

“Lord, I Want to be a Christian”

James Kim

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Introduction

Who is a real Christian? Who is a true Christian? How many people are there who are self-proclaimed Christians and seemingly Christians, but their faith is immature and they are so close to unbelievers? How many self-proclaimed Christians are there who have faith but are easily tempted and whose hearts are easily shaken, who are unfamiliar with the basic doctrines taught in the Bible, and who break the unity of the church by envying and bringing conflicts to the church? In particular, how many Christians are there in the church who rely on riches rather than God, who cast off restraint but trying to justify themselves? How many Christians are there who don't obey God and do things in their own stubbornness, who don't follow the Holy Spirit but sin after their own flesh, and who don't keep the Word of God even though they have received it? How many hypocrites are there who come to church every Sunday and worship God with their lips in vain but their hearts are far away from Him? This is our reality and tragedy right now.

Now we Christians have lost our taste. We, who supposed to be the salt of the world, are not producing saltiness in this world. Now we have lost our ability to play a role in preventing corruption in this society. The reason is because we have lost the taste of the gospel. It is because we lost the sweet taste of the Word. Nevertheless, we Christians are not ashamed now. We are now shameless Christians. That's why we are being criticized by people all over the world. What should we do?

Recently as I was preparing my book called 'Dating, Marriage, and Family', I also prepared the series of my three books about 'Church, Pastor, and Christian'. The manuscript has been compiled into three series: 'A Church-like Church', 'A Pastor-like Pastor', and 'A Christian-like Christian'. Among those three books, I am grateful and glad to share with you the book 'A Christian-like Christian.' I renamed this book to "Lord, I Want to be a Christian" based on the hymn "Lord, I Want to be a Christian". I hope and pray that those who read this book may be beneficial, at least a little bit, for them to be built as true Christians. May the hymn "Lord, I Want to be a Christian" verse 1 be our earnest prayers to God:

"Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart, in my heart,
Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart, in my heart.
In my heart, in my heart,
Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart, in my heart."

In the Lord,

James Kim

Who are the true Christians?

“Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth-- you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: ‘God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.’ Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker. A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.” (Romans 2:17-29)

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

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

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

1. Fake is instant: Instant Christianity tends to teach that everything is done in one act of faith. This represses the desire for further spiritual advancement.
2. Fake neglects the change of character: The first step in solving the problem is to get away from the illusion that over time will solve the problem. What we need is not time, but change. Only God can change us.

3. Fake believes that God's discipline is bearing the cross: When we are disciplined and hurt by God, we must feel that we are out of the right path for a while. On the other hand, feeling the pain of the cross tells us that we are on the right track.
4. Fake seeks forgiveness of sins by doing: An attempt to obtain forgiveness of sins by doing cannot succeed. For no one knows how much good to accumulate in order to offset one's own fault.
5. Fake ignores creeds: We shouldn't say that we can experience the mystery of God without doctrinal knowledge, and that is enough. Truth can be stipulated, and the trust that is stipulated is creeds.
6. Fake disregards theology: It is theology that is essential to live right in this world and to lead us to the eternal kingdom of heaven. We have many difficulties because we learn hard and forget easily. Therefore, we must be determined and study theology.
7. Fake neglects feelings: We must not fear or ignore feelings. It is because the feelings are our normal part of what God has made us.
8. Fake has no spiritual balance: The trust is like a bird and the bird cannot fly with one wing. But we foolishly try to fly with one wing squeezing like crazy and flipping the other wing like crazy (Tozer).

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

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

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

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

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

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

Look at Romans 2:19-20: “if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The worldly Christians

“Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly--mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says, 'I follow Paul,' and another, 'I follow Apollos,' are you not mere men?” (1 Corinthians 3:1-4)

Are you a Christian? Who is a Christian?

The word “Christian” is mentioned three times in the New Testament (Acts 11:26, 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). In a literal sense, it means ‘those who belong to a Christian party,’ or “Christ followers, believers.” In the Bible, the followers of Jesus Christ in Antioch were called “Christians” by unbelievers in Antioch as insult and degradation. They are so called because their words and actions resemble Jesus Christ. But nowadays, everybody who goes to church seems to be called a Christian. Instead of calling Christians who believe in Jesus Christ and are truly born again and follow Christ, those who are just religious or have high moral values are called Christians. One evangelist said: ‘As a car just entering the garage doesn’t mean that it will be transformed, a person who goes to church doesn’t mean that s/he will become a Christian.’ In other words, becoming a member of the church, attending the church regularly, devoting to the work of the church doesn’t make us to become true Christians.

I want to take the time to reflect in the Word of God whether we are true Christians or not. Let us think about whether we are ‘worldly Christians’ or ‘spiritual mature Christians.’ We are going to be taught by the Word of God what kind of Christians should we be.

In 1 Corinthians 3:1, 3, when Apostle Paul writes the letter to the Corinthian church saints, he refers to them as “worldly” twice. Let’s think about who are worldly and who spiritual Christians are. Let’s have time to reflect on ourselves whether we are worldly or spiritual Christians. May we all be spiritual Christians and not worldly Christians anymore.

Look at 1 Corinthians 3:1 – “Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly--mere infants in Christ.” Apostle Paul tells the Corinthian church saints that he cannot address them as spiritual. The reason is because they are worldly. Who are the worldly here whom Paul is talking about? The term “worldly” originally means an unbeliever, but in today’s text, it refers to a person whose faith is so immature and s/he is almost like that of an unbeliever. There are three ways in which Paul describes the worldly Christians who are like unbelievers.

First, the worldly Christians are like “mere infants.”

Look at 1 Corinthians 3:1 again: “Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly--mere infants in Christ.” What is one of the characteristics of infants? They tend to be deceived well. This is what Paul says about spiritually immature infants in Ephesians 4:14: “Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.” The worldly Christians who are almost like unbelievers are like infants who are easily tempted

by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. And their faith of the heart is easily shaken by the wrong lessons and the wrong teachings that their ears are enticed. The reason is because there is no spiritual perfection of faith. Their faith is so weak that they are easily tempted and easily shaken. In the end, the worldly Christians are deceived like infants and fall into sinful temptations of the world to sin against God. What sins do they commit against God? Like the unbelievers of the world, they live as unbelievers do, in the futility of their thinking (Eph. 4:17). For example, having lost all sensitivity, they give themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more (v. 19).

Second, the worldly Christians eat "milk."

Look at 1 Corinthians 3:2 – “I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.” No mother feeds a newborn baby food or meat. The newborn babies are fed with breast milk or milk. It is because the newborn baby doesn’t have the ability to digest food or meat. How can the newborn baby chew meat with teeth? Likewise, the worldly Christians who are like the newborn infants should eat “milk” since they cannot eat solid food. Here the “milk” refers to all the basic doctrines taught in the Bible. The writer of Hebrews says it is the elementary teachings about Christ (Heb. 6:1). This can be said of faith at the elementary level. What do you think about someone has the elementary level of faith even though s/he has been going to church for 20 to 30 years? Shouldn't s/he finish six years of elementary school and then graduate from middle school, high school, university, and graduate school? In other words, if s/he has lived a long life of faith, s/he should have eaten God's Word steadily, his faith has been growing, and s/he should have mature faith by now. It's a serious problem because s/he is an adult physically but an infant spiritually. The worldly Christians need to be taught the elementary truth of God's word (Heb. 5:12). Although they know the basic doctrine, they don't know the deeper doctrines because they are slow to learn (v. 11). As a result, because of the lack of deep spiritual discernment, when Satan and this sinful world tempt them, the worldly Christians easily fall into temptation and sin against God because they can't discern the good from evil.

Third, the worldly Christians break the unity of the church by jealousy and quarreling.

Look at 1 Corinthians 3:3-4 : “You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men?” When Apostle Paul hears that among the Corinthian church saints some of them boast “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos” and forms a faction in jealousy and quarreling, and thus not keeping the unity of the church, he tells them they are worldly. Who are the worldly? They aren't unbelievers but those who are being affected by corrupt nature. This is acting like mere men (v. 3) and following the not born again natural man's character. In a word, the worldly Christians are those who live according to the fleshly desires of the old nature before they believe in Jesus, rather than being led by the Holy Spirit. What is the works of the flesh? Look at Galatians 5:19-21: “The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

There are so many worldly Christians now who live so much like unbelievers. There are so many worldly Christians who live in conformity with the world, pursuing the works of the flesh according to their old sinful habits, rather than being led by the indwelling Holy Spirit. There are so many worldly Christians who raise conflicts in the church, thinking about and following the things of the flesh, not only outside the church but also in the church. Therefore, the church, which is the body of the Lord, is becoming more and more transformed into a community of

unbelievers who are no different from the world rather than becoming a spiritual community. That is why the church is being criticized by the people in this world.

What Christians should we be? We must be the spiritual ones (1 Cor. 3:1). Who are the spiritual ones? Originally, the spiritual people refer to Christians who have been born again by receiving the Holy Spirit. And Paul says four things about these spiritual Christians 1 Corinthians 2:6-16:

- (1) The spiritual Christians are those who know and believe in the hidden wisdom of God that is Jesus Christ and His crucifixion of the cross.
- (2) The spiritual Christians are those who know what God has bestowed upon them by grace. In other words, the mature Christians are those who know God's gracious gift of eternal life and all the spiritual blessings that God has prepared for those who love Him.
- (3) The spiritual Christians know the Holy Spirit's spiritual teaching through His servant because they have spiritual discernment and also receive the work of God's Spirit.
- (4) The spiritual Christians have the mind of Christ.

However, the meaning of "spiritual" in 1 Corinthians 3:1 is different from the one in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16. We can summarize "spiritual" ones in 1 Corinthians 3: 1 in three ways:

- (1) The spiritual ones are not unbelievers, but mature Christians.

Who are mature Christians? Those who know and believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Eph. 4:13) and are standing firm in their faith. So they aren't being shaken by all the wrong teachings and cunning and craftiness of this world. As the believers who stand firm on the rock of God's Word, the spiritual Christians live holy lives apart from the world.

- (2) The spiritual ones eat "solid food".

Look at 1 Corinthians 3:2 – "I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready." No grown-up adult lives like a newborn baby with only breast milk or milk. The grown-up adults eat solid food and meat. What Paul says is that the spiritual Christians, or mature Christians, are at the spiritual level to eat solid food. What is the "solid food" here? (cf. Heb. 5:12, 14) Then who are the mature Christians who eat the solid food?

- (a) The mature Christians are those who have experienced the word of righteousness (Heb. 5:13). In other words, the mature Christians are those perfect ones who are justified by believing in Jesus Christ and who are participating in Jesus' sufferings in order to learn to obey like the Son of God Jesus did (vv. 8-9) and live righteous lives. .
- (b) The mature Christians are those who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil (v. 14). The mature Christians are those who have spiritual discernment to discern between good and evil, holding onto good and avoiding every kind of evil (1 Thess. 5:21-22).
- (c) The mature Christians love each other in the Lord and keep the unity of the Spirit.

- (d) The mature Christians are those who agree with one another and those who are perfectly united in mind and thought (1 Cor. 1:10). They never speak different words in envy and quarreling, and cause conflict that breaks the order and peace of the church with different mind and different thought. The mature Christians are controlled and led by the Holy Spirit in order to keep their unity of the Lord's church. They don't follow the desires of the flesh but follow the Spirit. And they bear the fruit of the Spirit: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law" (Gal. 5:22-23).

We should be spiritual Christians rather than worldly Christians. We should no longer to live a foolish Christian life that bears the sinful fruit of envy and quarreling, pursuing the work of flesh that is no different from unbelievers. Rather, we should get rid of the works of the infants who are being taught the elementary truths of God's word but should be mature Christians, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Therefore, we should be able to eat solid food and to discern good from evil with our spiritual discernment, holding onto good and avoiding every kind of evil. In the meantime, we must keep the unity of the church as we are being led by the Holy Spirit and are bearing the fruit of the Spirit.

The beast-like Christians

“But man, despite his riches, does not endure; he is like the beasts that perish. ... A man who has riches without understanding is like the beasts that perish” (Psalms 49:12, 20).

The beast-like Christians are foolish (Ps. 49:13). And the fools say in their hearts "There is no God" (53:1). The foolish Christians say that they rely on God but instead of making God their stronghold, they trust in their great wealth (52:7). That is, the beast-like Christians are the ones who trust in their wealth and boast on their great riches (49:6). To these beast-like Christians, God teaches them three reasons why it is foolish to trust in their great riches:

First, the reason why it is foolish to trust in wealth is because we cannot take it when we die.

Look at Psalms 49:17 – “for he will take nothing with him when he dies, his splendor will not descend with him.” We don’t need to be overawed or to envy (Ps. 73) when we grow rich, when the splendor of our house increases (49:16). The reason is because we cannot take our wealth and glory with us when we die (49:17). Although we were praised by people during our lifetime congratulating ourselves, 'I am a blessed wo/man' and 'I am a successful wo/man' (v. 18), we must not trust in our wealth because when we eventually die, we go back to our ancestors and will never see the light of life (v. 19).

Second, the reason why it is foolish to trust in wealth is because we will see that we will leave our wealth to other.

Look at Psalms 49:10 – “For all can see that wise men die; the foolish and the senseless alike perish and leave their wealth to others.” We don’t have to envy the prosperity of the wicked. We don’t need to be greedy about the riches of the wicked. The reason is because the sinner’s wealth is stored up for the righteous (Prov. 13:22). Therefore, we should not rely on riches because riches don’t endure forever (27:24). We shouldn’t set our eyes on wealth because it certainly makes itself wings like an eagle that flies toward the heaven (23:5). We should not rely on the abundance of wealth.

Lastly, the reason why it is foolish to trust in wealth is because the wealth can’t redeem our souls.

Look at Psalms 49:7-8: “No man can by any means redeem his brother Or give to God a ransom for him -- For the redemption of his soul is costly, And he should cease trying forever--.” No matter how rich we are, our wealth cannot redeem us from death. The redemption of our lives is very precious. The redemption of our souls cannot be done with money. It isn’t by means of wealth that we live in eternal heaven without seeing decay. We must not trust in our wealth because it cannot redeem our souls.

The beast-like Christians are senseless and ignorant (Ps. 73:22). And the senseless and ignorant beast-like Christian is envious of the arrogant when they see the prosperity of the wicked (v. 3). As they compare themselves who have been plagued all day long (v. 14) with the wicked who are always carefree and increasing in wealth (v. 12), they think that it is surely in vain that they have kept their heart pure (v. 13). As a result, the beast-like Christians

serve both God and Money (Mt. 6:24). The beast-like Christians idolize their wealth. The beast-like Christians love money (1 Tim. 6:10; 2 Tim. 3:2). Although we can't take our riches with us when we die, but we must leave our riches to others, the beast-like Christians trust in their wealth and boast in the abundance of their riches (Ps. 49:6). Aren't we the beast-like Christians?

“Alas! and did my Savior bleed, And did my Sovereign die? Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?” (Hymns “Alas! And Did my Savior Bleed”, verse 1)

The Christians who are unrestrained

“Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained, But happy is he who keeps the law” (Proverbs 29:18).

At the time of Prophet Ezekiel, the Israelites did “the action of a bold-faced harlot” in the eyes of God (Ezek. 16:30). They believed in the splendor that God bestowed on them, and trusted in their beauty, they played the harlot because of their fame (vv. 14-15). They took some of their clothes, made for themselves high places of various colors and played the harlot on them (v. 16). They made idols and committed adultery with the material blessings that God gave them (v. 17). They played the harlot with the Assyrians because you were not satisfied; they played the harlot with them and still were not satisfied. They also multiplied your harlotry with the land of merchants, Chaldea, yet even with this they were not satisfied (vv. 28-29). These were the actions of the bold-faced harlot in the eyes of the Lord God (v. 30). Aren't we Christians now doing the same actions of the bold-faced harlot like the Israelites at the time of Prophet Ezekiel?

At the time of Exodus, the Israelites were out of control (Exod. 32:25). When they saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain Sinai, the Israelites assembled about Aaron and asked him to make a god who would go before them (v. 1). So they made a molten calf and worshiped it (v. 8). In Moses' view, the Israelites were out of control (v. 25). The reason is because Aaron had them get out of control (v. 25). God promised Moses that “I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth” (Deut. 18:18). And God told him that that prophet would speak to the Israelites all that God would command him (v. 18). But the problem was a false prophet. The false prophet spoke in the name of God which God had not commanded him to speak, or in the name of other gods (v. 20). And the Israelites could know the false prophet if the thing that he spoke in the name of the Lord didn't come about or come true (v. 22). Aren't there still many false prophets and false pastors around us who speak in the name of the Lord that doesn't come about or come true?

The Bible Proverbs 14:16 says, “A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil, But a fool is arrogant and careless.” Although the wise Christians leave evil by fearing God, the foolish Christians are haughty and careless. The foolish Christians refuse to be restrained by God's law because they don't fear God (29:18). But the wise Christians keeps their soul by keeping God's law and refraining from their careless conduct (19:16). The Bible says that such Christians are blessed (29:18). Are you a foolish Christian? Or are you a wise Christian? Are you a Christian who is unrestrained or a blessed Christian who keeps God's law?

The Christians who try to justify themselves

“But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29).

How do you receive the story of King David coming adultery? Do you receive it as a warning? Or do you receive it as comfort? For some reason, whenever a pastor's sexual harassment occurs these days, it seems that the story of King David who had committed adultery comes out often in the internet articles. And it seems those articles focus on forgiveness rather than repentance. So even after we, pastors, have committed sexual harassment, it seems that we are just trying to go about it without thorough repentance of our sin by talking about that story of King David. And we are just trying to hide it without an honest confession of adultery until we get caught. Then when we get caught, we are obliged to admit our sin of adultery. But even admitting it, it seems we are just admitting out sin to those who have pointed our sin, not in front of our church. Thus we continue to conceal our sin. This is our sinful nature. But God not only thoroughly revealed King David's sin, but He also wrote it in the Bible so that all of us who read the Bible would know it. However, God referred to King David as “a man after My heart” (Acts 13:22). Why did God say that? The reason seems to be that David repented thoroughly. So he was forgiven and used by God again.

Those whose sins are thoroughly exposed by God are blessed ones. Furthermore, those who experience the grace of God who thoroughly enable them to repent of their sins are blessed ones. But even if God reveals sin, those who continue to hide it won't be use by God anymore. In other words, despite God exposing sin, those who continue to cover it and don't repent thoroughly, God will abandon that servant. It is a blessing when God covers our sin (Ps. 32:1). But it is a curse when we try to cover it. However, an abandoned servant, like King Saul, keeps on wanting to be exalted in front the people by making such excuses and rationalizations even after being rebuked of sin (1 Sam.15:30). I don't know where the end of pride is.

In Luke 10:29, a man comes out and he is “a lawyer” (v. 25). He put Jesus to test, saying “Teacher, what shall I don to inherit eternal life?” (v. 25) Jesus said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?” (v. 26) “And he answered, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF" (v. 27). And Jesus said to him, “You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE” (v. 28). “But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?” (v. 29) And Jesus told him the parable of a Good Samaritan (vv. 30-35). Then Jesus told him, “Go and do the same” (v. 37). Jesus told the lawyer to show mercy to his neighbor as the Good Samaritan. Isn't it interesting? Why did Jesus say “Do this” in verse 28 and then “Do likewise” in verse 37? I think the reason is because the lawyer knew the Law well but he didn't do it. In particular, the lawyer put himself within the framework of the misinterpretation of the Law and didn't consider the Gentiles as his neighbors. So Jesus emphasized the need to love his neighbor by action. However, I wonder if this lawyer listened to Jesus and practiced love for his neighbor. The Bible is silent about the lawyer's action after he heard Jesus' saying “Go and do the same” (V. 37) whether he actually went and love his Gentile neighbors or not. My personal guess is that the lawyer didn't obey the Jesus' commandment. There are two reasons for this. The first reason is because he put Jesus to the test (v. 25). The second and even greater reason is that he was proud and tried to justify himself (v. 29).

A person who tries to justify himself is a proud person. And a proud man who hears the word of God again and again returns to his foolishness as a dog returns to its vomit (Prov. 26:11). Clearly, Jesus commanded us to love

our neighbors (Luke 10:27), but the proud man disobey His command again and again. And as he disobeys His command, he justifies his disobedience. The proud man decides who his neighbors are in his mind, those who love him, and he only loves them (Mt. 5:46-47). He believes that he doesn't have to love those who hate him as his neighbors. And even more frightening is that the proud man believes that he is right. He believes that he is obeying the Jesus' command even though he isn't. The proud person doesn't realize his sins. So he cannot repent of his sins. Even he is being rebuked of his sins, he keeps covering them. Although the holy God keeps on exposing his sins, the proud man tries to cover them by his own strength. How foolish is this? We can't cover the sky with our palm. Hence, the proud man demonstrates to everyone that he is a fool (Eccl. 10:3). Aren't we the Christians who try to justify ourselves?

The stiff-necked Christians

“You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. ‘Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.’ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him.” (Acts 7:51-54)

What is stubbornness? It is dogged determination not to change one’s attitude or position on something (Internet). This word is used to actively present one's thoughts to other or is used to do what one thinks without listening to others. The Bible Exodus 32:9 says that the people of Israel are “a stiff-necked people.” What does it mean? It is a metaphor for human stubbornness and foolish arrogance that does not obey God. The word “stiff-necked” means obstinacy. This reminds us a yoked cow. When we try to yoke the cow, the cow has to bow its head. But since the cow doesn't want to, the cow stiffens its neck.

In Acts 7:51 we can see the expression “stiff-necked”. As we meditate on the four ways in which a straight-necked Christian is doing, I pray that if we are a straight-necked Christian, we will have the opportunity to repent our sins to God.

First, the stiff-necked Christians resist the Holy Spirit.

Look at Acts 7:51 – “You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.” The Bible refers to the stiff-necked religious leaders who judged Stephen, ‘You are always resisting the Holy Spirit.’ These words point to the fact that the Israelites who were listening to Stephen's speech that they were like their ancestors who resist the Holy Spirit. When God's Holy Spirit counseled the Israelites through Moses and the other God's leaders after Moses, the stiff-necked Israelites resisted the Holy Spirit, and their descendants, the religious leaders, continued to sin against the work of the Holy Spirit. Here, "resisting" the Holy Spirit means rejecting, opposing, and showing hostility to the Spirit's message and the messengers who convey the message (MacArthur). How did the Israelites resist the Holy Spirit? They turned their ancestors’ spiritual obedience into outward worship (Furneaux). This means that instead of obeying the Holy Spirit's message, they replaced it with outward worship. The Israelites devoted themselves to the outward worship only in order to enjoy their religious satisfaction, rejecting the message of the Holy Spirit. Why did the Israelites resist the Holy Spirit? Why did they reject the Holy Spirit's message? The reason is that they have not been circumcised in their hearts and ears. This means that the Jews were physically circumcised, but not in their hearts. In fact, the Israelites lived the outward religious life that wasn’t praise by God but praised by people by focusing on the law and the appearance of the temple without participating in the inheritance promised to Abraham. The Jews lived the lives of outward religionists rather than the spiritual obedience of listening to and obeying the voice of the Holy Spirit.

What should we do? We shouldn’t go against the Holy Spirit. In order to do this, we must be saints who are circumcised in heart and ears and praised by God (Rom. 2:28-29). Also, we must oppose the Devil instead of the Holy Spirit (Jam. 4:7).

Second, the stiff-necked Christians persecute the righteous.

Look at Acts 7:52 – “Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become.” Stephen exposed not only the stiff-necked Israelites’ sin but also their ancestors’ sin. And his ancestors’ sin was a sin that persecuted and eventually killed the prophets whom God sent to foretell the coming of the Messiah. Eventually, despite the fulfillment of the coming of the Messiah, who was sent by God and was prophesied through the prophets, the Israelites crucified Jesus. Stephen emphasized Jesus’ innocence and righteousness to the Jews who were listening to him and exposed the sins of the Israelites who killed Jesus. Stephen pierced the essence of the fundamental sin of the Jewish people. It was the sin that killed the Messiah.

The stiff-necked Christians who are Christians outwardly persecute the Christians inwardly. They rejected the Holy Spirit’s message of love each other and seek the form of godliness for self-religious satisfaction but denies the power of godliness. In the end, they are secularizing the church by trying to reveal their own righteousness rather than revealing the Lord’s righteousness. These stiff-necked Christians disturb the church, persecuting the servants of the Lord who preached the word of God. They also murder their brothers and sisters in Christ in their hearts (1 Jn. 3:15). But we must hate unrighteousness and love righteousness. Since we are justified by the merits of Jesus Christ on the cross, we must love each other with our hearts with the love of Christ rather than committing murder by hating each other.

Third, the stiff-necked Christians receive the Word of God but don’t keep it.

Look at Acts 7:53 – “you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.” After Stephen pierced the fundamental sin of the stiff-necked Israelites, he pointed out to them that they who received the law as ordained by angels, they didn’t keep it. This word was given through angels when God gave the law to Moses (Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2), and even though the Israelites received the law, they didn’t believe in Jesus whom the prophets prophesized as Christ, but rather crucified Him. That’s why the Israelites couldn’t be said that they are law-keepers. Although they valued the law and studied and meditated on it, they didn’t accept Jesus as Messiah, who is the heart of the law. Even now, the Jews don’t believe Jesus as Messiah (Isa. 30: 9).

How about us? Do we receive the Word of God and keep it? We are all builders of houses, either on the rock or on the sand. If we heard the Word of God and act on them, we are building our house on the rock (Mt. 7:24). “And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock” (v. 25). But if we hear the Word of God and don’t act on them, we are building our house on the sand (v. 26). “The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell--and great was its fall” (v. 27). Are we building our house well?

As I met with a pastor this week, I really felt that Satan was attacking our families. There are so many marital conflicts in our families and our children who see us being in conflicts get hurts as well. How should we live our faith especially in our home? It’s very challenging. We must humbly received the Word of God and live a life of obeying it. How can we measure the maturity of our faith? Who are the mature Christians? The mature Christians are those who have good and soft hearts that are receptive to the Word of God, who are quick to listen to the Word and act on it. The problem is that we aren’t absorbing the Word of God well because of the lack of absorption. And the bigger problem is that we are not immediately putting that Word into practice. What should we do to solve these problems? First, we must train ourselves to receive the Word of God. And the important part of that training is meditation training. As we think and think about God’s Word repeatedly, we must experience the grace that Holy Spirit makes us to understand the Word and to engrave it on the tablets of our hearts. And then, we should train ourselves to put the Word of God into practice immediately for the purpose of cultivating the habit of

putting the Word into action immediately. In order to do that, we must be alert to the habit of putting off. If we put it off, then we will forget it and won't be able to put God's Word into practice. Now, we must obey the Word of God with the determination of putting the Word into practice.

Fourth and last, the stiff-necked Christians are angry.

Look at Acts 7:54 – “Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him.” Listening to the Stephen's speech that exposed the sins of the religious leaders and their ancestors, the religious leaders were cut to the quick and they gnashed their teeth at him. And eventually they killed Stephen. There are two things we can do when we hear the Word of God and when the Word of God pierces our hearts. First, the positive response of the Word of God piercing our hearts is to repent our sins and be saved (Acts 2:37). Second, the negative response of the Word of God piercing our hearts is to be gnashing our teeth rather than repenting our sins (5:33, 7:54). Here, the first positive response teaches us how God's Word can be blessing to us, while the second negative response shows us how God's Word can be a curse to us.

Is God's Word being blessing to us or curse to us? Are our hearts being pierced by this Word of God today, right now? Are we repent our sins or are we angry? As we listen to these words, we need to think about whether we are stiff-necked Christians like the Israelites or not. Are we resisting the Holy Spirit? Are we persecuting the righteous? Are we receiving the Word of God and not keeping it? Are we angry? If we say “Yes” to these questions, we are stiff-necked Christians. Therefore, we must repent before God.

Those who worship God in vain

“Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, ‘Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!’ Jesus replied, ‘And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’ and ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’ But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,’ he is not to ‘honor his father’ with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.’ Jesus called the crowd to him and said, ‘Listen and understand. What goes into a man's mouth does not make him ‘unclean,’ but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him ‘unclean.’ Then the disciples came to him and asked, ‘Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?’ He replied, ‘Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.’ Peter said, ‘Explain the parable to us.’ ‘Are you still so dull?’ Jesus asked them. ‘Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘unclean.’ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man ‘unclean’; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him ‘unclean.’” (Matthew 15:1-20).

Can you worship God with thanksgiving only when God answers your prayers and blesses you and your loved ones? In particular, wouldn't you be thankful to God if you or your family member were suffering from a disease and were at a crossroads of life and death when God answered your earnest prayer and healed and saved you from your disease? But if God doesn't answer your prayer as you expect, and your family member dies from disease, will you still be able to worship God with thanksgiving? Do you think this is possible?

