

**The Blessed Person Praises  
the Lord's Greatness.**

[Meditation on the Book of Psalms]

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# Content

<b>Introduction</b>	9
The very blessed man (Ps. 1)	10
By meditating on the Word of God (Ps. 1:2)	13
The way of the wicked vs. The way of the righteous (Ps. 2)	15
The Lord who lifts up my head (Ps. 3)	20
“O sons of men” (Ps. 4)	24
“In your anger do not sin” (Ps. 4:4)	28
“Make Your way straight before me” (Ps. 5)	30
Prayer of tears (Ps. 6)	34
Establish the righteous! (Ps. 7)	36
God who has indignation (Ps. 7:11)	40
“What is man” (Ps. 8)	42
Put your trust in the Lord! (Ps. 9)	45
The Lord who hears the desire of the humble (Ps. 10)	48
It is proud thought. (10:4)	52
“If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?” (Ps. 11)	55
The safety that the godly man wants (Ps. 12)	58
A godly and faithful man (12:1-4)	60
The process of prayer (Ps. 13)	62
“His captive people” (Ps. 14)	65
Abide in God’s presence! (Ps. 15)	68
“I have no good besides You” (Ps. 16)	72
“Give ear to my prayer” (Ps. 17)	76
“I love You, O LORD, my strength” (Ps. 18:1-19)	79
“The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness” (Ps. 18:20-27)	83
The secret of victory (Ps. 18:28-42)	86
The Lord who places us as head of the world (Ps. 18:43-50)	89
The Word of God (Ps. 19)	92
“They are more desirable than gold” (Ps. 19:10)	96
“Now I know” (Ps. 20)	99
Heavenly Father who cannot refuse the desire of my heart (Ps. 20:4; 21:2)	103
The Lord’s strength (Ps. 21)	106
When there is no one to help (Ps. 22:1-11)	111
“come quickly to help me” (Ps. 22:12-21)	114

‘The Lord has done it.’ (Ps. 22:22-31)	117
A satisfied life (Ps. 23)	121
We must thoroughly feel our want. (Ps. 23:1)	127
Fellowship with God (Ps. 24)	129
“Remember, O Lord” (Ps. 25:1-7)	132
“According to Your lovingkindness remember me” (Ps. 25:7)	136
The way I should choose (Ps. 25:8-15)	138
“Guard my soul and deliver me” (Ps. 25:16-22)	141
Love the place where God’s glory dwells! (1) (Ps. 26)	144
Love the place where God’s glory dwells! (2) (Ps. 26)	147
A fearful situation (Ps. 27:1-6)	151
“One thing I have asked from the LORD” (27:4)	156
‘Wait for the Lord, O my soul!’ (Ps. 27:7-14)	158
Do you believe for sure?? (Ps. 27:13)	162
The church that isn’t constructed by the Lord (Ps. 28)	167
The church that isn’t built by the Lord (Ps. 28:5)	170
Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name! (Ps. 29)	172
“O Lord, be my helper” (Ps. 30)	175
Trust in the Lord! (Ps. 31:1-8)	179
“But as for me” faith (Ps. 31:9-14)	182
Those who trust God (Ps. 31:15-24)	186
“Blessed is the man” (Ps. 32)	190
What is fitting for the upright? (Ps. 33)	194
Even if my plan doesn’t work (Ps. 33:11)	198
Those who look to the Lord are radiant. (Ps. 34:1-7)	200
Fear the Lord! (Ps. 34:8-14)	204
“Many are the afflictions of the righteous” (Ps. 34:15-22)	207
“Let them be like chaff before the wind” (Ps. 35:1-8)	211
God who delivers me (Ps. 35:9-16)	215
The Lord who delights in my prosperity (Ps. 35:17-18)	219
“In Your light we see light” (Ps. 36)	223
Those who hope in the Lord (Ps. 37)	227
Do not fret! (Ps. 37:1, 7, 8)	231
Wait patiently! (Ps. 37:7)	233
The wicked Vs. The righteous (Ps. 37:17-22)	235
The Lord who makes our way firm (Ps. 37:23-30)	239
Things that make us to slip (Ps. 37:31)	244
“because of my sin” (Ps. 38:1-12)	246
Relationships (Ps. 38:11)	250

“O Lord my Savior” (Ps. 38:12-20)	252
“O my God, do not be far from me!” (Ps. 38:21-22)	256
"let me know how fleeting is my life" (Ps. 39)	261
The countless thoughts of the Lord toward us (Ps. 40:1-10)	265
“O Lord, come quickly to help me” (Ps. 40:11-17)	270
Let us consider the helpless (Ps. 41)	273
Put your hope in God! (Ps. 42)	277
“Where is your God?” (Ps. 42:5)	281
“To God my exceeding joy” (Ps. 43)	283
Downcast and disturbed (Ps. 43:5)	287
The work that the Lord did in our fathers’ days (Ps. 44:1-8)	289
“All this has come upon us” (Ps. 44:9-26)	293
“the pen of a skillful writer” (Ps. 45)	297
The pen of a skillful writer (Ps. 45:1)	301
“Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps. 46)	304
Why should we praise God? (Ps. 47)	309
God who will guide us until death (Ps. 48)	312
“God will redeem my soul” (Ps. 49)	317
Let us not trust in our wealth.. (Ps. 49:6-8)	321
The beast-like Christians (Ps. 49:12, 20)	323
Hypocrisy (Ps. 50)	325
Righteous worship that pleases God (Ps. 51)	330
“I trust in God’s unfailing love for ever and ever” (Ps. 52)	335
“The fool” (Ps. 53)	340
“The Lord is the sustainer of my soul.” (Ps. 54)	343
"Cast your burden upon the Lord" (Ps. 55)	346
Put your trust in God! (Ps. 56)	350
Let us praise the word of God. (Ps. 56:4, 10)	354
“Put my tears in Your bottle” (Ps. 56:8)	357
“My heart is steadfast, O God” (Ps. 57)	359
When my soul is bowed down (Ps. 57:6)	363
“a God who judges” (1) (Ps. 58)	367
“a God who judges” (2) (Ps. 58)	371
Let us sing of God’s strength. (Ps. 59)	374
“O, restore us” (Ps. 60)	379
“When my hear is faint” (Ps. 61)	382
Let us wait in silence for God only. (Ps. 62)	386
When my heart shakes (Ps. 62:8)	390
“O God, You are my God” (Ps. 63)	392

The song of James: Praising in the wilderness (Ps. 63:3)	398
Let us ponder what God has done. (Ps. 64)	402
“We will be satisfied with the goodness of Your house” (Ps. 65)	407
“Come and see the works of God” (Ps. 66)	412
‘Let all the peoples praise You, O God!’ (Ps. 67)	416
Let the righteous be glad and rejoice. (Ps. 68:1-18)	420
God who gives power and strength to us (1) (Ps. 68:19-35)	424
God who gives power and strength to us (2) (Ps. 68:19-35)	427
Those who please the Lord better (Ps. 69)	431
The Christians who please God more in their suffering (Ps. 69:30-31)	436
“O God, hasten to deliver me” (Ps. 70)	440
Urgent prayer (Ps. 70:1, 5)	443
“I will always have hope” (Ps. 71:1-14)	445
A beautiful old man (Ps. 71:9)	449
“May You increase my greatness” (Ps. 71:15-24)	451
An ideal king (Ps. 72)	454
Those who are pure in heart (1) (Ps. 73)	458
Those who are pure in heart (2) (Ps. 73)	461
“Remember this, O Lord” (Ps. 74)	464
God is the Judge (Ps. 75)	468
God who reveals Himself to us (Ps. 76)	471
“My voice rises to God, and I will cry aloud” (Ps. 77)	475
My weakness (Ps. 77:10)	479
When I am weak ... (Ps. 77:10-12)	482
Tell to the generation to come (Ps. 78:1-22)	484
Our hearts that aren’t steadfast toward God (Ps. 78:23-41)	488
According to the integrity of His heart (Ps. 78:42-72)	492
“O God of our salvation” (Ps. 79)	495
Come to save us! (Ps. 80)	499
What God wants from us (Ps. 81)	503
“Arise, O God, judge the earth!” (Ps. 82)	507
Let them know that the Lord alone is the Most High over all the earth (Ps. 83)	511
The blessed people (Ps. 84)	515
‘Grant us Your salvation’ (Ps. 85)	519
“Oh grant Your strength to Your servant” (Ps. 86)	522
The true church (Ps. 87)	526
“Incline Your ear to my cry!” (Ps. 88)	531
The blessed people (Ps. 89:1-18)	536

God who strengthens me (Ps. 89:19-52)	540
'Teach us to number our days' (Ps. 90)	543
"My refuge" (Ps. 91)	548
The deepest thoughts of the Lord (Ps. 92)	552
Let us sing praises to God with thanksgiving. (Ps. 92:1)	557
How should we view the prosperity of the wicked? (Ps. 92:7)	559
"The Lord reigns" (Ps. 93)	561
"God of vengeance" (Ps. 94)	564
Those who enter the rest of God (Ps. 95)	568
True worshipers (Ps. 96)	571
"The Lord reigns" (Ps. 97)	574
"O sing to the Lord a new song" (Ps. 98)	576
The church under God's reign (Ps. 99)	579
How will we come before God? (Ps. 100)	582
The ideal king and his ideal people (Ps. 101)	585
The Christians who walk the blameless way with the integrity of their hearts (Ps. 101:2)	589
The prayer of destitute (Ps. 102)	592
Let's not forget all the benefits of God. (Ps. 103)	596
"How many are your works, O Lord!" (Ps. 104)	601
Let's remember God's works. (Ps. 105)	603
Remember me, O Lord, in Your favor (Ps. 106)	607
God who shows great grace in the midst of great sins (Ps. 106:6-12)	611
Realize God's great love (Ps. 107)	613
Are you realizing God's great love? (Ps. 107:43)	617
"I will awaken the dawn!" (Ps. 108)	622
"But I am in prayer" (Ps. 109)	625
"Your youth are to You as the dew" (Ps. 110)	628
"A good understanding" (Ps. 111)	632
I will give thanks to God with all my heart and will praise Him forever. (Ps. 111:1, 10)	636
The blessing of those who keep God's commandments (Ps. 112)	639
"Praise, O servants of the Lord" (Ps. 113)	642
The church as God's sanctuary (Ps. 114)	645
Those who are blessed by God (Ps. 115)	648
"I shall call upon Him as long as I live" (Ps. 116)	652
"I shall call upon Him as long as I live" (Ps. 116:1-12)	656
Why we should praise God (Ps. 117)	659
"Give thanks to the Lord" (Ps. 118)	662

Those who walk in the Lord's ways (Ps. 119:1-8)	665
“How can a young man keep his way pure?” (Ps. 119:9-16)	667
“ That I may not sin against You ” (Ps. 119:11)	671
“ That I may not sin against You ” (Ps. 119:11)	674
Spiritual fuel (Ps. 119:11, 56)	676
Purpose of life (Ps. 119:17-24)	678
I will run to Your words! (Ps. 119:25-32)	680
“I shall observe it to the end” (Ps. 119:33-40)	684
Walk at liberty! (Ps. 119:41-48)	687
Comfort myself! (Ps. 119:49-56)	689
The Lord who made me hope (Ps. 119:49-50)	693
The Christians who are victorious by the Word of God (Ps. 119:49-56)	695
My possession (Ps. 119:56)	698
Turn your feet! (Ps. 119:57-64)	700
Get rid of fat in your heart! (Ps. 119:70)	702
The benefit of suffering (Ps. 119:71-72)	704
Wait for the word of the Lord! (Ps. 119:73-80)	708
“When will You comfort me?” (Ps. 119:81-88)	711
“my delight” (Ps. 119:89-96)	713
A man of understanding (Ps. 119:97-104)	715
Let us keep the Lord's word to the very end! (Ps. 119:105-112)	719
Let's clarify the objects of love and hate! (Ps. 119:113-120)	721
“It is time for the Lord to act” (Ps. 119:121-128)	724
““Establish my footsteps in Your word” (Ps. 119:129-136)	726
When trouble and anguish have come upon me (Ps. 119:137-144)	729
Cry out to the Lord! (Ps. 119:145-152)	731
“Revive me according to Your word” (Ps. 119:153-160)	732
Do Your commandments! (Ps. 119:161-168)	735
“Let my soul live that it may praise You” (Ps. 119:169-176)	737
“I am for peace” (Ps. 120)	739
God who helps me (Ps. 121)	741
Who keeps my soul? (Ps. 121:7)	745
Those who love the church are prosperous. (Ps. 122)	747
Our eyes look to the Lord our God (Ps. 123)	750
If God was not on our side ... (Ps. 124)	753
“Those who trust in the Lord” (Ps. 125)	755
“We were like those who dream” (Ps. 126)	758
Unless the Lord builds the house, it's in vain. (Ps. 127)	761
The man who fears the Lord (Ps. 128)	764

“Yet they have not prevailed against me” (Ps. 129)	767
Waiting (Ps. 130)	770
How to be still and quiet my soul (Ps. 131)	773
My soul that is like a weaned child (Ps. 131)	775
The soul that is like a weaned child (Ps. 131:2)	778
The Lord who will not turn back (Ps. 132)	780
The unity of the church (Ps. 133)	783
“Praise the Lord” (Ps. 134)	786
Praise the Lord! (Ps. 135)	789
“Give thanks to the Lord” (Ps. 136)	792
Give thanks to God! (Ps. 136:1)	796
When we think of the church (Ps. 137)	798
“my chief joy” (Ps. 137:6)	802
The reasons why I am giving the Lord thanks with all my heart (Ps. 138)	804
O Lord, strengthen my soul (Ps. 138:3)	808
The Lord who searches me and knows me (Ps. 139)	811
The Lord who maintains the cause of the afflicted (Ps. 140)	815
But Lord, my eyes are toward You. (Ps. 141)	818
“When my spirit was overwhelmed within me” (Ps. 142)	822
A dismayed heart (Ps. 143)	825
A situation recreated in our lives (Ps. 143:5)	830
“Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love” (Ps. 143:8)	832
These people are blessed. (Ps. 144)	834
O Lord, what is man that You think of him? (Ps. 144:3-4)	838
“I will extol You, my God, O King” (Ps. 145)	840
Glory to the great Lord (Ps. 145:3)	843
Don’t trust in man but trust in God. (Ps. 146)	846
How good and pleasant it is to sing praise to our God! (Ps. 147)	849
Praise the Lord! (Ps. 147:1)	852
It is good to praise our God. (Ps. 147:1)	855
Praise the Lord from the heavens and the earth! (Ps. 148)	857
The Lord who beautifies the afflicted ones with salvation (Ps. 149)	859
Lord, please make me beautiful. (Ps. 149:4)	862
“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord” (Ps. 150)	864
<b>Conclusion</b>	867



## Introduction

I wanted to meditate on the Book of Psalms. I decided to meditate on the words of Psalms as I was praying in the midst of my weakness, foolishness and lack. I am not sure why I decided to meditate on the Book of Psalms out of 66 books of the Bible. Maybe the church's recommendation to read the book of Psalms 5 chapters a day (and the book of Proverbs 1 chapter a day) influenced me. Also, maybe Pastor Martin Llyod Jones' book "Spiritual Depression", especially his writing based on Psalms 42:5, 11 and 43:5, influenced me. When I was discouraged by myself and was anxious about things that are considered difficult, I, like the psalmist, also said to myself in my prayer to my God, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, ..." and thus I had experiences of praising God (42:5, 11; 43:5) by God who is my help (ch. 121). I wanted to enrich this experience. As I saw the psalmist cried out to God in the midst of all the adversities and eventually praised Him, I also wanted to enjoy that grace. So I wanted to meditate on the words of the Psalms.

This meditation book on the Book of Psalms is the compilations of the every Wednesday night prayer meeting sermons that I had preached for almost 6 and half years and then went back in to my pastor room and meditated them again. The reason I chose the title "The Blessed Person Praises the Lord's Greatness" is because when I think about the book of Psalms, especially the first verse 1:1 – "How blessed is the man ..." and the last verse 150:6 – "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!", it reminded me the chorus of the hymn "How Great Thou Art" – "Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee How great Thou art, How great Thou Art." When I think about the whole book of Psalms in connection with these three things, the concluding thought that came to my mind was "The blessed person praises the Lord's greatness." I hope and pray that you and I are the blessed ones who praise the Lord's greatness.

Believing in Jesus Christ by God's grace and partially enjoying every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

Pastor James Kim

(October, 2015, prayerfully wishing to praise the Lord's greatness until my last breath on this earth)

# The very blessed man

## [Psalms 1]

Among the church humors, there is the Satan's Beatitudes. Among the Satan's Beatitudes, there are three words that caught my attention:

First blessing: 'Blessed are those who don't go to church on the pretext of being tired and busy, because they will be my most reliable workers.'

Second blessing: 'Blessed are those who find fault with the pastor's mistakes or faults, because they won't be able to receive grace even though they hear his sermons.'

Seventh blessing: 'Blessed are those who are so busy that they cannot read the bible and pray, because they will easily fall into my temptations and finally will be my ridicule'  
(Internet).

When I think of these three blessings of Satan, I think this humor is very much applied to our Christians these days. Especially as I read Satan's seventh blessing, I am ashamed and embarrassed to think about how many of us Christians are being ridiculed by the people in this world. Why are we being ridiculed by them? I think one of the reasons is because we aren't bearing the fruit of the Word of God. In other words, we are being ridiculed the people in this world because we aren't living a life that personifies the Word. In the flood of the Word, only our heads grew. So we may have a lot of information about His Word, but there is no transformation in our lives. This is our present reality as Christians. For the transformation of our lives, we must to back to the basic. We must go back to the Word of God.

In Psalms 1, God is telling us who the blessed man is. To be more precise in the original Hebrew language, God is telling us who is the very blessed man is (v. 1). We must learn the God's teaching humbly and by obeying it we must live a life personifying the Word of God. In other words, we must pursue the transformation of our lives and become those who are very blessed in the sight of God. Then who is the very blessed person in the sight of God? I would like to think of two things and receive the lessons from God.

### **First, the very blessed man stays far away from sin.**

Look at Psalms 1:1 – "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!" We can see from this Scripture that the very blessed person stays far away from a small sin to a great sin. Here, the small sin means walking in the counsel of the wicked. The very blessed man doesn't even look at the wicked man's counsel, nor is he interested in it. He never lays down his

feet even on the path of the sinners (v. 1), at the crossroads of the way of the righteous (v. 6) and the path of the sinners before him.

Now many of us Christians fall into the counsel of the wicked, giving the him not only our eyes and ears but also our hearts. Although we shouldn't put our feet on the path of the sinners at all, we already put our feet on that path and are memorizing the Lord's Prayer "And lead us not into temptation." Then we rationalize our choice and circumstance. And now we are no longer surprised. The reason is because we are so accustomed to walking on that small path of sin. Here, we are forgetting something. It is that when we keep on walking on the small path of sin, we will fall into a greater sin later on. What is the greater sin here? It is standing in the path of sinners. At first, we were 'walking' in the counsel of the wicked. But later on, we are 'standing' in the path of sinners. Have you ever experienced the reality that without knowing you are already standing in the path of sinners? But the very blessed man doesn't stand on the path of the sinners, because he doesn't follow the path of the wicked, the way of small sins. Rather he walks the path of the righteous, which God watches over (v. 6). Moreover, the very blessed man doesn't sit in the seat of mockers (v. 1). The arrogant seat here is the seat of the wicked who despise God. Those who are close to sins, walk in the counsel of the wicked and without his knowledge he stands in the way of sinners and eventually he sits in the seat of mockers who despise God. But the very blessed man stays far away from all these sins (from small to great).

We should ponder this saying: 'We cannot ignore the progression from small to great in avoiding sin' (Park, Yun-sun). We must beware of this progressiveness of sin. We must cut off the root of the small sins. The reason is because if we take the small sin lightly and follow the wicked man's counsel in curiosity, we will eventually be in the point of sitting in the seat of mockers. Knowing this danger, we shouldn't get close to even the small sins. To do that, we need to draw close to the Word of God. It is one of two things: whether we are close to the Word of God to stay far away from sin, or close to sin to stay far away from His Word.

