that God will be with us rather than praying and expecting Him to deliver us from trials. The reason is that it is more important that God goes with us (Ex 33:15) than to be delivered from trials. We will quietly trust God (Isa. 30:15) and wait for His salvation. Therefore, we will see the glory of God (Job 42:4).

When we encounter various trials, we must consider it all joy (Jam. 1:2). The reason is because we know that the testing of our faith produces endurance (v. 3). In order for let endurance to have its perfect result (v. 4), we need to have an example of suffering and patience (5:10). And one of the examples is Job in the Old Testament (v. 11). Although he was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil (Job 1:1, 8) he went through various trials that we cannot imagine. He suffered great trials such as losing all of his ten children and all his possessions (vv. 11-19). Nevertheless, Job praised God and didn't sin nor did he blame God in all these things (vv. 21-22; 2:10). So what was the outcome of the Lord's dealings with Job (Jam. 5:11)? God restored the fortunes of Job and increased all that Job had twofold (Job 42:10). God blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning (v. 12). God gave him seven sons and three daughters (v. 13), saying, "Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters" (v. 15). When we see the outcome that the Lord gave to Job (Jam. 5:11), we must also endure in various trials (1:12). We count those blessed who endured (5:11). "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial" (1:12). The Lord will give the crown of life promised to those who love him (v. 12).

## **Grace after disaster**

**“Thus says the LORD, "The people who survived the sword Found grace in the wilderness-  
- Israel, when it went to find its rest” (Jeremiah 31:2).**

God's thoughts toward us are peace (Jer. 29:11). God's thoughts toward us are the future and hope (v. 11). But our thoughts are different from God's thoughts (Isa. 55:8). We have evil thoughts in our hearts (Mt. 9:4). What comes out of our heart is an evil thought, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness (Mk. 7:21-22). So our thoughts are sin (Prov. 24:9). God sees that every intent of the thoughts of our hearts is only evil continually (Gen. 6:5) and disciplines us only with justice (Jer. 30:11). God disciplines us and bring disaster on us so that we may realize our sins and repent of our sins. Even through disaster, God reforms our ways and our actions and make us to obey the Lord our God (26:13). Then God gives us grace (31:2). What is that grace?

### **First, the grace that God gives us after disaster is salvation.**

Look at Jeremiah 31:11 – “For the LORD will ransom Jacob and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they.” Through the prophet Jeremiah, God said to the people of Judah: “Sing with joy for Jacob; shout for the foremost of the nations. Make your praises heard, and say, 'O LORD, save your people, the remnant of Israel'” (v. 7). The people of Judah, who were discipline by God and thus were taken captive in Babylon, asked God to save them. This is because God of salvation wanted to save the people of Judah from the hand of Babylon after the disaster of being captive in Babylon. Our God wants to save such sinners like us who aren't worthy of salvation. God wants to save us from our sins, the cause of all our suffering before He delivers us from all suffering. And God saves us from our sins and from all our sufferings. This is the grace God gives us after disaster.

### **Second, the grace that God gives us after disaster is to bring us back.**

Look at Jeremiah 31:8 – “See, I will bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the ends of the earth. Among them will be the blind and the lame, expectant mothers and women in labor; a great throng will return.” Through the prophet Jeremiah, God promised to the people of Judah that He would bring them from Babylon in the north, gathering them from the ends of the earth in a great multitude, and bringing them back to this place, Jerusalem. Then the people of Judah would come with weeping and return to Jerusalem (v.9). When they come back, they would be led by God (v. 9). As before, since God had loved the people of Judah with an everlasting love, He would bring them back to Jerusalem with lovingkindness (v. 3). God promised that He would bring the people of Judah who repented their sins and return to God to Jerusalem. When seventy years were completed for Babylon, God told them that He would come to them and fulfill His gracious promise to bring them back to Jerusalem (29:10). And God promised them He would give rest to Israel (31:2). Our God is the God who waits for us to return to Him (Lk. 15:11ff.). And our God is the God who makes us to return to the house of God. It is the grace that God gives us after disaster to bring us back again.

**Third, the grace that God gives us after disaster is to make us to walk on the straight path and keep us safe.**

Look at Jeremiah 31:9-10: “With weeping they will come, And by supplication I will lead them; I will make them walk by streams of waters, On a straight path in which they will not stumble; For I am a father to Israel, And Ephraim is My firstborn. Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, And declare in the coastlands afar off, And say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him And keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.’” All the people of Judah were like sheep that had gone astray (Isa. 53:6). They walked on a crooked path. Then they met with disaster and were captured by Babylon. But God promised to deliver them out of the hand of Babylon, and to bring them back to Jerusalem (Jer. 31:8). And God promised to heal their way and that they would go on the straight path (v. 9). God promised them that He would bring them back with weeping and would be led by God (v. 9). Also, He promised them to keep them as a shepherd kept his flock (v. 10). Our Lord, our Shepherd, is the God who guides us. Actually, He is leading us into the true Jerusalem that is Heaven. And the Lord keeps us and lets us walk on the straight path. This is the grace of God that God gives us after disaster.

#### **Fourth, the grace that God gives us after disaster is to build us again.**

Look at Jeremiah 31:4 – “Again I will build you and you will be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel! Again you will take up your tambourines, And go forth to the dances of the merrymakers.” God promised the people of Judah through the prophet Jeremiah that they would be saved from Babylon and brought back to Jerusalem, and that they would be built again. God said them that they would return to Jerusalem, so that they could plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria and would live in peace (v. 5, Park Yun-sun). And God promised them that He would reunite the north Israel and the south Judah and promised them to go up to the temple of Jerusalem together to worship the true God (v. 6, Park Yun-sun). In the end, God promised the people of Judah that He would build them up again economically, politically, and spiritually. Our God is the God who builds us up again. When God builds us up again then we will be rebuilt (v. 4). The Lord God has promised to build His church up and He will surely build us up again (Mt. 16:18). This is the grace that God gives us after disaster.