The Bible Job 1:20 shows that this is possible. Job, who was blameless, upright, feared God and shunned evil (Job 1:1), fell to the ground in worship (v. 20) even after he lost all his ten children and his possessions (vv. 13-19). In addition to Job, David fasted and pleaded when a child was born with Uriah's wife Bathsheba became ill, but the baby died (2 Sam. 12:15-19). Then David got up from the ground, washed, put on lotions, changed his clothes and went into the house of the Lord and worshiped (v. 20). This is faith. This is what we Christians should do. We must worship God. We who are being saved by faith in Jesus Christ by God's grace, all we have to do is worship God. This is what Jesus said in John 4:23-24: “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”

This is what Mathew 15:9a says, “They worship me in vain;” Who are those who worship God in vain? I want to think about it in three ways:

First, those who worship God in vain are legalists and hypocrites.

Look at Matthew 15:1 – “Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked.” Here the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were the religious leaders of that time and Jesus said to them, “You snakes! You brood of vipers!” (23:33). Why did Jesus, who didn’t rebuke that tax collectors and the prostitutes, rebuke the Pharisees and the teachers of the law greatly? The reason is because they were legalists. Who were the legalists? They were those who believe that they could be saved by works and not by faith. So they emphasized the following three things. It is to keep the Law of Moses, circumcision, and the tradition of elders. The Bible clearly says that we aren’t saved by works (Tit. 3:5) but only by faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8). However, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, who were legalists, believed that they were saved by works and thus were zealous to keep the Moses’ Law, circumcision, and the tradition of elders. They were zealous for God but their zeal was not based on knowledge (Rom. 10:2). The reason why Jesus rebuked them “You snakes! You brood of vipers!” (23:33) was because they were hypocrites. Look at Matthew 15:7 – “You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you.” This is what Jesus quoted from Isaiah 29:13, which he referred the Pharisees and the teachers of the law as “hypocrites.” The reason is given in Matthew 15:8-9: “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.” The Pharisees and the teachers of the law, who were hypocrites, honored God with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him. In short, they worshiped God in vain.

In Matthew 23, Jesus spoke seven times about those hypocrites who worshiped God in vain. Among those seven times, let’s just think about two of them. One of them is the hypocrites, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, do not practice what they preach (v. 3). So Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples (v.1) not to do what the Pharisees and the teachers of the law did (v. 3). But Jesus told them to obey the Pharisees and the teachers of the law and do everything they told them (v. 3). The reason is because what they said was right. Even now, there are many hypocrites in the church who worship God in vain. Although they go to the Lord’s house on Sunday and worship God, they worship Him only with their lips, but they don’t live properly. To these people, this is what Jesus says: “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (15:8). Another one is that the hypocrites loved to be praised by people and the place of honor (23:5-7). The Pharisees and the teachers of the law loved the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogue and to be greeted in the marketplaces (vv.6-7). And they loved to have men call them “Rabbi” (v. 7). They did everything to show people. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law gave to the needy in order to be honored by men (6:2). When they prayed, they loved to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men (v. 5). Even now, like the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, the hypocrites in the church love to pray and serve to be seen by people. Those who love to be praised and exalted by people love to be honored by them like the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. Those who don’t give glory to God but steal His glory are worshipping God in vain.

We shouldn’t be like the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who were hypocrites. If we are hypocrites, we must get rid of our hypocrisy (1 Pet. 2:1). We must get rid of our hypocrisy if appear to people as righteous on the outside but on the inside we are full of hypocrisy and wickedness (23:28). We should no longer come before the Lord and worship God with our lips alone. We must worship God with all our heart and soul.

Second, those who worship God in vain are those who value human tradition above God's command.

Look at Matthew 15:3 – “Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?” What was the tradition of the elders that the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who came to Jesus that was important to them? It was washing their hands before they eat (v. 2). This is explained in more detail in Mark 7:3-4: “(The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)” Mark described the tradition of the elders that the Pharisees and the teachers of the law considered important more than just washing their hands before they eat. But this tradition of the elders wasn’t Biblical. This tradition was made by people. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, the Pharisees inherited many of the rules that weren’t described in the Moses’ Law (Park Yun-sun). But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law saw that the Jesus’ disciples breaking the traditions of the elders by not washing their hands before they ate (Mt. 15:2, Mk. 7:2). So they came to Jesus and said: “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don’t wash their hands before they eat!” (Mt. 15:2) For them, unwashed hands were unclean hands (Mk. 7:2). So the Pharisees and the teachers of the law asked Jesus: “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with ‘unclean’ hands?” (Mk. 7:5) So Jesus replied: “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?” (Mt. 15:3) The Bible Mark 7:8-9 says: “‘You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.’ And he said to them: ‘You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!’” The Pharisees and the teachers of the law neglected the commands of God and became experts at setting aside the commands of God. And what was the command of God they set aside? Look at Matthew 15:4 – “Honor your father and mother’ and ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’” This is quote from Exodus 20:12 and 21:17. However, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law nullified the word of God for the sake of their tradition (Mt. 15:6). They thought that if they had to give their parents what they had to offer (Corban: a gift devoted to God) they didn’t have to do anything to their parents (Mk. 7:11-12). At that time, the rabbis taught that if anyone wanted to escape the responsibility of supporting their parents, they just need to make a vow to give the property to the temple and used it however they wanted to for the rest of their lives. This was a trick to blatantly avoid children’s responsibility to their parents. Dr. Park Yun-sun said, ‘It is a truly abominable sin, and it is a great evil to bring up the sin of reproach by using the sacred name of God’s service’ (Park).

Aren’t we Christians now guilty of this sin? Although the Bible 1 Timothy 5:4 clearly says, “But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God,” are we not caring for our own family now? This is what 1 Timothy 5:8 says, “If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” Are we not caring for our family in the excuse that we serve the Lord devotedly? If we are worshiping God in the Lord’s house on Sunday without caring for our family, not doing our filial duties in our homes, then we are worshiping God in vain. If we live according to human traditions or man-made rules rather than God’s commandments, we are now worshiping God in vain. If we live a life bound by people’s traditions or rules, breaking God’s commandments during the week, and worshiping God in the Lord’s house this Sunday, we are worshiping God in vain. If we say we honor God, who is invisible, with our lips, and we don’t honor our parents who are visible, then we are worshiping God in vain. We shouldn’t worship God in this way anymore. In order for us to worship God correctly, we must obey God’s command. We must worship God in obeying the God’s command of honoring our parents.

Third and last, those who worship God in vain are those whose hearts are unclean.

Look at Matthew 15:11, 18: “What goes into a man’s mouth does not make him ‘unclean,’ but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him ‘unclean’” ... But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘unclean.’” Do the things that enter our mouth make us unclean? Or do the things that come out from our mouth make us unclean? Jesus said that “What goes into a man’s mouth does not make him

'unclean'" (v. 11). What does it mean? It means that the external things such as eating without washing hands didn't make a person morally or religiously unclean. Why did Jesus say like this? The reason is because the Pharisees thought that when Jesus' disciples ate food without washing their hands, the food made them morally unclean (Park). So Jesus said, "whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him" (Mk. 7:18), he gave the reason in Mark 7:19 – "because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (Thus He declared all foods clean)." Rather, Jesus said that "what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him 'unclean'" (Mt. 15:11). What is the reason? The reason is because "the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart" and that heart is unclean (vv. 18-19). What kind of heart is that unclean heart? Look at Mark 7:21-23: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man." Then in Matthew 15:20, Jesus said: "These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.'" What does this mean? From the point of view of the legalism, hypocrisy, and the elders' 'tradition of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, they thought that the Jesus' disciples eating with their unwashed hands (unclean hands) defiled them, but Jesus said that all the evil things that came out of the heart defiled people. Here we see a different view of Jesus from that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. Jesus was focusing on the human heart, while the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were focusing on the outside. Jesus also said to the Pharisees and the teachers of the law: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence" (23:25), "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness" (vv. 27-28).

We must devote ourselves to purifying our inner heart which God sees rather than trying to purify our outward appearance which people see. The reason is because God sees not as man sees, that is the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). Therefore, we must dedicate ourselves to the cleansing of our heart, which God sees. Then what must we do? We must listen to God's Word and seek wisdom so that we may keep our hearts on the right path (Prov. 23:19). And in order for us to keep our hearts on the right path, we must always be zealous for the fear of the Lord (v. 17). If we don't, we may sin against God in our sinful greed because we love money in our hearts (Lk. 16:14), even though we may seem to be living a very hard religious life like the hypocrite Pharisees. Therefore, the first thing we should be diligent is to listen to the Father God's words (Prov. 4:10-11). And we should keep the word of God in our hearts and keep it (v. 4). Then we will be able to keep our hearts on the right path. We must also obey God's word of truth. Look at 1 Peter 1:22 – "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart." We must purify ourselves by obeying the truth. Therefore, I hope and pray that we may be able to worship God with our clean hearts.

Those who worship God in vain are legalists, hypocrites, and those who value man's tradition above God's commands. And their hearts are unclean. We must not be false worshipers who worship God in vain. Rather, we must be true worshipers of God. We must get rid of all our hypocrisy and worship God with all our heart and soul. Also, we must worship God as we obey His commands. We should be worshipers of God with a pure heart. Therefore, I hope and pray that we can glorify God.

The tragedy of the Christians

“What is truth?” Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him” (John 18:38).

Our church first confesses the Apostles' Creed at the beginning of the early Morning Prayer meeting. When we look at the Apostles' Creed, there is the phrase, “He suffered under Pontius Pilate.” In the background story of that phrase, John 18:38 appears. When Pilate said to Jesus, “You are a king then!”, Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me” (v. 37). Then Pilate asked Jesus, “What is truth?” (v. 38) And then he went out again to the Jews and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him” (v. 38). As I read John 18-19, I pondered about what Pilate repeatedly said not only in 18:38, but also in 19: 4, 6 that he found no guilt in Jesus. And I realized an interesting fact. Pilate, who found no guilt in Jesus, found no guilt in himself. The reason was because he didn't know the truth (18:38).

As I meditated on the sufferings of Jesus by Pilate based on the words of John 18-19, I saw the tragedy of two kinds of people. The tragedies of those two peoples are the tragedies of Pilate and of the Jews who cried out, “Crucify, crucify!” (19:6). The tragedy of Pilate is that even though he found no guilt in Jesus based on the Roman law, he found no guilt in himself because he couldn't see himself by the God's law. How could he know a lie since he didn't know the truth? How could he understand his sin of unrighteousness without believing in Jesus who is the Righteous One and the Truth? It is indeed the tragedy of the one soul, Pilate. Then what about the Jews who cried out, “Crucify, crucify!”? Unlike Pilate, they found sin in Jesus. In other words, when the Jews saw Jesus based on their law, Jesus ought to die because he made Himself out to be the Son of God (v. 7). That is, the reason why the Jews regarded Jesus as a sinner deserved to die on the cross was because Jesus committed blasphemy in their view of their law. Isn't it interesting that Pilate found no guilt in Jesus on the basis of the Roman law, while the Jews found the guilt in Jesus that He ought to die on the cross based on the Jewish law? But the fact that both Pilate and the Jews found no guilt in themselves based on the God's law of truth is true tragedy. What was their sin? Their sin was not believing in Jesus who is the way, and the truth, and the life (14:6). He did not believe in Jesus, the way, the truth, and the life (14: 6). They were not of the truth as Jesus said (18:37).

As I thought about Pilate and the Jews, I thought about the tragedy of us, the Christians now. You may wonder how can there be tragedy in us who believe in Jesus. But I think there is a tragedy in us who believe and know the truth Jesus Christ. And that tragedy is that we find other people's sins but not our sins because we don't hear the Lord's voice of truth. In other words, the Christian tragedy is that we don't realize our own great and many sins before the holy God and His holy Word of God. The reason is because we don't hear the Lord's voice which testifies to the truth (18:37). That's why we aren't only looking for our own sins, but looking for other people's sins as we live in the legalistic life by falling into our own self-righteous. As a result, we are making the grace of God cheap and making the merits of Jesus worthless. And we live for our own glory by relying on our own merits and stealing the glory of God. Where else is this tragedy? This is a greater tragedy than a tragedy outside the church.

Let's not be the Christians who lost the taste.

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men” (Matthew 5:13).

I was taught by meditating on Matthew 4:18-22 under the title “Jesus who called us.” I was instructed that Jesus was calling me just as He called Peter, his brother Andrew, James, and his brother John (vv. 18, 21). I learned that there is a promise of Jesus in His call, “Come, follow me” (v. 19). And that promise was “I will make you fishers of men” (v. 19). In this way, Jesus is giving us higher calling. How should we respond? Like Peter, Andrew, James, and John, we must immediately leave things behind and follow Jesus. We must leave and follow Jesus like Peter, Andrew, James and John who left their nets (v. 20), the boat, and even their father (v. 22).

Look at Matthew 5:13. Jesus is saying: “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.” Based on this word, I would like to meditate on the Word of God under the title “Let's not be the Christians who lost the taste” and receive the lessons that Jesus gives us

Jesus is saying that we are the salt of the earth (v. 13). What does it mean that we are the salt of the earth? We must be the Jesus' disciples who bring out a distinctive flavor in this world. What is the taste of the salt? It is salty taste. The Korean drama ‘Jumong’ shows that salt was used as an important means of sale in Korea long time ago. Perhaps in those days, salt was used as a wage for labor, and it was possible to buy what was needed with salt. The English word “salary” is also said to come from salt (Internet). That's how salt is so important. In fact, we are very important and precious like salt. We Christians are very important people in this world. The salt flavors food and also helps prevent food decomposition. Foods that are salted over 12% by weight can be stored for a long time without going bad (Internet). The salt also plays the following role (Internet): (1) It promotes metabolism. The salt leads metabolism to break down food and excrete waste products. When metabolism does not go smoothly, blood is acidified and immunity is low, so there is a high probability of getting various diseases. (2) It helps the production of red blood cells and cleans the blood vessels. If there is insufficient salt intake, then not only our body is indigestible but also lacks iron which will result in not producing of the red blood cells that results in anemia. The salt prevents arteriosclerosis and high blood pressure. (3) It balances body fluids. The salt controls moisture appropriately to prevent metabolism from being acidic or alkaline and absorbs and save the nutrients. (4) It helps digestion. The salt enhances the function of the intestine by removing impurities attached to the stomach and the barrier, helping the intestinal fluidity and preventing abnormal fermentation in the intestine. It ensures the nutrients to be evenly supplied to our body. (5) It functions as detoxification and sterilization. The salt increases the body's resistance to invading cells and blood vessels even if harmful substances or bacteria enter the body. (6) It has antipyretic and geothermal effects. If you apply salt to the bleeding area with abrasions, you will see the blood clot quickly. This is because salt has antipyretic and geothermal effects in the body. (7) It produces cells. The salt quickly restores dead or destroyed cells. Good salt with clean water will help our body revitalization and it can also be effective in eliminating skin problems such as acne. (8) It supplies minerals. Minerals that cleanse the blood vessels of the human body, help digestion, and help the intestines function to prevent protein from being excreted in the urine are essential to our human body. The salt provides minerals at least little bit.

We Christians are indispensable people in this world because we have a role to make the world taste good with the gospel and to prevent our society from being corrupted (Park). In reality, however, we don't seem to be able to meet this responsibility. Although our lips seem to preach the gospel, but our lives don't live a life worthy of the gospel. Furthermore, we are now corrupting the society rather than preventing the corruption of the society in which we live. In short, now we Christians are not playing the role of salt in this world. We are like salt that has lost its taste. To us, Jesus in Matthew 5:13 "... if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men." Like the salt that lost its salty taste, it seems we become useless in this world. What should we do? First we must repent. And we must restore the taste of salt. Thus, we must be salty Christians in this world. I hope and pray that we who have lost our taste in this world may be able to bring out the distinctive flavor of the gospel of Jesus Christ and faithfully take on the role of preventing the corruption of this society.

The Christians who know shame

“... yet the unrighteous know no shame” (Zephaniah 3:5b).

Stephen Seamands said in his book “Wounds That Heal: Bringing Our Hurts to the Cross”: ‘Guilt is about our works. Shame is about our being, though it is caused by something we say or do. At the heart of shame is the sensitive feeling of self-exposure’ (Seamands). Our human nature is to cover up something that we feel shameful so we try to hide from others anyway possible. It is our human nature that we are in constant worry about someone may find out our shame things so that we keep on trying to cover them up again and again in tension so that no one may know for sure. After all, if we live by this human nature, then not only we can’t show our own values but also can’t see the values ourselves. That's why we waste our energy to protect ourselves while looking down on our own values. In the fear of acknowledging the truth about ourselves, we endeavor to divert our attention by pointing to others. Just as Adam and Eve blamed others after their sin, we blame those around us and our circumstance. The shame that keeps us from seeing ourselves in God's view hurts us. Moreover, it makes us feel helpless and lose our confidence in the crooked self. Furthermore, I think shame may inspire all addictive behaviors. It's so hard to endure painful self-exposure that we are immersed in the world of drugs, work, food, sex, and other insensitivity we've created for comfort and recognition. In this way, we who have fallen into the world of our own insensitivity have a rotten root of shame in our hearts, but we live our lives without remembering it. In the end, we may not only tell people that we no longer feel shame in the illusion, but we can also tell ourselves the same thing.

The world we live in now knows no shame. The worldly people steal and don't know their shame. They do sexual assault and adultery and don't know their shame. They don't know their shame even after they commit murder. Even though the world is full of crimes, people who continue to sin don't know their shame. But more serious sin than these is being done in the church. We Christians steal the tithe and offerings and don't know our shame (Mal. 3:8). We Christians are not ashamed of harassment, assault, and adultery. Even the Bible says that hating a brother is a murderer (1 Jn. 3:15), and we don't know our shame after we commit such a murder. Yet we are preaching the gospel to our neighbors, worshiping and praising God with our lips. Yet we serve the body of the Lord with our hands and feet. What is so shameful is that even in such hypocrisy there is no shame in our hearts. Our conscience is paralyzed and our faces have gotten too thick. Our faces and conscience are so thickly packed with lies and hypocrisy. That is why I fully agree with the God's word of Zephaniah 3: 5, "... yet the unrighteous know no shame." I think that it is applicable to us, the Christians, that the unrighteous people don't know their own shame even though they should know. In fact, we are the unrighteous people. We obey no one, we accept no correction, and we don't trust in the Lord (v. 2). We are too stubborn in not obeying God's command (Park). We don't draw near to our God (v. 2), but turn back from following the Lord and don't seek Him and inquire of Him anymore (1:6). But we are following our Baal (v. 4). We are trying to satisfy our greed by idolizing money, just as the judges were less satisfied when they thoughtlessly received the bribes (3:3). The more serious sin is that we, the church leaders, are not truthful like the Israeli prophets who were arrogant and treacherous men (v. 4). Just as the Israeli priests profaned the sanctuary and did violence to the law (v. 4), we aren't keeping the purity of the church, rather we are defiling the church with lies. We are still eager to act corruptly in all we do (v. 7). Yet we don't know the shame. What should we do?

Today, during the Morning Prayer meeting, I repeatedly sang the hymn “Pass Me not, O Gentle Savior” verse 1 and chorus quietly: “Pass me not, O gentle Savior, Hear my humble cry; While on others Thou art smiling, Do not pass me by. Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry; While on others Thou art calling, Do not pass me by.”

And this was my prayer: 'Lord, help me to be a Christian who knows shame.' I want to have shame as I face my iniquities that are revealed by my holy God. I want to be a Christian who can feel shame in front of God and people. In the midst of my shame, I want to look upon Jesus, who was shamed on the cross. Jesus who died in the tree of shame, despised the shame of the cross (Heb. 12:2) and was crucified in the tree of the curse (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13). When I looked at this Jesus, I came to believe what the Zephaniah 3:11a says: "On that day you will not be put to shame for all the wrongs you have done to me." Let us no longer hide our shame. Let us no longer cover our shame up even in front of our holy God. Let us all look to the cross of Jesus' shame by faith. And let us confess and repent our shameful sins to our God. Then God will cover our shame up with the blood of Jesus who shed His blood on the tree of shame in order to forgive all our sins. May this grace be with you as well.

A message to the saints who criticize a pastor

“Isn't it enough that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the desert? And now you also want to lord it over us? Moreover, you haven't brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey or given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you gouge out the eyes of these men? No, we will not come!” (Numbers 16:13-14)

We pastors must listen not only to the critics of the saints, but also to the critics of nonbelievers, especially those of anti-Christians. Just as King David heard the curse of Shimei, a man from the same clan as Saul's family, as he was escaping from his son Absalom into the wilderness of Judah (2 Sam. 16:5), we pastors should even hear the curse of the people. After we heard even the curse, we must go to God and pray. With this in mind, I read and meditated on Numbers 16 and wondered if there was a message that God would like to give to those who criticize pastors through this word. So with thoughtful prayer, I wrote the title of this meditation “A message to the saints who criticize a pastor.”

As I meditate on the whole chapter 16 of Numbers based on Numbers 16:13-14, I want to consider three lessons that the Lord may give to the saints. I hope and pray that each of us will meditate on Numbers 16 and the Holy Spirit gives us understanding so that we may obey His words and honor God.

First, I would like to say to the saints who criticize a pastor that criticizing the pastor may be criticizing God.

The reason I say 'may be' is because in Numbers 16, the word 'criticize' isn't mentioned; rather the words “against” (vv. 2, 11), “oppose” (v. 3) and “opposition” (v. 19) are used. Who were against Moses? Who opposed Moses and Aaron? Who were in opposition to them? Look at Numbers 16:1-2: “Korah son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and certain Reubenites--Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth--became insolent and rose up against Moses. With them were 250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council.” They rose up against Moses and came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron. And the Bible says they were gathered together “against the Lord” (v. 11). What is the message that this word is giving to us? I think that 'Going against a leader whom God has called and anointed is to go against God.' The biblical message is clear: ‘Grumbling against Moses and Aaron was grumbling against God’ (Exod. 16:2,7) and going against the leaders is going against God” (Num. 14:2,3,11).

Second, I would like to ask whether the criticizing a pastor is proper in God's sight.

In Numbers 16:13-14, we see Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, who were among those who opposed Moses and Aaron (v. 12) spoke. It can be divided into four parts:

- (1) “it not enough that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to have us die in the wilderness, ...” (v. 13a).

Is it really true that Egypt was the land flowing with milk and honey? Did Moses and Aaron bring Israel out of Egypt to have them die in the wilderness? Above all, I don't understand that Dathan and Abiram basically said that it was Moses' fault to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. This is extremely harsh criticism about the God's holy work of salvation in bringing the Israelites of Egypt through Moses. Dathan and Abiram, who had forgotten the grace of God and complained and grumbled about the God's saving work, saw the work of God's salvation and His saving grace as a little thing and saw their suffering in the wilderness as a great thing.

(2) "...but you would also lord it over us?" (v. 13).

Did Moses try to be king over the people of Israel, as Dathan and Abiram said? I think Dathan and Abiram were influenced by Gentiles. The reason I think that way is because at that time there was no king in Israel but other Gentile nations had kings. The important thing here is that both Dathan and Abiram's words opposing Moses did have any valid at all. Why would a humble Moses who fear God wanted to be the king of Israel? Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt in obedience to the word of God, the King of kings. Rather, Korah, a descendant of Levi, who had gone far enough tried to exalt himself and become king. This was a great misunderstanding regarding humble Moses.

(3) "Indeed, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor have you given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards" (v. 14a).

Dathan and Abiram affirmed that Moses could not lead the Israelites to a land of milk and honey. How could they affirm like that when Almighty God saved the Israelites from Egypt and led them with the pillar of fire and cloud in the wilderness? This was their unbelief and their pride.

(4) "... Would you put out the eyes of these men? ..." (v. 14b).

This means that Moses caused the Israelites to follow him blindly. Disobedient and arrogant Dathan and Abiram seemed worthy of this criticism to Moses, who obeyed the Word of God and led the Israelites. When we look at the Dathan and Abiram's words against Moses, we can find that they made unfair criticism without valid grounds.

Third, we must all fall on our faces and pray to God.

When the son of Levi, Korah and his group rose up against Moses, Moses fell on his face (vv. 1-4). When Moses and his brother Aaron heard them saying, "You have gone far enough, for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?" (v. 3), Moses, with a grim resolution, tried to solve the problem with his prayer. This decisive deed was that Moses didn't try to overcome them by word; rather he earnestly prayed before God, knowing that the solution to this problem was only by prayer. And Moses fall on his faces twice in Numbers 16:22, 45. When Korah assembled all the congregation and went against Moses and Aaron (v. 19), God was angry and he tried to destroy them instantly (v. 21). But Moses and Aaron fell on their faces and asked God not to be angry with the entire congregation because of one man Korah's sin and not to destroy the Israelites (v. 22). However, God destroyed the Korah and his group even though there was Moses' and Aaron' prayer of dissuading God (vv. 31-33, Park). And 250 leaders of the congregation (v. 2), chosen in the assembly, men of renown (v. 2), who were offering the incense were consumed by fire that came forth from the Lord (v. 35). But on the next day all the congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You are the ones who have caused the death of the LORD'S people" and they had assembled against Moses and Aaron (vv. 41-42). And God wanted to consume them instantly

(v. 45). Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before God (v. 45). Like this, Moses and Aaron pleaded with God to solve all their problems and challenges. We should too. Whatever the problems and difficulties there are between the pastor and the saints in the church, we must lie down before God and ask God to solve all those problems and difficulties. The pastors should pray, and the saints should pray to God as well. Instead of hearing criticism, grumbling, and discord among us and going oppose to the church leader, all of us, whether pastor or congregation, should hear praying to God and hear God's voice first.

The true disciples of Jesus

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:26-27)

Are you a disciple of Jesus?

All Christians who accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord are the disciples of Jesus. And the disciples of Jesus are learners and followers of Jesus. What should we Christians learn from Jesus and how should we follow Him? We must follow Jesus in right way by learning true discipleship from Jesus. How do the true disciples of Jesus follow Him?

First, the true disciples of Jesus hate not only their own life the but also their family members’ lives in following Jesus.

Look at Luke 14:26: ““If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple.” When we apply this word to ourselves, we should consider whether we can really say that we are the true disciples of Jesus as we love ourselves and our family more than Jesus. We, who are called by the Lord Jesus to follow Him, must be fishermen. But if we refrain the Jesus’ calling because of our beloved family members (cf.: vv. 18-20), then the Bible says that we can't be His disciples (v. 26). We cannot obey Jesus' call unless we love Him so much that we hate ourselves and our family members. And if we are disobedient to Jesus' calling because we love ourselves and our family members, then we cannot be His disciples. In order for us to be the true disciples of Jesus, we must hate our family members and our lives in following our beloved Jesus. In order for us to be the true disciples of Jesus, we must dedicate our beloved family members and even our lives to the Lord. We should not love our family and our lives more than Jesus.

Second, the true disciples of Jesus take their own cross and follow Him.

Look at Luke 14:27 – “And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” When we apply this word to ourselves, we should consider whether we can really say that we are the true disciples of Jesus as we refuse to bear our own cross and follow Him. If we know that Jesus took the cross for us, walked the way of Golgotha, and suffered all kinds of sufferings, then should we not suffer all kinds of sufferings as we take our own cross and walk on the narrow path for our beloved Jesus? But we are more use to comfortable live than suffering. And we see a wider road better than a narrow road. And we like to wear cross ornaments rather than to bear the cross of suffering. So even though we look like Jesus 'disciples outwardly, inwardly we are not living like Jesus' disciples. Although Jesus was a Son, He learned obedience from what He suffered (Heb. 5:8), we aren't willing to learn obedience from what we suffer. We, as children of God, are living in disobedience to God's will because we do not really love Jesus and His cross. We must hate our disobedience. And we must mourn with repent and turn to God. We must take our own cross, and walk the way of our own “Golgotha.”

Third, the true disciples of Jesus follow Jesus with a firm budget.

Look at Luke 14:28-32: “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’” When we apply this word to ourselves, we should consider whether we can really say that we are the true disciples of Jesus as we follow Him with any budget. Think about it. For example, if we start build a church in order to dedicate it to the Lord without having enough budget, then we will not be able to build the all the way but maybe just its foundation. Many churches have begun to build the church buildings, but they couldn’t because they are going the financial difficulties. Likewise, if we don't have enough budgets and devote ourselves to walk the path of the Lord with our passionate hearts, then we won’t be faithful to follow Jesus to the end. Another example is suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. He will first sit down and consider the number of his army against the number of another king’s army (v.3 1). But if another king’s army has 20,000 soldiers and he has only 10,000, then he will send a delegation while another king is still a long way off because he knows that he cannot (vv. 31-32). If the king believes in the Gideon's 300 soldiers story, and wages war with his enemy even though his military number is only half the number of its counterpart, then we can say that the king’s courage came out of his ignorance rather than his courage from faith. Jesus wants us to see first whether we can oppose those who come against us. In other words, the Lord Jesus wants us to follow Him with a firm budget. In the life of faith, budget means to make certain sacrifices for certain hope (Park). Are we determined firmly to sacrifice ourselves in following Jesus? Are we willing to forsake all our possessions in following Jesus? (v. 33) Since we have obtained Jesus by God's grace and are already enjoying all the spiritual blessings with salvation in Jesus Christ, shouldn’t we decide to give up all our lives and our possessions in following Jesus?