### **Second and last, the very blessed man stays close to the Word of God.**

Look at Psalms 1:2 – "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night." The very blessed man stays far away from sin by staying close to the Word of God. He delights in the law of the Lord so he meditates day and night (v. 2). He loves God so he hears His voice. So he praises God that 'There is no joy than hearing the Lord's voice.' The soul of the very blessed man is joyful and satisfied when he hears His voice that he enjoys meditating His word day and night. There he is very blessed man. Then what are the blessings that he receives? There are three things at least:

#### **(1) The blessing that the very blessed man receives is the fruitful faith.**

Look at Psalms 1:3a – "He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season ...."

This blessing is in stark contrast to the wicked in verse 1. Although the wicked are morally or personally fruitless, the very blessed man bears fruit morally and personally (Park). Also, the very blessed man is not only living a life that personifies the Word gradually, but also being sanctified as a person who bears the fruit of the Holy Spirit. That's why he is the very blessed man.

(2) The blessing that the very blessed man receives is the vital faith.

Look at Psalms 1:3b – "...whose leaf does not wither." This blessing also contrasts with the sinner in verse 1. Although the sinner doesn't reach the goal, the very blessed man has the vitality, the goal of faith, he must be the very blessed man.

(3) The blessing that the very blessed man receives the blessing of prosperity.

Look at Psalms 1:3c – "... Whatever he does prospers." The very blessed person enjoys the blessing of prosperity because God is with him whatever he does. What a blessed life this is. Even in the midst of pain and suffering, he enjoys the blessing of prosperity because God is with him. Look at Job in the Bible. He stays far away from sin even in his extreme pain and suffering by being close to the Word of God as he has endured and persevered (Job 1:22; 2:10). As a result, he experienced God's presence by seeing God with his eyes whom he had heard of Him by the hearing of the ear (42:5). He also received more of God's blessings than the first (v. 12). Like this, the very blessed man bears the fruit of faith and lives a life of vital faith despite pain and suffering. Therefore, he enjoys the blessing of experiencing God causing all things to work together for good to him who loved God (Rom. 8:28). The wicked, however, are "like chaff that the wind blows away" (Ps. 1:4) cannot enjoy the blessing of the very blessed righteous enjoys. In fact, the wicked will not stand in the judgment but will perish (vv. 5, 6).

The very blessed man stays far away from sin. The very blessed man stays close to the Word of God. I hope and pray that we could be that very blessed man or woman.

Being a very blessed man in Jesus Christ by the grace of God,

James Kim

(With great longing desire to heard the voice of God, 'The very blessed James')

## **By meditating on the Word of God**

**“But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.” (Ps. 1:2)**

The Christians who love God love the word of God. And the Christians who love the word of God stay close to His Word. Therefore, he meditates on His word day and night. In Psalms 1:3, the Bible says the very blessed man’s delight is in the law of the Lord. In other words, the joy of the very blessed man is in the word of God. Therefore, those who are blessed to enjoy the word of God meditate on the word of God day and night (v. 2). Then what does it mean to meditate on God’s Word? What is “meditation”? Meditation means hearing God’s voice. As we read the Bible, we must listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to us. We must diligently train ourselves to hear God’s voice through meditation on the word of God. And we must train ourselves to look at our lives from the point of view of God’s Word. If we neglect this training, we will hear only the voices of the world or the voices of Satan or our own. Therefore, we must meditate diligently on the Word of God. The meditation time is a time when we are provided with the food we need for our soul. Therefore, we must think slowly and thoroughly. We must read and meditate on His word like a miner who digs gold. Then, what do we want to gain through meditating on God’s word?

**First, we must get to know Jesus more and more by meditating on God’s word.**

It is knowledge of Jesus that we seek while reading, hearing, studying and meditating on the word of God. The Bible is “His Story.” The Old Testament is the promise story of Messiah Jesus (Promise). And the New Testament is the story of Jesus who came to fulfill that promise (Fulfillment). To be more specific about the New Testament, the New Testament is the story of Jesus, who came to fulfill the Old Testament promise and died on the cross and arose from the dead on the third day for our salvation, the story of church after Jesus ascended to heaven, and the story of His second coming. Therefore, we must grow up in the knowledge of Jesus as we read, listen, study and meditate on God’s word more and more every day. In the midst of that, when Jesus asks us, “But who do you say that I am,” we must be able to confess like Apostle Peter, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt. 16:15, 16).

**Second, we must imitate Heavenly Father’s heart by meditating on God’s word.**

Not only is the Bible a story about Jesus Christ, but it shows us the heart of Heavenly Father who sent Jesus,

the only begotten Son, to the earth, to give us the grace of salvation. Therefore, when we meditate on God's word as we delight in it, we must ponder what His word is trying to tell us about His heart. Sometime during the Morning Prayer, I meditated on the Word based on Psalms 103:13 and I realized a little bit about Heavenly Father's heart. At that time, the heart of Heavenly Father that I realized a little bit under the guidance of the Holy Spirit was the heart of Heavenly Father who has compassion on such sinner like me. The Bible says that Heavenly Father has compassion on those who fear Him, just as a father has compassion on his children (v. 13). The Bible says that Creator God has compassion on us who have to return to the earth due to sin and whose days are like grass and isn't always angry, doesn't deal with us according to our sins, and has removed our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west (vv. 10-15). When I realized a little bit of Heavenly Father's heart in doing these to us, I prayed God because I wanted to imitate that Heavenly Father's heart. In the midst of that, I remember that Heavenly Father made me pray for my church members whom my Heavenly Father loves. I don't want to do a shell ministry. I want to put my heart into the ministry with the heart of Heavenly Father who sees our hearts. How do you want to lead a family life, a work life, a church life, a life of faith? I hope and pray that we live a life of faith in imitating the Heavenly Father's heart as we continue to understand the Father's heart while meditating on the word of God.

**Third and last, we must stand firm in faith and be victorious in spiritual battles by meditating on God's word.**

The Second Coming of Jesus is getting closer. Therefore, we have to anticipate it. We must anticipate the tribulation we will receive in the future. Satan knows that his time is short. So he is trying very hard to deceive us who believe in Jesus more and more. Satan is trying and is striving to make us apostate Jesus away from faith. We must prepare. We must stand firm in our faith to fight spiritual battles against Satan. Then, in the midst of tribulation and persecution, we will be able to confess, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7).

Wanting to experience the power of God's word even more,

James Kim  
(Only the Word of God!)

## **The way of the wicked vs. The way of the righteous**

### **[Psalms 2]**

It happened when I went to a Christian bookstore. At that bookstore, I met a old pastor who is in the same presbytery with me. He told me that if I continued to do ministry in South Korea, I would have been popular ...' (I studied and worked in Korea in 2001-2003). At that time, I showed him a book called 'The Grace of the Wilderness,' which I was holding in order to pay money to a cashier with little mischief. The reason I showed him that book was because I believed that it was God's will for me to do wilderness ministry in Los Angeles, USA, rather than city ministry in Korea. In the book 'The Grace of the Wilderness', this is what it says: 'To learn is to change. If you have not changed, you have not learned ... Until you change, knowledge is not yours.' I really cannot disagree with this saying. As I taste God's great grace little by little in the place like the wilderness, especially now I am enjoying the power of the word of God. So, even now, after reading and meditating on His word, having prepared to preach, and after proclaiming God's word, I am now preparing to meditate on it again and writing down this Quiet Time. But when I ask the question "Is this all?" I can only answer "No". This is because true learning requires "transformation" (Hendricks). So I ask myself this question: "What change am I experiencing with the power of the Word?" I am experiencing many changes and one of them is that the Lord is building me firmly on the rock through His word. This is the Lord's building work as He promised us in Matthew 16:18. In particular, I am experiencing that the Lord is enabling me to hold on to His promise word of Matthew 16:18 that He gave to Victory Presbyterian Church whenever there are difficulties and hardships in my ministry. Actually, the Lord is holding me firmly through that promise word. Another change through the Word of God is that the Lord is training me to let the Word of God to speak to my soul. This training began after I read Pastor Lloyd Jones' book "Spiritual Depression" which I read a long time ago. I still have vivid memories. While I was reading that book, Pastor Lloyd Jones said that the psalmist proclaimed to his soul "Why are you in despair, O my soul? Why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God ..." when he was praying to God (Ps. 42: 5, 11; 43: 5). It was a big challenge for me when he pointed out that. From that time on, I began to learn how to speak the Word of God to my own soul. So I often let the Lord say His promise "I will build my church" (Mt. 16:18) to my soul when it is difficult in my ministry. Then I have experienced so many time that the Holy Spirit helps me to stand firm again and enables me to fulfill my ministry powerfully.

Last week, after meditating on Psalms 1, I challenged some of the members of the church to proclaim to their souls, '(your own name), you are the very blessed man/woman!' At that time I proclaimed to my own soul, "James, you are the very blessed man!" The reason is because the Lord made me not to walk on the path of the

wicked, but on the path of the righteous. In other words, the reason why I said to my soul that I am very blessed man was because the Lord enables me to be delighted in meditating the word of God day and night without walking in the counsel of the wicked, without standing in the way of sinners or without sitting in the seat of mockers (Ps. 1:1-2). By God's grace I can say to my soul "James, you are the very blessed man!" because the Lord enables me to taste the fruit of faith ("which yields its fruit in season"), to live the life of vital faith ("whose leaf does not wither"), and to enjoy the blessing of prosperity ("Whatever he does prospers") (v. 3). Today, I want to meditate continuously on the way of the wicked and the way of the righteous based on Psalms 2. The reason I said "continuously" is because Psalms 1 starts with "How blessed is the man ..." (v. 1) and Psalms 2 ends with "How blessed are ." (v. 12). In other words, since the psalmist is making a connection between Psalms 1 and 2, we must meditate on Psalms 2 in succession. The content of that meditation is "the way of the wicked" and "the way of the righteous" (1:6).

### **First, I want to think about the way of the wicked. What is the way of the wicked?**

#### **We can think of it in three ways:**

##### (1) The way of the wicked is the way of anger.

The world we live in is like a balloon. It seems like the people's anger of this world will burst as if the balloon was about to blow up. In a difficult and busy world, many people seem to be nervous because of stress. That's why people seem to be looking for someone or something to pour out anger on. And many seem to be adding more gasoline to the anger of the uncontrolled heart by hatred, jealousy, and envy. We who live in this generation need to think about the anger of the wicked who are against us. The reason is that even though we are living in a country where we have freedom of religion, we may not be able to feel this reality with our skin. But in a mission field where there is no freedom of religion, those who oppose Jesus Christ are persecuting and even putting those who proclaim the gospel of Jesus into prison.

Look at Psalms 2:1 – "Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing?" Here, "Why are the nations in an uproar ..." refers to the people of the world who are grinding their teeth, make much noise and attitude of attacking the Messiah that is Jesus in order to get rid of Him (Park). We can see in the New Testament Synoptic Gospel the fulfillment of this Old Testament word that prophesied that those who oppose Jesus Christ grind their teeth, made much noise and attitude of attacking Messiah. The people in this world who hated Jesus slapped His cheeks, spat on His face, beat Him and persecuted Him were full of anger so they were grinding their teeth and cried out 'Crucify Him!' in order to kill Him. What is surprising, however, is that the people who were so angry were the Jews whom Jesus came to save, especially the religious leaders behind them. Those who were angry with Jesus, such as the Pharisees and high priests, who walked the path of the wicked (the path of the children of the viper) without refusing to



walk the path of the righteous, were surprisingly not the characters who felt so far with us. So there is a good chance that we too can walk on the first way of the wicked, the way of anger. We should look back and examine ourselves whether we are now walking on this way of the wicked when we think about our anger toward God, our prayers and praises toward holy God like beating a gong and our attitude of dual personality in trying to get rid of Jesus.

(2) The way of the wicked is the way of plotting in vain.

When we look at the book 'The Grace of Wilderness,' this is what it says: 'Write your plan in pencil and then give the eraser to God.' As I read this, I thought about my own ministry: 'Am I really entrusting my pastoral plan to God? Or am I pastoring my ministry in a spiritual perfectionist way of thinking so that I am not yielding God to work? Therefore, am I doing pastoral ministry in vain now?' I think this is a word that applies not only to my ministry, but also to the lives of all the Christians. We must self-reflect ourselves to see if we are living our personal lives, our family's lives, and our work and business lives according our plans. Indeed, we should ask ourselves whether we are yielding ourselves, families, businesses and churches to the Lord so that He may build them up.

Look at Psalms 2:1 again: "Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing?" According to this word, the Bible says the peoples are devising a vain thing. This means that the people of the world crucified the Messiah Jesus to get rid of Him, but it was only in vain (Park). The reason is because God raised Jesus in three days. The people of the world killed Jesus and put Him in the tomb, but it was the vain thing because Jesus rose from the grave in three days [(v. 7) "... I have begotten You"]. Like this, all the man's plan to antagonize Jesus can only be the vain thing. The plan that the Lord is not with is just plotting in vain. That was why Moses said in the process of Exodus, "If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here" (Exod. 33:15). A plan without God is just a vain plan.

(3) The way of the wicked is the way to take counsel together in order to go against the Lord.

Look at Psalms 2:2 – "The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying." This word speak of the opposition by the world leaders to come together to go against Jesus Christ. Furthermore, they tried to break their chains and throw off their fetters (v. 3). In other words, the wicked who wanted to kill Jesus Christ regarded the truth as a heavy yoke, so they tried to reject the truth and take it off (Park). This word reminded me Absalom's counselor Ahithophel who tried to kill King David. Although Absalom could have killed his father King David if listened to the Ahithophel's counsel, God sent David's counselor Hushai to Absalom so that the Hushai's counsel would overcome the Ahithophel's counsel (2 Sam. 17:14). So in the end, King David lived but Absalom died (18:14-15). When I think about this Bible story, Psalms 2:4 comes to mind. God, the One

who enthroned in heaven, laughs when the nations, or the kings of the earth or the rulers conspire and plot against Messiah Jesus (Ps. 2:4).

When I think about “his Anointed One” (v.2), I know it refers to Jesus the Messiah. But in application, I think it can also refer to a pastor in the present world. I think God who is enthroned in heaven is laughing and scoffing as people in the church come together to against their pastors. How hard are they trying to repel the pastor by recklessly opposing the anointed one in the church? It is a pity why they don’t think that God will rebuke them in His anger (v. 5). Like this, the age in which we live is spiritually dark age.

**Second, I want to think about the way of the righteous. What is the way of the righteous? We can think of it in three ways:**

(1) The way of the righteous is the way of repentance.

Look at Psalms 2:10 – “Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth.” Here, “... be wise; be warned ...” is a word that encourages repentance (Park). In other words, true wisdom and warning are to quickly turn back and repent from the way of anger in opposing Jesus Christ, the way of plotting in vain, and the way of gathering together to go against the Lord (vv. 2-3).

(2) The way of the righteous is the way of service.

Look at Psalms 2:11 – “Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling.” What does the Bible say about how to serve? The Bible says to serve with fear. In other words, the Bible tells us to serve the holy God with fear and rejoice with trembling. Therefore, even after we obeyed the command of God, we must be His servants who are able to confess “We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done” (Lk. 17:10).

(3) The way of the righteous is the way of worship.

Look at Psalms 2:12 – “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.” The Bible says “Kiss the Son.” What does it mean? It means to worship the Messiah Jesus Christ (Park). But for some reason, when I meditate on this, I remember a scene where Judas Iscariot, who came to catch Jesus, kissed Jesus. I think of Judas Iscariot, the wicked man who betrayed Jesus, who, as Jesus said, would have been better off without being born into this world. Of course, this is not an action of a person walking on the way of the righteous. Rather, Judas Iscariot’s action was those of the wicked. What we need to keep in mind here is that Jesus is pointing out the evil of a false worshiper who worships with false lips like Judas Iscariot. Aren’t we offering false

worship that Jesus pointed out to God every Sunday? Even though we honor the Lord and praise and worship Him with our lips, aren't our hearts far away from the Lord? Aren't our lips the false lips like Judas Iscariot? Those who walk the way of the righteous worship the Lord with true lips (v. 12). We must become those who walk the way of the righteous.

How should the children of our God live who are walking on the way of righteousness by being justified through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? If we are now on the path of the wicked, we must turn back and repent and serve the Lord with joy and fear. We must truly worship the Lord. And even if the wicked are conspire, plot in vain and gather together to be against us, we must faithfully and silently walk the way of the righteous as we trust in Him and make God our refuge. Such a person is the very blessed person.

Wanting to be a servant of the Lord, who follows the footsteps of Jesus, who has shown the way of the righteous,

James Kim  
(In pursuit of repentance, service and worship)

# The Lord who lifts up my head

## [Psalms 3]

Have you ever heard the word “A man who bowed his head”? There are two choices in the question, “Where does my husband sit on the truck when I’m moving?” (1) “The passenger seat next to the driver” and (2) “The luggage compartment at the back.” The reasons for the answer to “The luggage compartment at the back” are (1) to protect the luggage, (2) because there is no room to give him a ride, (3) to save money, and (4) for fun. Do you know the answer? There is no answer in the above (1) ~ (4). The correct answer is, ‘Please take me with you. Please don’t leave me.’ Haha. It’s a funny answer on one side, but I think it’s a pity from the other side of the reality of Korea. The Korean men who bow their heads due to early retirement are called ‘unemployment syndrome,’ the symptoms of “I became a loser in life,” and the symptoms of “I can’t face the faces of my wife and children who believed in only me.’ They are said to suffer from loss, betrayal, defeat and frustration (Internet). After I read the article about “A man who bowed his head” on an Korean internet website, I thought about ‘A Christian who bowed his head.’ The Christian who bowed his head may suffer from loss, betrayal, defeat and frustration. But more than that, the “feelings” that make our Christians bow down are “guilt”: ‘My sins made my child like this, ‘My sins made my family look like this’ and etc.. These voices in our own minds can cause our Christians to become obsessed with loss, defeat, frustration, especially guilt.

David, the psalmist in Psalms, could have bowed his head. The reason was that David could have felt guilty when he was running away from his son Absalom because of the sin of killing his faithful soldier Uriah and taking Uriah’s wife Bathsheba as his wife (Psalms 3: “A Psalm of David: When he fled from the Face of Absalom his Son”). He could have bow his head when we think from his standpoint, such as ‘I am in this this situation because of my sin,’ ‘I didn’t fulfill my responsibilities as the head of family, and this is why my house is like this’ and etc. However, the surprising fact is that in Psalms 3:3, David confesses that ‘The Lord lifts up my head.’ How much of David’s confession is a great comfort and strength to us? I want to meditate on Psalms 3 under the heading “The Lord who lifts up my head” and humbly receive God’s grace to us.

### **The first thing to think about is “Increase of my adversaries”.**

Look at Psalms 3:1 – “O LORD, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me!” When we look at this word, David said “how many are my foes!” He said ‘There are man who rose up against me’ (v. 1) and “Many” said “God will not deliver him” (v. 2). Here, the word ‘many’ appears three times in Psalm 3: 1-2. If we see this word repeated three times, our adversaries will become more and more and not less for sure. When we meditate the

word of God day and night (1:2) and walk the way of the righteous (v. 6) and not walking in the counsel of the wicked, nor standing in the path of sinners, nor sitting in the seat of scoffers (v. 1), then those wicked, sinners and scoffers will be against and they will be many and their power will grow (3:1-2). That's why the psalmist David said in Psalm 2:2, "The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together ..." (2:2). Where can we surely see this is in the life of Jesus, the Messiah, "His Anointed" (v. 2). An interesting fact before crucifying Jesus was that "Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day, for before they had been enemies with each other" (Lk. 23:12). Just as Herod and Pilate, who were enemies in opposing Jesus, became friends, the people of the world are joining forces to overcome us together as friends when opposing us, the Jesus' disciples. In some ways, I think that the number of enemies is getting bigger is because one of the two reasons: (1) Evidence that I am getting discipline by God like David because I sinned greatly against my holy God, or (2) Evidence that I am walking faithfully on the way of the righteous. What are the critical blows that our enemies, who prowl around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (Cf. 1 Pet. 5:8), want to give us? It is the voice that many enemies say to David, "There is no deliverance for him in God" (Ps. 3:2). What many enemies said to David's soul was, 'God will not deliver you, he will not save you.' This is a very deadly Satanic voice that can blow our faith to fall. This is a voice we hear very well when we are exhausted and collapsed in adversity and crisis. When we hear the voices saying, 'Look, even though you are suffering and are in pain now, and no matter how much you pray, God is not helping you', this voice that we heard so well in when our spiritual power is weakened, our soul surely can be discouraged and be in anxiety. What should we do at times like this? We must overcome by faith: 'Faith can overcome, faith can overcome. By faith in the Lord Jesus, we can overcome the world' (a Korean hymn).