#### **Fifth and last, the grace that God gives us after disaster is to make us greatly rejoice.**

Look at Jeremiah 31:12 – “They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion; they will rejoice in the bounty of the LORD-- the grain, the new wine and the oil, the young of the flocks and herds. They will be like a well-watered garden, and they will sorrow no more.” Our God is the God who turns our mourning into gladness (v.13). Our God is the God who gives us comfort and joy instead of sorrow (v.13). He makes us to dance and be glad (v. 13). He fills us with the joy of forgiveness, the joy of salvation, and the joy of restoration. Therefore, God makes our soul like a well water garden (v. 12). There will be no more sorrow (v. 12). This is the grace that God gives us after disaster.

God gives us grace after disaster. The grace that God gives us is saving us, bringing us back, making us to walk the straight path and protecting us. And God builds us up again and makes us rejoice greatly. As a result, God satisfies us (Jer. 31:14). May this grace be with you after disaster.

# God who helps me

## [Psalms 121]

Do you know that you need help? If so, what do you do when you need help? Who are you asking for help? When I personally need help, I tend to sing the hymn "Jesus, My Lord to Thee I Cry". In particular, I like the words of verse three: "No preparation can I make, My best resolves I only break, Yet save me for Thine own name's sake, And take me as I am" (Internet). When I fall because my strength and determination are weak and when I feel like I need help urgently, I pray God and sing this hymn "Jesus, My Lord to Thee I Cry." And often the bible verse that comes to my mind is Psalms 121:1-2: "I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From where shall my help come? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth." I want to meditate on the whole of Psalms 121 under the title of "God who helps me" and to receive the lessons God gives to us.

In Psalms 121:1-2, the Psalmist looked at the mountain and thought, "From where shall my help come?" (v. 1) His conclusion was, "My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth" (v. 2). Who are we asking for help when we are in desperate need of help? Aren't we trying to get help from other people or other things besides God? Our instincts don't rely on God's help until we realize our own helplessness. That's why many times we are looking at a great world power such as "the mountain" instead of looking at God for help who made heaven and earth. Then, when we don't get any help from the "mountains" of the world, we are depressed and desperate, and eventually the Holy Spirit makes us look to God the Almighty Creator who made even the mountains for help. And after we get help from God, we confess like the Psalmist, "My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth" (v. 2). Then, how does God help us? I want to think in three things based on Psalms 121:

### **First, God who helps us does not allow our foot to slip.**

Look at Psalms 121:3 – "He will not allow your foot to slip; ..." This means that God, who helps us, will not allow us to derail from the truth (Park Yun-sun). What precious grace and blessings is this? We are the weak ones who have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way (Isa. 53:6). But the way, the truth, and the life, Jesus doesn't allow us to derail from the path of truth, what a blessing or grace is this? I am curious about the reasons for the derailment of Korean youths. The results of the questionnaire survey on the delinquent behavior of 431 middle school and junior high school students (224 males and 207 females) in the Seoul Metropolitan Government were analyzed. The results showed that the main cause of the delinquent behavior of the male students showed 'anxiety and negative emotion' and female students showed 'distorted perception of herself'. When I was reading the results of this survey, I thought about the causes why we Christians, who believe in Jesus the Truth and who are following Him, derail from the truth. I think one of the causes is a negative attitude toward the suffering of the righteous. The reason I think this way is that the psalmist Asaph's feet came close to stumbling because of the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous (Ps. 73).

What do you think? Do you think that the negative attitude of the suffering of the righteous is one of the reasons why we derail from the truth? If you think "yes," what do you think we should do to have a positive attitude toward suffering? I find the answer in 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." If we know and be thankful that it is God's grace that we suffer for Jesus Christ, we will not derail from the truth. Let's pray for this. Let's pray that God will give us grace so that we may know that suffering for Christ's sake is God's grace and blessing and that we will not derail from the truth. When we pray in this way, let's pray by believing in the fact that God will not allow our foot to slip (Ps. 121:3).

## **Second, God who helps us keeps us.**

How does God keep us? The Bible says that God who keeps us will neither slumber nor sleep (vv. 3, 4). A several years ago, my son was afraid of sleeping because he had nightmares. So I encouraged him to read the Bible and pray to God. No matter how much we love my son, I cannot keep my hand on my son's head and pray for him all night for him to have good sleep. How can I protect my son without sleeping? However, the Bible clearly states that our Heavenly Father doesn't slumber and sleep and keeps us. But what is the problem? I think the problem is when our prayers are not answered and when God's help is delayed, we sometimes think that God is sleeping. But in reality, God is not sleeping. Our God is helping us who are in trouble, in His appointed time. Therefore, we must learn to be patient. God, who is our shade on our right hand, protects us and prevents us from harmful things (vv. 5-6). Look at Psalms 121:5-6: "The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun will not smite you by day, Nor the moon by night."

When I was meditating on the God's word, "The LORD is your shade on your right hand" (v. 5), this thought came into mind: 'If the sunlight continues to shine on me in the desert, what will happen to me? But the Bible says God is my shade and I am comforted by this truth.' During the summer when the sun is so hot, we tend to look for the shadow. So when we find a big tree, we go under the big tree because there is big shadow. Likewise, there is a time when we would like to go to him in the shadow of our Father in heaven, when we are exhausted by these and other things in this world. When we are living in the desert-like world, we are comforted by the truth that God is our shade and protects us from harmful things of this world. Also God, who is our shield, protects us from all dangers in this world as we are heading toward Heaven. Therefore, we can confess, as David did in Psalms 23:4, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."

## **Third and last, God who helps us protects us from all evil.**

Look at Psalms 121:7 – "The LORD will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul." God, who helps us, keeps us from falling and protects us from all danger, protects us from all evil. Isn't it interesting that even though God protects us, we have to go through the danger of "all evil"? It is because our thought is when God who made heaven and earth protects us, then there shouldn't be no danger of getting harm by any evil. But the Bible says, there is all evil and God protects us and delivers us from all evil. Although God allows us to go through various kinds of tribulations, He will surely protect us and keep us. Here, I think even though God doesn't allow us to derail from the truth, He allows us to go through tribulations because He wants to discipline us and bless us.