The true disciples of Jesus hate their own lives and their own family in following Jesus. The true disciples of Jesus take their own cross and follow Jesus. And the true disciples of Jesus follow Jesus with the firm budget, that is willing to sacrifice for certain hope. Hopefully we will be established as the true disciples of Jesus who follow Jesus correctly.

The Christians who have knowledge

“A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered. Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.” (Proverbs 17:27-28)

What qualities and characteristics do we need to be a true leader? In response to this question, LG Economic Research Institute mentions 15 common qualities of 50 successful leaders who lead the business in their book “Lessons from the leadership experts, Top” by Tomas J. Neff and James M. Citrin, leadership experts. Only three of these fifteen qualities are related to intellectual or technical abilities, and most of them are attitudes or wills based on soft level of Emotional Intelligence. Here, “Emotional Intelligence” refers to ‘the ability to objectively judge one’s limits and possibilities, to control one’s feelings well, to truly understand the person from the other’s point of view, and to maintain a good relationship with others.’ Then, why is Emotional Intelligence becoming increasingly the basic qualities for future leaders, especially in the field of corporate management? First of all, as the speed of changing business environment, the values of employees are changing so fast and diverse. Therefore, the leaders must be able to understand and accept the various values and perspectives of their members, and form close relationships with them. In other words, the leaders should be able to demonstrate emotional leadership based on rich emotional intelligence. Only then can they meet the needs of their employees and make them feel satisfied. This enables the employees to be passionate about their work and generate high results. Furthermore, at the organizational level, human ties based on understanding and consideration between the leaders and the subordinates lays the foundation for a workplace or a strong organizational culture that allows them to work well. Daniel Goleman, a psychologist, has published research showing that the difference between successful and unsuccessful leaders depends more on emotional intelligence (EI) than on technical abilities or IQ. When about 80% of emotional intelligence and 20% of intellectual ability are properly harmonized, the leaders can be effective (Internet).

But I think little bit different from what the psychologist Daniel Goleman said. If effective leadership requires 80% emotional intelligence and 20% intellectual ability, I think that 20% intellectual ability should lead to 80% emotional intelligence. In a word, intelligence is more important than emotion in effective leadership. The reason is because emotion that isn’t based on knowledge is dangerous (cf. Rom. 10:2). In other words, I think that emotions should be led by intelligence. And my thought is based on Proverbs 19:2 – “It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way.”

Based on Proverbs 17:27-28, I want to think about “The Christians who have knowledge” in two ways:

First, the Christians who have knowledge use words with restraint.

Look at Proverbs 17:27a – “A man of knowledge uses words with restraint” King Solomon who wrote this says that those who have knowledge use words with restraint. Here the phrase “words with restraint” means “restrain mouth” (Brown). What is the reason? Why do the Christians who have knowledge restrain their mouths? The reason for this can be found in Proverbs 10:19 – “When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.” The reason why the Christians who have knowledge, that is the wise Christians, restrain their mouth is because when the words are many sin is not absent. In other words, if we talk too much, we cannot be without sin. But the problem is that a pastor like me or a Bible teacher must open our mouths to speak and talk.

What should we do? I look for the answer in James 3:1-2: “Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.” Although in case of pastors and teachers who teach the Bible should say many words, we must become perfect men who don’t stumble in any ways. That is, we must be perfect, just as our Father God in heaven is perfect (Mk. 5:48). In order for us to pursue this Heavenly Father's perfection, we must listen to what Apostle Paul says in Romans 2:21 – “you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? ...” We who teach the Bible must first diligently teach ourselves before teaching others. Then, what should those who learn the Bible from their pastor or their church Bible teachers do? I found the answer in James 1:19 – “My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” That is, those who learn the Bible should be slow to speak and quick to listen. In other words, they need to be quick to listen to the message of Christ (Rom. 10:17). Then their faith will grow.

Nowadays, as I look back on myself and pray to God, I have few struggles. One of those struggles is about listen quickly and speaking slowly. I think I have been struggling with this issue from the third year of college. While I was serving in the Christian club in college, I think I hurt so many people’ hearts by the words that came out of my mouth. Thus my heart was in distressed. So whenever I came back to my school apartment, I asked God for forgiveness and fell asleep. But since I couldn’t uses words with restraint and spoke out in a hurry, I unintentionally hurt many people’s hearts. Such person like me, the Scripture Proverbs 29:20 says, “Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” So nowadays, I try to think once more before I say something, unlike the years when I was in college, but I am still struggling with it. But I don't want to give. And I want to try harder to be more careful in what I say and speak few words. And I should try not to speak the words of a gossip (26:22). In particular, I shouldn’t say the prayer topics of others who have shared only with me, even to my close friends without their permission. Also, no matter how complimentary it is, I want to be honest but not exaggerate too much. And I want to restrain my mouth from criticizing others. My thought is to be self-reflecting in a balanced way, being generous to those who criticize me but not to myself. And if I share one more thing, I have to be silent when I need to. Look at Proverbs 17:28. I personally think of this passage when I see myself smiling, but I feel a bit pathetic: “Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.”

Second, the Christians who have knowledge is calm.

Look at Proverbs 17:27b – “and a man of understanding is even-tempered.” Here, the word “even-temper” means that the person’s character is calm (Park). There is an English phrase “Be cool!” This means “Be calm!” This phrase is often used to mean ‘Why don’t you calm yourself’ when the other person is excited. The literal meaning of “even-tempered” in Proverbs 17:27 is 'cool of spirit' (Walvoord). This means that the man of understanding is calm in his soul no matter what situation he is in. In other words, the man of understanding had calm character and he can control his emotion and deal with a situation calmly even in the situation where he can surely get angry. Thus, in Proverbs 14:29, the Bible says, "A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly." What does it mean? A person who is slow to be angry has great understanding, but a person who is quick to get angry is displaying his own folly. Are we the people who have great understanding or easily get angry?

The Scripture Proverbs 17:12 tells us that “Better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than a fool in his folly.” In other words, the fool is more dangerous than the bear robbed of her cups. Why is the fool more dangerous than the bear? The reason is because when the fool is angrier than the bear, s/he is irrational. Then if we meet this fool who is irrational, would we be able to react calmly? This is possible to the Christians who have knowledge. The reason is because they can control their temper. Look at Proverbs 16:32 - “Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.” If we are filled with the Holy Spirit and our hearts are

controlled by the word of God, we can be slow to anger because the Holy Spirit rules over our hearts. So we can keep calm in any situation.

This is the post-modern age we live in. One of the characteristics of this postmodern era is relativism. In other words, people don't acknowledge the objective and absolute truth (value or norms). Another characteristic of postmodernism is "emotionalism." In other words, this age in which we live emphasizes emotion more than reason. People seek emotional and sensuous things in all areas, and they speak and act as they flow under the control of their feelings. This also reveals as it is in our walk of faith. Rather than building faith on the foundations of the Bible and the biblical sound doctrine, we consider experience, mystery, or feeling more important and emotional aspects are prioritized in worship, praise, and prayer (Internet). But as we learned in Proverbs 17:27-28, we should be knowledgeable Christians rather than emotional Christians. We must restrain our words. We must also be calm. We should be slow to speak, and when we speak we should be careful in speaking. Never should we be swept up by our feelings and open our mouths. We must also be calm. Our character needs to be cold. In other words, we must be able to control our emotions calmly and respond calmly even in situations where we may be angry. Therefore, we must honor the Lord Jesus Christ through our lives.

A responsible Christian

"And they said one to another," Let us draw lots and let them know that this evil has come upon us because of them. Then they chose lots, and the lot fell on Jonah" (Jonah 1:7).

Are we Christians who are responsible?

One day, I thought about three questions as I was studying Jonah 1:7-17 in the Bible study with my Church leaders. And I tried to apply the three lessons that I learned to our lives. The three lessons are: (1) First, when God exposes our sins, we must sincerely confess those sins to God. (2) Second, we should not blame others. (3) Third, we must strive to be a responsible Christian by saying, "It is my fault." The reason why I applied these three lessons in our lives was because I thought that there was and still is a sinful tendency in us that had been tried to lie even before God, to blame others and to avoid each of our own responsibilities. What do you think? Do you think there is such a sinful tendency in you?

We Christians must face our sinful tendency that wants to avoid our responsibility. We must be more honest with ourselves before God. We should no longer avoid taking our own responsibilities and blaming others for bad situations that we are in. If you are still blaming others and rationalizing your own sinful choices without acknowledging your responsibility before God, then you will surely be in self-pity and self-defeating and have victim mentality. And you will still be making irresponsible remarks and actions in church without any hesitation as you disobey God's command in an irresponsible manner. What do you think Heavenly Father will do these irresponsible children of God?

I came to realize more about the answer of that question by studying Jonah 1:7-17. God made the storm of discipline against Jonah, who was disobeying God's command and running away to the opposite direction of Nineveh, Tarshish (vv. 2-4). As a result, the ship that Jonah was aboard was about to break up (v. 4). But Jonah, who had gone below deck, fell into a deep sleep (v. 5). To this Jonah, God asked for responsibility and eventually Jonah confessed his sins in front of the Gentile sailors and captains, and made a decision of repentance. Here I have come to realize a little bit of God's faithful love and God's responsible actions. In his faithful love, how did God act responsibly to unfaithful Jonah who was in deep sleep irresponsibly?

God made Jonah to acknowledge his irresponsible action through the Gentile sailors' responsible actions.

When the sailors cast lots to find out who was responsible for the calamity that they were going through, God made the lot to be fall on Jonah so that Jonah had to confess his irresponsible action of disobeying God's command and running away from God (v. 7). God also exposed Jonah's irresponsible actions through the four questions of the Gentile sailors. These four questions are:

(1) First question was "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us?" (v. 8).

This first question of the sailors was a question that probably made Jonah to recognize that the calamity came upon them because he disobeyed God's command, which is his irresponsible act. So Jonah had to acknowledge that "I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you" (v. 12). He could not

blame anyone anymore. Also he could not blame the environment he was in. He couldn't but admitted and acknowledged that it was his fault (v. 12).

(2) Second question was "What do you do?" (v. 8).

God enabled the Gentile sailors to ask Jonah "What do you do?" so that Jonah realized his irresponsible act of running away from God instead of fulfilling his prophetic responsibility and mission. To Jonah who had lost his sense of mission and calling, God approached him responsibly.

(3) Third question was "Where do you come from" (v. 8).

This question would have caused Jonah to remember Nineveh, which God had commanded him to go. Because Jonah had fled in the opposite direction, even though he had to go to Nineveh as God had commanded, the sailors' question "Where do you come from?" made Jonah to face himself with his disobedience to God's command.

(4) Fourth question was "What is your country? From what people are you?" (v. 8).

Through this question God made Jonah to remember the responsibility of obeying God's commandments as God's chosen anointed prophet.

Isn't it amazing? Isn't it really surprising that God even uses the non-believers' questions to expose our sins of disobeying God's commands, to make us realize and to acknowledge our sins? In the end, Jonah confessed who he is and who God is before the Gentile sailors. In other words, Jonah confessed in front of the sailors "I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land" (v. 9). Also, he confessed that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord (v. 10). The sailors who heard this confession from Jonah, they became extremely frightened and said to Jonah, 'How could you do this?' (v. 10) I am sure this rebuke from the sailors struck Jonah's conscience. When the sea was becoming increasingly stormy, the sailors asked Jonah, "What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?" (v. 11) Then listen to Jonah's reply: "Pick me up and throw me into the sea" (v. 12). Not only Jonah knew that because of his disobedience, the Gentiles had encountered the great storm, but also he knew that the only way to calm the stormy sea was to throw himself into the sea. So Jonah told the sailors to "Pick me up and throw me into the sea" (v. 12). He knew that this responsible action was the only way to save the sailors.

God even used the Gentile sailors not only to expose Jonah's sin of irresponsible disobedience but also eventually to acknowledge his sin of disobedience. This same God is making us to acknowledge our sins of irresponsible disobedience through non-believers around us. We must no longer be our irresponsible Christians. This is because our irresponsible acts not only cover the glory of God, but also damage non-believers. Because of the irresponsible disobedient act of Jonah, the ship on which Jonah was aboard was almost destroyed. Likewise, because of our irresponsible disobedient act, we can damage the non-believers around us. Therefore, we must be Christians who are responsible. How should we take responsibility? First, we must confess to God our sins of disobedience with assurance of forgiveness. Then we must confess our sins to even the non-believers who are victimized by our irresponsible acts of disobedience. We must ask for forgiveness for the storms of their lives through our irresponsible acts of disobedience. As we do so, we must make a decision of repentance like Jonah. Just as Jonah told the sailors to throw himself into the sea, we must throw ourselves to the blood of Jesus that he shed on the cross. We must never end with just confessing our sins with our lips. If we are Christians who are truly responsible, we must show our actions that we have repented our sins. This will stop "this great storm" (v. 12), which has come unto the unbelievers through us. Then the stormy sea will become calm (v. 15). Then, like Gentile

sailors, non-believers will fear God greatly and worship God (v. 16). And then we will also experience the grace of God's salvation by entering into the "big fish" God has prepared (v. 17) and we will look again toward God (2:4) and cried out to him in prayer. Then will experience the grace of God's salvation (deliverance). I hope and pray that all of us may become responsible Christians who experience God's salvation.

The responsible Christians

“The rest of the people--priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers, temple servants and all who separated themselves from the neighboring peoples for the sake of the Law of God, together with their wives and all their sons and daughters who are able to understand--all these now join their brothers the nobles, and bind themselves with a curse and an oath to follow the Law of God given through Moses the servant of God and to obey carefully all the commands, regulations and decrees of the LORD our Lord. ‘We promise not to give our daughters in marriage to the peoples around us or take their daughters for our sons.’ When the neighboring peoples bring merchandise or grain to sell on the Sabbath, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on any holy day. Every seventh year we will forgo working the land and will cancel all debts.” (Nehemiah 10:28-31)

An employer was looking for someone to work for him. Since many volunteers gathered he interviewed them one by one. Then this was a conversation with one of the applicants (Internet):

Employer: “This must be done by someone who can be responsible.”

Applicant: “Then I am that person. If something went wrong at my last job, everyone said it was my responsibility ”

It's ridiculous. Unfortunately, this humor is a reality. We, the irresponsible Christians, are now taking a position in the church and serving the Lord and His church.

In the book “Who are They anyway, co-authored by BJ Gallagher and Steve Ventura, the authors talk about 'professional victims' who shift their responsibility at every critical moment. One of the key questions gives three answers on how to turn a “professional victim” into a “responsible person”. The shortest answer is that you can never change the person. The long answer is that you can only change yourself. And the longer answer is even though you can only change yourself, you can take the lead and influences somethings to others. The authors also solve the alphabet of "ACCOUNTABILITY" and suggest what we need to do to implement responsibility (Internet):

- A: Acknowledge the situation
- C: Courageously face the difficulties
- C: Communicate with positive language
- O: Own the problem ... and the solution
- U: Understand others' viewpoints
- N: Negotiate solutions that work for everyone
- T: Take on new responsibilities
- A: Act, don't simply react
- B: Be willing to reassess and renegotiate
- I: Influence others and collaborate

L: Leave the 'poor me' victim mentality behind

I: Initiate thoughtful and deliberate solving

T: Take pride in your results

Y: 'Yes' leads to success

Are we profession victims or responsible people?

I want to learn from Nehemiah 10:28-31 three things that the responsible Christians should do, under the heading "The responsible Christians".

The first thing that we, the responsible Christians, must do is to separate ourselves from the worldly things.

Look at Nehemiah 10:28 – “The rest of the people--priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers, temple servants and all who separated themselves from the neighboring peoples” Why did the Israelites separate themselves with the Gentiles in Nehemiah's days? The reason is because of “all this” (9:38). Look at Nehemiah 9:38 – “In view of all this, we are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing, and our leaders, our Levites and our priests are affixing their seals to it.” The phrase “all this” refers to the fact that the forefathers of the Israelites had often been transgressed and punished in the past. So now, because of all this, the congregation of Israel made a binding agreement in writing, and the leaders of Israel, the Levites and the priests, all sealed the document (v. 38). The list of the names is found in Nehemiah 10:1-27. It's like we are signing our promise and responsibility to God by resolving that we won't be like our ancestors who had committed sins against God and who had received the punishments. Then, what was the promise that the Israelites made to God? It was to obey God's law (v. 28). As the Israelites congregation was experiencing the revival of the Word at the Water Gate, they determined not to transgress like their forefathers by disobeying the God's law but to keep and observe all the commandments of God. To what extent did they resolve, they decided that the Israelites would swear that if they didn't keep the commandments of God they should be cursed (v. 29). To make a decision to obey God's commandments, this is truly the fruit of revival.

What did the Israelites put into action at that time? It was to separate themselves from the neighboring peoples (v. 28). The reason was not to defile themselves by the unclean practices of their Gentile neighbors. Look at Ezra 6:21 – “So the Israelites who had returned from the exile ate it, together with all who had separated themselves from the unclean practices of their Gentile neighbors in order to seek the LORD, the God of Israel.” Does spending time with fellow faithful Christians help us in our Christian life or spending time with unbelievers help us in our life of faith? As you know, when we have a lot of fellowship with believers, it helps us in our life of faith. But what if we spend a lot of time with unbelievers and enjoy the worldly things together? They will be barbs in our eyes and thorns in our sides. Look at Numbers 33:55 – “But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land, those you allow to remain will become barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides. They will give you trouble in the land where you will live.” But the sad reality is that so many church members have "thorns" on their sides and live their faith. They live in faith without separating themselves with the worldly things, so their life of faith is painful and there is no growth of their faith. No matter how long they attend the church, their faith isn't growing. How can we expect our faith to grow when we aren't separate ourselves from the worldly things?

I heard the news that one day, a tourist bus carrying many Korean old people here in the US and going to a casino was hit by a fire truck and one of them died and about 50 people were injured. I still remember hearing that the news pointed out that the gambling degree of the elderly in Korean town is getting worse. Why aren't many people getting out of gambling, alcohol, nicotine addiction, drug addiction and sex addiction? Why are you addicted? In an article from the Korean Anti-Drug Campaign, I found some reasons for being addicted (Internet):

- (1) The first cause is the social environment. It is said that the socio-environmental prevalence of materialism and the high number of people who are aiming for money are also a factor in promoting poisoning during gambling. It is especially difficult to break up when exposed to adolescents who lack self-regulation. In addition, 'dreaming of one big success' which is socially ill, is a major influence on gambling and lottery addiction.
- (2) The second cause can be attributed to personality factors. Usually a thrill-seeker is easily addicted. This is the case of "addictive" personality people who need an endless new, intense stimulus.
- (3) The third cause is depression. Depressed patients are susceptible to gambling addiction.
- (4) The fourth cause can be said to be reality escape. The reason why escaped reality people are at high risk of addiction is that they are introverted and quiet, often have few friends and weak social activities.
- (5) Another thing is that there is a medical cause. Gambling addiction is called "pathological gambling" or "gambling mania" in medical terms. This is not a habit that can be fixed by an individual's will, but a kind of impulse control disorder. In other words, because the desire for gambling is so strong that they cannot control their own behavior, they are known to start from alcohol or drug addiction. There is no fatal effect on the body, but it is a kind of brain dysfunction. If they fall into a gambling poisoning state, characteristic symptoms appear. That's tolerance appears. Once they fall in love with gambling, that's all they think. To get the same excitement, they need to spend more and more time gambling and more and more money. In the end, they won't blink your eyes at any amount of money. Another scary symptom is symptom of prohibition, and most gamblers feel that they are having trouble at some point. If they have serious problems at home or at work, they may decide to temporarily restrain themselves. But these efforts are often failed due to prohibition symptoms. If they don't gamble, they are nervous and anxious. Then from the moment they gamble, the unpleasant feelings disappear and they are excited again. If these symptoms are repeated, they will reach a stage where they cannot quit without them knowing.

We must take seriously these problems of addiction that are emerging in society. How can we, Christians, who are responsible for separating ourselves from the things of the world, separating ourselves from these wickedness? We shouldn't step in from the beginning. But what if we have already stepped in and tasted them? Look at 2 Corinthians 6:17 – “Therefore come out from them and be separate” The Korea Anti-Drug Headquarters says: ‘It's hard to stop yourself. Once you're addicted to gambling, it's not easy to stop yourself. It is because, like other addictions, if you stop gambling you will have withdrawal symptoms such as depression, anxiety and insomnia. It is similar to a alcoholic who is looking for alcohol again. Therefore, gambling symptoms should be treated aggressively as soon as possible. Addicts never recognize gambling as a disease. People around you, such as your family, must force you to be treated’ (Internet). To get out of addiction, we need to be able to protect our hearts. It means that we must get rid of a life of letting our physical bodies to control our hearts and that we must reform so that our hearts and our souls control our physical bodies. In order to do so, we must enrich the Word of God in our hearts. As we seek “knowledge and understanding” (Neh. 10:28), we must understand the commandments of God and observe them. And we must live a life of faith that separates ourselves from the worldly things. We must earnestly pray to Jesus, the Doctor, who came to cure sin-addicted mankind.

The second thing that we, the responsible Christians, must do is we must be responsible for the marriage of our children.

Look at Nehemiah 10:30 – “and that we will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons.” How hard is it to marry our children these days? Dr. Sun-Hee Bae, a senior researcher and family doctor at the Korea Family Counseling Education Research Institute, said in an article titled, ‘It’s not to push our children to get marry, whether they won’t marry or will marry late’ (Internet): ‘My daughter is almost thirty but she isn’t thinking about getting married. So I am worried and I say the words of marriage. Then she gets very angry. I am afraid that it will become a fight. So if I decide to leave her alone, I am worried that she may lose the opportunity to get marry and may live alone rest of her life. When I think about my daughter's marriage, I wake up at night. What should I do as a mother?’ Most parents with unmarried children at this age group seem to have this concern. Perhaps it is natural for parents to think and worry about their children marriage, marrying them to the right person at the right time because it is their primary responsibility and duty. That’s why there is a saying that marriage is the greatest filial duty. To that extent, parents have a lot of concern in their children's marriage and sometimes tend to cling on it. How important is the parent’s responsibility to marry their children? It's never easy. As the parents who are raising the children, it is a big responsibility to marry them.

The Israelites’ second decision in keeping the God's commandments was to take responsibility for the marriage of their children. They decided not to marry their children with the Gentiles. This was a pledge of the Israelites not to intermarry with the Gentiles, but also a repentance movement of returning to God according to the God’s words given to Moses in Deuteronomy 7:3-4 (Park). Look at Deuteronomy 7:3-4: “Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you.” Marriage between the God’s people, the Israelites and the Gentiles, was a great problem among the Israelites in Ezra and Nehemiah's days. Look at Ezra 9:2 – “They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness.” As God’s holy children, the Israelites’ leaders took the lead in this sin of mixing with the Gentiles. If we now speak of these Israelites' commitments to children's marriage, we Christian parents are determined not to marry our children to unbelievers. Why should we? The reason is because it is God's commandment. Look at 2 Corinthians 6:14 – “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?” Why did God give us such commandment? What is the will of the Lord? The reason is to prevent our children from being tempted by unbelievers and leaving God to worship idols (Deut. 7:3-4). How many people are there around us who married unbelievers and left the churches they used to attend? But the question is whether it is possible to marry our children to other believers. I still remember that when I was working in Korea, a sister in Christ asked me whether it is possible for the Christian singles sisters in Christ could get marry because statistically they were more Christian single sisters in Christ than single brothers in Christ. It may be difficult statistically. We may also present many other difficult problems in our human minds. But the important thing is to marry our children by faith, not statistically.

We are to be instructed in the “marrying children” of Abraham, the father of faith. When Abraham chose his daughter-in-law, he told his servant Eliezer not to get a wife for his son Isaac from the daughters of the Canaanites (Gen. 24:3) but go to Mesopotamia (v. 10) and chose from his country and his own relatives (v. 4). This shows how carefully Abraham considered his son’s marriage. He obeyed God's commandment in Genesis 24:7 – “The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I will give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there.” Like Abraham, we must also carefully consider our children’s marriage. Regarding their marriage, we must act as directed by God, and we must refuse to marry our children with unbelievers. Nevertheless, there are some of our children who are married to unbelievers because of money, honor, status, and appearance, and others. If we let our children to marry because of these things and if our children marry as they are led by their own greed, then their families will not stand firmly in the Lord. The families without the truth and not being claimed by God should be concerned about the danger of falling.

The third and the last thing that we, the responsible Christians, must do is to keep the Lord's day holy.

Look at Nehemiah 10:31 – “As for the peoples of the land who bring wares or any grain on the sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the sabbath or a holy day; and we will forego the crops the seventh year and the exaction of every debt.” Determining in the revival of the Word, the Israelites in Nehemiah's day committed themselves to follow God's law by separating themselves from the Gentiles. In the meantime, they determined not only no to marry their children with the Gentiles, but also to keep the Sabbath day holy as the fourth of Moses' Ten Commandments said (v. 31). How did they commit themselves to keep the Sabbath day holy? They determined not to buy wares or any grain on the Sabbath day when the people of the land of Canaan would sell them on the Sabbath day or a holy day (v. 31). Another thing was that every seventh year they determined to forgo working the land and cancel all debts (v. 31). In other words, for the first year of the seventh year, the land would be left uncultivated (thus the land becomes fertile). In addition, they resolved to cancel the debts of the debtors in that year. Therefore, the debtors once again had the hope and opportunity to build a new economic foundation. As a result, the gap between rich and poor had narrowed in society. Dr. Park Yun-sun said: ‘This does not condemn the sale itself, but prohibits the commercial acts taken to hinder the rest of the body or hinder the spiritual worship.’ Here, the rest of the body doesn't refer to a state of inactivity and of doing nothing. Resting on that day means that the body and the soul enjoy God and enjoy peace together without suffering from the affairs of the world (Park).

How should we observe the Sabbath, the Lord's Day? As I grew up I grew up learning that I shouldn't spend money on Sunday. Also, I shouldn't study too on Sunday. This problem has changed in the seminary. While listening to one of my professors, I thought it was okay to use money on Sunday, that is, to buy and sell. Then, after becoming a senior pastor, I stopped buying and selling on Sunday. How should we keep the Lord's Day holy? This is what the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) Book of Church Order (BCO) 48th says: “It is the duty of every person to remember the Lord's Day; and to prepare for it before its approach. All worldly business should be so ordered, and seasonably laid aside, as that they may not be hindered thereby from sanctifying the Sabbath, as the Holy Scriptures require” (48-3), “The whole day is to be kept holy to the Lord; and to be employed in the public and private exercises of religion. Therefore, it is requisite, that there be a holy resting, all the day, from unnecessary labors; and an abstaining from those recreations which may be lawful on other days; and also, as much as possible, from worldly thoughts and conversation” (48-4). How challenging is this? Are we become accustomed to preparing the Lord's Day in advance? On the contrary, aren't we trying to do everything that we couldn't do during the week on Sunday? Therefore, aren't we keeping the Sabbath day holy as the Bible requires? Shouldn't we refrain from entertainment on Sunday, but is it becoming more common for us to have fun on Sunday? The 12th President of the United States, General Zachary Taylor, was to be inaugurated as President of the Constitution on March 4, 1849, and he refused to take office on Sunday. This was because keeping the Sabbath day, that is Sunday, was the command of God that preceded the inauguration of the president (Internet).

Ashley Smith, a 26-year-old widow who was taken hostage by the legal gunman murderer Brian Nichols (33), read Reverend Rick Warren's book *The Purpose-Driven Life* to Nichols. As she was reading that book “Day 33 – How real servants act”, this was how Ashley Smith tried to convince Nichols: Taking me hostage was according to God's providence, and preaching the gospel in a prison that you would go because of your act of murder might be your purpose of life.’ After hearing this, Nichols, the killer who lost his mind, returned to his heart, and soon released Ashley and surrendered (Internet). Isn't this the life of the responsible Christian? Yet, too many of us, the Christians, don't seem to live our lives as responsible believers. But Jesus died on the cross in order to be responsible for our salvation, such sinners like us who are not responsible. Did Jesus need to be responsible for our salvation? Was he responsible for us who aren't separated ourselves with the worldly things, who aren't responsible for the raising of children, who aren't keeping the Lord's Day holy? How shall we Christians live?

The Christians who can claim innocence

“Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, where the chief priests and Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges against Paul. They urgently requested Festus, as a favor to them, to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem, for they were preparing an ambush to kill him along the way. Festus answered, ‘Paul is being held at Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon. Let some of your leaders come with me and press charges against the man there, if he has done anything wrong.’ After spending eight or ten days with them, he went down to Caesarea, and the next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him. When Paul appeared, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many serious charges against him, which they could not prove. Then Paul made his defense: ‘I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar.’ Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, ‘Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?’ Paul answered: ‘I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!’ After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: ‘You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!’ A few days later King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus. Since they were spending many days there, Festus discussed Paul's case with the king. He said: ‘There is a man here whom Felix left as a prisoner. When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and elders of the Jews brought charges against him and asked that he be condemned. I told them that it is not the Roman custom to hand over any man before he has faced his accusers and has had an opportunity to defend himself against their charges. When they came here with me, I did not delay the case, but convened the court the next day and ordered the man to be brought in. When his accusers got up to speak, they did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. Instead, they had some points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive. I was at a loss how to investigate such matters; so I asked if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial there on these charges. When Paul made his appeal to be held over for the Emperor's decision, I ordered him held until I could send him to Caesar.’ Then Agrippa said to Festus, ‘I would like to hear this man myself.’ He replied, ‘Tomorrow you will hear him.’” (Acts 25:1-22)

There is a proverb that says, ‘When we dust off, there is no one without dust.’ This proverb means, if you want to catch a flaw, there is no person without the flaw. There is no one who will be flawless to those who are

heartless and harsh in their attempts to find others' flaw. But how precious is it if there is nothing for them to catch your flaw? Those who live such a life are called innocent people. And the innocent people are those who are clear and clean and without greed (Internet).