### **The second and last thing to think about is "Increase of my faith".**

Increasing of my adversaries can be a great opportunity to increase my faith. I would like to think of three things about this growing faith:

#### **(1) Increase of faith is "'But' faith" or 'Retrogress faith'.**

Look at Psalms 3:3 – "But You, O LORD, are a shield about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head." There is no conjunction in the Korean Bible but there is "But" in English Bible and the original Hebrew. In other words, when many adversaries tried to hit David and said to him, "There is no deliverance for him in God" (v. 2), David wasn't disturbed by their word. Rather, he made this confession of faith, "You, O LORD, are a shield about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head" (v. 3). This is 'Retrogress faith.' 'Faith rather enjoys adversity and paradox' (Park). We must retrogress the sinful wave of the world. Like a certain fish that goes up against the waterfall, we also have to go up against the waterfall of sin in the world. What a big challenge! When David was in the situation in which many and increasing adversaries tried to kill him, he went up against their waterfall-like saying of "There is no deliverance for him in God"

(v. 2) and confessed ‘God protects me’ [“You, O Lord, are a shield about me” (v. 3)], ‘God who gives me glory’ [“My glory” (v. 3)] and ‘God who gives me hope, comfort and victory’ [“the One who lifts my head” (v. 3)] (Park). What an amazing confession of faith? We must pursue David’s “But” faith or ‘Retrogress faith’. No matter what people in the world say to our souls, or whatever we say about God to our own souls, we must be able to confess the right faith. Although whoever lies to us about God, we shouldn’t be deceived but must confess the truth by saying “But” God is the God whom the Bible says. We must also proclaim to our souls and fight the enemies who are in front of us or who are infiltrated in us and be victorious.

(2) Increase of faith is ‘prayer faith’.

Look at Psalms 3:4, 7, 8: “I was crying to the LORD with my voice, And He answered me from His holy mountain. Selah. ... Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God! For You have smitten all my enemies on the cheek; You have shattered the teeth of the wicked. Salvation belongs to the LORD; Your blessing be upon Your people! Selah.” In these words we see David crying out to God [Ex.: (v. 4) “I was crying to the LORD with my voice, ...”]. He seemed to pray to God and relied on Him more where there were more and increasing adversaries. In particular, on the basis of past prayer answers (v. 7), with confidence in prayer answers, he prayed for God’s salvation (deliverance) from the adversity and crisis he faced. Although the adversaries continued to say, ‘God will not save you,’ David continued to proclaim to his own soul and believed that ‘God is my savior’, and prayed to God in faith for his deliverance. As David prayed “Arise, O Lord; save me, o my God” (v. 7), he admitted that he couldn’t do anything about many adversaries who arose up against him (v. 1). This fact gives us a valuable lesson. The valuable lesson is that the power of God’s salvation emerges when we admit our limitations and seek God’s infinity and ask God for his salvation. In light of this lesson, I think that if we aren’t praying to God means we are confessing that we aren’t recognizing our human limitations and don’t need to rely on God’s infinity. This faith can never be said to be a growing faith. A believer who is still ignorant of human limitations and wants to fight against his enemies with his own strength will have no choice but to endure the struggle and experience defeat and frustration. It seems that Satan keeps telling our souls like this: ‘You are fatigue and sleepy. Don’t pray, just go to sleep. You can minister without praying. Rely on yourself and do your ministry however you want. And if it doesn’t work, it is not too late to pray.’ What do you think Satan’s strategy is? I think the Satan’s strategy is to make us to believe this lie, ‘You have unlimited power in you. Rely on yourself. You are God.’ That’s why we must be alert and pray to God. By doing so, we must experience His salvation (deliverance). We cannot save ourselves. We must pray. We must cry out to God in faith for His salvation.

(3) Increase of faith is ‘Faith that are not afraid.’

Look at Psalms 3:6 – “I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people Who have set themselves against me round about.” When we look at this word, David confesses that he won’t be afraid of 1,000 of people. Of course, the more enemies we have, the greater our fears, but David was not afraid. This is the reaction of those who have growing faith. The Christians with genuinely growing faith have less fear as they pray more and more as the number of adversaries increase. Fear exists. But like David, they proclaim that they will not be afraid, and move forward by faith. David was able to proclaim it because there was prayers to support the retrogress faith. When we pray, the fear of man goes away because there is awe of God. Those who fear God won’t and can’t fear man. David not only was afraid of his adversaries but rather laid down and slept (v. 5) because he trusted God, who is the shield who protects his front and back, who will manifest His glory through many adversaries and who gives him hope, comfort, victory and lifts his head rather than frustration, disappointment and deft. How amazing faith of the believers who can sleep in crisis. As the waves on the surface of the sea are big, the deeper the sea, the calmer the bottom of the deep sea, even if our adversaries are attacking us, if we have the depth of faith in God, we will remain quiet and will look only to our Lord. This quietness is our strength [(Isa. 30:15) “... In quietness and trust is your strength ...”].

The world is trying to make our heads bow. Satan is making every effort to make our head to bow by making us to taste the loss, betrayal, defeat and frustration. He is sending us a lot of enemies and is also beating us with a lot of pain and adversity. He says to our ears, ‘God will not deliver you,’ and tries to make us not to look at God our Savior. But we must pursue a growing faith by deeply recognizing that our faith must grow as the work of Satan increases. That growing faith or increase of faith is retrogress faith, prayer faith and faith that aren’t afraid. I hope and pray that we can praise God ‘The faith wins. The faith in the Lord wins. It win the whole world’ and faithfully walk the way of the victors for His glory.

With earnest desire for my faith to grow and increase,

James Kim

(Thanksgiving to the Immanuel Lord who has been with me with the grace of salvation in my life)

## “O sons of men”

### [Psalms 4]

I like to sing the Korean hymn that says ‘This world is full of sinful things and a lot of death’ because I heard the news of many people dying from all over the world almost every day as well as the loved ones around me from illness and old age. When I came across the news of people who died here and there, I thought that it is truly God’s grace to live day by day and life is precious. On the Internet, I saw an article by Woo-jin Kim, ‘The Praise of Poet.’ If I move the few words here, this is what he said: ‘This world of tears/ Would it stop if I die/ O sons of men who are looking for happiness/ what you are looking for is vain ... A life fluttering in vanity/ Do you know that you have been deceived/ The things in the world is vain to you/ There is nothing after you die.’ When I ask myself “What is life really?” I think it is worthy of God to pursue a truly valuable life in this vain and meaningless world. I would like to think about that valuable life in three ways under the heading “O sons of men” (Ps. 4:2) based on the words of Psalm 4 in the Bible.

#### **First, I want to think of three things that the sons of men should repent of.**

##### (1) We must repent our sin of turning God’s glory into shame.

Look at Psalms 4:2 – “How long, O men, will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods ? Selah.” When we look at this word, the psalmist David said “How long, O men, will you turn my glory into shame?” Here “my glory” refers to the royal glory that God gave to King David. And what King David said is his adversaries should repent their sin of turning David’s kingly glory into shame.

How can this word be applied in this present age? I think that opposing the servant of the Lord, who is anointed to the church, is a sin that is turning God’s glory into shame. I believe that we must reflect ourselves with this word of God whether we are living a life of turning God’s glory into shame or not. The Bible urges us to repent our sin if we are turning God’s glory into shame and to live a life of glorifying God in this dark world.

##### (2) We must repent our sin of loving vanity.

Look at Psalms 4:2 again – “How long, O men, will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you



love delusions and seek false gods ? Selah.” When we look at this word, David said “How long, O men, ... will you love delusions ....” Here, the word “delusions” is being translated as “worthless” in NASB Bible which seems to be more appropriate to me. What David said is it is worthless to be against him whom God raised so his adversaries must repent their sin of loving vanity.

The Preacher, the son of David, says in Ecclesiastes 1:2, “Vanity of vanities”. We should ask ourselves whether we are living in this vain world, loving “worthless” things or not. Living for the glory of God is a life that all of us Christians should pursue since it is truly valuable thing and has an eternal value. But if we are living in compromise, pursuing vain things that are of instantaneous value or of no value at all, the Bible urges us to repent of our sins of loving vain (Ps. 4:2).

(3) We must repent our sin of seeking false gods.

Look at Psalms 4:2 again – “How long, O men, will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods ? Selah.” When we look at this word, David said “... How long will you ... seek false gods? ...” Here, the word “false gods” is being translated as “deception” in NASB Bible which seems to be more appropriate to me. Many of David’s adversaries already opposed David by saying to him, “There is no deliverance for him in God” (3:2). In Psalms 4, they continued to oppose David by using deception (v. 2). The deception that says ‘God won’t deliver you’ means eventually ‘God is not your Savior.’ This is deception that denies God as our Savior.

Even now, Satan is trying to make us doubt God’s salvation through this deception. Satan, the father of lies (Jn. 8:44), is making every effort to deceive us to doubt about God and His saving work in us. Another Satan’s deception is to deceive ourselves. Look at James 1:22 – “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” We are falling into the Satan’s temptation of merely listening to the word of God and don’t do what it says so many times. The Bible is urging us to repent this sin of deceiving ourselves.

**Second, I want to think of two things that the sons of men should realize.**

(1) We must realize that the Lord has set apart the godly man for Himself.

Look at Psalms 4:3 – “But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself; The LORD hears when I call to Him.” When we look at this word, David said, “Know that the Lord has set apart the godly man for Himself ....” In other words, it means that no one can cut off God’s love for God’s chosen ones such as, David and others saints, for His glory (Park). What a great words of comfort and words of grace? This reminds me of the words of Romans 8:35-39: “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will

tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” In Psalms 4:3, “the godly man” refers to ‘the one who is favored,’ that is, the one who receive God’s mercy and love. The reason God’s mercy and love remain unchanged is because God has chosen us “for Himself” (v. 3). Therefore, we cannot turn the glory of God into shame. The vanity and desperation of our adversaries can never change this fact.

(2) We must realize that the Lord hears when the godly man call on Him.

Look at Psalms 4:3 – “...The LORD hears when I call to Him.” From this word we can see that David believed that God was the God who answered his prayers. What we need to keep in mind here is that God hears the prayers of the godly, not because David or we are godly, but because our God is “the God of righteousness” (v. 1). God’s answer to our prayer is never based on our righteousness. It is based on God’s own righteousness that God answers our prayers. We must realize this.

**Third, I want to think of three things that the sons of men should do.**

(1) We must tremble and not sin.

Look at Psalms 4:4 – “Tremble, and do not sin ....” Here the word “Tremble” is translated as “be angry” in LXX (Park). In other words, it means that we should be angry and don’t sin. According to Park, it means not to commit anymore sins by being angry that we have sinned (Park).

Even though we get angry, we must not sin anymore. We must not turn God’s glory into shame anymore. Also, we must not love vanity anymore. We must not seek worthless things anymore. By being angry at ourselves in committing all these kinds of sins in the past, we must no longer commit them.

(2) We must meditate in our hearts and be still.

Look at Psalms 4:4 – “... Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.” If we say that the time we usually lie down on is night, the Bible is now challenging us to meditate in our hearts and be still. The Bible challenges us not to do things blindly but to remain silent before God and have self-reflection in the night. We need to be trained to have God’s Word speaking to our hearts. This training is very important. The reason is because the voice of the world and the voice of Satan are being heard very well in the heart. If we don’t constantly receive this training of letting the word of God to speak to our hearts, we will continue to sin against God. Therefore, we must overcome the battle against sin by training ourselves

in meditating the Word of God in our hearts so that His Word can speak to our hearts. One thing that we shouldn't miss in this meditation training is to train ourselves to be still before God. We must be still before Him so that God can reveal Himself to us. This quietness is our strength (Isa. 30:15).

(3) We must trust in the Lord completely with our repentant hearts.

Look at Psalms 4:5 – “Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the LORD.” What is “the sacrifices of righteousness”? It is “a broken spirit,” the heart of repentance (51:16, 17). The Bible is challenging us to repent our sins with our broken spirit as we trust in the Lord completely. If we don't repent our sins that we have committed against our holy God with our broken hearts, then we cannot say that we are completely trust in Him. He who trusts in the Lord repents.

In conclusion, what are some results of “the sons of men” repenting what they supposed to repent, realizing what they supposed to realize, and doing the things they supposed to do? The Bible Psalms 4 says four things:

1. God is gracious and will heart and will hear our prayer (v. 1).
2. God will shine the light of His face upon us (v. 6).
3. God will fill our hearts with joy (v. 7).
4. We will lie down and sleep in peace because God alone will make us dwell in safety (v. 8).

These blessings are privileges that “the sons of men” can enjoy, who repent what they supposed to repent, who realize what they supposed to realize, and do what they supposed to do. May these blessings be upon all of us.

With the hope that I am no longer turn God's glory into shame,

James Kim  
(Seeking for tears of repentance)

## **“In your anger do not sin”**

**“In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent. Selah” (Ps. 4:4).**

The Bible says “In your anger do not sin” (Ps. 4:4). But this word of God is too difficult to apply in our lives. In particular, the word “anger” is impossible without a fear of God. The Bible says “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil” (Prov. 8:13). Therefore, when we face temptation, we must resist it according to this word and overcome it and not commit sin. We know we should do that, but our sinful nature wants to get closer to temptation when we encounter it. When we look at ourselves, we cannot help but wonder if there is trembling in us.

When is it easy for us to sin? It is easy for us to commit a sin when we are in “distress” (Ps. 4:1). The psalmist David was in distress because of his son Absalom (Ps. 3), “my foes” (v. 1) or “all my enemies” (v. 7). However, the difficulty that made David more difficult than this was that “Many are saying of me, ‘God will not deliver him’” (v. 2). We are same. If many people say to us ‘God will not deliver you,’ then we who are in distress can be discouraged by their voice. We can also commit sin of not seeking God’s help any longer, but ask people for help. Furthermore, we can blame God and even leave the church of God.

What kinds of sins are easy for us to commit in distress? It is easy for us to commit the sin of turning the glory of God into shame (4:2). How can we turn God’s glory into shame? We can think of two ways:

(1) We can turn the glory of God into shame by loving the worthless things and by aiming at deception.

Look at Psalms 4:2 — “... How long will your love what is worthless and aim at deception? Selah.” We can’t wait for God’s help in distress, and it’s easy to be drawn to the worthless things and deception by turning our eyes to vain and falsehood. Then, in the end, we can turn God’s glory into shame.

(2) We can turn the glory of God into shame by doing unrighteousness and not trusting in God.

Look at Psalm 4:5 – “Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the LORD.” We are in danger of not trusting in God and waiting for the help of the righteous God, so there is enough danger of trusting ourselves and doing unrighteousness.

Then what should we do in distress?

**First, we must tremble and not sin.**

Look at Psalms 4:4 — “Tremble, and do not sin ....” Some scholars see this in connection with the words of Ephesians 4:26, “Be angry, and yet do not sin ....” Therefore, they say that we should tremble and not commit sin, even if we are angry with God’s fear.

**Second, we must meditate in our hearts.**

Look at Psalms 4:4 – “... Meditate in your heart upon your bed and be still.” We need to meditate on the word of God deeply in a quiet place at the quiet time, with quiet heart, as we go to the Lord. In the midst of that, we must yield to the word of God to speak to our souls.

**Third and last, we must be still.**

Look at Psalms 4:4 – “... Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still.” We must “Be still and know that I am God” (46:10). Also, we must know that in quietness and trust is our strength (Isa. 30:15). Therefore, we must tremble and not sin when we are in distress (Ps. 4:4).

Desiring to be submerged in God’s great love and grace in the life of knowing that I am a chief sinner,

James Kim  
(As I thank God for His abundant grace)

## **“Make Your way straight before me”**

### **[Psalms 5]**

One day, I drove to a restaurant with my father-in-law, mother-in-law and my children in order to have my niece’s birthday meal. At that time, I didn’t know how to get to the restaurant, so I got directions from the computer internet and drove to the restaurant safely. But after we have a good meal time together, I got lost when I was coming back home. The reason I got lost was because I could have gone back to the way I came, but I went on another way. The reason I went another way was because I thought for sure that another way was an expressway to my home. At that time, when my father-in-law saw me got lost and wandering, he was little bit worried. At that time, I confidently told my father-in-law, ‘Do you not trust me? Trust me, father. Even on this road, there is definitely a highway to go home.’ However, I got lost and eventually went a lot in the opposite direction from home. Eventually, I admitted that I was lost in my mind and got off at a nearby gas station and asked for a direction. And as the person working at the gas station told me, we were able to return home safely. The lesson I learned here was that having confidence is important, but confidence based on a wrong fact can be dangerous. I wasn’t confident based on the fact, but based on my assumption.

Looking down from an airplane, Los Angeles, USA looks like a checkerboard. The roads are almost straight and well listed. And the curved road is not very visible. So it’s a little easier to find a way in Los Angeles. So I thought that another way that I took was definitely straight. But perhaps it was little bent street. While I was driving, I thought it was straight road, but it probably wasn’t. Likewise, the way of faith isn’t always seem to be straight. There is a curved road in the way of faith. Although we, the believers, must walk on the straight way, we can choose to walk on the curved way, thinking confidently that it’s the straightway based on the wrong fact. As a result, we have no choice but to experience the consequences of our wrong choice. Therefore, we must choose the straightway and walk straight. Then, what is the straightway according to the Bible?

According to Psalms 5:8, the psalmist David prays to God, “Make Your way straight before me.” There must have been many curved ways and many tempting ways, but David prayed to God for him to walk the Lord’s straight way. And he walked the Lord’s way straight. I would like to meditate on three things based on Psalms 5 about what life is walking the Lord’s way straight.

### **First, the life of walking the Lord’s way straight is “the life of prayer.”**

Look at Psalms 5:1-3: “Give ear to my words, O LORD, Consider my groaning. Heed the sound of my cry

for help, my King and my God, For to You I pray. In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice; In the morning I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch.” These days, I am experiencing God revealing my sin of not walking on the Lord’s way straight because as I am serving the Lord’s church I am not praying properly. I am discovering myself that I am walking to the left or to the right. The reason why my pastoral ministry is inconsistent and moving to the right and to the left is because my prayer life has problems. So the Lord is making me to pray. The Lord is making me to repent and enabling me to no longer walking right and left on the way but to walk on the Lord’s way straight by making me to realize His will in prayer. He who walks the Lord’s way straight asks God to consider his “groaning” [“thoughts that are focused on God or dedicated heart to God” (Park) in the danger of going left or right (v. 1). In other words, he pours out his heart to God. Especially, the psalmist David poured out his heart in the morning and hoped that his prayer would be answered (v. 3). Pastor Spurgeon said: ‘Prayer is the key to the open the day, and it must be the lock that closes the day’ (Park). In other words, when we wake up early in the morning before starting the day’s routine, we should pray to God, “Lord, let me walk Your way straight today,” and then walk faithfully on that way. And at the end of the day at night before we fall asleep, we should be able to look back that day and give thanks to God for His grace that enabled us to walk the Lord’s way straight. Then we will be able to have a sweet sleep because of the beneficial day and the day that brings glory to God. But when we don’t pray, which is the key and the lock of our daily lives, we will be at greater risk of being expose to sin so that evil dwells with us rather than the Lord dwells with us (v. 4). Therefore, we need to develop a good habit of starting the day with prayer and ending the day with prayer.