I remember the words of Hosea 2:14 in which God disciplined the Israelites by leading them into the wilderness but the its blessing was that God spoke to their heart gently. This is the blessing of discipline and suffering. The difficulties and adversities in our lives, and all kinds of tribulation, are the blessings of God. Although it is difficult and painful at the time, it is the blessing of God that He doesn't allow us to derail from the truth, but deepens our faith in Him. Furthermore, it is a good opportunity to experience the grace of salvation as we cry out to God in prayer and God answers it with His salvation. Therefore, we can praise God: "Faith of our fathers! living still In spite of dungeon, fire and sword; O how our hearts beat high with joy Whene'er we hear God's glorious Word: Faith of our fathers, holy faith! We will be true to Thee till death" (Hymn "Faith of Our Fathers", verse 1).

When I feel helpless, I love to sing the hymn "Take Me as I Am." This hymn was written by Scottish Eliza H. Hamilton and composed by a well-known pastor named D. Sankey. Pastor Ira D. Sanky recalled in the 'Story of the Gospel Song of Sankey', published after his blindness (Internet): "Years ago, while revival meetings were being held in one of the large towns in Scotland, a young girl became anxious about her spiritual condition. Returning from one of the meetings, she went to her own minister and asked him how she might be saved. Ah, lassie, he said,

don't be alarmed! Just read your Bible and say your prayers, and you will be all right. But the poor, illiterate girl cried out: 'O Minister, I canna read, I canna pray! Lord Jesus, take me as I am!' So the girl prayed like this: 'Lord Jesus Take me as I am!' In this way the girl became a follower of Christ; and a lady who heard of the girl's experience wrote this hymn ." "A minister in England writes to me about a Christian woman, a shoemaker's wife, who had a lodger that was an obstinate unbeliever. The good woman often tried to induce him to go to meetings, but in vain. Tracts which she placed on the table in his room she found crushed on the floor. She would smooth them out and again place them so as to attract his attention, but he would read nothing but his novels and newspapers. One spring the old man fell ill with bronchitis. The good woman acted as his nurse, for he had no relatives who cared for him. She used the opportunity, often speaking to him about his soul and reading the Word of God; but she could make no impression upon him. One day she was reading the hymn Jesus, my Lord, to Thee I cry, and when she came to the refrain, the old man called out to her sharply: That's not in the book! The woman answered, Why yes, it is. He declared again that he did not believe it was in the book. The good woman told him that he could read it for himself. He asked for his glasses, and read with wonder and amazement, again and again, My only plea — Christ died for me! oh, take me as I am. A few weeks afterward he said to the woman one morning, I am going home to-day, and I am so happy, so happy! In an hour or two he passed away, repeating those words to the last" (Internet).

# God who strengthens me

## [Psalms 89:19-52]

I heard the news about a former baseball player in South Korea who murdered 4 people and took his own life. I was wondering how a person could be so cruel and evil. I was surprised to see that human cruelty is this much. According to the news, this former baseball player has paid the money to others before committing suicide. Maybe he killed those four people in order to steal their money. In the end, I think that it was murder because of financial pressure. I hear from people and in the news that not only America but also Europe and Asia as a whole are doing bad economically. As a result, I think that this kind of sinful thing caused by financial pressure is being expressed. Many people are depressed and frustrated, and feel desperate in despair.

Indeed, this world is full of sorrow and hardship. It is a world filled with many sinful things and death. As we live in this world, we can feel a lot of frustration, disappointment and despair. What should we do then? The Scripture Psalms 18:1 comes to my mind: “I love You, O LORD, my strength.” One of the reasons why we love the Lord is because God is our strength.

The Scripture Psalms 80:21 says God’s hand will sustain us and surely His arm will strengthen us. Under the title "God who strengthens me," I want to meditate on two things about how God strengthens us.

### **First, God who strengthens us gives help.**

Look at Psalms 89:19 – “Once You spoke in vision to Your godly ones, And said, "I have given help to one who is mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people.” God, who made a covenant with David (“one who is mighty”) and were faithfully fulfilling it, had given him help in order to save the chosen people Israel. And God who anointed David with His holy oil (v. 20) strengthened him with His arm (v. 21). Therefore David took strength and cried to God: “You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation” (v. 26). When David cried out to God the Father who is the rock of salvation, God didn’t let the enemy of David to deceive him and afflict him (v. 22). Instead, God crushed David’s adversaries before him and stroke those who hate him (v. 23). And God exalted David on high (v. 24) and extended his powers (v. 25).

Our God is the God who gives help us in times of need. Look at Hebrews 4:16 – “Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Our God knows our needs. He is the Almighty God who knows best when we need help. And our God is the God who can sympathize with our weaknesses (4:15). This God who can sympathize with our weakness helps and strengthens us when we need help. God holds us with His powerful right hand. Especially when we are troubled, tired, depressed, torn down, and in no power at all, God comes to us quietly and holds our hand and speaks to us. What does God say? Don’t you think He will say, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father (Heb. 1:5) and I love you”? I hope and pray that we may be able hear this voice of God and be strengthened. May God help us and give us strength. May God, who gives us grace to help in time of need, be with us so that we may hear this message and be strengthened as we pray to God in faith.