In Acts 25:1-22 we see a man named Paul who is truly innocent, who is clear, clean and without greed. As Acts 24 tells us, the high priest Ananias with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, who were against the gospel and Paul, brought their charges against Paul before the governor (v. 1). They claimed that Paul was a real pest, a fellow who stirred up dissension among the Jews throughout the world, a ringleader of the Nazarene sect, and even tried to desecrate the temple (vv. 5-6). But Paul was innocent. He was not guilty of the charges of the Jewish religious leaders who had sought. Eventually, the Jewish religious leaders falsely claimed to remove Paul without any witnesses or evidence, so the trial was delayed, and the corrupt governor Felix was trying to get Paul to gain the hearts of the Jews rather than free Paul. So Paul was detained in a prison for about two years (v. 27). Paul, who exhorted corrupt governor Felix to the gospel and the moral life worthy of the gospel, was an innocent man without sins. Nevertheless, he was imprisoned in Caesarea for two years (v. 27). Then two years later in Acts 25, when Festus, the successor of governor Felix, went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea (v. 1), Paul was charged again by the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews (v. 2). The Jewish religious leaders accused Paul to the new governor, Festus, to find fault with Paul again with the intention of removing him. They tried endlessly to find fault with Paul and accused him in order to kill him. How scary were these people? They asked the new governor Festus to move Paul from Caesarea to Jerusalem because they set an ambush to kill Paul on the way to Jerusalem (v. 3).

Two years ago, in Acts 23:12-13, more than 40 people formed a conspiracy and the plot of killing Paul. But even after two years, in Acts 25:3, it was surprising and sad that they were Jews who wanted to ambush to kill Paul on the way to Jerusalem. Indeed, the persistent efforts of the Jewish religious leaders and Jews to kill Paul are incredible. These were people who would not give up until they killed Paul. However, the new governor Festus didn't listen to the demands of the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews. Instead, he answered, "let the influential men among you go there with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them prosecute him" (v. 5). Eventually, the Jewish religious leaders who tried to kill Paul went down from Jerusalem to Caesarea where Paul was and tried to bring many and serious charges against Paul which they couldn't prove (v. 7). In other words, the Jewish religious leaders accused Paul of many serious charges, but the accusations were unprovable (Yoo Sang-sup). Then Paul said in his own defense: "I have committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar. ... I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you also very well know" (vv. 8, 10). Paul insisted on his innocence before governor Festus and before the Jewish religious leaders, telling them he had committed no sin, religiously or politically. And Paul confidently said that even the governor Festus knew that he had done nothing wrong to the Jews and had not done any injustice to them. In fact, governor Festus knew Paul's innocence too. Several days later, when King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea and paid their respect to Festus (v. 13), this was what Festus said to King Agrippa, revealing that he knew Paul was innocent: "When the accusers stood up, they began bringing charges against him not of such crimes as I was expecting, but they simply had some points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive" (vv. 18-19). The governor Festus knew that Paul had not committed any wrongdoing. He knew that the Jewish religious leaders brought accusation against Paul because of Paul's message of the death and resurrection of Jesus, the gospel of Paul. So Apostle Paul boldly said that if he was wrongdoer and had committed anything worthy of death, he didn't refuse to die (v. 11). He boldly claimed his innocence over his life.

Like Apostle Paul, we must be Christians who can risk our lives and boldly claim our innocence. We should not have anything to blame for those who are watching us and seeking our faults. Even if they want to dust off of us and try to find any dust from us, we should try our best to live an innocent life so that they cannot see any single dust in our lives. Is this possible? Doesn't it really sound impossible in our ears? As I asked this question, I thought about vacuum cleaners. As I thought the vacuum cleaner that absorbs and removes dust, I tried to apply it to my life of faith. I thought about how I can be like Paul who boldly asserted his innocence since I have

unaccountable dusts in my life even if some people try to dust me off. Then the Spirit, I believe, reminded me of a spiritual vacuum cleaner that God already gave to me. That spiritual vacuum is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Just as the better the filter in the vacuum cleaner, the better it absorbs all the dust, the best filter of the spiritual vacuum cleaner that God already gave me is the blood that Jesus that was shed on the cross. Therefore, when I violate the Word of God and sin, and when the indwelling Spirit enables me to confess and repent my sins, I experience the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the precious blood that He shed on the cross that removes (forgives) the sinful dusts in me and renews me. In that power of the gospel and of the precious blood of Jesus Christ, we must continue to be transformed and established as unblemished, pure, honest, innocent Christians. May such powerful work of the Lord and His gospel be full in us and in our church.

The Christians who show sincerity

“At that time men were appointed to be in charge of the storerooms for the contributions, firstfruits and tithes. From the fields around the towns they were to bring into the storerooms the portions required by the Law for the priests and the Levites, for Judah was pleased with the ministering priests and Levites. They performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did also the singers and gatekeepers, according to the commands of David and his son Solomon. For long ago, in the days of David and Asaph, there had been directors for the singers and for the songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. So in the days of Zerubbabel and of Nehemiah, all Israel contributed the daily portions for the singers and gatekeepers. They also set aside the portion for the other Levites, and the Levites set aside the portion for the descendants of Aaron.” (Nehemiah 12:44-47)

Don't you want to dream of a church community in which not only a pastor loves you but also you love your pastor so you embrace your pastor's hidden grievances so that both of you can build the church with understanding and love? However, the reality of pastor is 80 percent of all adults think that the pastor must meet a higher standard of living than the ordinary people. Ironically, the people think that almost no pastors can meet that expectation (Internet). What are your expectations for your pastor? This could all be different. But what we must make clear is that all of us must strive to build our church with understanding and love. In order to do so, we must show our sincerity to each other. We must share the love of the Lord by opening our hearts to each other, talking to each other, getting to know each other, and praying for each other. All of us must be sincere and faithful in this matter.

I would like to think about Christians who show their sincerity based on Nehemiah 12:44-47. I hope and pray that we, whether pastors or congregation members, maybe able to hear the Lord's words well and commit ourselves to build the Lord's church with understanding and love.

First, let's think about the pastors who show their sincerity.

Look at Nehemiah 12:45 – “They performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did also the singers and gatekeepers, according to the commands of David and his son Solomon.” Here, the word “performed” means ‘be careful, protect, keep, observe.’ The basic idea of origin is ‘care very much’. The first meaning is ‘to be cautious or diligent’ when it is a verb or compound word. The second meaning is to express that the Israelites are very careful in handling whether it is the covenant or the responsibility of the law. The third meaning is ‘to care for, take care of’. The fourth meaning is ‘to be important, to pay attention to.’ Then, what did the priests and Levites who served in the temple after the rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall care very much about the temple? What did the priests and Levites show more sincerity?

- (1) They care very much about worshipping God.

Look at Nehemiah 12:45 – “They performed the service of God” What will happen to the church if a pastor forgets about the importance of worship and tries to worship God? What would you think if your pastor prepared and guided worship without sincerity? We must keep in mind. The pastors should realize the importance of worship and must keep it, pay attention, and care very much with it.

(2) They care very much about the service of purification.

Look at Nehemiah 12:45: “They performed the service of their God and the service of purification,” The service of purification is found in Nehemiah 12:30 – “When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall.” We must care much about not only the purity of ourselves and our families but especially the purity of the church. In particular, the pastor must purify himself, his family and endeavor to purify the worship of the church.

The Korean churches have grown remarkably phenomenal for a while but their growth started to stop in the 1980s. There are many factors, but one of them is that the pastor’s right to preach is being challenged. The experts pointed out that the problems of pastors who have easygoing attitude of not looking ahead of the times and their problems of moral issues here and there began to elicit an attitude of no longer accepting pastoral preaching as the Word of God. Now, it is important who and what kind of person is preaching the Word of God. So the experts point out that only thorough self-renewal and repentance of pastors can save the collapsed pulpit. The theologians point out that, based on the right ministry of the pastors, the worship must be emphasized to the congregation and in order for this to be done, worship must be thoroughly in line with the essence and a plan for the restoration of worship should be made. The pastoral plan of worship and preaching is not only driven by a hunger for pastoral sites based on the church’s quantitative revival, but also requires the attention of the pastor to develop a pastoral plan to examine the times and change the life of the saints. After all, the authority of the pastor is not superficial outward things but it is spiritual and moral, and must be shown through the godly life and preaching of the pastor. In other words, the pastors should not forget that the pastors who say only God’s words on behalf of God will be respected (Kim Nam-joon). But now it seems that the time has reached when the pastors are not respected. And one of the reasons is that pastors are not exemplary to the saints.

We must learn that the priests and Levites in Nehemiah 12 set an example for the Israelites in worshiping and performing the service of purification. In particular, there are two principles that we can apply:

(1) The first principle is team work.

Look at Nehemiah 12:45: “... as did also the singers and gatekeepers, according to the commands of David and his son Solomon.” In modern terms, the pastor, associate pastor, choir/praise team, all worked together to worship God and to keep the purity of the church.

(2) The second more important principle is obeying the Word of God.

Look at Nehemiah 12:45: “.... according to the commands of David and his son Solomon.” In modern terms, the church pastor and other servants served together to worship God and to keep the purity of the church according to the Word of God (vv. 30, 45). Like the Israel priests, the Levites, the singers and gatekeepers, we must worship God according to the Word of God, not just whatever and however we think and want.

This is what Pastor A. W. Tozer said in his book “Worship and Entertainment”: “Today we have everything but no worship. Instead of attending the prayer meeting, there are those who only participate on the Church

Running Committee and calculate how much the church's budget should be spent. These are just church runners and we cannot make them to attend our prayer meeting. The reason is because they are not worshipers. It is a terrible contradiction that those who don't pray and don't worship are running and leading the church' (Tozer). We, the pastors, should be faithful and sincere Christians who show sincerity to our church members. Like the Israelites, we all need care very much about worshiping God and the purification of the church. We must be committed to build ourselves, our families, and the church as a community of worshipers. All of us must strive to be established as worshipers who are purified by the blood of Jesus on the cross.

Second and last, let's think about the church members who show their sincerity.

Look at Nehemiah 12:44 – “On that day men were also appointed over the chambers for the stores, the contributions, the first fruits and the tithes, to gather into them from the fields of the cities the portions required by the law for the priests and Levites; for Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who served.” What was the sincerity that the people of Judah show to the priests and the Levites?

(1) The people of Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who served.

Look at Nehemiah 12:44: “...for Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who served.” In modern terms, the church members, who saw their pastor's sincerity, rejoiced with him because they knew how much he served and worked hard. Are church members really pleased with their pastors? Are congregation members satisfied with their pastor's service? One of the things that both the pastors and the congregation members in the church community should be very careful between their relationships is complaining or grumbling. If the pastor complains about his congregation members and the congregation members complains about their pastor, then the community is not a living community, but it's like a dying cell. For example, let's pretend that a church member is complaining about his pastor. So he complains about his pastor to other church members and finds a fellow church member who is also resentful to the pastor. They will eventually join together and will lead to spiritual degeneration, like two dying cells. Our church shouldn't be like this. Rather, the congregation members should make their pastor not object of complaining but of joy. Likewise, the pastor should make his congregation members the object of joy and not complaining. Seriously, the frustration and discouragement of the pastors themselves may be more serious than the relationship between the pastors and the congregation members.

According to the book Peter Kaldor and Rod Bullpitt, in their book “Burnout Church Leaders”, the pastors themselves experience exhaustion in frustration and discouragement. In other words, looking at themselves, they aren't happy but are disappointed. Why are they exhausted and disappointed? If I share only the few of the highest burnout average list, they feel tired and hurt in their daily life. They are disappointed with themselves trying to accomplish what they think is important to them. They feel guilty that no spiritual change or growth occurs in the church or in the saints. We, the pastors, must keep in mind that God is a God who takes great delight in us (Zeph. 3:17). Therefore, we should rejoice over our congregation members as we set an example of leading the worship and living a pure life according to God's Word.

(2) The people of Judah supported the priests and Levites who served in the temple.

Look at Nehemiah 12:44 – “On that day men were also appointed over the chambers for the stores, the contributions, the first fruits and the tithes, to gather into them from the fields of the cities the portions required by the law for the priests and Levites.” As required by the Law of Moses, the Israelites offered the first fruits and the tithes to the temple in order to support the priests and Levites. Then some of the Levites took responsibility and stored the first fruits and the tithes that the people had offered in the temple. One

thing we had to remember here is that the reason why the Israelites offered their tithes or offerings to the temple was to help the temple workers to serve God well. This is what missionary Hudson Taylor said: 'When God's work is done in God's way for God's glory, it will not lack God's support.' If our pastors are doing God's work for God's glory, as Mister Taylor said, God's support will not be lacking. Eventually, the saints will each do their own support for the work of such a servant, not reluctantly or under compulsion (2 Cor. 9:7). They will support with joy. The result will be a blessing on the house and everything in it (Ezek. 44:30).

There was a deacon in a church who was doing a business. He was very stingy in church service and offerings. One Sunday a pastor's sermon title was 'Christian and Money.' The deacon was listening to the sermon with great interest. The pastor's sermon had three points. The first point was about making a lot of money. As the deacon was listening to the sermon, he continued to say 'Amen!' The second point was about saving a lot money, which he also 'Amen!' The deacon's face was bright and the sound of "amen" continued to be loud while the sermon continued. However, after listening to the third point of the sermon which was about giving it to God, there was no of "amen" anymore. After the service, the deacon told his friend. 'Aren't your pastor's sermon titles great today? The first and the second points were very gracious. But the third point the whole sermon' (Internet).

The attractive Christian office workers

“Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.” (Titus 2:9-10)

How should we behave as Christian workers in our workplace? What should you do, especially in relation to our boss? What can we do to glorify God in heaven, who is the Master of all masters (Eph. 6:9)? If we ask again in more detail, what can we do in our relationship with our superiors at work so that we can no longer commit a sin of hiding the Lord’s glory?

Too many people are experiencing too much stress at work. Among all the workers who believe in Jesus or not, it seems like the most stress comes from the relationship with their superiors. That’s why many office workers suffer from irritable colon syndrome. I still remember one of the brothers in Christ told me that he already wrote a resignation and put it in his desk drawer. And he said, someday he wanted to throw it in his boss’s face and quit his job. Would he say this if it weren’t that bad? Another sister in Christ told me that her boss sexually harassed a female employee at work, but he had a Bible on his desk. How should we behave in relations with our supervisors who believe in Jesus, but they are harassing employees and are setting a bad example and are worse than non-believer?

In Titus 2:9-10, the Bible says: “Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted,” I would like to receive five sound doctrines (v. 1):

First, the employees are to be subject to their own bosses in everything.

Look at Titus 2:9 – “Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything,” How can you apply this word to office workers who believe in Jesus? How can we accept this word now that there is no slavery as in Apostle Paul’s day, and that the relationship between the boss and the worker in the workplace is not between the master and the slave? Should we obey the words of our bosses in everything? Or should we obey the words of our bosses only in the Lord (Eph. 6:1)? If our bosses don’t speak the words that are against the word of the Lord, do we still have to obey them? If our bosses are really bad, do we still have to obey them in everything? When we ask these kinds of questions, I think we can never obey everything what our bosses say by our own strength. And in fact, when we see our bosses with our physical eyes, we cannot obey them. I think we don’t want to obey them. But the Bible says to be subject to our bosses in everything (Tit. 2:9). How is this possible? How can we obey our bosses in everything? I find the answer in Ephesians 6:5 – “Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ.” The Bible says ‘Obey your masters in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ.’ We must obey Christ as Christians. We must be obedient Christ in the sincerity of our heart. Likewise, the Bible says that we must obey our bosses. But even though we want to obey Christ, we don’t want to obey our bosses. It’s like a sister in Christ who doesn’t want to obey her husband because her husband doesn’t love her but harsh on her. But the Bible says: “Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord” (5:22). Although the wives should be subject to their husbands who God has given them divine authority and has made them the heads of the families as to the Lord, but they are not [The husbands are the same. Although

the Bible commands them to love their wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her (v. 25), the husbands are not doing so]. Although the wives are subject to the Lord, they are not to their husbands. But the Bible says to the wives to be subject to their own husbands as to the Lord (v. 22). Doesn't it seem a bit strange? Wouldn't it be strange to see the women trying to be subject to the Lord in a vertical relationship with the Lord but not in a horizontal relationship with their husbands or their work bosses?

Second, the employees should try to please their own bosses.

Look at Titus 2:9 – “Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, ...” Should our bosses try to please us so that we can try to please them? Our old natures are always conditional. Since our old habit, whether it's a marital relationship or boss-employee relationship, is always conditional and always selfish, so our husbands/wives or our bosses must please us first so we will please them. But we Christians who believe in Jesus and who became new people must obey the word of God according to the guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit who overcomes our old natures. And the word of God is for us to please our bosses at our works. How can we please our bosses? Should we speak with flattering lips to our bosses? This is what the Bible says: “They speak falsehood to one another; With flattering lips and with a double heart they speak” (Ps. 12:2), “These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage” (Jud. 1:16). Even in these two verses, the Bible says that flattering lips speak with two hearts and flatter for their own good. Apostle Paul, however, says, “You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed--God is our witness” (1 Thess. 2:5). We too should not put on a mask to cover up greed. We too should not flatter our bosses for our own benefit. We should not flatter our bosses with the double heart. It may seem to please our bosses at that moment, but it is never pleasing to our Master who is in Heaven. Rather, we must please our bosses by being subjected to them, as they are to Christ. We should not obey our bosses only by way of eye-service as men-pleasers (Eph. 6:6). We should obey our bosses as we remember that our Master in heaven, the Lord, is watching us whether our bosses are looking at us or not. Then we can please our bosses. And in order for us to please our bosses, we must serve them wholeheartedly, as if we were serving the Lord, not people (v. 7). The reason we should do this is because the Lord will reward us (v. 8).

Third, the employees should not talk back to their own bosses.

Look at Titus 2:9 – “... not to talk back to them.” The elderly are seeing young people talking back to them and say they are ill-mannered. Why are young people ill-mannered to the older people? Why don't the children obey their parents in the Lord (Eph. 6:1) and talk back to them? Isn't it because they don't honor their parents? (v. 2) Why does a wife talk back to her husband? Isn't it because she doesn't respect her husband? (5:33) In Titus 2:9, the Bible says that the slaves shouldn't talk back to their masters. The Greek word for 'talk back' is “ἀντιλεγῶ”, which is a combination of “anti” (opposite) and “lego” (to speak). In other words, the slaves shouldn't speak against or contradict their masters. Why do the slaves speak against or contradict their masters? I found the reason in Ephesians 6:5 – “Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ.” The reason why the slaves speak against or contradict their masters is because they don't respect and fear their masters. Why do the Christian workers refute their bosses? This is because we don't respect and fear our bosses. Of course, we can make excuses or rationalizations like this: 'My boss is not a respectable person. I cannot respect him because what he says and what he does.' We are making this excuse not only in relations with our bosses, but also in our marital relations. For example, clearly the Bible Ephesians 5:33, says, “... the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.” But many wives are saying that they cannot obey this Word of God because when they see how their husbands behaves and talks, they cannot respect their husbands. This means that they will obey the God's word and will respect their husbands if their husbands speak and act in a way that they can respect them. But this is not the truth. This is a lie. If the wives truly respect their Lord, then she will respect their husbands unconditionally as they do to their Lord. If the wives say that

'If my husband loves me as Jesus loves the church, then I will respect my husband', then they are breaking the word, "as to the Lord" (v. 22). How could then say that they respect and are submissive to the Lord but they don't respect and are submissive to their husbands? This is an unbalanced life of faith. Although it seems that their vertical relationship with the Lord is good, their horizontal relationship with their husbands isn't good. They are living two separate lives. Many of these Christians who have unbalanced marital relationships don't respect, aren't submissive to their bosses but talk back to them at their works based on the same unbalanced principle in their relationships with their bosses. If we talk back at our bosses at works, the real reason is because we don't truly and sincerely respect and fear our Lord who is in heaven.

Fourth, the employees should not steal from their own bosses.

Look at Titus 2:10 – "and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive." I still remember that I stole a hamburger while I was working at a hamburger shop when I was in high school. I ripped the hamburger shop owner off. I supposed to sell it to a customer so that the shop owner can earn money. It was a steal to intercept a portion of the money to be handed over to my boss. It's not my money, but sneaking my boss's money that that is stealing from someone else. Why do we steal? The Bible Proverbs 9:17 says "Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!" It is because it is delicious to steal others' money secretly. Once we have tasted it, it is difficult to break the habit of stealing. In particular, as the old saying, 'The needle thief becomes a cow thief,' the amount of stealing will increase from small amount at the beginning if we don't break the habit of stealing. We will be a slave to greed. And if we become slaves of covetousness, we will steal even God's money. We will rob God of "tithes and offerings" (Mal. 3:8). As we start stealing our bosses' money and our companies' money, we will eventually steal God's money as well even though the Bible clearly says "You shall not steal" (Exod. 20:15, Lev. 19:11, Deut. 5:19).

Fifth, the employees should be trustworthy to their masters.

Look at Titus 2:10 – "and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted," From the bosses' point of view, it is helpful to them to have someone whom they can trust. We Christian employees should be such trustworthy people. If we try to only please our bosses and work by way of eye-service when our bosses are present, then we will be tempted to be lazy and not work hard because our bosses aren't there at our work. If we do so and try to gain trust from our bosses, it is a big mistake. We don't know how long we will be able to deceive our bosses' eyes and gain trust, but in time we will lose our bosses' trust because we're shirking our duties to our bosses. In order for us to be trustworthy to our bosses, we must obey our master with sincerity of heart as to Christ (v. 5). We must do the will of God from our heart (v. 6). And we must serve wholeheartedly, as if we are serving the Lord, not men (v. 7) so that we can be fully trusted (Tit. 2:10).

Why should we do this? Why should we be subject to our bosses in everything, try to please them, not talk back to them, not to steal from them, but to show that we can be fully trusted? What is the purpose? The purpose is written in Titus 2:10 – "... so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive." What does it mean? It means to make the sound doctrine of God our Savior attractive. In other words, we Christian workers must be attractive at work. And, we the attractive Christian workers must obey our bosses as we receive the sound doctrine. Thus we will encourage our coworkers who believe in Jesus (Tit. 1:9). Not only that, we will refute those who speak against us (v. 9). So those who oppose us may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us (2:8). The attractive Christian workers will receive and obey God's sound doctrine so that the word of God will not be dishonored (v. 5). I hope and pray that we can be such attractive Christian office workers.

The believers who comforts a pastor, The pastor who makes the believers to be in sorrow

“But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever. Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it--I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while -- yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death” (2 Corinthians 7:6-10).

There are many believers who need comfort around us. They are all desperately in need of comfort when we think of their suffering, loneliness, sickness, pain, hurt and even they are in the crossroads of life and death. However, it seems that somehow we don't include our pastor among those people. Maybe it's because we think 'Our pastor is good at faith. So I am sure he will be okay.' But we must remember that even Apostle Paul was a servant of God in need of comfort (2 Cor. 7:6).

In 2 Corinthians 7:6-7, we can see Paul being comforted. Let us think about how he got comforted in three ways:

First, Paul was comforted by the coming of Titus.

Look at 2 Corinthians 7:6 – “But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus.” The God of comfort (v. 6) comforted Paul by causing Titus, Paul's partner and fellow worker (8:23), to come to Paul after visiting the Corinthian church (7:6). Likewise, we the pastors can be comforted by through our partner and fellow worker like Titus. In particular, rather than being comforted by what the fellow worker did for us, the pastor, our partner and fellow worker can comfort us just by seeing coming to us and by being with us.

Second, Paul was comforted by knowing that Titus was comforted by the Corinthian church saints.

Look at 2 Corinthians 7:7 – “and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever.” We, the pastor, are comforted when we hear that our partner and fellow worker like Titus is comforted by our church saints. We are comforted when our church members are comforting each other, just as a grandpa is comforted by his grandchildren when he finds his beloved son is comforted by his grandchildren.

Third, Paul was comforted by the news about the Corinthian church from Titus that made him rejoice even more.

Look at 2 Corinthians 2:7 – “and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more.” The Titus' message to Paul was that the Corinthian church saints received the Paul's letter, respected and honored it (“your longing”), realized their sins through Apostle Paul's admonition (“your mourning”) and exerted their zeal to serve the apostle with all their heart (“your zeal”) (Park). So Paul was comforted by Titus and the Corinthian church saints. The same is true with us, the pastors. We should also be comforted by our church members. Just as Paul was comforted with the good news he heard through Titus, we should be comforted by hearing the good news about our church members. What is the good news to us? The good news is that the church members respect and honor our admonition, they realize their sins through our admonition, and they are eager to serve us with all their hearts. Are you church members comforting your pastor like this?

There are some believers around us who need to be in sorrow. When we think of the believers who are sinning against God by disobeying the Word of God and follow the habits of the old sinful nature, they are all desperately in need to be in sorrow. But for some reason, there aren't many pastors who are making them to be in sorrow. Maybe it's because the pastors are afraid of reproofing them. Perhaps the pastors are not reproofing them because they are afraid that the church members won't come to church anymore because they are tempted by the pastors' admonition. But we must remember that Apostle Paul made the Corinthian church saints who were sinning to be in sorrow (v. 8). In 2 Corinthians 7:8-10, we see Paul making the Corinthian church saints to be in sorrow. How did Paul make them to be in sorrow? He did so by sending them the letter of admonition about the sins that the Corinthian church saints were committing against God. So Paul regretted it (v. 8) as if a father regrets after reproofing his beloved children. But he didn't regret any more because he saw that the letter caused them sorrow only for a while (v. 8). Rather, Paul rejoiced (v. 9). The reason is because the Corinthian church saints were made sorrowful to the point of repentance (v. 9). This is the sorrow that is according to the will of God (vv. 9, 10). Unlike the sorrow of the world that produces death, the sorrow according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation (v. 10). God caused the Corinthian church saints to be sorrowful to the point of repentance according to the will of God, causing them to be longing, mourning, fearing, to be in zeal, and avenging of wrong so that eventually they demonstrated themselves to be innocent in the matter (v. 11). Isn't this the sorrow that is according to the will of God? Wasn't this beneficial sorrow that made the Corinthian church saints to be earnest, to acknowledge their sins and asked for forgiveness, regard themselves as a cause of suffering and thus indignation, to fear God, to long for the Paul's coming, to zeal about correcting their wrongs, and to willing to receive punishment for their own sins? This sorrow wasn't a loss (v. 9). Rather, it is beneficial to the Christian life of the members of the church, so we pastors should make them to be in sorrow. It is no regret for the pastors to admonish their church members to repent their sins. On the contrary, while we are earnestly praying to God for the church members, repentance must take place because that is the sorrow according to the will of God. Are your pastors making your church members to be in sorrow?

How should we respond to our hypocritical pastor?

“So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach” (Matthew 23:3).

How should we respond when we go to work and see our boss is a hypocrite despite being Christians and church official? How should we respond when we go to church and see our pastor who is good at preaching and teaching the Bible well but he is hypocrite? How should we respond to our father who looks holy saint in the church and is praised by the church members but when he comes home he changes 180 degree and see very hypocrite father? Perhaps we don't want to see our hypocrite boss anymore. We may be struggling whether to move the church because we cannot hear our hypocrite pastor's sermon anymore. When we see our father who does not live a life of faith correctly every day, we may lose our respect for our father and may want to leave our faith and leave the church in disappointment. What should we do?

In the Bible, the word 'a hypocrite' (e.g. Mt. 23:15) means "an actor", meaning a person who acts visibly or a person who forges (WSNTDICT). Jesus speaks of two things about the teachers of the law and the Pharisees who are hypocrites in the context of Matthew 23:3.

First, the hypocrites don't practice what they preach.