## **Second, the life of walking the Lord’s way straight is “the life of worship.”**

Look at Psalms 5:7 – “But as for me, by Your abundant lovingkindness I will enter Your house, At Your holy temple I will bow in reverence for You.” David worshiped God even though he was in a situation where he couldn’t worship. He lived a life of worship even though there were “The boastful” (v. 5), “all who do iniquity” whom the Lord hates (v. 5), “those who speak falsehood” whom He destroys (v. 6) and “the man of bloodshed and deceit” whom the Lord abhors (v. 6). How could David walk the Lord’s way straight while everyone is walking on the curved road? There may be many people around us who are walking on the curved way rather than walking on the Lord’s way straight or walking the Lord’s way staggeringly. But when I think about how David was able to walk the Lord’s way straight beyond his situation, I think there were two reasons:

- (1) The first reason why David was able to walk straight on the Lord’s way was because of the Lord’s abundant lovingkindness (v. 7).

In order for David to go to the right way that he wanted to go even he saw the actions of all these wicked people, he had no choice but to trust in God’s mercy (Park). It is because of God’s abundant lovingkindness that we can worship God in the midst of many wicked people, many persecutions and

adversities, and many pains and sufferings.

(2) The second reason why David was able to walk straight on the Lord's way was because he feared the Lord.

David was able to worship God “my King and my God” (v. 2) beyond his difficult situations because he feared God. He who fears God hates evil, so he chooses the Lord's way and walks straight rather than choose and walk the curved way.

By God's abundant grace and mercy, David was able to look to God and worship Him in the midst of many enemies and wicked people. Even under such circumstance, he was able to worship God because he was a man of prayer. How about us? Are we worshipping God in the midst of many adversities, difficulties, pains and wounds? Or are we unable to worship Him because of our difficult circumstances? If we are failing to give praise and worship to God, it is because our prayer life has problems. Those who don't pray cannot worship God in spirit and in truth. We cannot worship God in a lot of difficulties and temptations because we cannot be strengthened by the Lord's abundant love and because we have no heart of fearing the Lord. Therefore, we must prepare for Sunday worship with prayer from Monday. And on the Lord's Day, we should enter His house and worship Him (v. 7). This is the life of walking the Lord's way straight.

**Third and last, the life of walking the Lord's way straight is “the life of joy.”**

Look at Psalms 5:11 – “But let all who take refuge in You be glad, Let them ever sing for joy; And may You shelter them, That those who love Your name may exult in You.” What is joy? When I was thinking about joy that the Christians should feel and experience, I thought about Jesus. I wondered if there is a word in the Bible that says, ‘Jesus was joyful’ or ‘Jesus rejoiced.’ But in my short knowledge of the Bible, I couldn't remember. Instead, the word that came to mind was “a voice came out of heaven” when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, “You are My beloved Son, in Your I am well-pleased” (Lk. 3:22). When I think about why Heavenly Father was pleased with His begotten Son, I think it was because Jesus obeyed the Heavenly Father's will until he died at the cross. Then, I asked myself again whether Jesus was joyful or Jesus rejoiced in His life on earth, from Bethlehem to Golgotha. In human perspective, Jesus lived a miserable life, a poor life, a sad life... However, I think Jesus lived a life of joy in Heavenly Father's perspective. There may not be the “joy” we think of in our lives that our Heavenly Father is pleased with. But the real joy we must experience is Heavenly Father's joy. That Heavenly Father's joy is also the joy of the Son Jesus. If we walk the way of Jesus straight by living the life of prayer and the life of worshipping God, we can live by experiencing the joy of God. This joy is the joy of all the saints walking straight on the Lord's way (“let all ... be glad”) and also eternal joy (“ever sing for joy”) (v. 11). The object of this joy is only the “Lord” (“those who love your name may rejoice in you”) (v. 11).



We who consider only the Lord as our joy will walk the way of the Lord straight, faithfully, and to the end, as we rejoice because of the Lord who takes great delight in us, even if no one in the world can understand us.

Long time ago, when my church first cell members went out in front of the church main sanctuary to sing a special song during the Wednesday night prayer meeting, I saw my youngest daughter running forward a little later and trying to hold my wife's hand. As I looked at it, I thought of this: 'If I want to walk the Lord's way straight, I must hold the Lord's hand. I really need the Lord to hold my hand so that I can walk the Lord's way straight.' When the Lord holds our hands even if there are many windbreaks, adversities, and difficulties, then we can walk faithfully and straight on the way of the Lord until the day He calls us to heaven. I hope and pray that we all can walk the Lord's way which is the way of prayer, the way of worship, and the way of joy without wavering to the right or to the left but straight.

With thanksgiving to the Lord for His grace that is making the lonely wilderness to the garden of solitude,

James Kim

(As I am experiencing God's people in my heart after I sang the Korean hymn 470 with my hands raised up and cried out to God together with my church members)

## Prayer of tears

### [Psalms 6]

As we prepared for our church revival meeting, we prayed in tears because of God's delicate God. The pastor who came as the guest speaker of our church revival meeting conducted the gospel radio broadcast interview with other two pastors from two other churches before leading the revival meeting at our church on the first day. While listening to the interview, I was hoping that the guest speaker would say a word about our church revival meeting. But I was a little bit sad because he didn't say anything about it. But after a while, a reporter whom I didn't know at all from one of the Korean newspapers called the church and asked to interview me regarding our church. After I hung up, I bowed my head to my desk and prayed to God in tears. The reason is because I felt the delicate love of God. I shed tears of thanksgiving because I was deeply moved by that love of God that He knew and heard my little desire in my heart.

In the word of Psalms 6:6, we can see that David, the psalmist, wrote "I am worn out from groaning; all night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears." I think about what his tears meant. When I think about it, I think David's tears were tears of repentance. The grace I received during the preparation for this revival meeting was a reminder that I had no tears of repentance. As the guest speaker said in the radio broadcast interview, he said that we who would attend the church revival meeting need heart of repentance but my tears of repentance had already dried up.

David wanted to be disciplined by God with His love rather than His anger because he sinned against God. And he shed tears of repentance to God amid agony of his bones and anguish of his soul because of God's discipline of love (vv. 2, 3). 'It is the gift of the Holy Spirit that we can repent of our sins in the presence of physical suffering' (Park). David shed tears of repentance over the sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, in the pain of the flesh that had come upon him. He knew that it was the discipline of God's love for sin, so he took it for granted and refused to avoid it. This is the psychology of repentance (Park).

I lack even this psychology of repentance. I also seem to have lost my sensitivity to sin. Therefore, it seems that not only I don't regard sin as a sin, but also I lost my ability to feel it. I have an instinct not to fear God's wrath and to reject even the discipline of His love. Now I am trying to avoid God's loving discipline rather than humbly accepting it. I am being disciplined by God and I don't know what my own sin is. So I have many tears to shed before God. Of course, I have to shed tears of thanksgiving, tears of devotion, and tears of love for a soul. But now I want to shed tears of repentance. The reason is probably that without a tear of repentance, I cannot honestly

appreciate, dedicate, and love with an unclean soul.

He whose tear of repentance is being dried up,

James Kim  
(Trusting in the precious blood of Jesus Christ on the cross)

## **Establish the righteous!**

### **[Psalms 7]**

This week my car was in trouble, so I drove a church car and went to close hamburger shop. And I met a member of our church. Upon meeting, the church member asked me, 'Have you seen a fight here a while ago?' I said 'No.' It turned out that, in an argument with the church member and others, he probably spit on the other person's face. So how angry would that person be? So the other person brought his friend and started arguing with our church member again. So I apologized to the other person as 'I am sorry'. However, one of the other people looked at the church car I was riding, looked at the church name and said to the church member, 'How can anyone who goes to the church do that?' I was really troubled. God's glory was covered by the controversy of our church members and the unscrupulous misbehavior of spitting on the other person's face. As a senior pastor, I felt responsible and I asked myself, 'How should I do the ministry?' Then I meditated on the words of Psalms 7 in the Bible and then meditated on the prayer of the psalmist who said, "establish the righteous" in verse 9. In the midst of that, I was challenged to pray to God and devote myself to establish the righteous.

At the church revival meeting, the guest speaker pastor preached about Abraham, who wanted to save Lot before Sodom and Gomorrah was destroyed, humbly asked God if 50, 45, 40, 30, 20, or 10 righteous people were in Sodom and Gomorrah, would He still destroy it. When I was listening to the pastor's sermon, I thought that we shouldn't be destroyed because there aren't 10 righteous people in our church. And I was challenged to make every effort to build a soul as righteous and establish him or her. Of course, there can be greed of numbers in my heart, but I thought that the Lord would add the believers to our church. So at first, I thought about committing myself to teach, encourage, and pray to live a righteous life by feeding each soul in our church with the Word of God. I remembered having a conversation with the guest speaker pastor in a car. The pastor told me about "cheap grace." It seemed like so many Christians who received faith as the gift of God's grace and received Jesus as their Savior and Lord and were justified, weren't living a righteous life. If justification by God's grace is the head of the coin, then the back side of the coin is living the righteous life. But we aren't fulfilling our responsibility and we say that we live by God's grace. This is truly cheap grace. The sad reality, however, is that we pastors prefer this "cheap grace". As the gap between faith and life is getting wider, it seems that the proclamation of the word in the pulpit and the obedience of the word after coming down from the pulpit is lacking. As a result, it seems that the Christianity has fallen where such hired pastors who don't resemble Jesus are dominating.

What should we do? We should ask God with one heart, 'Establish the righteous!' Then how does God

establish the righteous? Based on Psalms 7, I want to think about how God raises the righteous. By doing so and as we learn together how God raises the righteous, I hope and pray that we all can live the righteous life before God and people.

**First, God establishes the righteous through an unrighteous situation. In other words, our God establishes the righteous through even unjust situation.**

The situation in which the psalmist David faced was an unjust situation. If he had a wrong sin (?), he went in the name of God and defeated Goliath, the Philistine general. But when the people who were saying, “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands,” King Saul looked at David with jealousy eyes and tried to kill David (1 Sam. 18:7, 9). So David was running away from King Saul in this unjust situation. However, God’s amazing providence was that He proved David’s innocence or purity even in the midst of this unjust situation. Look at the Bible Psalm 7:3-5: “O LORD my God, if I have done this, If there is injustice in my hands, If I have rewarded evil to my friend, Or have plundered him who without cause was my adversary, Let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it; And let him trample my life down to the ground And lay my glory in the dust. Selah.” David said, ‘If I have sin, or if I have sinned against a friend or an enemy, I am fine with dying.’ David’s “righteousness” and “integrity” were shining even under his really unjust situation (v. 8).

Living in this unrighteous world, righteous Christians can face many unjust things. We can be defrauded, framed, and go through a lot of painful thing. Then, like David, we should give glory to God by taking that unjust or unrighteous situation as an opportunity to manifest “my righteousness” and “my integrity” (v. 8). We must manifest our innocence or purity before God and man. I hope and pray that we all become truly righteous Christians who can manifest righteousness and integrity even in unjust or unrighteous situation rather than complaining and grumbling about it.

**Second, God establishes the righteous through prayer.**

David prayed to God in his unjust situation. And his prayer was upright prayer. It was upright prayer in the midst of unrighteous situation. What an amazing providence of God? In this way, God makes the righteous to pray uprightly in unrighteous situations in establishing the righteous. After all, God raises upright man of prayer through unrighteous situations. We can think of three things about the righteous David’s upright prayer:

(1) Trust

In the midst of unjust situation, David didn’t rely on his own strength but prayed to God by entrusting himself to the power and will of God [(Park); “O Lord my God, in You I have taken refuge” (v. 1)]. Those who can do so can be assured that God will surely save them (Park). In rather unjust circumstances, David

looked only to the Lord and relied only Him. And he made God his shield (v. 10).

(2) Pure life.

When we look at Psalms 7:3-5, we see David praying to God with in mind that he didn't kill King Saul even though he was able to do so when both King Saul and David were inside the cave (1 Sam. 24:1-15). As we see David praying while revealing his innocence, we learn to pray to God for or on the basis of our pure life. Why should we pray to God in a pure life? The reason is because our God is the righteous God who tries the hearts and minds (Ps. 7:9).

(3) God's justice.

In the words of Psalms 7:6-16, David appealed to God based on God's justice (esp. vv. 6, 8, 11). This is the prayer of hope based on God's justice (Park). Like David, who cried out to a righteous judge God who has indignation every day (v. 11) for Him to save him from the unjust situation, we too must cry out to righteous and just God.

God makes righteous to pray uprightly through unrighteous or unjust situations. Those who don't live a righteous life will be dishonest in words and deeds, rather than offering upright prayers to God in unrighteous or unjust situation. But God's righteousness will be revealed through our lives and the situations we face through our upright prayer. Therefore, we must pray more uprightly to God in unrighteous situations.

**Third and last, God establishes righteous through judgment.**

God, who has indignation every day (v. 11), brings destruction to the wicked and salvation to the righteous through sudden destruction of sinners whose sins are many and who don't repent (v. 12). It is because the wicked conceived mischief (secret work to count others) and travails with wickedness (v. 14). Because the wicked keeps conceiving sins, God is forced to reveal His justice. Eventually, God establishes the righteous by judging the sinners by making His arrows fiery shafts (v. 13). God's judgment is that God saves the righteous "according to my righteousness and my integrity that is in me" and destroys the wicked (v. 8).

Our holy and just God manifests His righteousness by judging injustice. He is the God who fulfills the work of salvation by judging unrighteous people and wicked people in saving His righteous who are in an unrighteous and unjust situation. Therefore, we must trust in our God and pray to Him. We must offer upright prayer to God. And we should expect our salvation through God's judgement on the wicked. Eventually, God will manifest our righteousness and integrity. And God will establish us righteous.

With desire to live a righteous life uprightly and faithfully as one who is justified,

James Kim

(Struggling with unrighteous thoughts and sins of my lips)

## God who has indignation

**“God is a righteous judge, And a God who has indignation every day.”(Ps. 7:11)**

Yesterday afternoon, I took my son Dillon and went to Dillon’s school with my two daughters, Yeri and Yeun. When I was waiting at the school yard, I saw Yeun playing with another Korean child and hitting another child. So I encouraged Yeun to ask another child for forgiveness by saying “I am sorry”. However, Yeun didn’t listen to me and was stubborn. Then, in the end, Yeun cried in front of me. Even so, I couldn’t just go beyond Yeun’s wrong doing, no matter how reasonable her reason was in hitting another child. If Yeun took my advice and said “I am sorry” to that another child, I would have forgiven her. But Yeun was stubborn and didn’t listen to my advice. Yeun didn’t ask for forgiveness. So I had to discipline her. Then Yeun cried louder. When I was going to take Yeun and go to that child, Dillon came out of the school. After we met Dillon, I held Yeun in my arm and walked toward that child. And I gave Yeun another chance to ask forgiveness to that child, but Yeun didn’t listen to me and didn’t ask for forgiveness. So I asked that child for forgiveness instead of my daughter and stroked her head.

As I thought about this that happened yesterday, I thought about my relationship with Heavenly Father during this Morning Prayer meeting. I thought about Heavenly Father disciplining me as His child when I don’t listen to Him and don’t repent after I have sinned. However, in Psalm 7:11, the Bible says that God is not just God who disciplines us, but God who has indignation every day. I think this Bible verse can make us wondering. The reason is because we have image of our Heavenly Father who is love, rich in mercy and compassionate and son on. But the Bible says “God is a righteous judge (v. 11) and if we don’t repent (v. 12), He “has indignation every day” (v. 11). From that point of view, I wonder if it was the right thing to give Yeun the small discipline of love in my small anger. But rather than that point of view, I think of Yeun who was standing in front of me, and I think I acted like Yeun in front of Heavenly Father. Instead of listening to God’s rebuke and to repent my sins that is so clear since God sees them (like I saw Yeun hitting another child) to my Heavenly Father, maybe I am crying in front of Him, like Yeun did in front of me, and trying to manipulate Heavenly Father and thus committed greater sin. I reflect myself and think whether I am stubborn before Heavenly Father and am refusing to acknowledge my sins like Yeun was before me. What I see in this self-reflection is that I see that yesterday Yeun in me.

As I meditated on the words of Psalms 7:11 in this morning prayer meeting, I thought that my image of Heavenly Father was a little out of balance. So I thought about angry God when I don’t repent my sins. When I did so, the understanding that I got was me Heavenly Father loves me so much that He has indignation in order to make



me a clean and flawless child. I feel my Heavenly Father's love for me even in His indignation every day toward me in order to make me to repent my sins and to be His sanctified child.

With thanksgiving for the love of my Heaven Father who has indignation every day,

James Kim

(While feeling sense of responsibility to show Heavenly Father's image and love to my family and the church saints)

## “What is man”

### [Psalms 8]

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2005, two people passed away. Both of them were 79 years old. One was my friend's father, and the other was my father's friend who was also a pastor like my father. One person had the funeral ceremony in Buddhistic way and then cremated. Another person had the Christian funeral service and was buried in the cemetery. As I was thinking about their deaths, I thought about what is man again.

According to the Bible, the prophet Isaiah said that the man is “grass” (Isa. 40:6), Paul said “earthen vessels” (2 Cor. 4:7), and James said “a vapor” (Jam. 4:14). From the eternal point of view, life like grass, like earthen vessels and fog that appear a little while and then vanish away, isn't as wonderful as we think. In a word, I think that a man is nobody. But the surprising fact is that among these many people, we Christians are loved by God and chosen by Him to enjoy the grace of salvation. So David, the psalmist, says in Psalms 8:4 – “What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him?” So I asked four questions of grace on the subject of “What is man”:

### **The first question, ‘What is man that God has established strength from the mouth of infants and nursing babes?’**

Look at Psalms 8:2 – “From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established strength Because of Your adversaries, To make the enemy and the revengeful cease.” Here “infants” means a little kid who just started speaking’ (Park). And “nursing babes” reminds a mother's breast-feeding baby. In other words, ‘You have establishes strength from the mouth of infants and nursing babes’ means that the believers receive God's revelation and trust His revelation, and to know God by being like a child without prejudice (Park).

God reveals to us and helps us to know Him when we yearn for His word like a little child who humbly seek the spiritual milk, the word of God. What an amazing grace and blessing? What is man that he can know God? God also reveals the power of God (and His word) through us when we humbly yearn for the word of God like the little child and as the suckling baby. Therefore, God makes the enemy and the revengeful cease (v. 2).

What is James that God revealed His promise word of John 6:1-15 for me and of Matthew 16:18 for Victory Presbyterian Church. I am forever grateful for Him for these two promise words of God that He gave to me. Also, I am thankful to God for restoring and reviving my soul when I am discouraged and weak by the power of His

promise words.

### **The second question, ‘What is man that God takes thought of me and cares for me?’**

Look at Psalms 8:4 – “What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him?” Here, the word “thought” in Hebrew is ‘remembering’ and it means love. In other words, What is man that God loves him. Also in verse 4, the word “cares” means ‘monitoring or looking after’ (Park). David was amazed by God’s grace in loving and caring for such man as he was considering His heavens, the work of God’s fingers, the moon and the stars, which God had ordained (v. 3). What do you think? When you look at God’s creation, His heavens, the moon, and the stars, do you think that truly small, grass, earthen vessels and the vapor life deserves God’s love and care? What is more surprising, however, is that God made only us, human being, in the image of God. That’s why we are receiving God’s love and care. What an amazing grace and love of God?

I am just grateful for the grace of God that such man like me can enjoy the blessing of God’s extraordinary love and care because He gave me His image among many and wonderful God’s creations.

### **The third question, ‘What is man that God crowns him with glory and majesty.’**

Look at Psalms 8:5 – “Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty!” This word has a double meaning: (1) First, it foretells the fact that Jesus, on behalf of mankind, suffered and died and became lower than an angel and then risen and ascended to heaven and (2) Second, it means that the redeemed saints through Christ are fully redeemed to from the image of Christ (Park). The prophetic meaning applied to the Messiah has already been fulfilled. Christ died on the cross, resurrected, ascended, and sat down at the right hand of God. Heavenly Father exalted Jesus. Then the second meaning still remains to us. When Jesus comes back, we will be completely redeemed and Christ will form in us. At that time, God will crown us with glory and majesty. What is man that he can receive this glorious blessing and honor?

What is James that I will be crowned with glory and majesty? What isn’t if it isn’t God’s grace?