### **Second, God who strengthens us keeps His lovingkindness for us forever.**



Look at Psalms 89:28 – “My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever, And My covenant shall be confirmed to him.” In Psalms 89:3-4, God who made a covenant with His chosen David, and swore, “I will establish your seed forever And build up your throne to all generations.” How did God say that He would keep this oath? He promised to build up the covenant firmly with His lovingkindness and His faithfulness (v. 2). God promised David that He would be with him forever with His lovingkindness. Not only did God promise David He would make him the highest of the kings of the earth (v. 27) but also He would keep him forever (v. 28) and He would establish his descendants forever (v. 29). But if David’s sons sinned against God, then God would punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes (vv. 30-32). But the amazing eternal love of God speaks today in verses 33-34: “But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him, Nor deal falsely in My faithfulness. My covenant I will not violate, Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips.” God promised that when David’s offspring sinned, He would punish him, but He would not break off His lovingkindness from him. The reason was once God had sworn by His holiness, he would not lie to David (v. 35). Therefore, the psalmist remembered the covenant that God made with David and asked Him to rescue the Israelites from the present suffering and disgrace of Israel (vv. 38-51, Park Yun-sun). Since David knew that the hardships and disgrace of the people of Israel was due to the wrath of God (vv. 38, 46), he cried to God how long would He hide Himself in His wrath (v. 46). God had exalted the right hand of His adversaries (v. 42) and let them reproach the Israelites (v. 50). Therefore, the Psalmist prayed for God’s mercy (vv. 47-48), and prayed for the God’s salvation by relying on His former lovingkindnesses and faithfulness (v. 49).

God’s love for us is eternal. With that eternal love, God loves us in the past, now and forever. But we must not forget that the love of God is also a holy love. When we sin against God, He punishes us because He loves us. But God’s wonderful grace is that when He disciplines us He doesn’t take away His eternal love completely. God is God who does not withdraw His love for us in His wrath. Therefore, we, like the psalmist, should sincerely pray for God’s grace of salvation by relying on His eternal and faithful love even while we sin and are punished in the wrath of God.

What we can do, even when we are afflicted, is to decide to praise God and put it into action (v. 52). Our God strengthens us and help us when we cry out in trouble. He is God who shows us His eternal love. Therefore, when we experience the eternal love of God, we cannot but praise God.

# "I love You, O LORD, my strength"

## [Psalms 18]

Why are we discouraged? Why are we frustrated and despairing? Often times in our lives we lose our strength. At that time, there is danger of give ourselves up in despair. There may be a urge to put down things and give up everything. When I thought about why this may happen, I thought of three words: "reality", "mind" and "emotion". In other words, it is important how we react to these realities that we want to deny when difficulties and adversity come to our life journey.

The first reaction is "mind". When unexpected difficulty thing or adversity comes true, we can ask four questions from our thoughts. The first question is "Why?" I think it is our instinct or habit to ask questions such as 'Why did this happen to me?' and 'Why me?' In the end, the question of why is to show that we are denying the reality that we face. And this denial ultimately makes us to manifest our dissatisfaction, complaints and our victim mentality. Besides the question "Why?", the second question we frequently ask is "How?" Although we try to find a solution to the question by asking "How did this happen to me?", but in the end, it is more difficult to find answers than to find answers in our lives. Then the third question that we Christians often throw is "What?" As we throw the question "What is God's will?" we try to find God's will in our difficult circumstances. But we cannot deny the reality that there are much more unknown answers to God's will than we know. How can we know all the will of God? That's why the fourth question that we must ask is "Who?" We must ask "Who is our God?" In doing so, we can accept our reality in faith by believing and acknowledging God's sovereignty. This thought reaction allows us to express healthy emotions. Not only are our feelings aren't inflexible, but we can also express our consistent feelings with our consistent thoughts.

The psalmist David described his reality in verses 4-5: "The cords of death encompassed me, And the torrents of ungodliness terrified me. The cords of Sheol surrounded me; The snares of death confronted me." David recalled his past in his heart in which God saved him from all his enemies and King Saul and confessed sincerely from his heart as follow: "I love You, O LORD, my strength" (v. 1). Here, the word "love" used by David is "raham" in Hebrew. A pastor has interpreted this word as follow: 'It is God's mercy and love that has been poured out on us and it is God's painful love of looking at us with pain in His heart that dissolves everything' (Internet). This love is deeply rooted in man's heart and is a love that is literally melted (Park Yun - sun). The reason why David confessed this love is because God was David's strength. In other words, because David experienced the power and love of God that saved him in every crisis, David confessed, "I love You, O Lord" (v. 1). In the memory of experiencing this past salvation, David accepted reality in faith and praise God (v. 3).

Why did God save David from all his enemies and from Saul? We can think of two reason based on Psalms chapter 18.

### **The first reason is because God is God, His divinity.**

Since God is the God of salvation in the nature of God, God saved David (Park Yun-sun). The character image of God is expressed in several words Psalms 18:2 – "my rock" (meaning lands surrounded by steep rocks), "my fortress" (meaning a high hill or mountain top), "my deliverer" (Savior when faced with an emergency), "My God", "my rock, in whom I take refuge" (referring to the hill of a mountain), "my shield" (blocking the arrow of the enemy), "the horn of my salvation "(analogous to the power of victory) and "my stronghold" (a steep and sheltered

haven on the top of a mountain). In a word, God saved David because God was David's protector. Therefore, as David prayed to God, he proclaimed that God was the Savior who protected David.

### **The second reason is that God is the God who answers our prayers.**

Look at Psalms 18:6 – “In my distress I called upon the LORD, And cried to my God for help; He heard my voice out of His temple, And my cry for help before Him came into His ears.” God is the Lord who hears our prayers. Especially when we cry out in extreme dangerous situations (vv. 4-5: “death,” “the torrents,” “Sheol”), God hears our prayer that is offered in urgency of the tribulation.