Look at Matthew 23:3 – "... or they do not practice what they preach." The teachers of the law and the Pharisees whom Jesus spoke were those who taught the Law of Moses (v. 2). The problem was that while they were teaching the Law of Moses, they didn't keep the Moses' Law that they were teaching. They even added the inheritance of the Pharisees ["heavy loads" (v. 4)] to the Law of Moses and taught others but they didn't keep it [cf. Mk. 7:1-13 (The teachers of the law and the Pharisees let go of the God's commands and held on to the traditions of men)]. What caused them to be hypocrites? Of course, the cause was their pride, but more specifically, the teachers of the law and the Pharisees didn't teach themselves while teaching others (Rom. 2:21). I think this is a big problem for our church pastors and teachers. I am sure it wasn't like this when we first began to preach and teach the Word of God. At that time, we probably had taught ourselves the Word of God as we were meditating on it and then were diligently applying it to ourselves in preparing for Bible study and sermons. But the problem was that when we taught other people and thus when we received the praise from them that we were teaching them well, we thought that we were good teachers (though the only good teacher is the Lord). So as we tried to teach them well and hard, we became arrogant because we neglect to teach ourselves. And as the pattern of faith in which we teach others well but don't teach ourselves diligently gets longer and longer, then the gap between teaching and practice grows bigger and bigger. And eventually we become 'bible actors'. Then it turns out that later on, we have no choice but to imitate the life of faith before people, not before God.

Second, the hypocrites do everything for people to see.

Look at Matthew 23:5 – "Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long." The teachers of the law and the Pharisees, whom Jesus said "hypocrites", made their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garment long in order to impress people whom they did everything for them to see (v. 5, Park). Also, the teachers of the law and the Pharisees loved the place of honor at banquets and

the most important seats in the synagogues (v. 6) and also loved to be exalted in public (vv. 7-10). They loved to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them “Rabbi” (v. 7). I think this is a serious church problem. It is a big problem that young pastors like me in the church are getting use to be treated by elders who are much older than us. How can we, who preach that Jesus came not to be served but to serve (Mt. 20:28), not serve the God’s people who God has entrusted to us but expect them to serve us? What’s the use of saying more about these things. It’s our shame.

How should you respond when you see your pastors’ hypocrisy? How should you respond as children looking at your hypocritical father? What should you do when you see a Christian work supervisor whose outside and insider is different (Mt. 23:25-28)? I would like to receive three lessons:

(1) We should do and keep the words of our hypocritical pastor, but shouldn’t do what they do.

Look at Matthew 23:3 – “So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.” I think our nature is when we begin to think that our pastor is hypocrite, then it’s hard for us to listen to his sermon or teaching. So we try to endure and be patience and keep on trying to listen to his sermon or teaching. But when we keep on seeing his hypocrisy, we will stop listening to our hypocritical pastor’s sermon or teaching (but everyone’s instincts may not be the same). No matter how good his preaching or teaching is (or at least the right words that are not in conflict with the Bible), we can no longer respect him, so our hearts are closed and we reject his sermon and teaching. But Jesus said that even though we shouldn’t do what the hypocrites do, we must obey them and do everything they tell us (v. 3). In other words, the lesson is that when our hypocritical pastor’s sermon and teaching is biblical, then we must do that he preaches and teaches us. The wise Christians will hear and obey this Jesus’ lesson.

(2) We must take the opportunity to teach ourselves through our hypocritical pastor.

Look at Romans 2:21 – “you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal?” Our nature is that when we see our hypocritical pastor, we sit on the God’s judgment seat and tend to judge him and even condemn him in our disappointment and anger. The fact that we have condemned our hypocritical pastor is a proof that we are already being tempted. And at the heart of that temptation is to make us proud. Who are we to condemn our pastor? Are we that good? Are we godlier than our pastor in the sight of God? Do we show more godly power than our pastor does in God’s eyes? Or do we have a form of godliness rather than the power of godliness like our hypocritical pastor? Why aren’t we considering him to be our spiritual mirror and take it as an opportunity to learn from him? We must learn and learn. We must even learn from our hypocritical pastor. We must learn, especially through him, to look and see ourselves. We should make it an opportunity to reflect and examine ourselves whether we are different inside and outside, whether we don’t practice what we speak, whether we are living a life of faith for others to see like our hypocritical pastor. The wise Christians will do that.

(3) Unlike our hypocritical pastor (father), we must be humble and serve others humbly.

Look at Matthew 23:11-12: “The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” Our sinful nature is that we want to be exalted like our hypocritical pastor. Although the Lord deserves to be glorified, our sinful nature is to intercept His glory so that we can be glorified alone. Why do we like to be called “Doctor”, “Teacher”, “President” and so on? Isn’t it because we have greedy desire to be honored by others? Isn’t it great grace and great glory that God justifies us in Jesus Christ? Isn’t it great honor for us to be called “saints”? Then shouldn’t we

have burden to be called “pastor”, “elder” or “ordained deacon”? Shouldn’t we feel sorry to our brothers and sisters in Christ when we see ourselves being unfaithful to the Lord and we showing our hypocrisy to them? We want to imitate Jesus. We know that our attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:5). We know that we shouldn’t consider equality with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ (v. 6) but should make ourselves nothing (v. 7), consider them better than ourselves (v. 3) and humbly serve them. But we don’t know why we love to be praised and exalted among them. Our earnestly desire and prayer is that we can serve our brothers and sisters in Christ humbly and faithfully so that when we stand before the Lord, we may be able to hear from Him “Well done, good and faithful servant!” (Mt. 25:21)

The Christians who please God more in their suffering

“I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving. This will please the LORD more than an ox, more than a bull with its horns and hoofs.” (Psalms 69:30-31)

I am sure no one in this world has never suffered hurt or pain in human relationships. And I am sure everyone has experienced stresses and worries in that relationships. In particular, the hard and stressful human relations are a relationship where someone hates us and we don't understand why s/he hates us. And when s/he who hates us for no reason forms a group of people and hate us together, then we will go through extreme stress, anxiety and hurt. At that time we want to be comforted, but when no one comforts us, but rather turns their backs and go away from us, we experience extreme loneliness. Even when our family members we believed in and relied on turned their backs on us and kept us away from their hearts, then this painful situation causes us to be deeply hurt and be despaired as if we were in a deep pit. In this deep despair, can we think about pleasing God more? Can we sing a song of thanksgiving to God?

The suffering that the psalmist David of Psalms 69 was going through was a painful situation like "deep mire" and "deep waters" (v. 2). Why did David fall into such a deep mire and deep waters? The reason is because there were those who hated him without a cause were more than the hairs of his head (v. 4). Also, it was because his strong enemies tried to destroy David (v. 4). What troubled him more when he was in such extreme distress was that David became a stranger and an alien to his brothers (v. 8). David was lonely. Although David looked for sympathy and comforters, he found none (v. 20). But in the midst of those sufferings, David praised God and glorified Him with thanksgiving (v. 30). And he believed that this would please God more (v. 31). How could David praise God with thanksgiving in the midst of his severe sufferings? How can we, like David, please God more in the midst of our sufferings? I would like to learn the four lessons from Psalms 63:

First, we must pray to God in order to please God more in the midst of our sufferings.

Look at Psalms 69:13-14, 16-17: “But I pray to you, O LORD, in the time of your favor; in your great love, O God, answer me with your sure salvation. Rescue me from the mire, do not let me sink; deliver me from those who hate me, from the deep waters. ... Answer me, O LORD, out of the goodness of your love; in your great mercy turn to me. Do not hide your face from your servant; answer me quickly, for I am in trouble.” If there are so many who hate us for no reason, and even the powerful people who seek our lives surround us, we can be full of extreme stress, fear, and suffering. At that time, our nature is at least to go to our family members who love us or our close friends because we want to be comforted by them. But when we can't be comforted by even our family members or close friends whom we expected and felt that we are strangers to them, then we can feel very lonely. When we realize that no one can sympathize with and comfort our broken hearts and many worries (v. 20), then we can feel extreme loneliness. Only then do we realize that man is not the object to rely on, and finally we come to God and cry out to Him. The truth that we must realize at that time is that God accepts us (v. 13). In that situation where no one accepts us, we need to know more deeply that only God always accepts us. Then, even if we suffer in the future, we will not go to people first, but go to God first and we will cry out to Him on our knees. And when we pray to God, we should endure, expect, and wait for God's prayer answers in faith, as we long for God's many loving-kindnesses and truths of salvation in the midst of those who hate us are more than our hairs and in much

suffering. God will surely save us (v. 1). The God of salvation will surely deliver us from the deep mire and from those who hate us (v. 14).

Second, we must confess our sins to God in order to please God more in the midst of our sufferings.

Look at Psalms 69:5 – “O God, it is You who knows my folly, And my wrongs are not hidden from You.” When many people who hate us for no reason, and even those powerful people who seek our lives, are threatening us, we will probably complain and blame before those whom we go to, whom we depend on, and expected to be comforted by them. And when we don’t actually depend on God and go to Him first and pray, then there is high probability that we go to the people around us and pour out our resentment and complaints. But if we first go to God and pray, then our finger will be directed at ourselves rather than at those who hate us. That is, when we pray, we look back at ourselves before the holy God. Actually, our dark sins will be exposed by God’s holy presence. In particular, when we pray to God, we first realize that it is “my folly” that we rely on people rather than on God (v. 5). The wise Christian never would. Not only that, but when we pray to God, we realize that our sins cannot be hidden before God. Therefore, we should pray and confess our foolishness and our sins to God. This is the blessing of suffering. Through suffering we realize that Heavenly Father is accepting us and thus we pray to God so that our hidden sins may be exposed by His holy presence and that we enjoy the blessing of confessing and repenting our sins to Him. Don’t we miss this blessing?

Third, our zeal for God’s house should consume us in order to please God more in the midst of our sufferings.

Look at Psalms 69:9 – “For zeal for Your house has consumed me, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.” How is this possible? How can our zeal for the Lord’s church be burned in the midst of our sufferings? We can’t understand with our common sense. Usually when we suffer, we can’t afford to think about even our family members except ourselves. Then how can we think about the church and love the church with burning zeal? When we pray to God in the midst of our sufferings, we love God more by confessing and repenting of our sins because of God’s great love of accepting us. And we who love God cannot help but love the church of God. Then, like Apostle Paul, we are jealous for the church by God’s zeal (2 Cor. 11:2). In David’s case, he said that he was reproached and mocked by his enemies and those who hated him for the Lord’s sake (Ps. 69:7, 10, 12). That’s why shame was covered his face (v. 7). In addition, David’s enemies and many who hated him cursed and humiliated David, as well as those who hoped in the Lord and those who sought Him (v. 6). They insulted the Lord, whom David believed and served (v. 9). At that time, David’s zeal burned for the Lord’s house (v. 9). So should our hearts be. When many anti-Christians who hate us for no reason curse and mock us and insult and slander the Lord’s church, we must love the church even more. The more people who profane, slander, and oppose the church, the more we must love the church and be more zealous for it. When the church is persecuted and when we are in tribulation, our zeal for the Lord’s church should be burned more and more in our hearts. Like the words of the hymn “Faith of Our Fathers”, we must not only keep our faith in spite of dungeon, fire and sword, but we must also be faithful to the Lord and His church till death.

Fourth and last, we must praise God with thanksgiving in order to please God more in the midst of our sufferings.

Look at Psalms 69:30 – “I will praise God’s name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving.” God’s grace is amazing because when God gives us grace, we want to please God rather than to please ourselves even in our afflictions and sufferings. This is the work of God. How does God make us to please Him? He does so by making

us to praise Him with thanksgiving in the midst of suffering. Do you understand? How could David praise God with thanksgiving in the midst of extreme sufferings? This reminds me Psalms 63:3 – “Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You.” When David was running away his own son Absalom, he experienced God’s faithful love in the wilderness of Judah. So he praised the Lord as he considered the Judah wilderness as the sanctuary (v. 2). How can we praise God in the midst of our sufferings? We can do so by God who accepts us who are sufferings and answers us with His saving truth (69:13). We who love God by experiencing God’s great loves (v. 36) are compelled to praise God for His saving love. Didn’t Paul and Silas do so in prison? They prayed and sang hymns to God about midnight (Acts 16:25). I also remember praising God as I experienced God’s eternal love in great depth (Ps. 63:3). The Holy Spirit in me enabled me to sing “My Savior’s Love” (or “I Stand Amazed”) after my wife spread our first baby Charis’ ashes into the water and we were coming back to the land (<http://youtu.be/nkFOtaO8B9c>):

(v. 1) I stand amazed in the presence Of Jesus the Nazarene, And wonder
how He could love me, A sinner, condemned, unclean.

(v. 2) For me it was in the garden He prayed: “Not My will, but Thine.”
He had no tears for His own griefs, But sweat drops of blood for mine.

(v. 3) In pity angels beheld Him, And came from the world of light To
comfort Him in the sorrows He bore for my soul that night.

(v. 4) He took my sins and my sorrows, He made them His very own; He
bore the burden to Calvary, And suffered and died alone.

(v. 5) When with the ransomed in glory His face I at last shall see, 'Twill be
my joy through the ages To sing of His love for me.

(chorus) O how marvelous! O how wonderful! And my song shall ever be:
O how marvelous! O how wonderful! Is my Savior's love for me!

The Christians who enjoy the Lord's blessings through tribulation

“You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. ... LORD, they came to you in their distress; when you disciplined them, they could barely whisper a prayer” (Isaiah 26:3, 16).

When we encounter tribulation on our life's journey, we need to ask ourselves three questions: (1) Isn't there any sin that I didn't repent to God? (2) What blessing is God going to give me through this tribulation? (If I have tribulation even though I have no unrepentant sins) (3) Do I believe that God will deliver me in this tribulation? Or do I trust God completely?

In Isaiah 26:16, the discipline of the Lord came upon the people of Israel. That was why the Israelites were in distress. And their distress was the Babylon's invasion, which means that the Israelites would be taken captive by Babylon. Why did this distress come upon the Israelites? The reason was because they have sinned against God. In other words, the Israelites suffered in distress for their unrepentant sins. But their suffering in distress was a blessing to the Israelites. And that blessing was that they were taken captive to Babylon and there they sought the Lord (v. 16). In other words, the Israelites eagerly sought the Lord during the time of distress. Look at Isaiah 26:8-9a: “Indeed, while following the way of Your judgments, O LORD, We have waited for You eagerly; Your name, even Your memory, is the desire of our souls. At night my soul longs for You, Indeed, my spirit within me seeks You diligently” The Israelites who sinned in Jerusalem, Judah, eagerly sought the Lord in Babylon, a foreign nation where they were taken captive. How amazing was God's providence, grace, and blessing? Although the environment was so difficult, in tribulation and suffering in captivity, how blessed it was to find the Lord eagerly because of it. In addition, the Israelites came to trust in the Lord (v. 3). In other words, they depended only on the Lord (v. 13). How great was God's blessing that the proud and self-reliant Israelites were humbled through tribulation and suffering to trust in the Lord alone? As a result, the mind of the Israelites became steadfast (v. 3). In other words, their hearts have been changed to those who put their full trust in God. How great was this blessing? And God gave perfect peace to the hearts of those who put their full trust in Him (v. 3). Because the Lord, who is the everlasting Rock (v. 4), protected the Israelites, they could enjoy perfect peace. Furthermore, the Lord's blessing has made the way of the righteous smooth (v. 7). Although the road of tribulation and suffering, which had to be walked because of the sins, was never a smooth path in the eyes of man, the Lord enabled the Israelites to repent their sins and thus gave them perfect peace in their hearts. And the Lord made the road to Zion in their hearts. Not only that, God also had smoothen the path of God's people who put their full trust in Him. And the Lord performed for them all their works and established peace for them (v. 12). The Lord eventually increased the nation and gained glory for Himself (v. 15). In other words, the Lord caused a true revival in the nation of Israel (Park).

We are Christians who believe in Jesus. If we are true Christians, then we must trust in the Lord in peace and in tribulation. Therefore, we must be able to enjoy the blessings of the Lord even through the tribulation that is His discipline for our sins. We must not only enjoy the blessing of true repentance, but also the blessing of the restoration of our true soul who yearns for the Lord. And we must enjoy the blessing of the perfect peace that God gives by relying on Him with a faithful heart, even through tribulation. May the Lord, who smoothes our way, do all our work for us, so that we may earnestly pray in the name of Jesus that we may be filled with the blessings of His true revival among us.

Three things we Christians must dedicate

“They were helped in fighting them, and God handed the Hagarites and all their allies over to them, because they cried out to him during the battle. He answered their prayers, because they trusted in him” (1 Chronicles 5:20).

First, we Christians must dedicate ourselves to be skillful with the Word of God.

Look at 1 Chronicles 5:18 – “The sons of Reuben and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, consisting of valiant men, men who bore shield and sword and shot with bow and were skillful in battle, were 44,760, who went to war.” The Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh asked Moses and the priest Eleazar, and the leaders of the community to give them the lands of Jazer and the land of Gilead for their possession (Num. 32:1-5). And they asked them “Do not make us cross the Jordan” (v. 5). The reason was because the lands of Jazer were suitable for their livestock and they had very large herds and flocks (vv. 1. 4). Then Moses said to them: “Shall your countrymen go to war while you sit here? Why do you discourage the Israelites from going over into the land the LORD has given them?” (vv. 6-7) Then the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh told Moses that “We would like to build pens here for our livestock and cities for our women and children. But we are ready to arm ourselves and go ahead of the Israelites until we have brought them to their place. ... We will not return to our homes until every Israelite has received his inheritance” (vv. 16-18). And they kept that promise. They had not deserted their brothers but have carried out the mission the Lord their God gave you (Josh. 22:3). The Bible says that the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, who held that responsibility, were “s” valiant men (1 Chron. 5:18). And they were skillful in battle, “men who bore shield and sword and shot with bow” (v. 18).

We too should be skillful in spiritual battle. We, who are the soldiers of Jesus Christ, must be skillful to spiritual warfare. In particular, we must be spiritual warriors who are good at handling the sword of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God. We need to know how to skillfully use the Word of God in our spiritual battle against ourselves, sins, the world, Satan, and death. We Christians must dedicate ourselves to be skillful with the Word of God.

Second, we Christians must dedicate ourselves to trust in God and cry out to Him.

Look at 1 Chronicles 5:20 – “They were helped against them, and the Hagarites and all who were with them were given into their hand; for they cried out to God in the battle, and He answered their prayers because they trusted in Him.” The Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh fought against the Hagarites, Jetur, Naphish and Nodab (v. 19). Meanwhile, the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh trusted in God and cried out to Him (v. 20). God who heard their cry answered them and helped them (v. 20). As a result, the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh won the war (vv. 21-22).

In order to win spiritual battle, we must be accustomed not only to the Word of God but also to pray to God. In other words, we must be accustomed to cry out to God. As much as that, we should be people who trust in God. In other words, we must be those who trust in and trust in God (Ps. 22:4). We must cry out to God because we trust in Him. Then God will hear us (77:1) and surely hears our cry (Exod. 22:23). And God will answer us (Ps. 3:4, 86:7, 120:1). God will give us victory (1 Cor. 15:57).

Third and last, we Christians must dedicate ourselves to keep our hearts well after we receive grace.

Look at 1 Chronicles 5:25 – “But they were unfaithful to the God of their fathers and prostituted themselves to the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them.” After the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh won the battle against the Hagrites, Jetur, Naphish and Nodab (v. 19), they settled in their land (v. 22). The people of the half-tribe of Manasseh lived in the land from Bashan to Baal-Hermon, Senir and Mount Hermon and they were numerous (v. 23). “These were the heads of their fathers' households, even Epher, Ishi, Eliel, Azriel, Jeremiah, Hodaviah and Jahdiel, mighty men of valor, famous men, heads of their fathers' households” (v. 24). But after they won the war, became numerous, and gained fame, they sinned against God (v. 25). They acted treacherously against the God of their fathers and played the harlot after the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them (v. 25). As a result, God raised the king of Assyria to invade the land where the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh were living and let them carry the Israelites away into exile to Assyria (v. 26).

We must be careful after winning the spiritual battle. We must be careful after receiving grace. We need to be careful after we have grown and enriched. We should keep our hearts well so that we will not be tempted after receiving God's grace. Otherwise we will fall into Satan's temptation and sin against God. We will not be truthful to God and will serve the idols of this world. As a result, we will be disciplined by God.

The upright life of the Christians

“Do not love sleep, or you will become poor; Open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with food. ‘Bad, bad,’ says the buyer, But when he goes his way, then he boasts. There is gold, and an abundance of jewels; But the lips of knowledge are a more precious thing. Take his garment when he becomes surety for a stranger; And for foreigners, hold him in pledge. Bread obtained by falsehood is sweet to a man, But afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel. Prepare plans by consultation, And make war by wise guidance” (Proverbs 20:13-18).

A few months ago, we had a time to read and share the words of Titus 2 in our small group Bible study. At that time, one of the brothers in Christ said that the people who believed in Jesus seemed worse than the non-believers. I didn't know exactly what he meant. But when he explained to us what happened to him after the Bible study and during the meal time, I was able to understand the meaning of his words in more detail. And I had to agree with what he said. There are so many times we became speechless because we Christians not only be the light and the salt in this world but rather we are worse than unbelievers. When I think about what the cause is, I think one of the reasons is that we are not very good at learning “sound doctrine,” as Titus 2:1 says. As a result, we are not “sound in speech” (v. 8) and sound in life.

I would like to learn four lessons from Proverbs 20:13-18 under the heading “The upright life of the Christians.” I hope and pray that we may be able to live as true Christians in this world by taking these lessons and keeping them as best as we can.

First, we must have the right lifestyle.

Look at Proverbs 20:13 – “Do not love sleep, or you will become poor; Open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with food.” When we meditate on the Book of Proverbs, there are many teachings about laziness and diligence. One of the teachings can be found in Proverbs 6:9-11: “How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? ‘A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest’-- Your poverty will come in like a vagabond And your need like an armed man.” When we meditate this Proverbs 6:9-11 in connection with Proverbs 20:13, the conclusion we can make is that a lazy person likes to sleep and s/he will become poor. Therefore, the Bible says “Open your eyes,” that is, stay awake (20:13). In other words, stay awake when we need to work. For example, in Proverbs 6: 6-11, like the ant who prepares her food in the summer and gathers her provision in the harvest, we shouldn't sleep but should work when we have to work. Then we will be satisfied with food (20:13).

In the Bible, God has told us many times to stay awake. For example, look at 1 Thessalonians 5:6 – “So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.” Then what should we do as we stay awake and are alert? We must pray. Look at Colossians 4:2 – “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.” In the Bible, the topic that is often associated with the word ‘be alert’ is prayer. In other words, the Bible tells us to stay awake, be alert and continue to pray. Why does the Bible command us to stay awake, be alert and continue to pray? The reason is so that we may not be tempted. Look at Matthew 26:41 – “Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Another related theme in the Bible that is in connection with 'be alert' is the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus. Look at Matthew 24:42 – “Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.” We must be awake and be alert because we don't know which day the Lord will come again. This is what Luke 21:36 tells us: “But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.” The Bible says that we should keep on the alert at all times and pray.

Here, the thing that we should know is that the right lifestyle of the Christians is not to like to sleep but to wake up and work diligently. This reminds me the hymn “Work, for the Night is Coming”:

- (1) Work, for the night is com-ing: Work through the morn-ing hours;
Work while the dew is spark-ling; Work 'mid spring-ing flowers;
Work while the day grows bright-er, Un-der the glow-ing sun;
Work, for the night is com-ing, When man's work is done.
- (2) Work, for the night is com-ing: Work through the sun-ny noon;
Fill bright-est hours with la-bour, Rest comes sure and soon;
Give ev-'ry fly-ing min-ute Some-thing to keep in store;
Work, for the night is com-ing, When man works no more.
- (3) Work, for the night is com-ing: Un-der the sun-set skies,
While their bright tints are glow-ing, Work, for day-light flies;
Work till the last beam fad-eth, Fad-eth to shine no more;
Work, while the night is dark'-ning, When man's work is o'er.

Like these lyrics, we cannot deny that there is a night when we will no longer able to work. And we know that that night will come quickly. Therefore, we must work when we need to work and not play. And when we need to work, we should like to sleep, but we must work diligently. This is the right lifestyle of the Christians.

Second, we must speak the right word.

Look at Proverbs 20:14 – “Bad, bad,” says the buyer, But when he goes his way, then he boasts.” How do you bargain with a seller when you go to buy something, whether it's a department store or a market? I still remember that in December 2003, when I came back to the United States from South Korea and went to buy a car with my father-in-law, I went to few car dealerships in the Buena Park area. And I remembered that I had an impression that I should buy a car like my father-in-law. When he was dealing with the salesman, he kind of said that the price of the car was too expensive. And he told him that we would go to another dealership. Then the salesman seemed to say that he would be able to lower the price of the car. So he actually lowered the price and my father-in-law bought Honda Pilot for us. I also tried to deal with a person in the car wash when I went to wash my car. The person said that since my car was SUV, I had to pay \$15. But I told him that whenever I came her, they charged me \$12.99. So the guy changed the price from \$15 to \$13. In Proverbs 20:14, what King Solomon tried to say was that the buyer who tried to bargain with the seller said “Bad, bad” in order to intentionally cut the price of the item. He does so in order to show off his cleverness (MacArthur).

Have you ever experienced this? In this age of purchasing various kinds of goods over the Internet, we as buyers of goods must not only like the things we want to buy, but also the prices must be low. But for the people who sell them, I am sure they want a higher price. Therefore, the buyer and the seller must negotiate with each other, but at a price that is already set, the buyer can't do anything much with the seller. Most of the things we buy on the Internet seem to be like that (except for the auction sites). However, if it is possible to control the price of the goods, the buyer of the goods wants to negotiate with the seller. But in negotiations with the buyer who want to buy the

goods cheaply and the seller who need to earn more income, I think it's hard to be pure and honest in their conversation. In particular, in the salesman's point of view, it won't be easy for him to be honest with the buyer about price and the goods because he has to earn more money. So he may have to exaggerate and maybe even lie. But we Christian salesmen should say the right thing. In other words, we should not lie and deceive people who buy things from us. What is the reason? The reason is because the Lord detests it (v. 10). Our God hates differing weights and differing measures (v. 10). God hates lying and deceiving. Look at Proverbs 20:17 – "Food gained by fraud tastes sweet to a man, but he ends up with a mouth full of gravel." What does it mean? At first, food gained by fraud tastes sweet, but later on, the result is very unpleasant and uncomfortable, like eating sand in the mouth (Walvoord). In other words, the food that is cheated and is eaten at first but it will be later woe to us. This reminds me Proverbs 9:17 – "Stolen water is sweet; And bread eaten in secret is pleasant." Food that has been deceived and water that is stolen or secretly eaten rice cake seem to taste good at first, but later on the consequence of the dishonest behavior can never taste good. The problem is that even we Christians later lie and deceive others, even to some degree, knowing the consequences of our wrong choice.

We must not lie. As Christians, we should not deceive others. Rather, we must say the right thing. We must speak the truth. We must say the right thing, speak the truth, and our lips must be wise lips. Look at Proverbs 20:15 – "There is gold, and an abundance of jewels; But the lips of knowledge are a more precious thing." In order for our lips to be wise, we must speak knowledge with our lips. As Christians, we must speak our knowledge of God. We must speak of knowledge of the Bible and of knowledge of Jesus. We must speak the wise words and the right words in right times (Walvoord).

Third, we must do the right love.

Look at Proverbs 20:16 – "Take his garment when he becomes surety for a stranger; And for foreigners, hold him in pledge." What if your loved one asks you to hold you in pledge, what will you do? Especially if you know that your loved one is incapable of paying you back with money, will you still stand surety for your loved one or will you gently reject it? The Bible Proverbs 6:1-5 teaches us about standing surety our neighbor. The point of the lesson is that if we have become surety for our neighbor (v. 1) and we have been snared into the hands of our neighbor (vv. 2-3), if we assume the responsibility of paying the debt of our neighbor, then we must deliver ourselves (v. 5). Here, what the author of the Book of Proverbs King Solomon warns us is the act of foolishness. And the foolish act is to promise ourselves a responsibility of pledge for the person who defaults, knowing that s/he is indebted to others and s/he cannot pay back. Of course, I don't think the Bible warns that making a pledge here is in itself the foolish act. The reason is because when our neighbor is in financial trouble, being a guarantor for that neighbor can be a practice of Christ's neighbor love. But the foolish act that King Solomon warns here is that if a guarantee is given, it will not be a guarantor who is not prepared to take responsibility in the event of an accident, a person who is deceived by another, a guarantor, or an insurer who is incapable of performing responsibilities.

In Proverbs 20:16, King Solomon warns of a possible mistake in people's acts of pledge. And the mistake is that the person who makes a pledge for another person whom s/he doesn't know well cannot get anything back. The question we can ask here is why do we make pledge for the person whom we don't know well? Dr. Park Yun-sun is referring to this behavior as 'economic adventure' (Park). How big is this economic adventure? Whether we lend money to someone who is unable to pay off our debts or make a pledge, these actions can result in significant economic loss to the person who gave the loan. Of course, we may say that the moneylenders are earning a lot of money by lending their money to people who can't even pay back their debts by forcing them to even pay the interest of the their money. But many times the Bible warns us the adventurous acts of pledge (6:1-5, 11:15, 17:18, 22:26-27). Dr. Yun-sun said: 'The people (especially believers) fail when they are economically adventurous, because their excessive economic adventurous is a kind of unbelief. Such an adventure is to disregard God as if to

claim tomorrow's work by human power (Jam. 4:13-17)' (Park). What do you think about the phrase 'excessive economic adventure is a kind of unbelief'? Do you agree?