### **Fourth and last question, ‘What is man that God makes him to rule over the works of His hands?’**

Look at Psalms 8:6 – “You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet.” Before the Fall, the first man was blessed with God’s authority to rule over the works of God’s hands. However, because the man sinned, he lost his authority and in a true sense he couldn’t ideally rule all things. But even on the day when the salvation is completed by the redemption of Christ, humans will come to the place of all rulership (Park). What is man that he can reach that place of all rulership? It’s completely God’s grace.

This reminds me the hymn “I, Know not Why God’s Wondrous Grace”, verse 1: “I know not why God’s wondrous grace To me He hath made Known, Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love Redeemed me for His own.” I don’t know why God has redeemed the unworthy man like me, has revealed Himself to me, love and care for me, will crown me with glory and majesty when the Lord comes back and will make me to rule over the works of His hands. I know not why God enables me to enjoy all these blessings, to such man who is just grass, earthen vessel, and vapor.

Without knowing what is man James that God allows me to live in such abundant grace of God,

James Kim

(With earnest desire to labor even more with the power of God’s grace)

## Put your trust in the Lord!

### [Psalms 9]

Our despair makes us to long for God. Our despair leads to longing, and our longing makes us to hope in God, so we praise God. So the psalmist says in Psalms 42:5, 11; 43:5 – “Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him For the help of His presence.” Here, the psalmist is proclaiming to his soul, “Hope in God,” and this means that we are to commit ourselves to trust in the Lord. In the end, even if we are in despair, God the Holy Spirit will turn that despair into longing for God, making us more and more to trust in Him. So the psalmist David says in Psalms 9:10, “those who know Your name will put their trust in You.” I would like to meditate on three things based on the words of Psalms 9 about how those who trust in the Lord act:

**First, those who trust in the Lord give thanks to the Lord with all their heart and are glad and exult in Him.**

Look at Psalms 9:1-2: “I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart; I will tell of all Your wonders. I will be glad and exult in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.” The reason what David gave thanks to the Lord with all his heart and is glad and exult in Him was because He defeated the enemies of David and their nations. What David was grateful for and was glad and exult in Him was not because his enemies were defeated but because God manifested His justice and greatness (Park).

I asked myself why I give thanks to God and am glad in Him. Is it because I have experienced who God is or what He does for me? When I asked this question to myself, I couldn't deny myself but had to acknowledge that I didn't trust in the Lord completely too many times. The reason is because my trust in God isn't based on who He is but what He does. How can I know all that God does? That's why if I trust in the Lord based on what He does, then I will be tempted to trust in others or other things than Him and sin against God because I cannot understand all His does.

Those who truly trust in the Lord gives thanks to Him with all their heart and are glad because God reveals Himself to them. David was able to give thanks to the Lord with all his heart because he understood and experienced God's righteous judgment (v. 4). This is because God's justice was manifested through His righteous judgment. David gave thanks to the Lord with all his heart and was glad in the midst of his present suffering and persecution as he reflected on the past incident in which the Lord, who maintained David's just cause and sat on the

throne to judge righteously (v. 4), rebuked and destroyed the wicked enemy forever (vv. 5, 6). We too should look back on our past and remember our God and what He did for us in the midst of our present suffering and adversity and give thanks to God with all our hearts and be glad and go through our present suffering and adversity.

### **Second, those who trust in the Lord make Him their stronghold.**

Look at Psalms 8:9 – “The LORD also will be a stronghold for the oppressed, A stronghold in times of trouble.” When David was in a situation like “the gates of death” and was suffering from those who hate him (v. 13), not only he gave thanks to the Lord with all his heart and was glad by remembering the past experience of God, His justice, he made the Lord as his stronghold in his near death situation. In verse 9, David said that the Lord was “A stronghold in times of trouble,” where the word “trouble” came from the etymology that means “it is cut off” (Park). In other words, David made the Lord his own stronghold in the absence of all hope. How precious is this faith? It is the expression of David’s precious faith that he made God as his stronghold and trusted in Him when was near the gates of death.

Like David, we must make the Lord our stronghold and trust in Him only when all our hopes in the world are cut off and there seems no hope. This is because our Lord is a God who does not forsake those who seek him (v. 10). Also, we must make the Lord our stronghold, the Lord who doesn’t forget the cry of afflicted (v. 12) and who sees our affliction and is gracious to us (v. 13). Since the Lord doesn’t forget us, cannot forget us and our hope won’t perish forever (v. 18), we must make the Lord our stronghold. And we must take refuge in Him in times of trouble. And we must get His protection.

### **Third and last, those who trust in the Lord praise Him.**

Look at Psalms 9:2, 11, 14: “I will be glad and exult in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High. ... Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion; Declare among the peoples His deeds. ... That I may tell of all Your praises, That in the gates of the daughter of Zion I may rejoice in Your salvation.” David was pledge to praise God in the hope that the Lord, who was his stronghold, wouldn’t forsake him but deliver him from the gates of death. He who believed that the Lord would lead him from “the gates of death” (v. 13) to “the gates of the daughter of Zion” (v. 14) couldn’t stop but compelled to praise Him. This praise of David in the Old Testament reminded me of the words of the New Testament Acts 16:25 where Paul and Silas praying and praising God in prison: “But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.” Then Paul and Silas were saved (delivered) from the prison. Therefore, we can also praise God in any adversity and hardship. When we are in trouble, we depend on God more because our faith is little. As time goes by and whatever hardship or difficulty we face, we should rely on Him.

We who know the name of the Lord trust in the Lord. And we who trust in the Lord give thanks to God

with all our hearts and are glad in our present suffering and adversity as we remember what God did for us and meditate on our experience of who God is. As we do so, we make the Lord as our stronghold and take refuge in Him. Especially, when all the hopes of the world are cut off, we put our hope only in the Lord and praise Him. Then God, who dwells in praise, will manifest His glory and power through us.

Making the Lord as my stronghold,

James Kim

(Confessing that as time goes by I can only trust in the Lord)

# The Lord who hears the desire of the humble

## [Psalms 10]

Yesterday during the Morning Prayer meeting, the Holy Spirit helped me to ask God for my wish. As I ask God for my wish, which was offered to Him with little pain in my heart, little tears were shed. It was tears of earnestly desire. That wish was ‘God’s holiness and God’s glory.’ The Holy Spirit enabled me to earnestly pray to God for me to dwell in the arms of the holy and glorious Father: ‘Maranatha!, Lord come!’

The Bible Psalms 10:17 says that God hears “the desire of the humble.” When we humbly bow down before the holy and glorious God and offer the desire of the humble, our Lord is the God who answers our prayer. Then, I would like to think first about who the humble is in four ways:

### **First, the humble is the afflicted.**

Look at Psalms 10:2, 9 - “In pride the wicked hotly pursue the afflicted; Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised. ... He lurks in a hiding place as a lion in his lair; He lurks to catch the afflicted; He catches the afflicted when he draws him into his net.” A true believer is the afflicted. Here, the afflicted refers to the one who suffers (Park). Living in this sinful world, the true believer suffers because of the wicked (vv. 3, 4, 14, 15). The wicked people trouble the Christians in these and those ways. So whenever we are in trouble, we must humbly bow down and ask Heavenly Father.

### **Second, the humble is “the unfortunate.”**

Look at Psalms 10:8, 10, 14 – “He sits in the lurking places of the villages; In the hiding places he kills the innocent; His eyes stealthily watch for the unfortunate. ... He crouches, he bows down, And the unfortunate fall by his mighty ones. ... You have seen it, for You have beheld mischief and vexation to take it into Your hand The unfortunate commits himself to You; You have been the helper of the orphan.” The true believer is the unfortunate. For the Lord’s righteousness, the true believer has to be unfortunate. We live in a world filled with injustice and become unfortunate for the Lord’s righteousness. We who suffer because of the unrighteousness of the wicked are unfortunate in this sinful world.

### **Third, the humble is “the helpless.”**



Look at Psalms 10:12 – “Arise, LORD! Lift up your hand, O God. Do not forget the helpless.” The true believer is the helpless. The true believer is poor in spirit (Mt. 5:3). In the midst of hardships and pressures, our spirits are bound to be poor. Therefore, we are longing for heaven (v. 3). Just as Moses so longed for Canaan, the Promised Land in the wilderness at the time of Exodus with the poor in his spirit, we live in this world that is like the wilderness and long for the heaven even more.

**Fourth and last, the humble is “the fatherless and the oppressed.”**

Look at Psalms 10:18 – “defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more.” The true believer is the one who is oppressed by “that man, who is of the earth” (v. 18). The true believer lives like an orphan without parents in this world. The sincere believer is the orphan who is persecuted and suffering by Satan, the father of those in the world.

Then what is “the desire of the afflicted”? We can think in four ways:

**First, the desire of the afflicted is ‘May the wicked man caught in the schemes he devises in his arrogance.’**

Look at Psalms 10:2 – “In his arrogance the wicked man hunts down the weak, who are caught in the schemes he devises.” The wicked man who digs a hole and scoops it out falls into the pit he has made (7:15). In other words, the pit that the arrogant wicked man has made is his thoughts that “There is no God” (10:4). He digs the pit of thought that “There is no God” and in that pit, there are full of thoughts, “God has forgotten; He has hidden His face; He will never see it” (v. 11). Therefore, the wick will be caught in the plots which they have devised (v. 2). For this, the humble man prayed to God and offered his desire to Him.

**Second, the desire of the afflicted is “Do not forget the helpless.”**

Look at Psalms 10:12 – “Arise, LORD! Lift up your hand, O God. Do not forget the helpless.” In the thought of the wicked, there is no God and God won’t remember the helpless. That’s why the psalmist, the true believer offered his desire “Do not forget the helpless.”

**Third, the desire of the afflicted is “Seek out his wickedness until You find none.”**

Look at Psalms 10:15 – “Break the arm of the wicked and the evildoer, Seek out his wickedness until You find none.” The psalmist offered his prayer of desire to destroy the power of the wicked until there is no wickedness. He who feared God hated wickedness this much that he desired his holy and just God to completely destroy the wickedness of the wicked.

**Fourth and last, the desire of the afflicted is ‘Judge the wicked so that the man who is of the earth will no longer cause terror.’**

Look at Psalms 10:18 – “To vindicate the orphan and the oppressed, So that man who is of the earth will no longer cause terror.” The psalmist prayed to God to judge the man who is of the earth so that he could no longer threaten the humble.

So how did God answer the psalmist’s desire prayer? What kind of God did he experienced?

**First, the psalmist experienced God who sees everything.**

Look at Psalms 10:14 – “You have seen it, for You have beheld mischief and vexation to take it into Your hand The unfortunate commits himself to You; You have been the helper of the orphan.” The Lord is the God who sees the cruel acts of the wicked on the earth and the unfortunate circumstances of the saints. Although the wicked said, ‘God does not see’ (v. 4) or ‘God has forgotten and has covered his face; He will never see it’ (v. 11), the psalmist lamented “Why does the wicked man revile God? Why does he say to himself, “He won’t call me to account”?” for God’s glory (v. 13). But God sees trouble and grief (v. 14). He is the God who sees everything.

**Second, the psalmist experienced God pays back with His hands.**

Look at Psalms 10:14 – “But you, O God, do see trouble and grief; you consider it to take it in hand. The victim commits himself to you; you are the helper of the fatherless.” “The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek Him All his thoughts are, ‘There is no God’” (v. 4). “He says to himself, ‘I will not be moved; Throughout all generations I will not be in adversity’” (v. 6). But the Lord will judge them (v. 18) and will completely destroy the power of the wicked (v. 15).

**Third and last, the psalmist experienced God who helps the true believers who trust in Him.**

Look at Psalms 10:14 – “You have seen it, for You have beheld mischief and vexation to take it into Your hand The unfortunate commits himself to You; You have been the helper of the orphan.” Those who know God’s name put their trust in Him (9:10) and humbly pray their desire to God. Then the Lord is the God who hears their prayer and answers it. God, who helped the psalmist who needed help, is with us with His grace to help in time of need.

Our Lord is the Lord who hears the desire of the humble. It is our God who answers the prayers of a humble, lonely, poor-spirited, orphan and oppressed believers. Our God is the Lord who causes evil and arrogant ones who afflict and oppress us to be caught in the plots which they have devised, judge them and destroy them

thoroughly, so that they no longer threaten the humble. The Lord who does not forget the afflicted and hears their prayers of desire is the God who helps us to judge the wicked in righteousness and to give salvation to the humble because He sees everything. Let's humbly ask this God our desire.

With desire for the holiness and glory of God,

James Kim

(Humbly asking my desire to God)

## **It is proud thought.**

**“In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.” (Psalms 10:4)**

The Lord knows all our thoughts. He knows that we are thinking evil in our hearts (Mt. 9:4). He knows that we are setting our mind on man's interests, but not God's (Mk. 8:33). Also, the Lord knows that our thoughts are a mere breath (Ps. 94:11). In particular, our Lord clearly knows proud in the thoughts of our hearts (Luke 1:51). Then, what is our proud thought?

### **First, our proud thought is “There is no God.”**

Look at Psalms 10:4 – “The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek Him All his thoughts are, “There is no God.” Of course, we have been justified by believing in Jesus Christ and thus we aren't the wicked people. Nevertheless, we often think as proud as the wicked, according to our old man's nature. The proud idea is that there is no God. In other words, in all our proud thoughts there is no room for God (v. 4). And we don't seek God when are proud (v. 4). We don't even feel the need to seek God. Nevertheless, when our ways prosper at all times (v. 5), our hearts are filled with greed and covetous. And we boast of our heart's desire and are greedy (v. 3). And we curse and spurn the Lord (v. 3). There is no God in our proud thoughts (v. 4). This is foolishness of our pride. Look at Psalms 14:1a – “The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God. ....” There is no God in the foolish thoughts of the proud.

If we are living with the thought that there is no God, we are proud. If we are greedy and covetous with the thought that there is no God, we are proud. It is a proud thought to think that there is no God. We must get rid of this proud thought. God exists. Our God is a living God. This is a humble thought. We must live with this thought before God.

**Second, our proud thought is ‘I will not be moved, and I will never be in trouble under any circumstances.’**

Look at Psalms 10: 6 – “He says to himself, ‘I will not be moved; Throughout all generations I will not be in adversity.’” If we work with our proud thought that there is no God and thus without seeking him and that work is successful (vv. 4-5), then we will become more proud. We don't realize that God's judgment is waiting, and we think of ourselves that ‘our path is always firm (v. 5). In the midst of this pride, we say to ourselves, ‘I will never be

shaken and I will never be in trouble under any circumstances' (v. 6). We think to ourselves that 'I have no struggles. My body is healthy and strong. I am free from the burdens common to man. I am not plagued by human ills' (73:4-5). Therefore, pride is our necklace and our greed knows no limits (vv. 6, 7). Without knowing that God's judgment is awaiting, we say to ourselves, 'I will never be shaken, and I will never be in trouble under any circumstances,' thinking that our way will be firm at any time (v. 6). This is proud thought.

If the way we are walking on is always firm, then there is a danger of thinking that we are good. The greater danger of illusion is, 'I will not be moved' (v. 6). The reason we are in illusion is because we believe in ourselves that we will never be in trouble under any circumstances. The basis of this false and vain faith is ourselves. How can we find the basis of solidity in ourselves? It is meaningless and meaningless and a very proud thought. We must get rid of this proud thought. Our basis of solidarity is only the Lord. Only the Lord is the rock of our solidity (1 Cor. 10:4). Therefore, we must cast our cares on the Lord. Then he will never allow the righteous to be shaken (Ps. 55:22).

### **Third, our proud thought is “God has forgotten; He has hidden His face.”**

Look at Psalms 10:11 – “He says to himself, “God has forgotten; He has hidden His face; He will never see it.” “In pride the wicked hotly pursue the afflicted” (v. 2). The wicked boasts of his heart's desire (v. 3). “His mouth is full of curses and deceit and oppression; Under his tongue is mischief and wickedness” (v.7). In the hiding places he kills the innocent and his eyes stealthily watch for the unfortunate (v. 8). And he lurks to catch the afflicted (v. 9). And his victims are crushed and they fall under his strength (v. 10). Then he thinks that 'God has forgotten and has hidden His face and He will never see it' (v. 11). This is proud thoughts. It is to think that God isn't seeing us, thinking of ourselves even though we are committing sins secretly. But the psalmist says, “You have seen it” (v. 14).

It is a proud thought if we think that God is hiding His face and not seeing, even though we are committing sins to God in secret. God sees all the sins we secretly commit. God sees all our steps (Job 34:21). In addition, God monitors our hearts and conscience (Proverbs 16:2, 21:2; Psalm 7:9). Not only that, God weights and tries our motives, minds and our hearts (Prov. 16:2; 21:2; Ps. 7:9). Those who believe in this truth will never have a proud thought before God who sees the heart and mind. Rather, knowing that they are chief sinners before God, they will humbled themselves and confess their sins.

### **Fourth and last, our proud thought is ‘God won't call me to account.’**

Look at Psalms 10:13 – “Why does the wicked man revile God? Why does he say to himself, ‘He won't call me to account?’” The proud wicked despise God. The proud wicked, who boast of the cravings of his heart and blesses the greedy and reviles the Lord (v. 3). In his arrogance the wicked man hunts down the weak (v. 2) and even

he lies in wait to catch the helpless (v. 9), overthrow them (v. 10) and think that God will not judge them (v. 13). The reason they think so is because God does not punish them immediately (Eccle. 8:11). Therefore, “the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong” (v. 11).

If we are courageous in committing sin, it is because God does not punish us immediately. Why doesn't God immediately punish us? This is because God wants us to repent and turn back (Rom. 2:4). However, we despise the richness of God's kindness, tolerance, and patience (v. 4). How do we despise God? Even though we are sinning against God in pride, we despise God because we think that God will not punish us. What should we do? We must confess our sins and repent. We must repent of our sins that despise God. We must confess and repent of our sins committed in secret.

It is proud thought to think that “There is no God.” Also, it is proud thought that ‘I will not be moved and I will never be in trouble under any circumstances.’ It is proud thought to say, “God has forgotten; He has hidden His face; He will never see it.” We must abandon all these proud thoughts before the cross. We must repent of all our proud thoughts by relying on the blood of Jesus. And we need to think humbly. We must have the heart of Jesus and think humbly (cf. Phil. 2:5).

Wanting to constantly throw away my proud thoughts and think humbly,

James Kim

(Confessing that God who lives and sees my heart is my strong rock)

## **“If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?”**

### **[Psalms 11]**

One thing that comes to my mind when looking back this year 2005 is Hurricane Katrina, which came to New Orleans, USA. It is said that this hurricane made about one million New Orleans people to move to other states. There are people who refer to this as “Black Exodus”. Why is this great disaster in New Orleans? Many public opinions say that it is because the embankments are not properly built. Two things are surprising: First, in early 2005, the U.S. Army requested \$37 million to pay for the New Orleans embankment, but the government cut it to \$3.9 million. Another surprising fact is that the New Orleans Embankment Committee bought a casino with money that supposed to be used to manage the embankment. What a sad thing. Because of these two surprising facts, two embankments of the Pontchartrain lake were collapsed by the hurricane, causing water spatter in most parts of New Orleans.

I think about if we have built a good foundation. If we have built the good foundation in our hearts, our homes and churches firmly, then even Hurricane Katrina like storm of sins rush waves at our hearts, our homes and our churches we won't be shaken and we will be able to protect our hearts, our homes and our churches. But even if we don't invest in build the strong foundation properly or even if we invest but if we don't use to build the foundation of our hearts, our homes and our churches, then we have no choice but to fall and break when the wave of sins comes. We should think about the foundation of our hearts, of our homes and of our churches.

When we look at Psalms 11:3, the psalmist David says, “If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?” Here, if we translate the word “the foundations” literally in original Hebrew, it is ‘those foundations.’ And this means ‘justice and truth’ (J. Ridderbos). In other words, when David was being persecuted by Saul, the grounds of justice and truth were collapsed. What about this time in which we live? It's no different. Now we are living in the time where justice and truth have collapsed. How should we live in this time? I want receive two lessons from Psalms 11.