How, then, did God save David? We cannot help but be surprised when we see Psalms 18:7-15. This is because the way of salvation described in verses 7-15 is the majesty of God. See how David expressed God's salvation: “the earth shook and quaked; And the foundations of the mountains were trembling” (v.7), “Smoke went up out of His nostrils, And fire from His mouth devoured” (v. 8), “came down With thick darkness under His feet” (v. 9), “He rode upon a cherub and flew” (v. 10), “He made darkness His hiding place” (v. 11), “From the brightness before Him passed His thick clouds, Hailstones and coals of fire” (v. 12), “The LORD also thundered in the heavens” (v. 13), “And lightning flashes in abundance, and routed them” (v. 14), “Then the channels of water appeared, And the foundations of the world were laid bare At Your rebuke” (v. 15). All of these expressions indicate that when God came to save David, He came to earth in a majestic and vibrant manner (Park Yun-sun). The majesty of God which shakes the heavens, the God who came to save David in his majesty, ‘This is strange. The majesty that God has revealed is so great, that the object of salvation is an individual that seems to be utterly pointless. Had God shaken the heaven and earth to save this one person?’ (Park Yun-sun). It is doubtful whether the prayer of such an individual is great. We cannot help but be surprised that the prayer of one person brings about the great work of salvation while the heavens are shaking.

Here I thought of four things about a person's prayer:

#### **First, prayer opens the door in heaven.**

In Psalm 18:16, David said, "He drew me out of many waters." This means David prayed when the gates of the north, south, east, and west of all the cities were shut down because of disasters and tribulations, the door that man couldn't stop was opened, and that door was the door in heaven. And there the work of God's salvation occurs. Unlike the Israelites during the Exodus time who complained and grumbled in front of Red Sea when they were hemmed, Moses looked at the heaven and prayed to God. And God heard his prayer and open the door in heaven and give them the gracious blessing of salvation. Our prayers open the door of heaven.

#### **Second, prayer is strong.**

It is a prayer that makes us to experience God's salvation by Almighty God who is stronger than “my strong enemy” (v. 17). Powerful enemies stronger than David, but prayer will experience the power of the salvation of the Almighty God.

#### **Third, prayer depends on God.**

David confessed that “the Lord was my support” (v. 18). Although “the day of disaster” (v. 18) came to David, when he prayed, the day of disaster was changed to the day of God's salvation.

#### **Fourth, prayer helps us to realize how much God delights in us.**

Look at Psalms 18:19 – “... he rescued me because he delighted in me.” Not only David experienced God’s salvation through prayer but also he experienced God’s guidance. What is more surprising, however, is that he realized how much God delighted in him. Therefore, the praise that we can sing from our hearts is ‘I want to be the Lord’s joy’.

No matter what difficult situation we face, we should think about ‘The Lord is my strength’ and accept the reality by faith. And we should cry out to God who is our protector and Savior because He will manifest His great saving power as He will come in great majesty. Then we will praise God because we will realize how much God is delighting in us.

## **‘My circumstances have turned out ...’**

**“Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel” (Philippians 1:12).**

How do I look at the situation I am facing now? Is this the situation I expected? Perhaps the situation that I face now is a situation that I didn't want or expected. So now I am dissatisfied with my situation. And now I am struggling because of my dissatisfied situation. It is painful and I am distressed. I wonder how long I have to stay in this hard and painful situation. So when I look at my situation, I become discouraged and even despair. There is no hope. What should I do?

Today I read Bible Philippians 1:12. In reading, I came to think about Apostle Paul saying “my circumstances have turned out ....” First, I thought about the Paul's circumstances. The circumstances are explained in the next verse by Paul as “my imprisonment” (v. 13). In other words, Paul was in prison. If I am in prison like Paul, how will I react? If I go to mission that is a communist state or a Muslim country and go to jail for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, how will I react? The words of Acts 16:25 came into my mind: “But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.” Although Paul and Silas were in the inner prison and their feet were fastened in the stocks (v. 24), they prayed and sang hymns of praise to God (v. 25). Can I pray and praise God like Paul and Silas, if I have been sent to prison in the mission field? Perhaps I would ask God at least to rescue me from prison. But I don't know I can praise God so that even other prisoners will hear my singing. Perhaps I will not sing praise by my strength. But if God gives me grace, then I believe that the indwelling Holy Spirit will enable me to praise God even in such circumstances. The reason is that after my first baby died, my wife spread her ashes in water and the indwelling Holy Spirit enabled me to praise God His saving love. Since God gave me this faith, with the same faith I will accept any circumstances, whether I wanted it or expected it, as I acknowledge God's sovereignty instead of denying that circumstances. And even though I don't know what the sovereign will of God is, I certainly will believe that there is God's good, pleasing and perfect will (Rom. 12:1) and I will be comforted by the fact that I am in His sovereign will. In the midst of that, I will pray and wait patiently God's given patience with the expectation that God causes all things to work together for good to me (Rom. 8:28). The reason for this is that in Philippians 1:12, Apostle Paul said that his circumstances had turned out for the greater progress of the gospel.

When I meditated on Philippians 1:12, I realized two things. One is that even though Paul was bound, but the gospel of Jesus Christ couldn't be bounded. So with faith that the gospel of Jesus Christ cannot be bounded in any difficult circumstances I will pray that there will be progress of the gospel through “my bonds”. Another one is the fact that God's sovereign will was accomplished through others, even without Paul. So I came to think again that I should get rid of thought that the Lord needs me to accomplish His will. God accomplished His will of the progress of the gospel through the two groups when Paul was in the prison. One group of people was “most of the brethren” who trusted in the Lord because of Paul's imprisonment and had far more courage to speak the word of God without fear (v. 14). They preached Christ from good will (v. 15). Also they did it out of love, knowing that Paul was appointed for the defense of the gospel (v. 16). They preached the gospel in truth (v. 18). Yet another group of people preached Christ even from envy and strife (v. 15). They proclaimed Christ out of selfish ambition, thinking to cause Paul distress in his imprisonment (v. 17). They proclaimed Christ in pretense (v. 18). But since Christ was proclaimed, whether in pretense or in truth, Paul rejoiced (v. 18). In the end, Paul rejoiced greatly because his circumstances of imprisonment had turned out for the greater progress of the gospel (v. 12).

I hope and pray that whatever circumstances we are in it may turn out for the greater progress of the gospel. I pray that Christ will be preached through our circumstances now. Through whatever we are going through now, I hope and pray that there is progress of the gospel, so that there is progress and joy in our faith (v. 25).