As I meditate on the Book of Proverbs, I feel more desperately in need of God's wisdom in loving my neighbor with God's love. For example, in my introduction, I mentioned about how I talked with the brother in Christ after the Bible study. We also talked about how we should love our neighbors. I shared with him some things that God taught me in my life, and one of them was devoted to trust another person as I trust in God. The reason is because even though we trust our neighbor, entrusting everything and loving him or her like a family member, but s/he can betray us and we will be hurt and thus we cannot trust anybody anymore. Another thing I shared with him is that in loving our neighbor, we don't have to tell all the truth of our hearts to our neighbor. I personally like to share my life transparently. But one day when I was reading the story of Samson in Judges 16, I was little bit shock. The reason is when Delilah pressed Samson daily with her words and urged him to tell the secret of his great strength, Samson's soul was annoyed to death (vv. 15-16) so he told her everything (v. 17). So I shared that lesson with the brother in Christ that no matter how dear other person may be to us, we don't have to tell everything to him or her. It is lesson that we need to be self-control in loving our neighbors. And among the self-control, we must know how to say "No" politely but firmly when we should say no. I think one of thing that we must say "No" politely but firmly is when our neighbors ask us to hold a pledge for them. Of course, if we have the economic ability to pay off the debt and make the pledge for our loved one, then we can do so because it will be no problem. But if we hold the pledge for our neighbor even if we don't have economic ability to pay off the debt but borrowing money from other people here and there, then that's not loving our neighbors wisely. I think we need to take seriously what Dr. Park Yoon-sun said that such economic adventure comes from distrust of God. The lesson that the Bible teaches us is that we give financial help to our loved ones who need financial help rather than to guarantee it for them (Deut. 15:1-15; 19:17) or to lend money without receiving the interest (cf. Leviticus 25:35-38; 28:8).

We must love right in the sight of God. The right love is to love in the Lord and in the truth. Love that is outside of the truth of God is never right love. We must love our neighbors according to the Word of God. In particular, as Proverbs 20:16 says, we must be careful of making pledge for others. If we make a mistake in the guarantee for our neighbor's debt, the consequences cannot be avoided. Furthermore, the result is that we will hide the glory of God. Therefore, in loving our neighbor, we should wisely judge about guaranteeing our other person's debt and shouldn't make the mistake.

Fourth, we must do the right management.

Look at Proverbs 20:18 – "Prepare plans by consultation, And make war by wise guidance." Wal Mart, which has been very successful in the U.S. market, has made inroads around the world on the basis of its success in the U.S. market (1998 in Korea). But the company suffered so much just in the Korean market. Do you know why? The reason is because the low price that wasn't right for the Korean consumers' propensity. For example, the Korean consumers hate the warehouse-type store, which is a representative form of large discount stores, and they want to display products in the same way as department stores. But Wal-Mart completely ignores this customers' inclination. As a result, Wal-Mart was completely defeated in competition with Korean companies, who are familiar with Koreans like E-Mart, and sold all their business in Korea to E-Mart (Internet). In relation to this result and today's text, Proverbs 20:18, there must be "consultation" and wise "guidance" in management. A good example is an advice given by Moses' father-in-law Jethro to Moses in Exodus 18:17. The background of the advice was that Moses sat down to serve as judge for the people of Israel, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening (v. 13). As a result, his father-in-law Jethro knew that that will only wear Moses out because the word was too heavy for Moses and he couldn't handle it alone (v. 18). So Jethro advised Moses to select capable men from all the people – "men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain" – and appointed them as officials over

thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens and have them serve as judges for the people at all times (vv. 21-22). When Moses heard the words of his father-in-law Jethro, he did everything he said (v. 24). “He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens” (v. 25). And they served as judges for the people at all times (v. 26). “The difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves” (v. 26). Like this, in management, consultation (advice) and guidance is necessary and important. In addition to Proverbs 20:18, look at Proverbs 15:22 – “Without consultation, plans are frustrated, But with many counselors they succeed.” And the Bible says “many advisers make victory sure” (11:14). In order to win the war, we need to have wise guidance (20:18).

One economics professor says that the Bible emphasizes more on the economy than any economics textbook. It is said that there are 1,600 times the passage that mentions economy and management throughout the New and Old Testament. In that sense, the Bible is an excellent economic and management textbook (Internet). ‘An example of a biblical economy and management model is the Torah economy. This economy is characterized by the separation of ownership and management. The Bible separates ownership and management from the beginning. If so, who is the owner? God. Who is the manager? We who are delegated management. We are delegated and managing God's own property or wealth’ (Internet). This is one of the three aspects that we Christians must have, that is the biblical perspective of wealth. In other words, the biblical perspective of wealth is that God is the owner of the wealth and we are the managers. The difference between the biblical economy and the general economy is that while the general economy mainly studies what we earn, the Bible teaches us how to use what we earn (the Internet). This is what Proverbs 16:1 and 16:3 says: “The plans of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD. ... Commit your works to the LORD And your plans will be established.” What do these verses teach us? We must commit our works to the Lord. What is the reason? The reason is because only God's plan and His work will be done. Look at Isaiah 14:24 – “The LORD Almighty has sworn, “Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand.”

We are Christians. We must live right lives as Christians. In order to live a right life, we must have the right lifestyle, must speak the right word, do the right love, and do the right management. Then we will be able to faithfully play the role of light and salt as Christians in this world.

The right relationship of the Christians

“He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, Therefore do not associate with a gossip. He who curses his father or his mother, His lamp will go out in time of darkness. An inheritance gained hurriedly at the beginning Will not be blessed in the end. Do not say, "I will repay evil"; Wait for the LORD, and He will save you” (Proverbs 20:19-22).

How should we be in good relationship with others as Christians? Don't you think that sometimes having good relationship with other people is beyond your capacity? I think there are people around us who are very hard to accept and to build relationship with. The relationship is very difficult because there are people who make us hard and hurt our hearts. In particular, those who are working will know how difficult relationship is as they work with their bosses and co-workers. One study found that there are two major workplace difficulties. One is the difficulty of work and the other is the difficulty of human relations. But here, the difficulty of human relations is twice that of work. What do you think?

When I think about the right relationship of the Christians, it reminds me Proverbs 3:27-25. As I meditated on that passage, I learned three principles about the relationship of the wise:

- (1) The first principle about the relationship of the wise is that we shouldn't withhold good from those to whom it is due.

Look at Proverbs 3:27-28: “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, When it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come back, And tomorrow I will give it," When you have it with you.” When it is in our power to do it, we shouldn't withhold good from those to whom it is due. We shouldn't say to our neighbor to go and come back, and we will give it tomorrow.

- (2) The second principle about the relationship of the wise is that we shouldn't contend with another person without cause.

Look at Proverbs 3:29-30: “Do not devise harm against your neighbor, While he lives securely beside you. Do not contend with a man without cause, If he has done you no harm.” We shouldn't start an argument and contend without cause.

- (3) The third principle about the relationship of the wise is that we shouldn't envy a man of violence.

Look at Proverbs 3:31 – “Do not envy a man of violence And do not choose any of his ways.” The reason is because God detests a perverse man (v. 32), His curse is on the house of the wicked (v. 33), He mocks proud mockers (v. 34) and He holds up the fools to shame (v. 35).

In Proverbs 20:19-22, we can think of three lessons about the right relationship of the Christians that God teaches us:

First, we shouldn't associate with a gossip.

Look at Proverbs 20:19 – “He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, Therefore do not associate with a gossip.” Here, a person who talks a lot is a person who goes about as a slanderer. And the person who goes about as the slanderer reveals secret. S/he especially reveals other person's confidential information. In fact, s/he is a gossip. The Bible tells us not to associate with the gossip (v. 19). Then why shouldn't we associate with the gossip? The reason is because such a person reveals the secrets of others (v. 19, 11:13). In other words, the reason we shouldn't associate with the gossip is because such a person loses trust. In addition to this reason, reading the book of Proverbs teaches us another reason why we shouldn't associate with the gossip. And the reason is that gossip causes quarrels. Look at Proverbs 26:20 – “Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down.” Another reason is that gossip separates close friends. Look Proverbs 16:28 – “A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.” Don't you think that the gossip who likes to talk about other people stirs up dissension and separates close friends? Not only the gossip separates close friends, but also siblings and even the couple relationship. How does the gossip separates them? They do so by lying. Look at Proverbs 6:19 – “a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.” Therefore, we shouldn't associate with the gossip.

Second, we shouldn't curse our parents.

Look at Proverbs 20:20 – “He who curses his father or his mother, His lamp will go out in time of darkness.” When you hear this word, won't you think in your mind that who will curse their own parents? However, in the original Hebrew, the word "curse" means not only "curse" but also "belittle" (Vine). That means that the phrase “He who curse his father or his mother” can mean ‘He who belittle his father or his mother’. Now, doesn't that change the problem? Although we have never cursed our parents, we may have belittled them. We may have esteemed them lightly, underestimated them and despised them. This is what Matthew 15:4 says: “For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’” In the Old Testament, those who curse their parents or belittle them violate the command of “honor your parents,” which is the fifth commandment of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:12). The penalty for the violation is stated in Exodus 21:17 – “Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death” (cf. Lev. 20:9). One commentator says that this punishment not only applied to those who curse their parents, but also those who rebel against their parents (Walvoord). In Proverbs 20:20, the lamp of he who curses his father or his mother will go out in time of darkness refers to death (Walvoord). Therefore, we shouldn't curse our parents, but rather we should bless them. And we shouldn't belittle our parents but value them highly. We should also respect and honor them without disregarding them.

Third, we shouldn't revenge.

Look at Proverbs 20:22 – “Do not say, "I will repay evil"; Wait for the LORD, and He will save you.” If someone has hurt us in a relationship, our nature is to repay him for the pain we've suffered. In fact, we prefer the word “hate your enemy” rather than “Love your neighbor” (Mt. 5:43). It's our nature to “Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot” (Deut. 19:21). So God tells us in Proverbs 24:29 – “Do not say, "I'll do to him as he has done to me; I'll pay that man back for what he did.” Also Proverbs 20:22 says “Do not say, 'I will repay evil'.” That means that even the other person hurt us, we shouldn't hurt him or her back. Don't we say that if we do that, we will be the same person? If we are true Christians, shouldn't we be different from the people in this world? One of the things that we should be different is waiting for God instead of repaying evil (Prov. 20:22). In order to understand what it means to wait for God we must look at Romans 12:19 – “Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord.” The reason why we should wait for God instead of repaying evil is because it is God's to avenge and not us. Therefore,

we must wait and believe that God will repay for us. This is what Deuteronomy 32:35 says: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them.” What does it mean? It means that revenge is God's. Look at Nahum 1:2 – “The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The LORD takes vengeance on his foes and maintains his wrath against his enemies.” When it is time for God’s vengeance (Jere. 51:6) God will repay for us. Therefore, we must not repay. We must believe in God and wait. God will take revenge and deliver us in God's time.

The right business perspective of the Christians

“The LORD detests differing weights, and dishonest scales do not please him” (Proverbs 20:23).

In order for us as Christians to live right life in God's perspective, we must have a right business perspective.

Look at Proverbs 20:23 – “The LORD detests differing weights, and dishonest scales do not please him.” If I think about “scales”, Proverbs 16:11 comes to my mind: “Honest scales and balances are from the LORD; all the weights in the bag are of his making.” Here, “scales,” “balances,” and “weights” refers to “scale.” And this scale measure accurately. In other words, this scale is a “fair” scale. In other words, it is the consistent scale. In addition to Proverbs 20:23, in verse 10, King Solomon says as follow: “Differing weights and differing measures-- the LORD detests them both.” What does it mean? It means that a wise Christian who fears God hates the differing scale that God hates. In other words, the wise Christians hate deception, which God hates. Thus we must hate the dishonesty that God hates. Rather, we must delight in accurate weights just as the accurate weights are God’s delight (11:1). In other words, we must be honest.

Perhaps in King Solomon's day some of the merchants deceived their customers by using their weights to deceive them from the quality, weight, or quantity of their goods (see Prov. 11:1). The way that the merchants deceived their customers was by using the 'double scale'. In other words, while the dishonest merchants used the light and small scale to give less grain when they sold grain, they used the heavy and bigger scale when they bought grain. If this applies to the reality in which we live, we can receive valuable lessons about how Christians in business should do the right work in the sight of God. In short, the lesson is to do business with the right business perspective. Here, the right business perspective is to seek honesty that God is pleased with, but hate the dishonesty that God hates. If we Christian merchants are dishonest in our commercial conduct, we must remember that God hates dishonest commercial conduct. Never should we do dishonestly for unrighteous gain. Rather, we must be honest in our commercial conduct.

In addition, the Bible tells us more about the right business perspective. One of them is found in James 4:13-17: “Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.’ As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.” There are three lessons that Christian businessmen should learn from this Word:

First, the Christian businessmen must do good.

Look at James 4:17 – “Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.” The Christian businessmen need to know how to do good. The Bible says that even though they know they suppose to do good but don't do it, it's sin. Look at 1 Timothy 6:18 – “Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.” The Christian businessmen should be generous. They should be willing to share and do a lot of good work. Look at Hebrews 13:16 – “And do not forget to do good and to share with others,

for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” The sacrifices that God is pleased with is doing good and sharing with others. Look at 2 Thessalonians 3:13 – “And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.” If the Christian businessmen do good in their own strength, they will one day get tired and discouraged. But they will not be discouraged if they do good by the power of grace that God supplies.

Second, the Christian businessmen should not boast in their arrogance.

Look at James 4:16 – “But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.” The Bible says that it is evil for the Christian businessmen to boast in their arrogance. Look at Jeremiah 9:23 – “... let not a rich man boast of his riches.” Look at Psalms 49:6 – “Even those who trust in their wealth And boast in the abundance of their riches?” The Bible says not to trust in our wealth and not to boast our wealth. Rather, the Bible tells us to depend on God. And this is what the Bible says about boasting: “But, ‘Let him who boasts boast in the Lord’” (2 Cor. 10:17), “If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness” (11:30). The Christian businessmen should not boast of their strong things, but of their weaknesses. And they must boast in the Lord. Look at Jeremiah 9:23-24: “Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD.” We should boast of knowing God. God is pleased with this.

Third, the Christian businessmen should have attitude and habit of saying that “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that”, knowing that they are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away in the midst of planning to make a profit by doing business.

Look at James 4: 14-15: “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.’” I think it’s not easy to have this attitude and habit. We need to intentionally strive to do so with God’s help while we are praying to God. One of those efforts we can make is, in my case, I meditate on is this words of James that we are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away as I drive on a foggy day. When I see the fog, I think about the fact that my life is like a mist that appears for a little while and quickly disappears. When I keep on doing so, then I have more view of death. The Christian businessmen should also have the death perspective and ask themselves what kind of profit they should make. It is necessary for them to think and pray about what is more valuable and eternal and what God wants from them through their business.

In addition to James 4:13-17, there is another Bible verse that the Christian businessmen must know. It is Deuteronomy 8:17-18a: “‘Otherwise, you may say in your heart, ‘My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.’ ”But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth,” We must keep in mind that it’s not our power and the strength of our hands that made us our wealth. We must never forget that we have wealth because God has given us the power to make wealth. The Christian businessmen who believe this truth will surely use their God-given wealth wisely for God’s glory and not in vain.

The Christian businessmen must have the right business perspective. The right business perspective is to do business honestly. And the Christian businessmen must do good and don’t boast in arrogance. And they should know that their life is a mist that disappears after a short time. So they need to have attitude and habit of saying, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” And when they have gained wealth, they should not say “My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.” Rather, they must remember that it is God who is giving them power to make wealth.

The right inheritance perspective of the Christians

“An inheritance quickly gained at the beginning will not be blessed at the end” (Proverbs 20:21).

What is “inheritance”? According to the Internet Wikipedia inheritance is the comprehensive succession of property and status by the death of a person and the center of inheritance lies in inheritance of fortune (Wikipedia). Look at Proverbs 20:21 – “An inheritance quickly gained at the beginning will not be blessed at the end.” The phrase “An inheritance quickly gained at the beginning” probably indicates that the child had asked his father for a fortune to be passed on to him (Walvoord). A good example is the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-20. The second son said to his father, “Father, give me my share of the estate” (v. 12). So the father divided his property between them (v. 12). Think about how the second son felt when he received his property. Wouldn't it be nice to receive a portion of your parents' property as your inheritance little bit earlier? But what does the Bible say? The younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living (v. 13). After all, the younger son was not blessed by his inheritance (Prov. 20:21). Dr. Park Yoon-sun interpreted Proverbs 20:21 in relation to verse 20. He said that “a man curses his father or mother” (v. 20) is the man whose behavior and character is bad. Also, he said verses 20 and 21 are talking about this man who speaks against his parents and disobey them because of the property problem. He said that the people whose behavior and character is bad often conflict with their parents by forcing their rights without having to fulfill their responsibilities, mainly because of the financial problem. As they do so, they also use abuse and curse (Park). I think it makes sense. And I personally think that it is ugly to see children fighting over their parents' inheritance. Not long ago, I noticed that the couple of Korea's big business presidents who have a lot of wealth were fighting over their father's inheritance. When I heard the news about that, I don't think that was good example to others. That is why I fully agree with Proverbs 20:21. One interesting point is that verse 21 has both the word “the beginning” and “the end”. After all, when we inherit our inheritance from our parents quickly, we may feel happy at the beginning because we think that we are materially blessed. But at the end that inheritance will not be blessed. Not only that, I think that the children will dispute with each other over their parents' inheritance and their sibling relationship will be cut off.

I read one of the articles published in the Internet Korean Newspaper that introduced fifteen rich people who refused to give their property to their children. They were referred to as ‘The rich people who refused their inheritance.’ Among those fifteen people, we are familiar with some of the names such as Warren Buffett, Microsoft founder Bill Gates, eBay founder Pierre Omidar, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Hong Kong Actor Jackin Chan. Their motto is that inherited wealth can ruin humans. So an important figure in oil industry Pickens said: ‘I like to make money and donate. ... But I don't like to inherit my money (to my children) because it usually does more harm than good.’ A Hong Kong action star Jackie Chan said, ‘If my son is capable, he will make money on his own. If not, he will just waste my money.’ And this is what Warren Buffett said: ‘I want to give my children enough money to think that they can do something with it. But I don't want to give them so that they don't have to do anything.’ What do you think? What do you think about inheriting your wealth to your children?

If non-believers have this kind of inheritance perspective, how about us, the believers? Shouldn't we have the right inheritance perspective in God's sight and not in the eyes of people? What is the right perspective of inheritance in God's eyes? What does the Bible says about the inheritance that we the children of God should have?

First, we must remember that we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

Look at Romans 8:17 – “Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.” Who is a heir? Isn't it a person inheriting the property? It means a property inheritor of God's kingdom. By God's grace, we have become heirs of God through faith in Jesus Christ. We also became heirs with Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:6). We have become property inheritors of the kingdom of God. We must keep this in mind.

Second we must be thankful for the fact that we have inherited eternal life.

Look at Matthew 19:29 – “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.” As heirs of God, we have inherited eternal life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is God's total grace. Apostle Paul said in Titus 3:7 – “so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.” By the grace of God we became the heirs who have the hope of eternal life. We should be grateful for this grace of God.

Third, we must seek for the glorious new body and the heavenly dwelling heirs prepared in heaven.

Look at Philippians 3:20-21: “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.” The day that Jesus will come again, we will be like His glorious body. And we will enter the heavenly dwellings that the Lord has prepared (Jn. 14:1-3) and live with Him forever. Therefore, we, as heirs of God, those who have eternal life, are to live on earth, longing for the body of glory and eternal heavenly dwelling which will be inherited by us in the future.

Fourth, we should value the wisdom of heavenly Father God more than inheritance from our physical parents.

Look at Proverbs 19:14 – “Houses and wealth are inherited from parents, but a prudent wife is from the LORD.” The inheritance we receive from our parents (house or riches) is precious, but even more precious is a wise wife from God. The focus here is “wisdom” rather than wife. In other words, the inheritance we receive from God is wisdom. We should value this wisdom more than our homes or our wealth.

The right future perspective of the Christians

“A man's steps are directed by the LORD. How then can anyone understand his own way?” (Proverbs 20:24).

In order for us as Christians to live right in the eyes of God, we must have a right future perspective.

Look at Proverbs 20:24 – “A man's steps are directed by the LORD. How then can anyone understand his own way?” Have you ever made plans in your own life and pursued for your purpose, and eventually didn't go according to your plan? When that happens, what do we usually think about? Have you ever thought that ‘My work doesn't go as well as I want’? If our work doesn't go as well as we want, how can it go well as we planned about our future and work hard to achieve it? Sometimes it goes well with our plan, but more often, it doesn't go well as we plan and we face difficulties. I remember what the Bible says in Ecclesiastes 7:14 – “When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future.” What does it mean? It means that we should rejoice when everything goes well, but we must think when we go through difficulties. God gives to us both happiness and difficulties so that we cannot know what will happen next. We must realize that we don't know what will happen next.

We can be happy when things are going well. We can rejoice and feel happiness when everything is successful. The question is, what should we do when we are in trouble? When the Shepherd Lord makes us lie down in green pastures and leads us beside quiet waters (Ps. 23:2), there is no problem. But what should we do when we choose to walk through the valley of the shadow of death? (v. 4) The Bible says to consider (Eccle. 7:14). What does it mean? It means that we need to look back on the past when we faced hardships and difficulties. And as we look back on the past, we must remember how God delivered us from our hardships and difficulties and how He showed His grace of deliverance to us. This is the right perspective of the past. Then we can believe that the God of salvation will save us from the difficulties we face in the present. Then we can face the present difficult reality with faith and with confidence in deliverance. Although the difficult circumstances have not changed yet, we have changed in which we can boldly go through those difficult circumstances by faith. Why does God not only give us the happiness of prosperity, but also allow us to go through hardships and difficulties? The reason for this is so that we cannot discover anything about our future (Eccle. 7:14). Although we may look better if we know what will happen in our future, we will surely sin more and more against God if we know our future. If we know our future, we will certainly be proud and not trust in God. And we will try to live our lives as our own. Not only we can be lazy, but we can also live our lives however we want to live. It is better not to know the future. It's no fun to know the score before the soccer game is over. We don't want to see it at all. We need not to know. We must not know our future. But what is certain is that only God knows our future. This is what God says in Isaiah 44:7 – “Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come-- yes, let him foretell what will come.” Who can say what is going to happen in the future? Who can tell us about the future work? There is no one in the world who can speak boldly with confidence what will happen in the future. Only the omniscient God knows the future. And all future work is done only by God's sovereign will in His providence. Therefore, we should listen to these words: “To man belong the plans of the heart, but from the LORD comes the reply of the tongue. ... In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.” What does it mean? It means that even though we plan our way with our hearts, it is God who leads our steps. God, who guides our paths, tells us: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” We must

know this thought of God. We must believe in this God's thoughts toward us. And this thought of God must be our thought as well. In other words, we must live by faith with the future and hope in the Lord. In prosperity as well as in hardship, we must live by faith with the future and hope.

What is our future and hope? Isn't it the Second Coming of Jesus? We must hope and be convinced by faith in the Second Coming of Jesus. And knowing that we will stand before the Lord and will settle account with Him in the future, we must faithfully take on the mission the Lord has entrusted to us on earth. We believe that Jesus, who was the same yesterday, today, and forever, will be with us (Heb. 13:8).

The right devotion perspective of the Christians

“It is a trap for a man to dedicate something rashly and only later to consider his vows” (Proverbs 20:15).

In order for us as Christians to live right in the eyes of God, we must have a right devotion perspective.

Look at Proverbs 20:25 – “It is a trap for a man to dedicate something rashly and only later to consider his vows.” Who do you think of in the Bible when you think about a person who made a vow in prayer? I think of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1. As we already know, “Hanna” was a woman whose womb the Lord closed (1 Sam. 1:5-6) who offered a vow to God. Look at 1 Samuel 1:10-11: “In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD. And she made a vow, saying, “O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.” God remembered Hannah, who had made the vow to God (v. 19), and she conceived and gave birth to a son named Samuel (v. 20). Hannah, after weaning the baby Samuel as she had made the vow to God, actually took him to the house of the Lord (v. 24) and gave the child to God for the rest of his life (v. 28). Listen to what she said to the priest Eli: “... As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD.” And he worshiped the LORD there.” Hannah gave her precious son Samuel to God. This is the dedication that we should learn. Another good example of dedication comes out in the Jesus’ story in the New Testament. It is none other than the story of a woman named Mary who poured “a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume” on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair (Jn. 12:3). Here, the woman “Mary” is not the mother of Jesus, but the younger sister of Lazarus who died and was raised again and of Martha. She was the woman who broke the jar of perfume and poured the perfume on the head and the feet of Jesus who came to Bethany before going to Jerusalem. “But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ‘Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages’” (vv. 4-5). He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. As keeper of the money bag, Judah Iscariot used to help himself to what was put into it (v. 6). When we think of these words, we may think that there are devotees like Mary in the church and thieves like Judas Iscariot. When I think of these two groups of people, I think there are people in the church who have the right devotion and the wrong devotion.

Let’s think about who are the Christians who have the wrong perspective of devotion in three ways:

First, the Christians who have the wrong perspective of devotion devote their lips only.

Honestly, how many people in the church are dedicated to the Lord by word only and serve the Lord’s church only by word? They are just talkative. They talk about serving but they have no action. These devotees who serve the Lord’s church with only their mouth never benefit the church. Rather, it is more likely them to cause problems in the church.

Second, the Christians who have the wrong perspective of devotion are coveted people in their hearts.

There are people within the church who not only talk about serving but also actually serving the Lord's church but with impure motives. These are those who serve the church with covetousness in their hearts. There is danger for these devotees to harm the church.

Third, the Christians who have the wrong perspective of devotion are those who are rashly devoted to God.

Look at Proverbs 20:25 – “It is a trap for a man to dedicate something rashly and only later to consider his vows.” Here, dedicate something rashly refers to a person who vows to give something to God and thinks again. And the rash devotee says: “My vow was a mistake” (Eccl. 5:6). For example, you dedicated your life to God when you received the word of God and His grace at the revival meeting. But after the revival meeting, you don't keep your vow to God because when you think about it again, you cannot dedicate your life to Him. Look at Deuteronomy 23:21-23: “If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the LORD your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin. But if you refrain from making a vow, you will not be guilty. Whatever your lips utter you must be sure to do, because you made your vow freely to the LORD your God with your own mouth.” Look at Numbers 30:2 – “When a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.”

Then who are the Christians who have the right perspective of devotion?

First, the Christians who have the right perspective of devotion are the ones who faithfully fulfill their vows to God and don't think twice.

Second, the Christians who have the right perspective of devotion are the ones who devote to God joyfully.

Look at Psalms 110:3 – “Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power; In holy array, from the womb of the dawn, Your youth are to You as the dew.” The Christians who have the right perspective of devotion are willing to devote themselves and their hearts are honest. This is because they know that God searches their hearts and delights in honesty. Look at 1 Chronicles 29:17 – “Since I know, O my God, that You try the heart and delight in uprightness, I, in the integrity of my heart, have willingly offered all these things; so now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here, make their offerings willingly to You.”

Third, the Christians who have the right perspective of devotion humbly offer what they have to God.

Look at 1 Chronicles 29:14 – “But who am I and who are my people that we should be able to offer as generously as this? For all things come from You, and from Your hand we have given You.”

We should not be devoted to God rashly. We should not dedicate ourselves to God with impure motives. And we should not dedicate ourselves to God only in words. Rather, we must keep our vows carefully to God. And we should devote to God humbly and joyfully.

The moral life of the Christians

“Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, ‘That’s enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you’” (Acts 24:24-27).

I read an internet article that says, ‘How to raise my child’s morality index: Not only IQ (Intelligence Quotient) should be good. A child with a high MQ (Moral Quotient) will succeed.’ Professor Robert Coles of Harvard University in the United States claims that people who know how to be good and considerate are successful. In today’s and upcoming future society, the claim is that children with high MQ (Moral Quotient) are more successful than children with high IQ (Intelligent Quotient). Since the dawn of the information age the rapidly changing world requires lifelong education and self-development for all members of society. If this trend continues, after 10 years, we will not be able to have differentiated competitiveness from others with only our expertise. Although we are trying to improve our children’s competitiveness by making them to do musical instruments, sports and other things so hard, but when we look around, there are quite many children who are doing all those things very well. In this time, it is the moral intelligence that exemplifies oneself and draws devotion and participation from others. The people with high moral intelligence know how to serve others and know how to succeed together. It is because morality is nothing more than learning the principles, norms, and values of seeing the world. Tracking people who have graduated from Harvard University in the past 60 years and the findings that school performance and success have nothing to do with it supports this. Looking at the faces of socially successful people, they were people of high morality, such as humorous people, considerate people, kind people, and people who judge right and wrong well (Internet).