### **First, in this time when justice and truth collapsed, we must rely more in God.**

Look at Psalms 11:1 – “In the LORD I take refuge; How can you say to my soul, “Flee as a bird to your mountain.” David says, “In the Lord I take refuge ....” In other words, when David was persecuted by Saul and his people, David relied on God in time and circumstance where justice and truth cannot be found. Because he relied on the Lord in the midst of suffering and persecution, he was able to feel safe because of God (Park). But what's

interesting here is a suggestion of David's friends. They suggested David to "Flee as a bird to your mountain" (v. 1). The reason was because the wicked bend the bow and made ready their arrow upon the string to shoot in darkness at the upright in heart (v. 2). That was a really persuasive advice. Because the wicked were trying to harm the righteous David, David's friends encouraged David to flee to the mountain as if the bird was flying to the mountain bush. However, David didn't accept the persuasive advice of his friends and fled to the Lord. This was because David relied only on the Lord.

If we are in danger like David, we must think about how we will respond. Indeed, we must choose whether to take refuge in the Lord and get a sense of security from Him, or listen to the advice of our friends to flee to the mountain and rely on something other than the Lord to enjoy a sense of security there. We already know the answer. We know that there is no real sense of security if we depend on someone else or anything other than the Lord. Relying on someone/other besides the Lord may give you a momentary sense of security, but there will be no peace and security that only the Lord can give. That's why we should take refuge in the Lord. The Lord alone is our stronghold and the One in whom we should take refuge. Especially, in this time when the foundation of justice and of truth is collapsed, we must rely on the God of justice and of truth, so that we can enjoy true protection and security.

**Second and last, in this time when justice and truth collapsed, we must walk the way of righteousness.**

Why should we walk the way of righteousness? This is because God is righteous and loves righteousness. Look at Psalm 11:7 – "For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; The upright will behold His face." We who are justified and who also love righteousness must walk the way of righteousness faithfully. Especially, the more urgent we are, the more we must defend the way of righteousness to the last (Park). Indeed, the day of God's judgment is near. We live in time when darkness is extreme and sin is prevalent. In this time when the forces of darkness are tempting "the upright in heart" (v. 2) and trying to make them to leave the way of righteousness anyway possible and making them to walk the sinful way, it is great challenge for us who are upright (v. 7) to faithfully walk the way of righteousness until the end. Especially in this time when the foundation of justice and truth have collapsed, it is a great challenge to be upright in heart, love the righteous way and walk that way to the end.

We are living in an age where the path of evil can be seen and heard so well even if we look at the north, sought, east and west. Therefore, it is impossible without relying on the Lord to walk alone in the narrow and difficult path of righteousness. It is a lonely path and the way the Lord has walked. David was able to walk this way because he believed that the Lord whom he relied on was seeing both the righteous and the wicked (vv. 4-7). In particular, David knew that God, who looked deeply at the wicked ["His eyes behold" (v. 4)] and who hates the one



who loves violence (v. 5), will judge them at the Lord's time (v. 6). In the midst of that, David also believed that "the Lord tests the righteous (v. 5). In other words, God tests him first before helping the righteous. God tests the righteous whether our hearts is upright (v. 2), whether we are upright (v. 7). God also helps him if he passes after testing him to see if he completely relies on God. David relied entirely on God and his heart was upright and he was upright. That was why he was able to get helped by God.

This time in which we live is when justice and truth have collapsed. Even if we see ourselves as self-proclaimed Christians, the foundation of justice and truth in our hearts has collapsed too much. It seems that the foundation of our home and of our church is collapsing. How should we live in this time? We must rely more and more on our God and build the foundation of our hearts, our homes, of justice and truth in our churches firmly. Indeed, that foundation should be strong and firm so that ourselves, our homes, and our church should be firmly built by the Lord. Then we can be safe even if there is wave like hurricane of sin. We must continue to walk the path of righteousness faithfully. Although the wide path of evil can be seen and heard too much around us, we must walk the narrow path of righteousness. Therefore, we must shine the light of God's justice and truth in this dark world.

Wanting to have complete trust in the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Foundation of us, our homes and our churches,

James Kim

(Praying to walk the way of righteousness faithfully as I rely on God)

## The safety that the godly man wants

### [Psalms 12]

In the book “The Next Generation Leader” by Pastor Andy Stanley, 5 C’s come out. The last C is the “Character”. The author points out that the next generation of leaders should focus on character. Some surveys are highlighting it, and the point of those surveys is that the leaders in the company that people want to follow are honest, sincere, trustworthy, and so on. But in this era of our lives, there are countless leaders the people are following reluctantly (maybe the reason is because many people want to be a leader), and we have to think about how many leaders are around us whom we want to follow. The reason is because there may not be as many such leaders as we think.

In Psalms 12:1, the psalmist David says, “Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases to be, For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men.” There was no godly or faithful man around David. Here “the godly man” refers to a person who is favored, that is, who is loved by God (Park). To be more specific, “godly” is “faithful.” In other words, it refers to ‘a person who is reliable and trustworthy’ (Park). The godly person who is loved by God becomes solid, not indulged as a result of His love (Park). Then the question to ask is, ‘Am I a godly man?’ Indeed, I ask myself if my character is strong and reliable. However, it’s a question I’ve rarely asked that this question can make me feel a bit puzzled. Rather than this question, a familiar question is, ‘Is that person trustworthy?’ I’ve rarely asked myself the question, ‘Am I a trustworthy person?’ because I didn’t try to be that trustworthy person from the other person’s point of view and I rather want other person to be trustworthy person to me. So, from the other side’s point of view, we should ask ourselves this question often: ‘Am I really trustworthy?’

We live in an age when we don’t trust each other. This age is a world where pastors do not trust the church members, nor do the pastors trust each other and the church members don’t trust any pastor like before. In light of what the Psalms 12, I think the cause is because the godly man is gradually ceasing (v. 1). As such, this world is hard to find godly pastors, godly saints and so on. I really want to ask myself how many pastors are around me who I want to follow from my heart. As I meditated on this, I tried to apply this to my church: (1) As a senior pastor, I am committed to becoming a reliable and trustworthy man. I am determined not to give up, but to strive to become a pastor who resembles the Lord, maturing personality. (2) I am determined to focus more on sharing God’s love among my church leaders and to build strong character and trustworthy leaders. (3) I want to make every effort to build the trustworthy community in which all the church leaders and believers trust each other.

Then what is “the safety” of the godly man in Psalms 12:5? It is “salvation” (Park). In other words, the safety that he longs for is the salvation that the godly man, “the afflicted” and “the needy” (v. 5) desperately long for (Park). That is why David, in verse 1 prayed to God for “Help, Lord,” that is, he prayed for salvation. Why did David offer this prayer to the Lord?

The reason is because when those who spoke falsehood and had flattering lips and a double hearts (v. 2) were full, and the vileness was exalted among the sons of men (v. 8), the godly man was groaning because of the devastation of the afflicted and of the needy (v. 5). The reason why the godly man was devastated and persecuted was because he was truthful (v. 6). Those who boasted themselves by speaking falsehood with the flattering lips and the double hearts persecuted David who possessed the truth of the word of God. These wicked people committed sins with their lips by even saying to David, “With our tongue we will prevail; Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?” (v. 4) Would they let the godly and truthful David alone? That was why David turned to God for help. He cried out to God for His salvation. In other word, David asked for the safety. At that time, God’s answer to David’s prayer was a promise: “...I will set him in the safety for which he longs” (v. 5). It was the God’s promise that He would no longer see and sit still. Since it was His appointed time, God promised that He would no longer be watching his godly people being persecuted. And God promised David that He would awaken the work of salvation as if he woke up. God said that He would keep the godly and preserve him from this generation forever (v. 7).

In this world, there are so many falsehood, flattering lips, people who speak with the double heart, the tongues of the wicked. We are living in time when there are many Christians who fall on their tongues, and more and more godly and faithful ones are disappearing. In these times, we must strive to be godly, that is, to be strong and trustworthy in character. Also, we should not give up our goal of pursuing godly life amid the oppression and persecution of the wicked people who become stronger and stronger as we become godly. Then our Lord will place us in “the safety” we want. Now, our God will no longer be just looking and be patient. He will get up and put us in the safety that we want. Victory!

With assurance of salvation,

James Kim

(Looking at the Lord who is our safety)

## **A godly and faithful man**

**“Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases to be, For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men. They speak falsehood to one another; With flattering lips and with a double heart they speak. May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, The tongue that speaks great things; Who have said, ‘With our tongue we will prevail; Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?’” (Ps. 12:1-4)**

What Christians should we become in this age when godliness and faithfulness are disappearing? We must be godly and faithful. Based on Psalms 12:1-4, I would like to think about what kinds of heart the godly and faithful man has in three ways:

### **First, the godly and faithful man has truthful heart.**

Those who are ungodly and unfaithful have false heart. Therefore, they have no choice but to lie (v. 2). But we have to speak the truth. We must be honest with God and people. And we must be honest with ourselves. We must purify our hearts with the word of truth (1 Pet. 1:22). Our hearts must be the heart that enjoys freedom by the truth of God (Jn. 8:32). In such heart, the truth of God must come out naturally through our lips.

### **Second, the godly and faithful man has one heart.**

The godly and faithful man isn't a double-minded man (Jam. 1:8). Those who are ungodly and unfaithful are double-minded, and even if they sharpen their swords in their hearts, they flatter with their lips (Ps. 12:2). Their flattering mouths work ruin (Prov. 26:28). But the godly and faithful man doesn't flatter with his mouth. His inner heart and outer lips are no different. He can't lie, so he doesn't say something he doesn't mean. He speaks truths from the truthful heart. He lives honestly and truthfully in front of God and man with one heart and one mind.

### **Third and last, the godly and faithful man has humble heart.**

The godly and faithful man boasts God with his mouth. But those who are ungodly and unfaithful boast with flattering lips: “Who have said, ‘With our tongue we will prevail; Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?’” (Ps. 12:4). Since they don't accept Jesus as the Lord in their hearts, they boast themselves, thinking that they regard their lips as their own. But since the godly and faithful man accepts Jesus as his Lord, he knows that the Lord is in

charge of his mouth. That's why he has offered his mouth to the Lord and he uses to glorify Him by boasting Him.

Wanting to be godly and faithful,

James Kim

(Wishing my heart and lips to be remodeled in the midst of church remodeling)

## The process of prayer

### [Psalms 13]

W. Tozer's book "Success and the Christian" says, 'We must respect everyone. Although we cannot respect them if we see their present form, we must respect them by see their potential for change through the renewing power of the blood of the Lamb Jesus and the Holy Spirit' (Tozer). Without ourselves being changed, we cannot see other people's potential for change. The reason we think, 'Why doesn't that person change?' is because we ourselves aren't changing. Then what must we do for ourselves to be changed? The Bible teaches us to pray. When we pray, we must experience ourselves changing before the circumstances we encounter change. In that regard, we must be different before and after prayer. For example, before prayer, there may have been no peace, full of hatred, and anxiety. But after prayer, we must experience the work of the Spirit in filling our hearts with peace, love, and confidence.

In Psalms 13, we see the psalmist David himself changed before and after the prayer. I want to enjoy the grace God gives us as we meditate on the process of his prayer before, during, and after prayer.

#### **First, before David's prayer, he prayed "How long?"**

Look at Psalms 13:1-2: "How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, Having sorrow in my heart all the day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?" The psalmist David cried out to God "How long?" for four times. He had long been spiritually depressed and exhausted by adversity because of his "enemy" (v. 4) so he appealed to God, "How long?" (Park). We can have this groaning as well. Personally, I cried out to God 'Lord, how long?' many times before in regard to evangelizing my beloved friends. How about you? Haven't you ever pray to God "How long?" when you feel the limitation of your patience and of your ability in front of long adversity? As we live our Christian life, sometimes we can have depressed hearts like David. The prophet Elijah in the Old Testament was also depressed under the tree of Rodem and sought to die. Sometimes we are depressed and we don't know what to do. But in this time, we should make our depressed situation as an opportunity to long for God. We should kneel down more. And we should cry out to God. This is what Pastor Yoon-sun Park said: 'We sometimes experience the light of God's grace as in the daytime, but it is also grace that we can feel spiritually sad at night' (Park). I agree. When we are stuffy and spiritually sad, we should cry out to God "How long?" in sighing. This is also God's grace.

The reason why David was stuffy and spiritual sad was because he felt that God forgot him forever and He was hiding His face from him (v. 1). He said, "... I take counsel in my soul" (v. 2) and the word "counsel" means that David was in pains because of this thought and that thought and he was in anxiety (Park). In other words, David's soul was worried about this thought and that thought because of pains, so he was worried all day long. Aren't our souls like this so many time? Don't we have so many thoughts because of pains? How often do we feel anxious and are in worry? This is what Pastor Park said: 'If a person suffers from heart pain by faith, he immediately realizes it and receives God's grace. However, anxiety of leaving the God of grace that is the unbelief of suffering in mind is harmful.' We should no longer be anxious of anything in unbelief because it is harmful and unprofitable to us. In order to do so, we must go the place of prayer and humbly kneel down before God and should cry out to Him, "How long?" We should no longer sigh of faith, but sigh of faith.

### **Second, during David's prayer, he prayed 'in fear.'**

Look at Psalms 13:3-4: "Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; Enlighten my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death, And my enemy will say, 'I have overcome him,' And my adversaries will rejoice when I am shaken." Here, "the sleep of death" refers to 'spiritual death from God's grace' (Park). The deeper the spiritual exhaustion and the deeper the depression in adversity through his enemy, the greater the risk of darkening our eyes if we do not receive God's gracious help and then eventually we may sleep the sleep of death (Park). David had the spiritual anxiety, not a world anxiety, against this spiritual death. He prayed to God because he feared the enemy would win. He thought of his enemy as the enemy of God, so he wanted to overcome it. So David asked God to overcome God's enemies. Also, he cried out to God because he was afraid that he would be shaken because his enemy would win and his enemies would rejoice. In other words, David prayed to God so that he wouldn't be shaken. In the midst of that, he prayed to God, "Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; Enlighten my eyes" (v. 3). The literal translation of the word "Consider" is "Look at me" (Park). David wanted God to see him more than he wanted to see God when God open his spiritual eyes. After that, he wanted to see God by Him opening his eyes.

The friend of Pastor Tozer said this: 'It is better to see the great God when the small number of people gather together than to see the small God with many people gather together.' This is precious word. We must see and feel the great God in worship. Not only that, we must see and feel the great God in prayer. In doing so, other things (adversity, difficulties, problems, etc.) will appear small in our eyes. However, if we pray to God with unbelieving hearts that keep on making us to see other things than the Lord, the great God will look small. Therefore, like David, we must experience the great presence of God while asking God in fear. Then change will happen to us after prayer.

### **Third and last, after David's prayer, David was changed.**

What kinds of change did he have? We can see three changes:

(1) David trusted in God's lovingkindness.

Look at Psalms 13:5a – “But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness; ....” Before prayer, David felt as though God had forgotten him and felt like His hid His face from him. But during his prayer, David experienced God's lovingkindness. So after prayer, he decided to continue to depend on the loving God.

(2) David rejoiced in God's salvation.

Look at Psalms 13:5b – “... My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.” Before prayer, David was exhausted and his soul was depressed. But after prayer, he rejoiced on God's salvation. This is the joy that came through the assurance of salvation. And this was because David experienced the Lord his Savior in his prayer.

(3) David determined to praise God.

Look at Psalms 13:6 – “I will sing to the LORD, Because He has dealt bountifully with me.” The reason why David determined to praise God was because God had dealt bountifully with him. God deals bountifully with us. Like David, when we experience by faith God's bountiful goodness in our prayer even in adversity, we can praise God like Paul and Silas in prison (Acts 16:25).

Prayer is a great privilege and a blessing to the children of our God. What a precious grace of God that through continual adversity and hardship and when our souls are depressed, God enables us to cry out to Him in faith ‘O Lord, how long?’ and just look upon Him. When we experience great God, His lovingkindness, Savior God, God who is worthy to receive our praise, we cannot but be transformed. And we who have been transformed after prayer have no choice but to trust in God's lovingkindness, to have confidence in the Lord and rejoice because of His bountiful goodness and we will praise Him all the days of our lives.

“Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.” (Ps. 150:6)

Wanting to be the man of prayer, James,

James Kim

(Committed to strive for His words and prayers)



## “His captive people”

### [Psalms 14]

At the end of the year 2005, I meditated on Psalms 14 during the last Wednesday, December 28. In 2005, I meditated on the words of Psalms 119 for several months under the theme of ‘I will run toward the Lord’s Word’ and meditated every Wednesday from Psalms 1 to Psalms 14. In the midst of that, I thanked God by meditating on Psalms 14 on the last Wednesday prayer meeting. I thanked the Lord for allowing me to meditate on the words of the Book of Psalms throughout the year 2005. Of course, there are many things that can be regretted as I look back on this year, but God has given me a heart of thanksgiving for His grace. And even if there were regrets, I decided to give a different perspective and thank God with faith. So I was able to finish this year 2005 with peace of mind and gratitude.

That’s right. We only need to change our perspective to faith. For example, if we look at Exodus 14:3, the Bible says that Moses and the Israelites were “hemmed in by the desert.” It was Pharaoh King of Egypt who thought that way, and with that thought he brought his army and pursued Moses and the Israelites. At that time, the thoughts of the Israelites were the same as the unbeliever Pharaoh. In their thought that they were hemmed in by the desert, they called that place “graves” (v. 11). However, Moses’ perspective was different. He never saw the desert as graves. Rather, he saw it as a place of salvation, experiencing the power of God. Listen to what Moses said: “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.” How this perspective is so different from the Israelites’ perspective? In this way, the perspective of faith is very different from the perspective of unbelief.

When we look at Psalms 14, the psalmist also was hemmed. In other words, he became a captive (v. 7). To whom he was in captivity was by the fool (v. 1). Here the word “the fool” in Hebrew is “nabal.” In the story of David, the husband of Abigail (later becoming David’s wife) was named “Nabal.” In Psalms 14, when David was in captivity by the fools, he sang this song of Psalms 14. And he sang in verse 1, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ In that sense, there are so many fools in this world. And we can also say that we are surrounded by the fools. Here, “the fool” is a practical atheist (Park). The practical atheist, not the theoretical atheist, acknowledges God with words, but denies Him with deeds. Apostle Paul says that this kind of man is “detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed” (Tit. 1:16). Then in Psalms 14, who were the fools who surrounded David? The Bible mentions in five ways:

### **First, the fools are those who don't do good.**

Look at Psalms 14:1, 3 – “The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God “They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good. ... They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.” David says, “There is no one who does good” twice. The fools may say, ‘God is so Good’ with their lips, but they deny God’s goodness by not doing good in their lives. Even though they have tasted the Lord’s goodness (34:8), they are evil because they have already abandoned all good things. They are corrupt and they have committed abominable deeds (14:1). Here “corrupt” refers to moral corruption that is the extreme sinful nature to the extent that it cannot be recovered by its own self (Park).

### **Second, the fools are those who don't even seek after God.**

Look at Psalms 14:2 – “The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God.” The fools confess with their lips that they know God, but they really don't know God and don't even seek after Him. They don't even feel the need to know God. Despite God looking down from heaven and seeing, none of the fools want to know God and seek after Him.

### **Third, the fools have all turned aside.**

Look at Psalms 14:3 – “They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.” This refers to those who have been derailed from knowing God (Park). They don't even have a heart to seek God. They don't only seek God but other things as well. They seek the world before God. Even if they seek God, they do so without eagerness and they don't so continually. Also they don't seek God according to the Word of God (heresy). They seek Him timely (not repenting when they need to repent) (Park).

### **Fourth, the fools are those who persecute God's people.**

Look at Psalms 14:4 – “Do all the workers of wickedness not know, Who eat up my people as they eat bread, And do not call upon the Lord?” The fools persecute God's people without hesitation and think this unconcernedly. They are the evil does who never learn (v. 4).

### **Fifth and last, the fools do not call upon God.**

Look at Psalms 14:4 – “Do all the workers of wickedness not know, Who eat up my people as they eat bread, And do not call upon the Lord?” Although they have sinned against the people of God, they don't cry out to God and repent their sins.