## **Those who suffer according to the will of God**

**“Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right” (1 Peter 4:19).**

Why do we Christians suffer? I think of three reasons for that: (1) because of our sins, (2) because God wants to bless us, and (3) because we are living worthy of the gospel. Of course not all our sufferings are due to our sins. But somehow it is not easy to shake off the thought that many of our sufferings are the result of our sins. I think a good example of this is Prophet Jonah. Why did Jonah suffer? Why was the ship that he was aboard almost broken? (Jonah 1:4) The reason was that Jonah disobeyed God's command (vv. 2-3). Likewise, we too can suffer hardships when we disobey God's command. But I think it is dangerous to think that all our sufferings are all due to our sins. The reason is that the Bible doesn't say that all the suffering is due to sin. I think a good example of this is Job. He didn't disobey God's command like Jonah, but suffered tremendous hardship. Not only did he lose his ten children (Job 1:18), but he also lost all his possessions (vv. 12, 15-17), even though he was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil (vv. 1, 8). He also boiled from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head and he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes (2:7-8). The reason for this was not because of his sin, but because God allowed Satan to smite Job who fear God (1:12; 2:6). As a result, Job received the God's blessing of coming forth as gold (23:10) and God's presence of seeing God with his eyes instead of just hearing him with his ears (42:5). Like this in the Bible, we see Jonah who suffered because he disobeyed the command of God but also we see Job who suffered greatly even though he was blameless, upright, fearing God and turned away from evil. We also see in the Bible Apostle Paul, who went through so many sufferings even though he lived his life worthy of the gospel of Christ Jesus (Phil. 1:27; 2 Cor. 11:21-31). So if for whatever reason we are suffering now, what should we do? I think we should connect our sufferings to the sufferings of Jesus Christ (Nowen). In other words, when we are suffering, we should meditate on the Jesus' sufferings, so that we may find the purpose and meaning of our sufferings. Then God will help us to persevere and endure our afflictions. As we persevere and endure, we must experience the fulfillment of God's sovereign will that He wants to accomplish even through our sufferings.

In 1 Peter 4:19, the Bible speaks of those who suffer according to God's will. My focus of the meditation of the Word is that we Christians should suffer according to the will of God. Then who are those who suffer according to the will of God? I thought of five things:

**First, those who suffer according to the will of God arm themselves with the same purpose as Jesus Christ who has already suffered in the flesh.**

Look at 1 Peter 4:1-2: “Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.” The attitude of those who suffer according to the will of God live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men but for the will of God since they firmly believe that Christ has died on the cross once for all for our forgiveness and our relationship with sin was cut off. In short, those who suffer according to the will of God don't follow the lusts any longer and lives the rest of the life on this earth according to the will of God. They no longer engage in man's lust (v. 2), lewdness, lust, drunkenness, debauchery, pleasure, and illicit idolatry (v.3). They don't plunge with the non-believers into the same flood of dissipation (v. 4). Because they have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do (v. 3), now they live for the will of God (v. 2).

**Second, those who suffer according to the will of God rejoice that they participate in the sufferings of Christ.**

Look at 1 Peter 4:13 – “But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.” Those who suffer according to the will of God aren’t surprised at the painful trial they are suffering, as though something strange were happening to them (v. 12). Rather, they are delighted to think that they are participating in the suffering of Christ in their fiery trials. They consider it as joy even though they are subjected to various trials (Jam. 1:2). In addition, those who suffer according to the will of God think that they are blessed when they are insulted in Christ's name (v. 14). The reason they can think and believe like that is because the Spirit of glory and of God rest on them (v. 14).

**Third, those who suffer according to the will of God don’t be ashamed but praise God that they bear the name “Christian”.**

Look at 1 Peter 4:16 – “However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.” Those who suffer according to the will of God aren’t ashamed when they suffer as Christians (v. 16). The reason is that they aren’t suffering because they live for evil human desire of the past (vv. 2, 3) such as murder, stealing or any other kind of criminal or even meddling (v. 15) but because they live in faith and according to the God’s will (v. 2) by receiving forgiveness of sins and having ceased from sin (v. 1). Therefore, they aren’t ashamed when they are suffering as Christians, but rather they glorify God in the name of Christians (v. 16). In other words, those who suffer according to the will of God obey the gospel as Christians (v. 17) and glorify God (v. 16).

**Fourth, those who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.**

Look at 1 Peter 4:19 – “Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.” Those who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator God (v. 19). And they continue to do what is right (v. 19). Even though they are suffering as Christians, they don’t stop doing good for the glory of God. The reason is that they know that they are newly created for good works in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:10). Therefore, they don’t grow weary of doing good (2 Thess. 3:13), nor do they lose heart in doing good (Gal. 6: 9).

**Fifth and last, those who suffer according to the will of God believe that God will Himself perfect, strengthen and establish them after they have suffered for a little while.**

Look at 1 Peter 5:10 – “After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.” Those who suffer according to the will of God know that suffering is God's grace. The reason they know and give thanks to God when they suffer as Christians they are participating in Jesus Christ’s suffering is because participating in the suffering of Jesus Christ is God’s grace (Phil. 1:29; 1 Pet. 5:12). Not only that, but they also thank God in the midst of suffering because they know that suffering is for their testing (1 Pet. 4:12). One of the testing is when they receive the testing through suffering, they will be able to serve His church as ones who are serving by the strength which God supplies (v. 11). Those who suffer according to the will of God who receives the testing through their suffering know that the suffering they receive as a Christian is only for a little while (5:10). They also believe that God called them to His eternal glory in Christ (v. 10). They endure and persevere in the midst of suffering, knowing that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to them



(Rom. 8:18). In the process, God makes them strong, firm and steadfast (1 Pet. 5:10). Therefore, they said, "To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen" (v.11).