The noticeable crisis in our days is the loss of morality. Morality is the exercise of the will to do what is right and not to do what is wrong. Even if we have to do what is wrong, feeling remorse in our conscience is proof that we still have moral roots. But we can’t but be surprised to see that some people are doing wrongs without any hesitation. The New Testament states that such a case their consciences were seared with a branding iron (1 Tim. 4:2). Ethical theologian R. Niver said: ‘The identity of the Christian is exposed by the morality of that life’ (Internet). How is the morality of us, the Christians? How do the people in this world look at us? We Christians must have a higher moral level than the people of this world. Otherwise, if we lower our moral level, then our Christian identity will eventually collapse.

When we look at Acts 24:24-27, we see Apostle Paul not only spoke about faith in Christ Jesus to the governor Felix (v. 24) but also spoke about the morality of those who believe in Jesus and His gospel. That morality is righteousness and self-control (v. 25). Here “righteousness” refers to the moral act of a person who believes the gospel rather than the justification of God who hears the gospel and believes Jesus Christ (Yoo Sang-sup). The moral conduct is that Governor Felix, as the governor of the Jews, must deal with everything fairly and correctly according to Roman law and Jewish customs (Yoo). So the Paul’s exhortation would have stricken Governor Felix’s conscience. The reason is because Felix was a person who had consistently run a far-reaching unjust reign (Yoo). I think that the Paul’s exhortation applies to our Christian politicians as well. As Christian politicians who believe in Jesus, their moral behavior must be right and honest. They must never come near corruption. This Tuesday at 6:30

pm, I watched some news about Iraq on Channel 7. The news was about the best hospital in Iraq. But a doctor said that the hospital didn't have any basic medical equipment or drugs. Why was the hospital like this? The cause is because of corruption. Although the amount of oil in Iraq is extracted to some extent and earned by the oil every day, but because of the corrupt people among politicians, there is no supply of the most basic things to the Iraq's famous hospital. The corrupt politicians are stealing the money. Therefore, in Iraq, many people are not well treated in the hospital. Like this, corruption involves such corrupt political funds, or money. So Paul told Governor Felix about "self-control." Here, "self-control" refers to the control and suppression of desires (Yoo).

Benjamin Franklin was born in a poor Puritan family and had only been in school for a year. But he was greatly influenced by his mother's education and another pastor's Puritan education. From an early age, he learned to work hard and read. He was the founder of the American Philosophy, the inventor of the lightning rod, and the first French ambassador. He left a saying, 'Do not sell virtue to get property or sell freedom to gain power.' In addition, he has defined 13 virtues since his childhood and has lived his life according to those virtues. The first of the virtues is 'self-control'. Apostle Paul said that "All things are lawful, but not all things edify" (1 Cor. 10:23). The Bible considers "self-control" as the virtue's first priority. A person with self-control edifies and a person who edifies has self-control. S/he is neither tempted nor tempts others. Virtue in Greek has a 'building a house' meaning. Virtue has the power to build up. Americans have a proverb that says, 'Although beauty is destroyed, virtue is not destroyed' (Internet).

Why did Apostle Paul exhort Governor Felix on the matter of "self-control" in Acts 24:24-27? One of the reasons is that Governor Felix had a greed for material things. Governor Felix was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him (v. 26). Perhaps Governor Felix knew of the news that Paul had received an offering from the Gentile churches and had come to Jerusalem to help the Jerusalem church. I think that was why Felix approached Paul for the money. Indeed, if we as Christians want to live a moral life worthy of the gospel, we must abandon our love for money. As Paul said in 1 Timothy 6:10, we should not love money because the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. The reason is because those who love money have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs (v. 10). Therefore, we should not love money. In order to live worthy of the gospel, we must throw away greed and be clean with money. Especially when it comes to the Christian politicians and the church leaders, they have to clean with money. Another reason why Apostle Paul exhorted Governor Felix on self-control was because of Felix's desire. According to Jewish historian Josephus, the corrupt, deputy governor Felix could not restrain his desires, but fell in love with the outstanding beauty of the Jewish woman, Drusilla (v. 24). So in order to marry her, Felix persuaded her through the Jewish magician Atmos from Gubro so that she could get rid of her husband and marry Felix (Drusilla was a Felix's third wife). In other words, Governor Felix was a man who had not been in control of sexual desire. Not only did he love money, he was a man who could not restrain his sexual desire. So Apostle Paul preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to Governor Felix, and said to him that in order to live worthy of His gospel, he had to have self-control. As Christians, we must listen to Apostle Paul's exhortation in order to have a right moral life. We must control our sexual desires. We must control our desires for money. We must be clean regarding money as well as sexually clean. In particular, we pastors should promote sexual purity. You may be familiar with many news as to how many pastors have not overcome sexual desires, and because of the scandals in the church that are covering the glory of God and hurting the hearts of the church members. As this world become more and more evil, it seems like we are losing self-control. Everyone, not just pastors, is losing self-control. As a result, we are losing our ability to restrain our desire to sin. Therefore, there are countless Christians who commit themselves to sin that they do not want.

If we, like Governor Felix, have lost our self-control and are doing injustice, we should also listen to the coming judgment that Paul preached to Felix. In Acts 24:25, the Bible tells us that Apostle Paul addressed Governor Felix not only righteousness and self-control but also "the judgment to come." Perhaps when he referred to future judgments, he spoke not only of the judgments that unbelievers will receive, but also of those who had done injustice and iniquity on earth. Also, he would have revealed that in the last days it would be Jesus Christ who

would judge the whole world in righteousness (17:30-31). At that time, Governor Felix was afraid. Why was he afraid? It was because his sins had been exposed. The exhortation of Apostle Paul had no choice but to give fear to Felix, who didn't live up to the gospel, did injustice, and was living in sexual desire and was sinning against God. So Governor Felix stopped Paul's words and told him, "You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you" (vv. 24:25). Here, the important question is: 'Did Governor Felix hear the exhortations of Paul's gospel, the counsel of the proper life of the gospel that is morally righteous and self-control and have changed? (vv. 24-25) As we can see in verse 26, after Governor Felix received the moral lesson about the gospel and the worthy life of the gospel from Paul, he was hoping that Paul would offer him the bribe under shock and fear. This shows that Felix refused to be changed. Also in verse 27, Governor Felix left Paul in prison, "wishing to do the Jews a favor." This shows that Felix didn't accept Paul's counsel. The corrupt politician who doesn't know God doesn't make it a problem to do unjust to others to solidify his position (Park).

How is our moral life as Christians? We as believers in the gospel must live our lives worthy of His gospel. We must do righteousness. We who are justified must live righteous lives. We must be right and honest. Also, in this age of losing self-control, we must exercise self-control, one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:23). Whether it is greed or sexual desire, we must be self-control. We Christians must raise the Moral Quotient (MQ). Therefore, the gospel of Jesus Christ must be preached through our lips and through our lives.

The Christian pride

“When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: ‘Release those men.’ The jailer told Paul, ‘The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace.’ But Paul said to the officers: ‘They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out.’ The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and encouraged them. Then they left” (Acts 16:35-40).

Today, too many people seem to live in inferiority and frustration. Disregarding themselves, they keep repeating the thought that 'I am nothing, I am not worthy of grace or blessing.' Negative and dark thoughts like this result in terrible ruin. One of the consequences is self-abuse. For example, every time we look in our mirror, we look at ourselves and lose our self-esteem in inferiority and frustration, insisting on ourselves, and live our lives saying to ourselves, 'This ugly boy, this filthy boy, you dirty boy, you don't deserve a happy life.' What is inferiority? It means “the condition of being lower in status or quality than another or others” (Internet). In Chinese, the sense of inferiority means ‘to be humble and to despise oneself.’ After all, inferiority is a feeling that we consider our own physique, appearance, ability, and educational background to be inferior to that of others, or to devalue it to a worthless human being. The people with inferiority have low self-esteem due to their unhealthy self-concept. When a person is caught in inferiority, he becomes passive, loses himself in everything, and because of this feeling, he cannot do anything positively. In general, the person who is inferior feels that he is lacking in comparison with other people by broadly interpreting his lacking aspects.

An English-language scholar and philosopher C. S. Lewis of Cambridge University of England said Satan's greatest weapon in destroying the personality and consciousness of modern people is the ‘comparison consciousness’ that is behind the inferiority. Too many people, even Christians, are attacked by this Satan's weapon and live with inferiority, passive life, and low self-esteem in all things. They are internally anxious, fearful, and self-abusive. Some people with inferiority sometimes have perfectional symptoms that come from keeping the inferior from being revealed. They are trying very hard to cover and disguise their inferior parts. But we Christians must live with pride. What is pride? It is self-esteem, a positive view of self-existence value. A British psychologist Dr. J. Hardfield's research on self-confidence shows that when we have sense of shame and say to ourselves, ‘You're wrong, it's over!’, we're using only less than 30% of what we actually have. But on the contrary, when we give ourselves the confidence, "You can do it! You're special! Why can't you do it?’, then we can use 500% of our ability (Internet).

We Christians can find our own positive existence only in Jesus. We can never find anything in us that can be proud of something outside of Jesus. As new creatures only in Jesus are we looking for eternal pride and infinite dignity conferred upon us in His gospel. Therefore, as the new creation in Jesus, we are the children of God, we open up our spiritual eyes to see ourselves from God's perspective of how Heavenly Father sees us. For example,

when we look at ourselves in terms of how God see us based on Isaiah 43:4 “Since you are precious and honored in my sight”, we realize more and more how valuable our own worth is.

Paul and Silas were proud as Romans.

Apostles Paul and Silas were put into prison because they had been innocently framed. At that time they prayed and praised God (Acts 16:25). At that time, in God’s presence Paul and Silas could have fled but they didn’t. And there was a work of rejoicing because the jailer and all his house believed in God (v. 34). Then when it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer to release Paul and Silas (v. 35). So the jailer told Paul, “The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace” (v. 36). How interesting Paul's answer was then: “They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out” (v. 37). How bold was Paul's attitude? It is interesting to note that Apostle Paul revealed that he and Silas were Romans. Apparently after healing a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future (v. 16) in the name of Jesus Christ (v. 18), her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone (v. 19). So they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace (v. 19) and brought them before the magistrates and said, “These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice” (vv. 20-21). Even at that time, Paul didn’t say that he was Roman. Although he and Silas were Roman citizens, they were put into prison without proper legal proceedings according to Roman law (Yoo). So Paul said to the officers, “Let them come themselves and escort us out” (v. 37). It is not clear why Apostle Paul now reveals himself and Silas to be Romans. If Paul told the magistrates that he and Silas were Romans before they were thrown into prison, then they didn’t have to be stripped, beaten and severely flogged (vv. 22-23). But it’s interesting to see that Paul revealed that he and Silas were Romans after they were stripped, beaten and severely flogged. However, one thing is clear that because Paul didn’t revealed himself and Silas as Romans, the jailer and his whole house believed in God (v. 34). If Paul and Silas said they were Romans when the masters of the healed slave dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities, they would not be held in prison. If so, then Paul and Silas wouldn’t have experienced the miraculous power of God's presence in prison and wouldn’t have met the jailer. If so, then there would be no such thing as verse 34 that the jailer and his whole house believed in God. When we meditate on this wonderful work of salvation through Paul and Silas, the men of prayers, Paul and Silas’ attitude was that, like the other apostles, they rejoiced because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name (5:41). Paul revealed that he and Silas were Romans when he was released from prison (16:37). At that time, the officers reported this to the magistrates that Paul and Silas were Romans (v. 38). At that time the magistrates were afraid (v. 38). The reason was because at that time those who were Roman citizens were to be tried in a very fair and just process compared to those of noncitizens. But without such a fair and just process, the Romans Paul and Silas were imprisoned after they were beaten with rods (vv. 22-23). If this was reported to the Roman authorities, those magistrates could not escape the responsibility, so they personally came to the prison and kept begging Paul and Silas to leave the city (v. 39). How confidently did Paul and Silas left the prison? In seeing Paul and Silas found their right and being treated by the Romans, we can see that Paul and Silas were proud to be Roman.

It may be less now, but long ago, it seemed hopeful to have US citizenship. It was usually the idea of immigrants to expect that once they get US permanent residence, even if they are not citizens, they will be recognized as US citizens that the people in this world might be envious. Maybe it was 1995. When I first went to Korea, I went to the Korean Embassy in Fukuoka, Japan, because I didn’t have a visa. At that time, I went with my cousin who was living in Busan. When I got off the Japanese airfield and tried to enter, we have to write something on a paper. Since I am an American citizen, a custom agent wrote things for me on the paper while he told my cousin to go and fill it up. At that time, my cousin was very mad. At that time, I realized little bit the power of US citizenship. Although this was just a small example of my own experience, it was comfortable being an American citizen. After all, enjoying my rights as a US citizen can be prideful when it is compared to other countries citizens.

We must have pride as Christians. Why should we have pride as Christians? The reason is because our citizenship is in heaven, not in the United States. Look at Philippians 3:20-21: “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.” We who have citizenship in heaven are waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ to come again. When He comes to this world again, we will be transformed into conformity with the body of His glory. That is why we must live with pride. We should never live in self-abuse or passively with inferiority or frustration. We should never have material riches and worldly pride like the Laodicean church (Rev. 3:16-17). This is because worldly pride eventually causes spiritual poverty. Rather, we must go toward the heaven with spiritual pride in the midst of our worldly need. Sine we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ, we must be strong and courageous with the pride of being able to do all things through Him who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13). The reason is because the Lord has overcome the world. Look at John 16:33 - “...In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” We Christians need to live this world with such pride and strength and boldness. We should live with confidence and courage in the Lord. We should never live in fear and insecurity. Why is that? Look at 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.”

The Christians who walk the blameless way with the integrity of their hearts

“I will give heed to the blameless way When will You come to me? I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart” (Psalms 101:2).

People are seeing the way we walk. Especially our family members are watching how we live. But they cannot pay attention to our hearts. And they cannot see our hearts. How can they see our hearts that we cannot see and we don't know well? But God is looking at our hearts well. And God knows our hearts well. Therefore, the Christians who live their faith before God live by focusing on what God sees. They wish to imitate the heart of the Lord. And they try to obey the word of the Lord with the heart of the Lord. But those Christians who live a religious life before people live by focusing on what they see. As a result, even though their hearts don't resemble the heart of Jesus, their conduct seems to resemble Jesus in people's eyes. Therefore, they are praised by the people, and they are even honored by them. Perhaps when they were first praised, their consciences were both remorseful and distressed in their hearts. But in the midst of them, they don't repent, turn away their hearts, and pursue a right life of faith before God, so they continue to be conscious of people and live a life of praise and respect before them. As their life continues, they eventually imitate people's right life of faith. Then, like the Pharisees, their lips honor God, but their hearts are far from God (Mt. 15:8). Where should we focus and live? Is it God or people? Is it our heart or our conduct?

In Psalm 101:2, the psalmist King David says, “I will give heed to the blameless way” and “I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart.” As I was meditating on this verse, I titled this quiet time meditation as “The Christians who walk the blameless way with the integrity of their hearts.” But after I wrote this title, I thought that those who read this meditation seemed unable to agree with the word “the blameless way.” The reason is that we believe that no one in this world can walk in the blameless way. We believe that only Jesus walked the blameless way with blameless and perfect heart as the perfect sinless Man on earth. That is why his followers, we Christians, have a duty to imitate Jesus' perfect heart and perfect and blameless life. For reference, the words "the blameless way" and "the integrity of my heart" that King David referred to in Psalms 101:2 mean "a blameless heart" and "a blameless life." In other words, we are instructed to be blameless Christians. As we live our faith, we must become more and more blameless Christians. Although we cannot be fully blameless Christians on this earth, we must move forward toward that goal. In order to do this, we must first seek the blameless heart. The reason why we put our heart first before our actions is because our actions should naturally come out of our hearts. We seek for the blameless hearts, so that in our blameless heart we should naturally express our blameless conduct. Then what is the blameless heart?

First, the blameless heart is far from the perverse heart.

Look at Psalms 101:4 – “A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will know no evil.” Here “A perverse heart” refers to crafty heart, a life that is different inside and outside (Park). In other words, the perverse heart refers to hypocrisy. King David stayed away from this hypocrisy, or the perverse heart. He also turned away from those who practiced deceit (v. 7). He prevented those who practiced deceit to dwell within his house (v. 7). So David stayed away from all the wicked things. By destroying all the wicked, he tried to cut off all who do evil from the city of the Lord (v. 8).

We, Christians, who seek a blameless heart, must stay away from the wicked heart. In other words, we must stay away from the cunning heart. We must stay away from hypocrisy. Therefore, we must not live different inside and outside life. And we must stay away from lies. Therefore, we must stay away from evil. We must live a life that is far from hypocrisy and wickedness by staying away from evil and false hearts. We must draw near to good works with a sincere heart. In pursuit of blameless heart, we must live a life of doing good with the sincere heart.

Second, the blameless heart does not accept a proud heart.

Look at Psalms 101:5 – “Whoever slanders his neighbor in secret, him will I put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure.” King David didn’t tolerate those who had haughty eyes and the proud heart. If he has tolerated those who had haughty eyes and the proud heart, then they would observe the work of the country, would abuse the people superciliously, and would try to sit in high places, and will eventually rebel. Such proud people would quietly slander their neighbors (Park). That is, the proud are those who harm others with secret propaganda. King David not only didn’t tolerate such proud and disloyal servants, he also destroyed them.

We Christians who seek the blameless heart should never tolerate the proud heart. Also, we should not tolerate the proud. In addition, we must never slander our neighbors quietly. We should not tolerate those who quietly slander our neighbors. The reason is that when the Lord called us, He didn’t call us to harm our neighbors, but to love them. Therefore, we must love our neighbor with humble heart. In pursuit of the blameless heart, we should humble ourselves and consider our neighbors better than ourselves, and look to their interests (Phil. 2:3-4).

Third, the blameless heart is a faithful heart.

Look at Psalms 101:6 – “My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he whose walk is blameless will minister to me.” King David searched his people and kept away from those who had wicked and proud hearts in the land, and he hated the deeds of faithless men (v. 3). And he brought the faithful in the land close to him, making them to minister him (v. 6). The reason was because he needed faithful workers, not cunning men or proud men. In other words, King David made faithful men to serve him who walked in the blameless way (v. 6).

We, Christians, who seek perfect, blameless hearts, should hate the apostate's works. And we must love the works of the faithful. In order to do this, our hearts must first be faithful. And we must be faithful to our Lord. The reason is because it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful (1 Cor. 4:2). We must be trusted with very little. Then we can be trusted with much (Lk. 16:10). We must be faithful to the Lord even to the point of death (Rev. 2:10). Therefore, when we stand before the Lord, I hope and pray that we may be praised by the Lord, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” (Mt. 25:21, 23)

The wise Christians

“Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a ‘fool’ so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: ‘He catches the wise in their craftiness’; and again, ‘The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.’ So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future--all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God” (1 Corinthians 3:18-23).

What should we do if we encounter trials? The Bible, in James 1: 2, tells us: “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds.” The Bible tells us that whenever we face trials of many kinds, we should consider it pure joy. However, many times when we face many kinds of trials personally, at home, and in church, we don’t consider them pure joy. What is the reason? The reason is because we don’t know that the testing of our faith develops perseverance (v. 3). Why don’t we know this truth? The reason is because we lack (God's) wisdom. So Apostle James says: “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him” (v. 5). We should ask for wisdom from God, who gives generously without finding fault. Then God will generously give us wisdom. In this way, we can consider it pure joy whenever we face trials personally, at home and in church and we can let perseverance to finish its work. And by persevering we may be mature and complete, not lacking anything (v. 4).

The Corinthian church was a church that lacked much. One of the reasons was because there were people in the church who were unwise and foolish in God's eyes. Those foolish people were worldly (1 Cor. 3:1-4) and their faith was so childish that they were living near the level of unbelievers. They were like “mere infants” (v. 1), who were immature, so that they didn’t stand firmly on Jesus Christ, the foundation of the house of God (v. 11). As a result, they were deceived by the temptation of Satan who tried to build the God’s house on different foundation and committed sins against God. The reason why the members of the Corinthian church were shaken was because they didn’t have the ability to eat the solid food, but were eating milk that was the basic doctrines taught in the Bible (v. 2). They didn’t have the power to understand the God's deep doctrine. In a word, they only knew the elementary teachings about Christ (Heb. 6:1). So they didn’t know that they were God’s fields (1 Cor. 3:9), and Paul and Apollos they boasted were nothing (v. 7), but just the servants who planted the seed and watered it and God make it grow (vv. 5-7). Furthermore, the Corinthian church saints didn’t serve the church according to God’s grace like an expert builder Paul (v. 10) and didn’t stand firmly on the rock of Jesus Christ, the foundation of the church (v. 11). This was because they were listening to false instruction which was the bad material instead of the good material, the pure truth of God (v. 12). As a result, they were still defiled by the corrupt nature and acted like mere men (v. 3), destroying God's temple without knowing that they are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwell in them (vv. 16-17). How were they destroying the God's temple? They did so by living according to the flesh, committing immorality (6:18), and sins of breaking the unity of the church by conflict (1:10, 11; 3:3-4) and division (12:25). They boasted, “I am of Paul,” “I am of Apollos,” and were unable to keep the unity of the church because there was jealousy and strife among them (3:3-4). What should the Corinth church saints do? What should we do in order to keep the unity of the church? Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:18-23 that the Corinthian church saints to be the wise Christians. And the Bible tells us two ways how the wise Christians keep their church unity:

First, the wise Christians don't deceive themselves.

Look at 1 Corinthians 3:18 – “Let no man deceive himself If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise.” When we look at conflicts in the church, those who think they are wise often seem to cause problems. Who think that they are wise? It is those who don't trust God but depend on their own understanding (Prov. 3:5-7). According to Jeremiah 9:24, the true understanding that is pleasing in the sight of God is knowing God. But those who rely on their own understanding say that they know God, but they don't really know God. Another Bible verse that supports this fact is 1 Corinthians 1:21. The Bible says, “For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him” In short, those who think they are wise who cause conflict in the church are arrogant people who don't know God (v. 21). These arrogant people of the Corinthian church were guilty of breaking the church's unity in jealousy and quarreling. Perhaps they were not proud in the early days of their faith in Jesus. We can guess this based on 1 Corinthians 1:26-29: “Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.” The saints in the Corinthian church surely knew that not many of them were wise, influential and of noble birth by human standards. But God chose such ones to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Way of the Cross, and to accept Jesus as the Savior through Paul. Some of the Corinthian church saints who were called to be saints by God's grace were proud and thought that they are wise by the standards of this age (3:18). When we think about why these people were arisen in the church at Corinth, the reason is because they forgot God's grace. As a result, they became proud and depended on their wisdom rather than on God. Eventually, God left them to catch the wise in their craftiness (v. 19, cf. Job 5:13). And they were foolish in God's sight (v. 19) and their thoughts were futile (v. 20). But the proud, who thought themselves wise in this world, never realized that their thoughts were futile (v. 20). So Paul said to them, “Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a "fool" so that he may become wise” (v. 18).

We must not deceive ourselves. How can we deceive ourselves? We can deceive ourselves by thinking that we are wise by the standards of this age. We must know that even though the wisdom of this world may seem wise, it is foolishness in God's sight (v. 19). Therefore, as the Bible tells us, if we think we are wise in this world, we must become a “fool” so that we may become wise (v. 18). In other words, if we deceive ourselves and think that we are wise by the standards of this age, we must realize that this is foolishness in the sight of God. The wisdom of this world that doesn't know God and denies God is truly foolish and vain. We should not serve the church with such foolish and vain wisdom. Then, like the Corinthian church saints, we are bound to sin against God by breaking the unity of the church in envy and conflict. Rather, we should be wise in God's eyes by forsaking the foolish and vain wisdom of this world. Who is wise in God's eyes? This wise people in God's eyes are those who don't rely on their own understanding but rely on God and fear God and are obeying God's Words by faith. And those who obey the Word of God by faith are the wise Christians who keep the unity of the church. We must become the wise Christians. I hope and pray that we become wise Christians in God's eyes and faithfully keep the unity of the Lord's church.

Second and last, the wise Christians don't boast in men.

Look at 1 Corinthians 3:21 – “So then let no one boast in men For all things belong to you.” Apostle Paul already told the Corinthian church saints, “Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord” (1:31). This was because the Corinthian church saints boasted those whom they followed, such as Paul, Apollos, and Peter (v. 12). That was why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1 that God chose the foolish things, the weak things, the lowly things and the despised things of the world, and let them hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and saved them by faith in Him. The reason was so

that no one might boast before Him (v. 29). Why do we boast our leaders whom we follow before God? Why are we, like the Corinthian church saints, rely on our own merits, abilities and wisdom and boast our leaders whom we follow and cause faction and division in the church? (vv. 10-13) What is the reason? The reason is because we forget that salvation is by God's grace and God's power, and we believe that it is by our people's merit and people's power. The reason why we boast people rather than God is because we lost the consciousness of God's grace and became conscious of human merit. This consciousness of human merit can only make us to boast people instead of God. The Corinthian church saints were boasting Paul or Apollo or Cephas (Peter) (3:22). And because they boast each of them, their own leaders whom they liked, respected, and followed, the Corinthian church was divided by envy and conflict. Thus, Paul said, "no more boasting about men!" (v. 21), to the Corinthian church saints in order to warn them of this factional harm to the unity of the church. What was the reason? The reason was because all things were theirs (v. 21). It means that since Paul, Apollo, Peter, the spiritual leaders of the Corinthian church saints, and everything in the world were for their benefit, their spiritual leaders didn't need to be specially treated and to boast about them. Even "the world or life or death or the present or the future – all are yours" (v. 22), Paul told the Corinthian church saints that they didn't have to boast about anyone or anything but only God. All this was for the benefit of the saints, and for the glory of God (2 Cor. 4:15), so Paul said that those who were enjoying the benefit should only give glory to God (MacArthur).

We must become wise Christians and give glory only to God. We should never cause a faction in the church as we boast of those who are church leaders. They are for the benefit of our faith. Therefore, we should not boast them but boast only God and give glory to Him. Then we will be able to maintain the unity of the church.

In order for us to keep the unity of the church, we must all become wise Christians. And the wise Christians never have human merit consciousness. Rather, they abandon the human merit consciousness and have the consciousness of God's grace. We are saved by God's grace and God's power, not by our own merit or power (1 Cor. 1:27-28). So Apostle Paul said, "by His doing you are in Christ Jesus" (v. 30). What does it mean? It means that both the Corinthian church saints and we are all saved by God and thus we are in Christ Jesus. And regarding this fact, this is what Paul said, "and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God" (3:23). This is the most important prerequisite to overcome the division of the church. It is the fact that the church belongs to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, is the source of healing of the church division and of the spiritual unity of the church (MacArthur). Therefore, the wise Christians look to the Lord to end the church's conflict and division, and to keep the unity of the church. I hope and pray that we all become the wise Christians.

The Holy Spirit-filled Christians

“But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’ At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he fell asleep.” (Acts 7:55-60)

What is filled with the Holy Spirit? This is what Pastor Andrew Murray said about filled with the Holy Spirit: ‘Without filled with the Holy Spirit, it is absolutely impossible for a Christian or the church to live and work as God desires. Therefore, we must seek filled with the Holy Spirit with all our heart’ (Internet).

First, filled with the Holy Spirit means filled with Christ.

Look at John 16:13-14: “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.” Wherever the Holy Spirit works, Jesus Christ is exalted and His name is testified. When Peter and John faced persecution in witnessing Jesus Christ, they prayed to God “Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness” (Acts 4:29). And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and eagerly testified the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit didn’t emphasize himself and since the glory of Jesus Christ came, the Holy Spirit was called “God who hides.”

Second, filled with the Holy Spirit means that not only Jesus Christ is exalted, but also His Word is manifested in power.

The Lord has also said that He is the Spirit of Truth and “He will guide you into all the truth” (Jn. 16:13). Ephesians 5:18 says, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.” Colossians 3:16 says “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Here, Paul used the phrase “Let the word of Christ richly dwell” instead of the phrase ‘filled with the Holy Spirit’. Therefore, ‘the word of Christ richly dwell’ means same as ‘filled with the Holy Spirit’. The ‘filled with the Holy Spirit’ is not just our emotional change, but a state of full control of us with the eternal Truth Christ and His Word. Also, the ‘filled with the Holy Spirit’ is explained in comparison with drunkenness. Just as alcohol enters us and dominates our central nerves, the Holy Spirit controls all our lives. He controls us by His Word and sanctifies us to make God’s holy life within us.

The Jewish religious leaders, who were listening to the preaching of Stephen who was filled with the Holy Spirit, were stiff-necked men who persecuted and killed the righteous in resentment against the Holy Spirit. They didn’t obey the word when they received it. In Acts 7:55-60, we find Stephen, who was filled with the Holy Spirit,

unlike the Jewish religious leaders who were stiff-necked. I would like to think about who the Holy Spirit Christians are in three ways:

First, the Holy Spirit-filled Christians look and say.