What does Psalms 14 say what God will do to His people who are captivated by the fools and thus are in

their miserable condition? The Bible Psalms 14 says three things:

**First, the Bible says that God is with His captive people.**

Look at Psalms 14:5 – “There they are in great dread, For God is with the righteous generation.” Although it seemed that God wasn’t with the captive David and His people who were persecuted by the fools, for sure Immanuel God was with them. Even if we don’t think and feel like God is with us when we are surrounded by the fools, God is with us. When it’s God’s time, we will be able to realize it and feel it.

**Second, the Bible says that the Lord is our refuge.**

Look at Psalms 14:6 – “You would put to shame the counsel of the afflicted, But the LORD is his refuge.” Although there are times when the fools hate God’s people and try to frustrate and put to shame their plans and sometimes actually make their plans to fail, the Lord is their refuge. The Lord is refuge of “the afflicted” (v. 6), those who believe in God and who suffer and are persecuted because they try to live righteously.

**Third and last, the Bible says that God will save His people.**

Look at Psalms 14:7 – “Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD restores His captive people, Jacob will rejoice, Israel will be glad.” Although God’s people, who are captive to the fools and are in miserable situation, God will save them in His time. And when God saves His people, God will destroy the wicked (Park). God’s salvation is to restore His captive people (v. 7). At that time, God’s people will rejoice (v. 7). Our sorrow will be temporary and the joy will be eternal.

As in the days of the Exodus, we, like the Israelites, are now passing through this wilderness-like world to the promised land of Heaven. We are being guided by Jesus who is the true Moses. In the midst of that, we may be hemmed in the wilderness like Moses and the Israelites. Even if we look at the north, south, east and west, we can feel the crisis of not seeing a solution and being trapped. At that time, we shouldn’t think of the crisis as a burial place in discouragement and dissatisfaction, looking at the ground like the Israelites who resemble the king of Egypt Pharaoh, who was an unbeliever. In the midst of that, we shouldn’t commit sins of complaining Moses and God. Rather, like Moses, we should look up to the heaven, to the Lord and we need to use that crisis of being trapped as an opportunity to reveal the power of God’s salvation. We must trust and rely on God who is with us and our refuge and our Savior. Therefore, I hope and pray that we all can experience the power of God’s salvation.

Desiring to experience the work of God’s salvation when I am surrounded by the fools,

James Kim (Striving to be a wise man, not a foolish man)

# Abide in God's presence!

## [Psalms 15]

How can we Christians live our life of faith without being shaken? Can we live in this world as we confess our faith in firm faith? Today, on CNN News, I heard about 12 out of 13 people who died in an explosion in the West Virginia coal mine and one still in critical condition. Despite being trapped in the deep coal mine for 41 hours, family members, relatives, and friends gathered in one church were delighted by ringing church bells when they first heard the false news that all 13 were alive. They said they sang the song "Amazing Grace." But after 3 hours, when they heard that 12 people died and only 1 was saved, one person in the church said "They were praising God" at the first wrong information and 3 hours later when they had the correct information "They were cursing." At that time, a man named Hatified, the chairman of the company that owned the coal mine, said, "We prayed for 13 miracles. We want to celebrate the one miracle that was delivered." Although we may sympathy a little bit about how the people who heard the first wrong news and praised "Amazing Grace" to God and then cursed after hearing the second correct news, we feel that their faith were shaken for some reason. But I think this kind of shaking is not only for them, but also for us. When we are happy, we praise and give thanks to God. But when we go through difficulties and hardships, especially in the death of a loved one, we grumble and even curse God rather than consistently praise Him and give thanks to God. I think the reason for this lack of consistency is the fragility of knowing that God is God and not trusting in Him completely. If I try say in the view of Psalms 15, the reason is because we aren't abiding in God's presence.

In Psalms 15:1, the psalmist David says, "O LORD, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill?" Here, "who may abide in Your tent" means 'Who may abide in God's presence?' Of this question, David gives ten answers in Psalms 15. I think these ten answers are 'The ten commandments in abiding in God's presence.' As we keep these ten commandments well, we will be blessed with this: "He ... will never be shaken" (v. 5). Then, what are the Ten Ccommandments in abiding in God's presence?

### **The first commandment is to walk in integrity.**

Look at Psalms 15:2a – "He who walks with integrity ...." Here "integrity" means 'pureness' or 'faithfulness.' This is contrary to double life and it means character that isn't capricious (Park). An example is Job. In Job 2:3, we can see how God boasted Job to Satan: "For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause." Although Job was in great agony because of Satan's attack, he still held fast

his integrity. Job, who dwelt in the presence of God, did not sin with his lips, no matter what the situation, even if all of his children were dead. He was able to do so because he lived a life of fearing God and because of his integrity character. A man of integrity isn't afraid of the environment, people, or even Satan, but rather lives a life of being far away of sin because he fears God. David held fast his integrity even the fools were surrounded him (ch. 14). It was because he knew that God tried the heart and delighted in uprightness, the integrity of his heart (1 Chron. 29:17).

### **The second commandment is to work righteousness.**

Look at Psalms 15:2 – "... and works righteousness ...." Here the word "righteousness" means 'what is right in the sight of God' (Park). However, Satan is making things that are not right in the sight of God seems to be right. I don't know how terrifying Satan's schemes are. An example is "the woman" in Genesis 3. When the serpent came to the woman and tempted her to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Satan made her to see the tree as a delight to her eyes (Gen. 3:6) even though it was never right thing in the sight of God to eat that fruit. Even now, Satan is deceiving us to see what is right in God's eyes as not right, and to see what is wrong in God's eyes as right by tempting us to fall into the lust of the eyes. But David lived a righteous life as a righteous man, no matter what Satan's temptations were. He lived a righteous life that did what is right in the sight of God, not in the sight of man.

### **The third commandment is to speak truth in our hearts.**

Look at Psalms 15:2 – "... And speaks truth in his heart." David knew that God desired truth in the innermost being (51:6). So he also knew that in order to dwell in God's presence, he had to speak truth in his heart. But those who have a quirky character who lives a double life speaks lies in the heart rather than telling the truth in the heart. Such a person cannot dwell in the presence of God. To hate with the heart and pretend to love with words is not honest with themselves, so they cannot say that they are living a righteous life in the sight of God. They don't do justice because they don't do what is right in the sight of God. The Bible encourages us not to live this kind of life. Rather, the Bible encourages us to speak the truth to God and to people in our hearts in order to abide in God's presence.

### **The fourth commandment is not to slander with our tongues.**

Look at Psalms 15:3 – "He does not slander with his tongue ...." The word "slander" means "foot." In other words, it means to harm others with words while walking around with one's feet (Park). In a word, slandering with his tongue refers to stumbling speech. Some of these stumbling speeches are spreading rumors, gossiping about neighbors, eventually the words that harm the neighbor. This is never a Christians' life in God's presence. Our feet should be beautiful feet to share the gospel of Jesus Christ, not to spread words that harm others. Words are

really important. At the beginning of the day, it's great to start by listening to warm words, praise, encouragement, or something that delights others. But if we start the day with speaking negatively of others and slandering others, then we feel very dark and our hearts are heavy. So Apostle Paul says in Colossians 4:6 as follow: "Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person." As this word says, I know I have to speak graciously like seasoned with salt but it isn't really easy to practice it. I really need God's grace and wisdom.

### **The fifth commandment is not to do evil to our neighbor.**

Look at Psalms 15:3 – "... Nor does evil to his neighbor ...." This command contrasts with the third commandment, 'To work righteousness.' It means that those who want to dwell in the presence of God must do what is right in the eyes of God, not evil to their friends. In other words, we must not harm our neighbor. What evil can we commit to our friends? For example, when our friend has sinned and takes responsibility and confesses, we who works righteousness forgive our friend and accept him. This is because God has justified the one who repent and allows fellowship with Him (Lk. 18:13, 14) (Park). But even though he is already the repentant soul and God sees him right, the one who does evil to his friend condemns him rather than seeing him righteous. And he does not allow fellowship with himself. This is doing evil to his friend. Then he cannot abide in God's presence. Therefore, we must not do evil to our friends in order to abide in God's presence.

### **The sixth commandment is not to take up a reproach against our friend.**

Look at Psalms 15:3 – "... Not takes up a reproach against his friend." The Bible says in James 3:9-11 that the purpose of the tongue is to praise and thank God. If we harm a person with it, we cannot achieve the purpose of the tongue. Especially Apostle James says, "if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth" (v. 14). He says that this wisdom isn't that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic (v. 15) and the result is "there is disorder and every evil thing" (v. 16). In order to abide in God's presence, we must not take up the reproach against our neighbors, but rather must walk with integrity. And we must speak truth in our hearts.

### **The seventh commandment is to despise a reprobate and to honor those who fear the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 15:4 – "In whose eyes a reprobate is despised, But who honors those who fear the LORD ...." Here "a reprobate" is the one who despises God and we don't need to respect him to curry favor with that wicked (Park, Calvin). But we must honor those who fear the Lord. In Psalms 25:14, the Bible says "The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him ...." Those who abide in God's presence are those who have intimate fellowship with God, and we must honor them. God with those who fear Him (103:13, 17). Therefore, we must abide in God's

presence by despising those who despise God and by honoring those who fear God.

**The eighth commandment is to keep his vow.**

Look at Psalms 15:4 – “...who keeps his oath even when it hurts.” God is pleased with those who practice what he has determined before Him (Park). Here, the vow is the vow of God’s truth and goodness. This is what Ecclesiastes 5:5 says, “When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for He takes no delight in fools Pay what you vow!” Therefore, we shouldn’t make a vow recklessly. If we made the vow, we must keep it. Then we can abide in God’s presence.

**The ninth commandment is not to put out his money at interest.**

Look at Psalms 15:5 – “He does not put out his money at interest ....” One of the old Jewish laws forbids the farmers not to take interest of any kind from the poor because it was one of the acts of pity for the poor (Lev. 25:35-38). So the Hebrew law didn’t allow for money to be lend with interest to the fellow Hebrews. Its purpose was to reduce the suffering of the poor. Those who ignore this law knew only money (Park). Therefore, in order to abide in God’s presence, we must not put out our money at interest for loving our neighbors.

**The tenth and last commandment is not taking a bribe against the innocent.**

Look at Psalms 15:5 – “... Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent ....” The Bible commands us: “You shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of the just.” In order to abide in God’s presence, we must not take the bribe against the innocent.

Look at Psalms 15:5 – “... He who does these things will never be shaken.” This is God’s promise that those who faithfully obey the Ten Commandments to abide in God’s presence will not be shaken forever. By faithfully following the Ten Commandments above, I pray that our lives of faith will stand firmly without being shaken so that we may abide in the presence of God forever.

Desiring to abide in God’s presence,

James Kim

(Praying for standing firmly on the rock of faith)

## **“I have no good besides You”**

### **[Psalms 16]**

What do you think is the life of faith? As time goes by, I think the life of faith is confessing the words of Psalm 73:25 and 28: “Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. ... But as for me, the nearness of God is my good ....” Indeed, the nearness of God, God who is the source of blessing, is a truly blessed life. All blessings flow from Him. The blessings of forgiving our sins, of refreshing and the restoration of all things are also from Jesus (Acts 3:17-26). Lord, the source of this blessing, the confession from the heart and lips of a believer who enjoys it in the wisdom to count his blessings is Psalms 16:2 – “... I have no good beside You.”

In Psalms 16, I would like to think about five blessings that the psalmist David enjoyed:

#### **The first blessing is the protection of the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 16:1 – “Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge.” When David was in dangers, he took refuge in the Lord. There were two dangers: (1) the danger of death (v. 10) and (2) the danger of syncretism (v. 4) (Park). One danger was about his life, the other was about his faith. Like David, we can experience these two kinds of dangers: physical danger and spiritual danger. However, in this danger, David took the opportunity to draw closer to the Lord. The reason is because he knew that the nearness of God was his good (73:28). In Psalms 16:1, when David said “I take refuge”, it refers to his attitude of faith in trusting God without anxiety (Park). He trusted in God completely in the dangers of his spirit and flesh. Therefore, he was protected by the Lord.

#### **The second blessing is the Lord’s support of the portion of his inheritance.**

Look at Psalms 16:5 – “The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You support my lot.” God is the Lord who not only is the portion of our inheritance, but also secures it. Although we own it, it isn’t easy to keep it. But there is nothing to worry about because the Lord will secure our inheritance (Park). God is the Lord who gives us truly pleasant inheritance. David had the boundary lines that the Lord gave him (v. 6). This word refers to God’s giving of inheritance to David in regard to the measured land as an inheritance. Furthermore, God not only gives an inheritance but also He secures it. God, who gives us the promised land, just as He has given Abraham the beautiful land of Canaan, He also protects that inheritance that He has given us so that we may enjoy our blessed lives.



### **The third blessing is the Lord's counsel.**

Look at Psalms 16:7 – “I will bless the LORD who has counseled me; ....” A truly blessed man receives God's revelation and lives according to it. An example is Apostle Peter. He confessed to Jesus, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt. 16:16). He was able to confess like this because Father God revealed this to Peter (v. 17). So Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona” (v. 17). In Psalms 16, since David received the pleasant places as his inheritance according to the Lord's revelation, he blessed the Lord (v. 7). And he confessed like this: “Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night” (v. 7). David liked the Lord's instructions in the night (Park). It is a truly blessed soul that is taught by the word of the truth written in his heart in the night.

### **The fourth blessing is that the Lord is at my right hand.**

Look at Psalms 16:8 – “... Because He is at my right hand ....” The Lord was David's right hand means when God helped David, He strengthened him most powerfully (Park). David, who was protected by taking refuge in the Lord in the dangerous situation, experienced God's empowerment. This confession “I love You, O LORD, my strength” (18:1) is inevitable from the heart and lip of the men who has experienced the presence of the Lord, who comes to us and strengthens us most powerfully with His promised word when we are very weak and exhausted in discouragement.

### **The fifth blessing is that the Lord makes known to us the path of life.**

Look at Psalms 16:11 – “You will make known to me the path of life; ....” This was what David said as he was looking at the eternal world (Park). Psalms 16:10 is a prophecy of Jesus' resurrection and is quoted in Acts 2:27-28: “because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.” In other words, David believed and hoped for his resurrection by believing in the resurrection of the Messiah. Lord, who showed David the way of eternal life, was David's blessing and we have no good besides Him (Ps. 16:2).

Then what should be the response of those who have received these blessings from the Lord, who is our blessing? We can think of four things about the life that serve the Lord who is our blessing:

#### **First, we delight.**

Look at Psalms 16:3 – “As for the saints who are in the earth, They are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight.” How can they delight in other saints? The reason is because of the saints' majesty (Park). Here 'majesty' means glory or magnificence. It refers to the glory of the inheritance as God's children in the afterlife (Park). The brilliance of that glory is manifested by the saints living holy according to God's will in this world. When we see

such saints, we think ‘Oh! They are sons and daughters of God’ and ‘They are the ones who will be glorified as God children’ and admire them (Park). Therefore, the saints should be in delight.

### **Second, there is hatred toward the idols.**

Look at Psalms 16:4 – “The sorrows of those who have bartered for another god will be multiplied; I shall not pour out their drink offerings of blood, Nor will I take their names upon my lips.” David determined not to pour out his drink offerings of blood to the idols and take up their names on his lips. And he determined not to make any contact with idolaters. How can a saint who lives with the Lord, the true blessing, serve the Lord and an idol, the false blessing, together and live a double life? We who live with the Lord, who is our blessing, should hate idols and those who oppose God.

### **Third, we have set the Lord continually before us.**

Look at Psalms 16:8 – “I have set the LORD continually before me; ....” This is the grace that is given to those who believe in God’s Word, pray hard, repent, and obey (Park). We must walk with God and then we won’t be shaken (v. 8). The nearness of God is our blessing. And it is our blessing to have the Lord in our hearts and lives.

### **Fourth, our hearts are glad.**

Look at Psalms 16:9 – “Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely.” David confessed that because God was with him, his heart was glad and his glory rejoiced and his flesh also would dwell securely. In particular, in verse 11, we can see that while looking at the Lord who would be with him in heaven forever, David experienced a partial experience of the full joy and eternal joy in heaven through the Holy Spirit. We should be glad and should rejoice because the Lord gave us hope in the eternal kingdom of God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the true source of our blessings.

As I meditated Psalms 16, I looked back at my own life. I asked myself “I have no good besides You” (v. 2). Especially considering the five blessings given by the Lord, I have to confess that I am receiving these five blessings in my life. In particular, as I was coming out to church for Wednesday morning prayer meeting, my car tire as torn, so I had to change it. As I did so, it felt the Lord’s protection, so I thanked God. Actually my mechanic friend told me that tire was very old, was dangerous to drive like that and told me to change it. So I was thankful and I change it as he said. But the same tire got torn down on a freeway and nobody got hurt. I believed that this was God’s protection and I cannot but give thanks to Him. The Lord who protects me is my blessing. I don’t want to pursue any other blessing beside my Lord. I want to pursue the best blessing. In doing so, other blessings will become secondary. Therefore, I would like to sincerely confess, “I have no good besides You” like David.

Desiring to confess “I have no good beside You” who is the Lord of Blessing,

James Kim

(In the midst of getting strength in the blessed Word of God)

## “Give ear to my prayer”

### [Psalms 17]

‘In fact, the prayer of the mind is like a stream that whispers constantly under many waves of everyday life. The possibility of living in the world without being part of the world and growing in our God in the midst of solitude opens there.’ (Henry Nowen, “The Only Necessary Thing: Living a Prayerful Life”).

‘A lot of waves in everyday life’ ... We encounter lots of different waves in our lives every day. There are many different types of waves, and each wave also has different sizes. Among those waves, we need to master the surfing skills. I think the first element of the surfing technique is ‘prayer of the heart’. Henry Nowen said the heart’s prayer was ‘a stream that whispers constantly under many waves of everyday life.’ The constant whisper under the waves is like a calm wave flowing deep under the waves. I think that calmness is a state of spirit that has given rise to God in the middle of solitude. In the midst of solitude, we can go to God just as we are in spiritual nakedness. We can quietly pour out our hearts. Like Hannah, we can go to God in our great distress and weep bitter and cry out to Him (1 Sam. 1:10). In the midst of solitude, we realize that God’s desire for us is far greater than our desire for God. In other words, we realize that God’s desire to listen to our prayers is much greater than our desire to listen to God’s voice.

In Psalm 17, the psalmist David was praying to God. His prayer to God was a prayer that God listened to. It was the prayer that wasn’t from deceitful lips (v. 1). In other words, David prayed honestly to God. How could he ask God in this honesty? We can receive three lessons:

#### **First is “my judgment.”**

Look at Psalms 17:2 – “Let my judgment come forth from Your presence; Let Your eyes look with equity.” This judgment of David comes from the Lord’s presence. When David was surrounded by his deadly enemies (vv. 9, 11), who were extreme proud (v. 10) with a cunning thoracic and powerful like a lion and brutal cruelty, he prayed honestly to God with right judgement. He took refuge in Him with his right judgment in the midst of the extreme persecution by his enemies (v. 7). David’s judgment was to depend on just God in unjust situations (v. 2). David prayed to God trusting that God his Savior would judge justly between him and his extreme enemies. Also, his judgment was that he believed that God would answer his prayers when he asked God (v. 6). Furthermore, David believed in God would keep him as the apple of the eye and asked Him (v. 8). In this judgment, David prayed to God.

## **Second is ‘my purpose.’**

Look at Psalms 17:3 – “You have tried my heart; You have visited me by night; You have tested me and You find nothing; I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress.” The Hebrew translation of this word is, ‘Even if I think of evil in my heart, I will lamented it and keep it out of my mouth’ (Park). As David cried out to God, he had purposed not to sin. That was why he prayed to God while living in his purpose. Although the oppressors or extreme enemies who surrounded David were speaking with arrogance (v. 10), David had purposed not to sin with his lips. It was to the extent that the Lord tested David and He found nothing (v. 3). Although most people who commit crimes of thought are more likely to sin with their mouths, David not only sinned with his mouth but also in his heart. He asked the Lord with an honest heart and lips that the Lord could not find fault. I am sure it wasn’t easy for David to stand firmly in his purpose in the midst of his extreme difficult situation. Although David was surrounded by his extreme enemies who spoke with arrogance, David had purposed that his mouth would not transgress (v. 3). Although he could have sinned with his thoughts, he didn’t. How could he have defeated evil thoughts in his thought fights and didn’t sin with his lips? It was because he had the power to suppress evil thoughts. That power is the power of the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. When we think about one of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control (Gal. 5:23), I think the Spirit of God restrained David’s thoughts so that he could overcome evil thoughts with good thoughts (Rom. 12:21).