We Christians are suffering according to the will of God. And we who suffer according to the will of God must arm ourselves with the same attitude as Jesus Christ who has already suffered in His body. And we must rejoice in participating in the suffering of Christ. We shouldn't be ashamed when we suffer but praise God that we bear the name "Christian". We must continue to do good as we entrust our souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right. We must believe that even though we will suffer a little while, God will make us strong, firm and steadfast. I hope and pray that the will of God will be fulfilled through the suffering we receive.

## **"Put my tears in Your bottle"**

**"... Put my tears in Your bottle ..."(Psalms 56:8).**

There are still tears in the bottle of my heart. They are the tears I will never forget. I still remember vividly the tears that flew in their eyes. They are the tears that are so precious to me. The tear that is written deepest in my heart is a drop of tears from my first baby Charis. When I held her first and last time in my arms, she passed away. And I saw one drop of tears in her right eye. Whenever I participate in the communion, I intentionally think of Charis who was in the Los Angeles Children Hospital Intensive Care Unit for 55 days and who had numerous needle marks in her body. And when I think about her, I remember one drop of her tears and it makes my heart moving. The second deepest tear in my heart is the tear of my beloved wife. I still remember clearly when my wife was crying in front of Charis. She was crying very hard because her baby Charis was slowly dying. I had never seen my wife look as beautiful as that time. Another unforgettable tear of my wife is when she shed her tears after she spread Charis' ashes in the water. It was inside the small boat in where my wife was sitting in front and I was in the back. Suddenly my wife who was looking at the front turned to me and said "Titanic". I think she was joking, thinking about the movie "Titanic". And when I saw her face, she was crying. Her tears were dropping from her eyes. I still cannot forget her tears that she shed at that moment. Another tear that is in the bottle of my heart is my grandfather's tears. I still remember when my grandfather was in St. Vincent Hospital Intensive Care Unit. It was Sunday morning when I visited him before I went to my friend pastor's church to preach. After I proclaimed the word of God to my grandfather during the worship, I prayed for him. After we prayed and when I opened my eyes, I saw tears on my grandfather's right eye. Although he couldn't speak because he was wearing an oxygen respirator, he shed his tears and I cannot forget that tears. That night he passed away as he was sleeping. I also cannot forget my grandmother's tears that she shed when I and my wife visited her in St. Vincent Hospital. I thought she was crying because she was afraid to die. So I asked her, 'Grandma, are you afraid of death?' She said 'No'. She said she was very thankful to God. So I asked her 'Why are you thankful to God?' She answered it was because the Lord raised several pastors in our family. She was so thankful for that. That was why she shed her tears. And her tears are in the bottle of my heart.

I have been thinking of tears in my heart as I have been living my faith. However, when I was reading the Bible yesterday night for today's Morning Prayer, my gaze stopped at Psalm 56:8 because the Bible says "... Put my tears in Your bottle ...." Obviously I would have read this Bible passage many times before, but I just passed that Bible passage until yesterday night. Then, during today's Morning Prayer, as I was preaching the word of God based on Psalms 56:4, I got more interested in verse 8. So as I am writing down this I am meditating the verse 8 again. Now my interest is to focus on the tears of the beloved who are in the Lord's bottle, rather than the tears that are in the bottle of my heart. I believe that the tears of the beloved in my heart bottle are already in the Lord's heart bottle. And I firmly believe that the Lord loves them much more than I am. So I am offering all those tears to the Lord who knows their tears best. How can I understand the meaning of the tears that my first baby shed, the tears that my wife shed and the tears my grandfather and grandmother shed. But since my omniscient God knows and fully understands the meaning of all of their tears that they shed, I hope and pray that the Lord receive all of their tears from the bottle of my heart. Also, I hope and pray that the Lord receives my three tears that I shed during our church college retreat in May 1987 because of the work of the Holy Spirit in my heart: tears of repentance, tears of devotion and tears of gratitude. I wish I could continue to shed these three tears in my life until I die. Therefore, I want to fill the bottle of the Lord with these tears.

## **“I will always have hope”**

### **[Psalms 71:1-14]**

President Nixon's assistant, Chuck Colson, wrote his book "Born Again," focusing on his experience in prison. He said he saw three people among the prisoners: the first is a hopeless prisoner who hits his head against the wall and hurt his own body, the second kind is the hopeless prisoner who squat down in their own chambers, and the third kind of prisoners are waiting for the day to leave the prison and thus they exercise whenever they have an opportunity. Although they are in prison, they act like they will go out tomorrow. Even though their bodies are trapped in prison, their minds are out there and enjoy freedom. Those who live in hope are free. Their lives are overflowing with hope. Those who attitude is positive and optimistic are looking at the light even in the dark. But those who are pessimistic see darkness even in the light. Do you look at the light in the darkness or the darkness in the light?

What is God's thought toward us? The Scripture Jeremiah 29:11 says the God's plans for us is to give us a future and a hope and not for calamity. I hope and pray that God, who gives us hope and future give us hope through Psalms 71:1-14. God wants us to make a resolution that 'I will always have hope'. So today I would like to meditate on three things under the title of "I will always have hope": First, what was the situation of the psalmist David who seemed hopeless; Second, why the psalmist said, "I will always have hope"; and third, what life was like for the psalmist who decided "I will always have hope".

### **The first thing I want to think about is the hopeless situation that David was in.**

The psalmist David was in danger of life because of "the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of evil and cruel men" (v. 4) and his "enemies" (v. 10). They conspired together and waited to kill David (v. 10). Here, the "cruel men" are those wicked men or the unrighteous men, who are utterly evil, who cannot stop evil and repent but make evil more widespread (Park Yun-sun). Because such people were aiming at the life of David, he was in a situation where there seemed to be no human hope at the crossroads of life and death. Then David made this decision: "But as for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more."

### **The second thing I want to think about is the reasons why David decided to always have hope in his hopeless situation.**

#### **(1) The first reason is because the Lord was his hope.**

Look at Psalms 71:5 – "For you have been my hope, O Sovereign LORD ...." This world can never give us hope. It is only despair that this world can give us. Satan keeps trying to make us to be in despair. But in this world of despair, we live joyfully in hope. The reason is that our Lord is our hope. Although all that we believe in this world will be cut off, we must believe in the covenant of our Savior, and thus our hope will be even greater. Although all that we believe in this world is cut off, we must continually hold onto and stand firm on the Lord's promises. Then our hope in the Lord will grow bigger in the Lord.