Look at Acts 7:55-56: “But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’” What did Stephen see and say? When Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God (v. 55). Now the question is ‘Why Jesus was standing?’ The New Testament consistently testifies that Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God's throne (Yoo). But why did Jesus stand at the right hand of God in Acts 7:55? The scholars' interpretations vary. There is an interpretation that Jesus was standing up to receive the martyr Stephen's entry into the glorious kingdom after his death. And there is another interpretation that says the reason why Jesus was standing up was because Jesus, as a witness, wanted to testify the message and ministry of His servant Stephen like in the Jewish court (Wiersbe). This is what Professor Sang-seop Yoo says: ‘The reason why Son of Man Jesus stood up at the right hand of God's throne was to acknowledge Stephen before God who was boldly testifying and acknowledging Him, and to intercede for him to Heavenly Father that he would be faithful to the end.’ The reason why God allowed Stephen to see this heavenly vision was to encourage him on the one hand and on the other hand, to show that Jesus is still serving as a legal representative and mediator at the right hand of God for his faithful witness. (See Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:24).

The Holy spirit-filled Christians are those who testify what they have seen and heard. Look at 1 John 1:3 – “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.” Here, what does “we have seen” mean? In other words, what does it mean that we have seen Jesus? It means to believe in Jesus. Look at John 12:44-45: “Then Jesus cried out, “When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me.” Here, the phrase ‘he who sees Jesus’ and ‘he who believes in Jesus’ are used synonymously. Therefore, the Holy Spirit-filled Christians who believe in Jesus hear His voice through the Word of God by the work of the Holy Spirit and testify what they have heard. In other words, the Holy Spirit-filled Christians are those who believe in Jesus and His gospel and preach it. And the purpose of doing so is for the listeners to have fellowship with Jesus.

Second, the Holy Spirit-filled Christians depend on the Lord.

Look at Acts 7:59 – “While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” When the Holy Spirit-filled Stephen spoke what he saw, that is the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God, how did the leaders of the Sanhedrin and those leaders of the Synagogue of the Freeman who were furious and gnashed their teeth at Stephen respond? (v. 54) Look at Acts 7:57-58: “At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.” These Sanhedrin leaders and the leaders of the synagogues of the Freeman, who were stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears (v. 51) didn’t believe in Jesus even though it was obvious that what Stephen saw and said, that is “the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” (v. 56) proved the apostles’ preaching about Jesus resurrection and ascension was without any false because they were murderers who killed Jesus on the cross. Rather, they closed their ears completely with both hands when Stephen spoke (v. 57). They were against the Holy Spirit, and against the Holy Spirit-filled Stephen (Yoo). They yelled at the top of their voices and they all rushed at Stephen (v. 57). And they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him (v. 58). At that time, Stephen prayed to Jesus who stood at the right hand of God that he would entrust his soul to Jesus who advocated and defended him before God. Look at Acts 7:59 – “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” This prayer is also found in Psalms 31:5 – “Into your hands I commit my spirit.” This

psalmist's prayer eventually points to the prayer of Jesus on the cross: "'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit'" (Lk. 23:46). In Acts 7:59, we see that the Holy Spirit-filled Stephen offered the prayer of Jesus on the cross. On the crossroad between life and death, Stephen entrusted his life to the Lord.

The Holy Spirit-filled Christians depend on God. Those who rebel against the Holy Spirit deny the Lord and trust in themselves. But the Holy Spirit Christians rely solely on the Lord even when they are stoned to death. Since the Holy Spirit-filled Stephen saw the glorious Lord, who died, was resurrected, and stood at the right hand of God entrust his spirit to Him. Like Stephen, we are Christians who have resurrection faith. Then, in the matter of life and death situation, we should entrust our spirits to the Lord. Whatever situation we are in, we must rely completely on the Lord.

Third and last, the Holy Spirit-filled Christians forgive.

Look at Acts 7:60 – "Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep." The Holy Spirit-filled Stephen fell on his knees and prayed for forgiveness even when he was stoning to death: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (v. 60). This prayer of forgiveness is similar to the prayer Jesus offered on the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk. 23:34). The Stephen's prayer of forgiveness also includes forgiveness for Saul, who was controlling behind this work of killing Stephen (Yoo). But was this Stephen's prayer answer immediately? Not at all. Rather than being immediately changed, Saul took the lead in persecuting the church even more (Yoo). However, in Acts 9, Saul was converted and faithfully carried out the ministry of the witnesses in suffering and persecutions from Acts 9-28. How amazing is this? Like this, the prayer of forgiveness is powerful.

Look at the American steel king Andrew Carnegie's writing about 'forgiving heart: 'He is famous for having a lot more talented people around him than other people. He was asked how he was able to put such outstanding people by his side, and, Carnegie said the one of the secrets is 'the heart of forgiveness.' There is a very special reason for Carnegie to have such a forgiving heart. When he was in his early twenties, he was in charge of delivering the funds from the company he worked for. On a train with a huge bag with a lot of money, he sat on the railing of the train and began to doze. But suddenly he woke up and the bag was gone. It was obvious that he slept and dropped his bag out of the train. Carnegie drifted over to the engineer, thinking about the situation, and asking him to back up the train. These days, there is no way any engineer would do that, but at that time people's minds were relatively simple. So the engineer, who was sorry to Carnegie, backed the train a few kilometers. Carnegie's eyes, which were staring out, came into the familiar bag that fell by the stream of water. Shouting close to screaming, Carnegie jumped out of the train and opened the bag. Fortunately, the cash was intact. So he continued to hug the bag like a treasure trove on his return train. It was said that Carnegie made an important decision to live up to his life with that daunting memory. From that time on, Carnegie decided to forgive young people even if they made a very decisive mistake, unless they had done it fraudulently. Since in human life, no matter how hard we try faithfully, sudden situation can happen. So Carnegie thought that the lifelong dreams shouldn't be penalized because of the sudden situation' (Internet).

In Acts 6, the Bible says that Stephen was "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" (v. 5), and was a man full of God's grace and power who did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people (v. 8). Also, members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen, who argued with Stephen (v. 9) couldn't stand up against Stephen's wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke (v. 10). So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law to seize Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin (v. 12). Then they slandered Stephen in front of the religious leaders. "All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel" (v. 16). Like Stephen, those who are filled with the Holy Spirit look to (focus on) the Lord Jesus and live their Christian life. As they do so, they resemble the image of Jesus (filled with His grace). Since they live their

Christian life by solely relying on the merits of Jesus on the cross, they depend on Him completely (filled with faith). Not only they offer the Jesus' prayer of forgiveness on the cross but they also put it into practice (filled with power). I hope and pray that we all become such Holy Spirit-filled Christians.

The Christians who are responsible to the end

“and said to them, ‘You have done all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and you have obeyed me in everything I commanded. For a long time now--to this very day--you have not deserted your brothers but have carried out the mission the LORD your God gave you.’”(Joshua 22:2–3).

Are we Christians trustworthy in the eyes of the people in this world? Are we Christians trustworthy when we look at each other? For some reason we don't seem to trust each other while looking at each other because we lost trust to each other. Why did we lose trust? The reason is because we are not keeping what we say with our mouths. We spit out many promises in our mouths, but in reality we are not faithfully keeping those promises. As such, we Christians now become irresponsible people without credibility. What should we do?

In Joshua 22:2-3, we see Joshua, the leader of the Israelites, called the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh (v. 1) who went for the conquest of Canaan, the Promised Land and complimented them. In short, the content of the compliment is that they had kept the God's commanded responsibilities to the end (v. 3). What was the responsibility of the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh that they had kept to the end? It was to go armed over the Jordan before the Lord until He drove His enemies out before Him, until the land was subdued before the Lord (Num. 32:21-22). Initially, Moses rebuked the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh because they discouraged the Israelites (vv. 7, 9) by asking Moses “Do not make us cross the Jordan” (v. 5). The reason that asked Moses not to cross the Jordan was because they had very large herds and flock and the land of Jazer and Gilead were suitable for livestock (v. 1). So they wanted to build pens there for their livestock and cities for their women and children (v. 16). Think about it. The nine and half-tribe of Manasseh were about to cross the Jordan and to try to enter the land of Canaan, which God promised to give, but the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh asked Moses “Do not make us cross the Jordan” (v. 5) for their families and livestock. How disheartening this was to other nine and half-tribe? This was indeed the irresponsible request that the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh made to Moses (v. 5). But fortunately the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh heard the Moses' rebuke and made the promise, “We will not return to our homes until every Israelite has received his inheritance” (v. 18) after they built pens for their livestock and cities for their women and children, for their protection from the inhabitants of the land (v. 17). Also, they promised that they would not receive any inheritance with other nine and half-tribe on the land of Canaan (v. 19). Upon hearing this, Moses commanded the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh to do what they had promised (v. 24). Then they answered Moses: “We your servants will do as our lord commands. Our children and wives, our flocks and herds will remain here in the cities of Gilead. But your servants, every man armed for battle, will cross over to fight before the LORD, just as our lord says” (vv. 25-27). And not only did they keep all that Moses had commanded them, but they also heeded all that Joshua had commanded who became the Israel leader after the death of Moses. The Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh had not deserted their brothers but had carried out the mission the Lord their God gave them (Jos. 22:3). They kept their responsibilities to the end, as the word of promise spoken through their mouths. They showed their faithfulness as they made their vow. How responsible and trustworthy were these people?

We must keep the word of promise like the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. And we must keep it faithfully. The reason is because our God is faithful. It is also because God, who has made not one

of the good promises which He had made to the house of Israel failed but came to pass (21:45), is a sincere and faithful God who keeps the words promised to us in Jesus Christ to the end. If we have faith in our God and love Him who is sincere and faithful, then we must endure and fulfill our Lord-given responsibilities to us. I hope and pray that we be faithful to the Lord to the end.

The Christians who are victorious by the Word of God

“Remember your word to your servant, for you have given me hope. My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life. The arrogant mock me without restraint, but I do not turn from your law. I remember your ancient laws, O LORD, and I find comfort in them. Indignation grips me because of the wicked, who have forsaken your law. Your decrees are the theme of my song wherever I lodge. In the night I remember your name, O LORD, and I will keep your law. This has been my practice: I obey your precepts.” (Psalms 119:49-56)

God reproved, encouraged and exhorted me through the guest speaker at our Church revival meeting. He exhorted me to go on with the vision of raising a leader like Barnabas, a man full of the Holy Spirit and faith (Acts 11:24). Not only did He exhort me, God also comforted me with the word of God and strengthened me so that I could be driven by the vision that the Lord gave me (and the church) with more firm faith. Because of that grace, I want to labor more and more, seeing the possibility of one soul, finding potential leaders, and humbly joining the Lord in building them up as the Christ-centered visionary leaders. I want to devote my life to the work of raising up Christian leaders who will fight against themselves, their sins, the world, Satan and death to win spiritual warfare by the Word of God. Who are the Christian leaders who are victorious by the Word of God? I would like to be instructed in four ways based on Psalms 119: 49-56:

First, the Christian leaders who are victorious by the Word of God make His Word ‘my hope.’

Look at Psalms 119:49 – “Remember the word to Your servant, In which You have made me hope.” The psalmist was “in my affliction” (v. 50). The arrogant utterly derided him (v. 51). The purpose was to cause the psalmist to turn aside from the Lord's law (v. 51). And the psalmist was suffering because of the wicked who forsook the Lord's law (v. 53). In the midst of suffering, the psalmist prayed to the Lord: “Remember the word to Your servant, In which You have made me hope.” In other words, he pleaded with God to remember His promise to him. How could a true and faithful God forget the promise that He made to the psalmist? If someone forgot, it wasn't God but the psalmist. So when the psalmist was in trouble, he remembered the Lord's ordinances of old (v. 52). And he remembered His name in the night and kept His law (v. 55). Why did the psalmist remember God's Word? The reason was because the God's word was ‘my hope’ (v. 49). Indeed, the Word of God is our hope.

When we are in affliction, we must look to God, who is ‘my hope,’ in faith. When we are in trouble, we must remember the Word of the Lord, who is ‘my hope.’ And we must pray, expect, and wait for a faithful God who fulfills the promise that He gave us.

Second, the Christian leaders who are victorious by the Word of God make His Word “my comfort.”

Look at Psalms 119:50 – “This is my comfort in my affliction, That Your word has revived me.” The psalmist wanted to be comforted by the Word of God when he was in affliction. So he remembered the Lord's old

ordinances and comforted himself (v. 52). Here, “ordinances from of old” refer to the God's Word, which has been shown to be true for a long time and stands firm. In other words, the psalmist remembered the promised word of God that had been true from his past life and that had been standing firmly. As he looked back on the past, he found true comfort in his soul, thinking of God's faithfulness in fulfilling the word of promise.

The Christian leaders need to develop spiritual strength to comfort themselves. In order to do this, they must not only make God's promised word ‘my hope,’ but also go further and make the covenant God who gave the promise word as ‘my hope’ (v.49). And they must remember the word of the promise given by the faithful Lord who is ‘my hope,’ and hold on to them and ask Him in faith. Then through the word of God, which revives our afflicted souls (v. 50), we must experience God's lovingkindness (v. 76).

Third, the Christian leaders who are victorious by the Word of God make His Word “my songs.”

Look at Psalms 119:54 – “Your statutes are my songs In the house of my pilgrimage.” The psalmist considered the promise Word of God, which had been his hope and his comfort in affliction, “my songs” and praised God. He praised God by considering His words of promise as his songs “in the house of my pilgrimage.” How can a pilgrim have a house? Even if he has the house, it's only temporary. The psalmist looked upon the eternal house that is Heaven. He was heading toward Heaven in following the Word of God as he made the Word of God his songs.

We are the pilgrims who are moving toward our eternal house, Heaven. As we live in this pilgrim-like world, we are worshipers who praise God even in the midst of afflictions, seeking a better home. And when we worship God, we must praise God, remembering the work of salvation that God has already done to us in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, we must praise God by faith in anticipation of Jesus' second coming. Like prophet Habakkuk, we should sing praises to God in prayer (Hab. 3). Like Paul and Silas, who were in prison, prayed and praised God (Acts 16:25), and a marvelous miracle happened (not only being delivered from prison but also the jailer's and his family's souls were saved), we too must experience God's amazing work of salvation by making the Word our song and praying to God.

Fourth and last, the Christian leaders who are victorious by the Word of God make His Word ‘my possession.’

Look at Psalms 119:56 – “This has become mine, That I observe Your precepts.” The psalmist made God's word his own by keeping God's precepts that was his hope, his comfort, and his songs in affliction. He made affliction as an opportunity to make God's Word his possession. He used his crisis in his life as an opportunity to write down the word of God deeply on the tablet of his heart.

Through the death of my first child, the greatest crisis of my life, God wrote the Scripture Psalms 63:3 deeply in the tablet of my heart. I couldn't help but praise the Lord's eternal love that was better than my first baby's 55 days of life in this earth. It was God's amazing and marvelous love that He showed to me. Even now, when I meditate on Psalms 63:3 again when I go through some difficulties, God writes that word on the table of my heart deeply. The Word of God, Psalm 63:3 became mine (also the promised word of John 6:1-15 for me, and Matthew 16:18 for our church). Even in these days, God enables me to praise Him because through His promise words He gives me hope and comfort.

The Christian leaders who are victorious by the Word of God must make God's Word ‘my hope,’ “my comfort”, “my songs” and ‘my possession.’ Therefore, they must move forward to Heaven by winning the spiritual

battle with God's Word and by giving praise to God. I hope and pray that we may become such Christian leaders for His Kingdom and His glory.

The servants of Christ

“So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.” (1 Corinthians 4:1-5)

This is what the hymn “Praise Thee, Precious Savior” verse 1 and chorus say: “How I praise Thee, precious Savior, That Thy love laid hold of me; Thou hast saved and cleansed and filled me That I might Thy channel be. Channels only, blessed Master, But with all Thy wondrous power Flowing thro' us, Thou canst use us Every day and every hour.” The word of God that is behind this hymn is 1 Timothy 1:12 – “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.” Paul confessed to Timothy how he thanked Christ Jesus not only for saving such worst sinner like him but also for appointing him to His glorious service. I hope and pray that this Paul's confession of thanksgiving would be my confession and your confession as well. I hope and pray that we may be able to praise and pray ‘Lord, give us great strength and use us according to Your will’ by understanding God’s saving grace more and more as we live our Christian life and by giving thanks to God.

In 1 Corinthians 4:1-5, Apostle Paul talks about the servants of Christ. In particular, in verse 1, Paul continually writes to the Corinthian church saints, saying that they should regard him or his co-workers as “servants of Christ” (v. 1). I want to receive God's lesson from this three points of thought about servants of Christ under the heading “The servants of Christ.” I hope and pray that we may be blessed to be praised by God for being established as servants of Christ.

The first thing I want to think about is, “Who are the servants of Christ?” (The identity of the servants of Christ).

Look at 1 Corinthians 4:1 – “So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God.” Apostle Paul already said in 1 Corinthians 3:5 that he and Apollos were only servants, through whom the Corinthian church saints came to believe. In other words, Paul told the Corinthian church saints who boasted of him or Apollos: 'We are nothing' (v. 7) and 'We are just the servants of the Lord' (v. 5). And then in 1 Corinthians 4:1, Paul told them they ought to regard Paul and Apollos as servants of Christ. In the English Bible, the same word "servants" were used in both 1 Corinthians 3:5 and 4:1. But in the original Greek, the two words are not the same but are two different words. The word used in 1 Corinthians 3:5 is “diakonoi,” and the word “deacon” is derived from it. This word means ‘serving people.’ However, the Greek word used in 1 Corinthians 4:1 is not the word “diakonoi” but “huperetes,” which literally means “under rowers” under the ship. According to Pastor John MacArthur, the slaves who were rowing under the ship at that time were the ones who did the poorest work, the ones that no one envied, and the ones most despised. The word that had this meaning later came to refer to a person who absolutely obeyed all authority (MacArthur). In short, Paul told the Corinthian church

saints who boasted of Paul, Apollos or Peter that they were slaves of the Lord who were absolutely obedient to the Lord and His commands.

The Christ's servants are the Lord's slaves who obey His commands. And they are lower slaves. Do we have this slave-consciousness? If we, like Paul, have this slave-consciousness, what should we do to the Lord's command? Shouldn't we obey the Lord's command? I remember I preached before that we needed 'slave-consciousness.' But for some reason, I think we have more master consciousness than slave consciousness. How do we know this? We can know this by seeing whether we are obeying God's Word and serving Him or disobeying His Word and being served by others. We need service consciousness. In order to do this, we must have a humble heart like Apostle Paul. What is that humble heart? As John 3:30 says, we should have attitude of "He must become greater, I must become less" (Jn. 3:30). This is the heart and attitude of the servants of Christ. And the thing that was entrusted to these servants of Christ is "the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1). Thus, Paul told the Corinthian church saints that they ought to regard Paul and his co-workers as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God (v. 1). Here, what does "stewards" mean? The literal meaning is a house manager (MacArthur). What Paul said here was that he and his co-workers were the servants of Jesus Christ, those who preach the mystery of God in the house of God. What, then, is "the mysteries of God" spoken of by Paul here? It means what was hidden before is now revealed—the gospel of Jesus Christ. After all, Apostle Paul said to the Corinthian church saints that he and his co-workers were the Christ's servants, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, the mystery of God, to them, the house of God (3:9). You must regard me and other pastors as the servants of Christ and the stewards of the mysteries of God. You should consider us to be the servants of Christ who preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, the mystery of God, to you, the house of God. Therefore, you should not boast the Christ's servants. Rather, you must boast only Jesus Christ and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The second thing I want to think about is "What is essential for the Christ's servants?" (The necessity of the Christ's servants).

Look at 1 Corinthians 4:2 – "In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy." After Paul told the Corinthian church saints that he and his co-workers are the Christ's servants and stewards of the mysteries of God (v. 1), he told them what is required of stewards is that they must be found trustworthy (v. 2). The Christ's servants are stewards. The Lord gave the Christ's servants to serve the church, the house of God. How does the Lord want the Christ's servants to serve His church? He wants us to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, the mysteries of God (v. 1). And the Lord demands faithfulness to us who are preaching the gospel (v. 2). In other words, those who preach the gospel of Jesus Christ must be found faithful. When Paul said "Now it is required that those who have been given trust must prove faithful" (v. 2), the word "it is required" means 'it is earnestly demanded.' In other words, Paul said to the Corinthian church saints that it is faithfulness (or trustworthy) that he and his co-workers are eagerly demanded by the Lord as the Christ's servants.

What does "faithfulness" or trustworthy refer to? It refers to the servants' obedience to their masters and their commands certainly and consistently. Therefore, the Christ's servants must preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, which the Lord has commanded and entrusted to them, certainly and consistently. When I applied these words to myself as a pastor, I remembered the words of the Lord's promise of John 6:1-15, the two fish and five loaves miracles. And while holding on to that promised word of the Lord and praying during the Morning Prayer, the indwelling Spirit gave me understanding that I must meditate His words diligently and share them to other as Jesus. And I devoted myself to the Lord to share His words certainly and consistently until His second coming or until the moment I meet the Lord. This is what Psalms 101:6 says: "My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; He who walks in a blameless way is the one who will minister to me." The Bible says that the eyes of God shall be upon the faithful of the land so that they may dwell with Him and that they may minister to Him. Shouldn't we be His faithful servants? There is a mission the Lord has given to each of us. In fulfilling that

mission, it is faithfulness that the Lord demands from us. Look at Matthew 24:45-46: “Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.” As I think of these words, I enjoyed the grace of reaffirming what I should do as a servant of Christ. It is that I want to enjoy the blessings of the Lord by being faithful in the ministry of the Word in sharing with His people from time to time as the servant of Christ.

The third and the last thing I want to think about is “What assessment should the Christ’s servants focus on?” (The evaluation of the Christ's servants).

Look at 1 Corinthians 4:3-4: “But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted;” Apostle Paul told the Corinthian church saints that it was very small thing for him to be judged by others, even though those who boasted of him were certainly among the Corinthian church saints. What did he mean? To him, the Corinthian church saints’ praise or criticism was very small thing. I am sure among them there were those who boasted Paul praised him. For example, suppose they could say something about Paul like this: ‘Oh, he is very faithful man of God. As a servant of Christ, he boldly and faithfully proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ even in the midst of persecution.’ Although Paul could be well pleased and fond of these commendations, he regarded their judgment as a very small matter, whether it is a compliment or criticism of men. Paul even told the Corinthian church saints “I do not even judge myself (v. 3). What did he mean? Paul said that he didn’t even judge himself because not only other people’s judgments were unreliable, but also he couldn’t believe his own judgments. Then he said, “My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent” (v. 4). What did he mean? Paul said that when he looks back on his life, he didn’t know any serious sins that he committed, so he knew nothing to blame himself. But Paul knew that even though he knew nothing to blame himself, it didn’t make him innocent. Why did Paul consider it so small that he judged himself or that others judge him? The reason was that as the Christ’s servants, the most important judgment for him was the judgment of the Lord. That was why he said to the Corinthian church saints, “It is the Lord who judges me” (v. 4). Why did Paul value the judgment of the Lord over others or his own? We can see why in verse 5: “Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.” The reason why Paul focused on God's evaluation rather than people's evaluation was because only God knew the motives of men’s hearts. Isn't it true? Although we judge others based on their actions, isn't it true that only God who sees our hearts knows the motives of our hearts?

We should focus on God's evaluation rather than people's or our own evaluation. As Christian servants, we should not sway by praises or criticisms of any person or group of people as we faithfully carry out the commission that the Lord has entrusted to us. Rather, we must value the Lord's evaluation when He comes back as our most important evaluation and faithfully carry out the commission that the Lord gave to each of us in order to be praised by Him. Therefore, on the day that when He comes back, when we meet the Lord, I hope and pray that we may be able to hear from Him “Well done, good and faithful servant!” (Mt. 25:21) by being faithful to the commission given to each of us as the Christ’s servants and His stewards.

The beauty of the Christians

“He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to” (Isaiah 53:2).

What is the beauty of the Christians?

Nowadays, watching church ads seems to be no different from TV commercials. Where can we feel this? We can feel this when we watch TV commercials and church ads in which pretty-looking women come out as advertising models. Of course, in the world outside the church, when companies make the advertisements, it is understandable that they companies use good-looking women who can make people attractive. But when we see the churches are also using good-looking women as church ads, I think that the world is affecting our churches. This is because we Christians see as the world sees and we think as they think. In other words, just as people in the world see and think that 'that person is so attractive', we Christians see and think the same way. But the question is, does God see and think that way as well?

What the world sees is appearance. And even we Christians see appearance too. Even in the Bible, Samuel saw the appearance of Jesse's son Eliab and his height and said in his heart, “Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD” (1 Sam. 16:6-7). Although God looks at the heart, we look at the outward appearance. All of us are seeing and are attracted to outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes (1 Pet. 3:3). Especially when people look at the women's beauty who walk with expensive luxury clothes, luxury jewelry, luxury bags, etc. in times of where many people do plastic surgery to make themselves look pretty, they think they are pretty and are attracted to them. But the problem is that even we Christians are deceived by this worldly beauty. Although as Apostle Peter said that of great worth in God's sight is our inner self, “the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit (v. 4), we don't understanding what is great worth in God's sight. And so, like the people of the world, we are more focused on outer appearance than inner beauty, and we are not pursuing the beauty that is valuable to God. Worse yet, just as the people of the world have seen no beauty in Christ Jesus that they should be attracted to Him (Isa. 53:2), we Christians don't see the beauty in Him as well. The prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilling. Jesus Christ, the Messiah, “in our sight,” has no stately form or majesty (v. 2). In other words, Jesus Christ has no appearance that we should be attracted to Him (v. 2). If we are seeing the beauty of Jesus, then we will never live a life of focusing on outward appearance. But if we are not pursuing a priceless inner beauty in God's eyes, but rather like an appearance-oriented life, an appearance-oriented relationship, and even an appearance-oriented ministry, we never see the beauty of Christ Jesus. We won't be able to say that we look upon Him and are being attracted to Him. What is the beauty of a Christian in God's sight?

The only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, is beautiful in God's sight. Although there is no appearance in Him that we should be attracted to Him, but Heavenly Father God sees beauty in His Son Jesus Christ. This is because Jesus was obedient to His Heavenly Father to the point of death, even death on a cross (Phil. 2:8). In other words, in God's sight, Jesus was beautiful because He was obedient to His Father God to the point of death on the cross. Therefore, the beauty of Christians lies in obeying the word of the Lord. Although in the eyes of the world, we Christians may look weak and have no fine appearance, but in the eyes of God, our beauty lies in obeying the word of the Lord. Even when we live in a world that is like the parched ground, we may be persecuted like “a tender shoot” like Jesus (v. 2) we should live in obedience to the will of God through the help of God from above. Then we will be beautiful children of God in the sight of God. Although in appearance, there is nothing that we can be

attracted to the people in this world, we the disciples of Jesus Christ should be children of God who are attractive in God's eyes because we obey His word. We should no longer to live a life that is so demanding and appealing to the needs of the world, but to seek an inner beauty that is valuable and attractive in the sight of God. I hope and pray that we be the disciples of Jesus who are beautiful in God's sight by cultivating our valuable inner man before God and be obedience to Him.

Conclusion

We must be true Christians. As we are saved by God's total grace, we must live by focusing on our inner life of faith with living faith that has action. We must get rid of the lusts of our hearts and hypocrisy. We must be mature Christians. We must stand firm in the faith and live holy lives apart from the world. We must cut off the worldly things. We are not to be proud, but we must resist the temptation of riches and live a restrained life. And we must keep the unity of the church by loving one another in the Lord. We must be attractive Christians who faithfully take on the responsibility of being light and salt in this world.

We must be true disciples of Jesus. We must love Jesus more even to the point of hating our family and our lives. And we must follow Jesus faithfully as we bear our own cross. We must be calm and restrain our words. We are responsible for the marriage of our children and keep the Sabbath day holy.

We must be wise Christians filled with the Holy Spirit. We should be familiar with God's Word and pray as we trust in God. And we must keep our hearts better after we receive God's grace. We Christians must be able to forgive. As God has forgiven us, we must forgive our neighbors with our hearts.

We must live right lives as Christians and have the right relationships, the right business perspective, the right inheritance perspective, the right future perspective, and the right devotion perspective. Our moral life must be better than the worldly people as well as the Pharisees who are hypocrisy. We must live the righteous life that is worthy of the gospel. We must be right and honest. As Christians, we must live with confidence and boldness in faith. We are not to be foolish Christians who deceive ourselves.

We must be Christians who truly worship God. We should be Christians who humbly obey the word of the Lord and keep our responsibilities to the end. We must please our God even in the midst of suffering. When we pray God, we should confess our sins. In addition, we must praise and worship God as we love His church more and more. We must be Christians who know how to enjoy the blessings of the Lord in the midst of trouble.

We must be victorious Christians by the word of God. We must make the Word of God 'my hope,' 'my comfort,' 'my songs' and 'my possessions.' And we are to serve the Lord faithfully as the servants of Christ. We must obey what the Lord has entrusted to us certainly and continually. And we must boast only Jesus Christ and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we must be faithful to the mission that the Lord has given to each of us with earnest desire to receive the praise of the Lord, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

I hope and pray that we all may be able to reveal the beauty of Christians.