#### **(2) The second reason is because the Lord is his rock.**

Look at Psalms 71:3 – “Be my rock of refuge, to which I can always go; give the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.” Whenever David’s enemies tried to kill him, he always went to the Lord who was his rock and his fortress. In verse 3, David described the Lord as “my rock of refuge”. The word "rock" here refers to a reliable and trustworthy object of faith because it is solid (Park Yun-sun). When his strength was failing because of his enemies, David relied on God who was his strength. The reason why David’s heart didn’t shake in persecution and suffering because of his enemies was because he took refuge in the Lord who is his rock and his fortress. Like Abraham, our fathers of faith, who hoped in hopeless situation, we who hope in the Lord in this hopeless world is because of the promise word of God that He has given us. When we stand firmly in the God’s promise we will not be shaken. And we can pray and wait with expectation that God will fulfill the promise. The word of the promise that David held unto from the Lord who is His rock was the God’s command to save him (v. 3). Therefore, David hoped for salvation and took refuge in God who is his rock with the assurance of salvation.

(3) The third reason is because the Lord has been his hope and confidence since his youth.

Look at Psalms 71:5 – “For you have been my hope, O Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth.” Even in a situation where there was no hope in David’s perspective, he determined to always have hope in the Lord because he had conviction that God who had been protecting him and delivering him since from his youth to until this time of crisis when he was writing this Psalms 71 would protect him and deliver him from the present crisis. I truly hope that this confidence of David will be planted not only in our hearts but also specifically in our young children’s hearts. If our children learn how to rely on God from their childhood, I am sure it will be great strength and hope for them when they live in this tough world.

**The third and the last thing that I want to think about is about the David’s life who decided “I will always have hope”.**

(1) He had taken refuge in the Lord.

Look at Psalms 71:1 – “In you, O LORD, I have taken refuge; ....” The psalmist David confessed that the Lord was his strong refuge (v. 7). That was why David had taken refuge in the Lord who was his strong refuge when his enemies gave him despair. The Lord was his rock of refuge, to which he could always go (v. 3).

(2) He prayed to his God.

First, David asked God to save him. Look at Psalms 71:2 – “Rescue me and deliver me in your righteousness; turn your ear to me and save me.” As David prayed to God to deliver him from his enemies who were the wicked and the unrighteous, he specifically asked God to rescue from them (v.4). Second, David prayed to God not to case him away. Look at verse 9: “Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone.” David prayed that God would not leave him when he was old and his strengthen was gone. Third, David prayed to God that his enemies fail. Look at verses 10-13: “For my enemies speak against me; those who wait to kill me conspire together. They say, ‘God has forsaken him; pursue him and seize him, for no one will rescue him.’ Be not far from me, O God; come quickly, O my God, to help me. May my accusers perish in shame; may those who want to harm me be covered with scorn and disgrace.”

(3) He always praised God.

Look at Psalms 71: 6, 14: “From birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother's womb. I will ever praise you. ... But as for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more.” The psalmist David decided to praise the Lord more and more when his enemies spread evil more and more. David, who had always taken refuge in the Lord who was his rock (shelter), always praised Him under His protection. So David said: “My mouth is filled with your praise, declaring your splendor all day long” (v. 8). He who always trusts in God always praises Him even in situations where there seems to be no hope. The reason is that he believes that only the Lord is the hope. We who believe in Him who is our hope must praise God whatever circumstances we may be in.

In any circumstance where there seems to be no hope, we must determine to have hope always because of the Lord who is our hope, our rock and our confidence since our youth. And we must always praise the Lord. Let us all who always hope in the Lord praise the Lord all the time, even in despair for He is worthy to receive our praises.

## Conclusion

God, who comes near to those whose hearts are broken and heals their broken hearts, is our true hope. We live day by day as endure any kinds of hardships and difficulties in tears and we stand up again even after fall because of our true hope the Lord Jesus Christ. Though we don't know about tomorrow, we are heading toward the heaven, step by step, with the comfort and power of the Lord who is our true living hope. Though we live in this wilderness-like world where there are so many things that trouble us, make us worry and be anxious and make us to commit sin against God, we have come to this far because our Lord has given us comfort, strength and help. It is the Lord who allows us to go through hardships and sufferings so that He may discipline us and train us through those tests of our faith. And even when we don't know what to do in times of troubles that give anxiety and distress, God speaks to our hearts tenderly and enables us to put our hope only in Him so that we may endure and overcome any kinds of hardships and troubles. God who reveals our weaknesses through sufferings helps us to completely rely on Him. And He answers our prayers and delivers us so that we may praise Him for His salvation. The Lord of salvation who makes us to praise Him comforts us in our suffering and gives us peace and assurance of deliverance in time of troubles so that we may be patient and endure any kind of hardship and adversity. The Lord also gives us peace that the world cannot give us, so we trust in God quietly, not fearing even the violent waves of this world. And we who trust in God quietly put all our heavy burdens on God. The reason is that we believe that the Lord will take away our heavy burdens that we cannot bear them alone. The Lord who bore all our sins and died on the cross in order to forgive us and to grant us eternal life has given us eternal hope. With this eternal hope in Jesus Christ, we look upon the Lord of hope in faith when our hearts are hard, when we are depressed and when we worry and are in anxiety as we live in this desert-like world. He will surely help us. Surely the Lord will heal us. The Lord will touch our broken hearts and heal them in His way in His time. The Lord will free our hearts. We don't have to be in anxiety, worry, fear, discouragement, depression, and bitterness any more. We no longer need to endure any guilt. We will be free. We will have more and more freedom in the Lord. I hope and pray that we may live in hope because of our Lord who heals our broken hearts. May God bless you all!