## **Third is “my steps.”**

Look at Psalms 17:5 – “My steps have held fast to Your paths My feet have not slipped.” When a person faces hardship, adversity, or crisis, there is a high risk that his steps will be distorted. Eventually, he can’t keep your faith and sin. Therefore, in order to avoid sinning, we must strictly follow God’s Word (Park). In the midst of crisis and adversity, David was rather close to the word of God. In the midst of it, he had kept from the paths for the violent by the word of His lips (v. 4). He kept from the paths of the sin and his steps had held fast to the Lord’s paths. David took a righteous and honest path based on the Word.

What was God’s answer to David’s honest prayer? We can think of it in two ways:

## **First is ‘my salvation.’**

Look at Psalms 17:13 – “Arise, O LORD, confront him, bring him low; Deliver my soul from the wicked with Your sword,” When we kneel down and cry out to God in honesty, God arises and confront our extreme enemies and bring them low (v. 13). No matter how his wicked and deadly enemies surround us, God delivers us away from them (v. 9). And God keeps us as the apple of the eye and hides us in the shadow of His wings (v. 8).

## **Second is ‘my hope.’**

Look at Psalms 17:15 – “As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake.” The hope of our believers is only God (Park). The hope given to us is to enter the afterlife and see God. When we die or at the Lord’s return, we will enter the kingdom of heaven through the righteousness of the Lord and be satisfied with the image of the Lord.

Like David, we must offer honest prayers to God through “my judgment,” ‘my purpose,’ and “my steps.” In doing so, we can enjoy the blessings of ‘my salvation’ and ‘my hope in response to our prayers. We may already have experienced this blessing in our lives. Therefore, we praise God’s salvation and rejoice in hope. No matter how many waves of everyday life come into our lives, I hope and pray that all of us can praise God with heart full of hope and enjoy the grace of salvation through honest prayer to God.

Studying in the school of prayer as I pray to God,

James Kim

(Wanting to enjoy the God’s blessings of His salvation and of His hope as I pray honestly to Him)

## **“I love You, O LORD, my strength”**

### **[Psalms 18:1-19]**

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

#### **The first reaction is “mind”.**

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

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

power and love of God that saved him in every crisis, David confessed, “I love You, O Lord” (v. 1). In the memory of experiencing this past salvation, David accepted reality in faith and praise God (v. 3).

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

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

Look at Psalms 18:2 – “The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” Since God is the God of salvation in the nature of God, God saved David (Park). The character image of God is expressed in several words Psalms 18:2 – “my rock” (meaning lands surrounded by steep rocks), “my fortress” (meaning a high hill or mountain top), “my deliverer” (Savior when faced with an emergency), “My God”, “my rock, in whom I take refuge” (referring to the hill of a mountain), “my shield” (blocking the arrow of the enemy), “the horn of my salvation “(analogous to the power of victory) and “my stronghold” (a steep and sheltered haven on the top of a mountain). In a word, God saved David because God was David’s protector. Therefore, as David prayed to God, he proclaimed that God was the Savior who protected David.

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

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

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



We cannot help but be surprised that the prayer of one person brings about the great work of salvation while the heavens are shaking.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

With gratitude for the love of God and the grace of salvation,

James Kim

(As I praise the Lord in desiring to be the Lord's joy)

## **“The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness”**

### **[Psalms 18:20-27]**

As I spend time with children these days, I see myself in my third child, Karis. It is the attitude of the heart that says to God in greed, 'God, It's not fair!' I once gave 10 chocolate pieces to the children. At that time, Dillon, the first child, and Yeri, the second daughter, seemed to eat one by one. But the youngest daughter, Karis, just finished eating ten pieces as she wanted to eat and asked me to give her more. So I told her that she shouldn't ask me for more because I fairly gave each of you 10 pieces. Then Karis said to me, "It's not fair!" Not only then, but Karis has been complaining about not treating her fairly, especially compared to her older sister. Looking at it, my wife and I thought that we have been trying to be fair to all three children as dad and mom, but nonetheless, it seemed unfair to Karis. Despite the fact that I gave the three children equally ten pieces of chocolate, I wondered if we were telling Heavenly Father that He isn't fair. Although we may not say that God isn't fair, we may have that thought in our mind. Just as Karis said she wanted to eat more because of greed, but I didn't give to her and she said it was unfair, I think we are praying to God for more in our greed even though Heavenly Father treats us fairly. I think if we tend to complain to God and say He isn't fair if He doesn't do what we ask for. We have no choice but to experience God's justice if we aren't satisfied only with our Heavenly Father.

If we look at Psalms 18:20 and 24, the psalmist David confesses that the Lord rewarded him according to "my righteousness". Our God is righteous God, and He is clear in rewarding those who are good and in punishing those who are evil (Park). With the kind He shows Himself kind and with the blameless He shows Himself blameless (v. 25). With the pure He shows Himself pure, and with the crooked He shows Himself astute (v. 26). The Lord saves an afflicted people but he abases haughty eyes (v. 27, Park).

However, we seem to be thinking a little out of balance. We believe in, rely on and try to enjoy God's love, grace, mercy, and goodness among God's divine character, but we don't focus on God's holiness and righteousness. So, even if we live in front of the holy and just God without obeying his commandments, we are living lightly without thinking of true repentance for sin, in the words of 'I am just living well by the grace of God.' Dietrich Bonhoeffer said this is "cheap grace." While forgetting the seriousness of sin and repeatedly committing the sin of disobedience, we interpret God's grace, love, and faithfulness in our own selfish desires, and we believe that we are still living the right faith. If we say that we are living by the grace of God, this is a great misunderstanding. Apostle Paul says that those who truly know the grace of God labor more than anyone else in the Lord's work by that grace (1 Cor. 15:10). If we are truly believers living by the grace of God, we must devote ourselves more to obeying His

commandments before holy and just God.

That's what the psalmist David did in Psalms 18:20-27. He devoted himself to keeping God's way (v. 21). He wasn't a man living his life of faith, just by crying out for cheap grace. He was a wholehearted man to obey the commandments that God revealed in His Word. He is challenging us through the words of Psalms 18:20-27 that we, who are justified, will live a righteous life which is our responsibility. David lived a righteous life pursuing "my righteousness," the back of the coin, if "His righteousness" is the front of the coin.

Now we are committing a very serious sin against God. We, who are justified by the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, must live righteous life for the glory of God while living in this world. But it seems like we are just emphasizing the fact that we are justified by God's grace and don't live righteous life. We are living with the illusion that we live our lives of faith without making every effort to produce righteous fruit. So even though we may be proud of living a long Christian life, we cannot find the fruit of righteousness in our own lives like a fig tree that is without any fruits. It's the fig tree but there is no fruit. We are living the life of faith that isn't bearing any fruit. This is our figure of unbalanced lives. It is an unbalanced life of faith, focusing only on justification (righteousness) received by grace from God and then failing to live a righteous life faithfully in the fear of God.

David's balanced life of faith lived to keep God's way more and more by fearing God in God's holy grace. He didn't wickedly departed from his God (v. 21). Here we must receive precious lessons through the life of David. We can divide the lesson into three: (1) We must yearn for 'God's revelation', (2) We must make 'right confession of faith' based on the revelation of God, and (3) We must live a 'right life' according to the right confession of faith. But Satan is attacking us. Although we must receive God's revelation through the Word of God, Satan is keep on attacking us by blocking His revelation to us through His Word. In a word, Satan's efforts are bringing 'a famine of hearing the words of the Lord' so that God's revelation does not come upon us. Look at Amos 8:11 – "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the LORD." We have reached a time of spiritual drought. There are countless spiritual deaf and spiritual blind people sitting in the chapel every Sunday in the chaos of hearing the word of God. The God's people, who have eyes but cannot see even's God's providential words and have ears but cannot hear the words of God pouring out like a flood, sit in the chapel every Sunday and cannot hear the word of God. Even the servants of God who proclaim the Word are preaching the voice of God that has not been heard. As if the deaf people talked to each other, in the chapel every Sunday, there are absurd things happening in the sight of God. Like the words of Isaiah 1, the things that God hates and can no longer endure are done every Sunday in the chapel. Satan seems to be succeeding now. Satan is making us to want to have our ears tickled and accumulate for ourselves teachers in accordance to our own desires and to turn away our ears from the truth and to turn aside to myths (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Satan seems to be succeeding now. God's people are leaving the word of God. He made it too

light to keep his commandments. Satan is successful in rationalizing out responsibility for obey God's commandment and is making us to consider the sins of disobedience very lightly. And Satan makes us to consider 'cheap grace' the most valuable. He is making us to keep God's holiness and justice far away from us. Therefore, in the end, we are leaving the truth of God and wickedly leaving God to live the weekday. But David did not. He listened to God's Word and lived in obedience to Satan's attacks and temptations. He didn't live in the word drought, but in the plenty word. So he confessed with confidence that God's all ordinances were before him and never put away God's statutes from him (Ps. 18:22).

David not only committed himself to keep the ways of the Lord (v. 21) he also kept himself from his iniquity (v. 23). He feared God wholeheartedly and kept himself from his iniquity (Park, Delitzsch). Indeed, David was a wise man. As the Bible says in Proverbs 16:6 that a wise man fears God and departs from evil, David was such a man. Pastor Yoon-sun Park said: '... He disciplined his body and made it his slave because he regards himself as dangerous in rebellion. A wise man first guards himself by regarding himself as dangerous' (Park). Are we guarding ourselves first by regarding ourselves as dangerous? One of the reasons is that the thought that we are okay with ourselves lies deep in our minds. If we truly know our rebellion, we cannot but guard ourselves. We are in fear because we know too well that we are prone to commit sin against our holy and just God if we don't guard ourselves. We are afraid of sinning and that we will go further and bringing the name of the holy God shame. We are afraid of covering up the glory of God. So we must always wake up and pray. We must always stay alert and be guard ourselves, knowing that Satan will make us to commit sin against God when we show him even a small gap.

I visited a nursing home this week with a saint. We went to see the saint's relative after prayer even though I met his relative first time in my life. His relative had a heart surgery and a knee amputation on one of his legs due to his diabetes. However, his relative confessed that it was God's discipline that his heart and leg was like that. And his relative confessed that 'There is only the Lord in my life.' When I heard that confession I thanked God with my heart. It is a precious confession. What a precious confession, even when the leg is amputated, while confessing that there is only the Lord, acknowledging the discipline of God's righteous love. God is just God. God rewards us according to our righteousness. God protects us and gives us the grace of salvation when we fear God wholeheartedly and keep the ways of the Lord (Park). We must strive to lead a righteous life as those who have been justified by God's grace.

As I devote myself in pursuing a righteous life as I look at His reward,

James Kim

(Learning the balanced life of faith)

## The secret of victory

### [Psalms 18:28-42]

Yesterday at 8 o'clock in the evening, there was a soccer game between the Korean national team and LA Galaxy. One of the controversial focal points was whether to use a "three-back" or "four-back" defense system. The three-back defense system is typical and familiar to the Korean players, and the four-back defense system is the new defense system to them. It is said that during the 2002 World Cup, Hiddink also tried to use the four-back defense system, but was unable to adapt to it, so he returned to three-back defense system. Professor Yong-soo Lee, Sejong University, who was the chairman of the technical committee at that time, said, 'In fact, whether it is a three-back or four-back is an inappropriate classification of the dichotomy. Although Hiddink used a three-back, the key was the organic movement of all players. To do that, it required a high level of tactical understanding, and it required steel strength' (Internet). What I felt through Professor Lee's words is 'the organic movement of all players.' I believe that the organic service of our church members is also important because the church is also an "organization" and an "organism". In order to live such an organic life of faith, we need to have a high understanding of the will of the Lord who is the head of the church, as well as spiritual 'steel strength' like in football. Then, we can even with our spiritual battles.

In Psalms 18:28-42, the Bible says that the secret of victory is only God's strength. God girded the psalmist David with strength to make war (vv. 32, 39). As a result, David was able to lead a war-winning life with the strength of God. Then, what is the strength of God that the Bible is talking about in Psalms 18:28-42? I meditated on it in five ways:

#### **First, the strength of God is "The power of knowledge."**

Look at Psalms 18:31 – "For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God." Since David knew the true God and the Rock, he was able to win the war. Knowledge of who God is our strength. And people who know God are strong. Therefore, we must grow in the knowledge of God. However, Satan is trying to destroy us by destroying our knowledge of God (Hos. 4:6). Therefore, we must work harder to know who our God is (6:3). Prophet Jeremiah said "let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me" (Jere. 9:24). What God should we boast? We must boast God our lamp who illumines our darkness (Ps. 18:28). Here, the word "You light my lamp" means prosperity, and when it applies to David, a soldier, it refers to victory in the war by God's grace (Park). In other words, the God we must strive to know is the God of victory and God who makes us victorious. We can live a triumphant life as we know this triumphant God in our daily lives.

## **Second, the strength of God is “The power of the Word.”**

Look at Psalms 18:30 – “As for God, His way is blameless; The word of the LORD is tried; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.” David lived a victorious life with the power of the word of God. The word of God is our strength. By eating His word, we can live a life of power. Apostle Paul said, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Indeed, we must think about whether we are being taught by the Word of God, being reproofed, being corrected, and being trained in righteousness. In every moment of life, there may be sinful thoughts, and whenever temptations are attacked from time to time, we should be taught, be rebuked, our wrong thoughts and lives should be corrected and be trained in righteousness so that we must live the victorious life by fighting against ourselves, our sinful nature, this sinful world and Satan by the Word of God. David defended himself from his iniquity by the perfect word of God and won the battle against himself (Ps. 18:23) and was protected by the power of His word even in the face of persecution of the enemy (v. 30). God made David’s feet like hinds’ feet and settled him upon His high places (v. 33). In other words, God led David to safety. Actually, the word of God is our safety zone. His word will set us upon His high places.

## **Third, the strength of God is “The power of dependence.”**

Look at Psalms 18:29 – “For by You I can run upon a troop; And by my God I can leap over a wall.” If we think in common sense, a baby who relies on his parents will gradually become independent as he grows up. But our Christian life seems to be the opposite. Before we believe in Jesus, we live an independent life. And then, after we believe in Jesus, we gradually rely on the Lord. This is our Christian life. It is a life of faith that we realize that there is only the Lord whom we can rely on as we go through the years, and put it into practice. And those who depend on the Lord are strong. God’s strong power reveals when we realize our weakness thoroughly and this is our strength. For example, David ran to Goliath in God’s holy name like running upon a troop (2 Sam. 22:30). That’s what we should do. We must be those who run toward the world in total dependence on God. When we rely on God and move forward boldly and courageously, God will enlarge our steps and our feet will not slipped (Ps. 18:36).

## **Fourth, the strength of God is “The power of skills.”**

Look at Psalms 18:34 – “He trains my hands for battle, So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.” In this word, God taught David’s hand to fight and David’s arm to pull the brass bow. In other words, God gave the soldier David the proper skill. Pastor Yoon-sun Park said, ‘God will give those who trust him the right skill for his job. If he is a merchant, God will give him the right skill for business. If he is a literary person, He will give him the literary skill.’ In Ecclesiastes 10:10, the wise man says, “Wisdom has the advantage of giving success.” We need skill to win the war. And the Lord gives that skill to us. According to Exodus 36:1, God made his sanctuary by

giving wisdom “every skillful person” “to know how to perform all the work in the construction of the sanctuary.” In doing His work, God not only raises workers, but also gives wisdom (skills) to the workers He has raised. Although we should be innocent as doves, we should also be shrewd as snakes (Mt. 10:16). In order to fight and win in spiritual warfare, we need fighting skills. We need to know how to use “the shield of salvation” (Ps. 18:35) and how to use the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). There is no use of the sword of the Spirit if we don’t know how to use it. God gives us skill and power. With that skill and power, we can live a victorious life.

**Firth and last, the strength of God is “The power of character.”**

Look at Psalms 18:35 – “You have also given me the shield of Your salvation, And Your right hand upholds me; And Your gentleness makes me great.” Here “Your gentleness” means ‘the result of the Lord helping David by humbling Himself and with His gentleness, he became great’ (Park). The key to our Christian victory is the person who resembles Jesus. In particular, Jesus’ meekness in the character makes us victorious in this world. The key to our Christian victory is the character that resembles Jesus. In particular, Jesus’ meekness in the character that makes us victorious in this world.

With these five strengths of God, we must fight against ourselves, sin, the world, Satan, and death and win. We are winning now and will continue to win. We are all the victors who are moving forward toward the heaven while holding the military flag of victory and singing the hymn of victory. Victory!

Senior pastor of Victory Presbyterian Church,

James Kim

(With assurance of victory in the Lord)



# The Lord who places us as head of the world

## [Psalms 18:43-50]

While living in this world, there are many kinds of trials in our lives. This is the world where there are many things that are difficult to endure, many tears, and many troubles in our hearts. Because of these things, many people were desperate in despair. Among those many are the Christians. How should we think of trials? A British romantic poet Byron said this about the trials: ‘The trials are the foremost path to truth’ (Internet). But we don’t like this foremost path of these trials to the truth. So we try to avoid them. No one wants to see the big ocean wave and row to the depths of the ocean. That’s because we can’t figure it out what is underneath of the ocean. The British proverb says: ‘A good boatman is not made in a calm sea.’ No one has succeeded without trial. As such, we can never be made mature disciples in a calm world without trials. So we should not avoid the foremost path of trials. We must also walk that path with gratitude and faith.

If we look at Psalms 18:43-50, we will meet the Lord who places us as head of the world. Especially in verses 43 and 48, the Lord said, “... You have placed me as head of the nations ...” (v. 43) and “... Surely You lift me above those who rise up against me ...” (v. 48). Our God is the Lord who places us head of the world. How the Lord places us head of the world is explained in verse 46: “The LORD lives, ....” In other words, the Lord places us head of the world by manifesting that God is alive. Then, how does the Lord manifest that God is alive specifically in our lives? I want to think about it in three ways:

### **First, the Lord places us head of the world by delivering us.**

Look at Psalms 18:43, 48: “You have delivered me from the contentions of the people ...” (v. 43) and “He delivers me from my enemies; Surely You lift me above those who rise up against me; You rescue me from the violent man” (v. 48). Where did the Lord deliver the psalmist David? God manifest His aliveness by delivering David “from contentions of the people” (v. 43), “from my enemies” (v. 48) and “from the violent man” (v. 48). In other words, the Lord, who is the horn of His salvation (v. 2) manifested that He is alive by giving David the power of salvation. Therefore, the Lord placed him as head of the nations (v. 43).

As if the exodus of the Israelites were trapped in the east, west, north and south of the Red Sea, we will fully recognize and acknowledge the inability to save ourselves. At that time, we sincerely confess that we have only Jesus the Savior. When we acknowledge the utter inability to deliver ourselves, we experience God’s saving power. But too many times we seem to be committing the sin of silence like the people of Israel at Carmel in the

days of Elijah. As in the battle against the prophets of Baal and Asherah, and Elijah the prophet of God, said to the Israelites “How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him” but the people didn’t answer him a word (1 Kgs. 18:21), there seem to be times when we are in so many cowardly silences that we are not following God the Savior. A believer, who confesses and acknowledges that the God who delivers me is the only Savior, manifests that God is alive. Although the people of the world cry for help, but there is none to save (Ps. 18:41), our Lord manifests Himself to the world that He is truly our Savior by coming to us when we cry out to Him and manifests His majesty by rescuing us. Therefore, the Lord places us head of the world.

### **Second, the Lord places us head of the world by making us abundant.**

David enjoyed God’s abundant grace despite the persecution and adversity of his enemies. The placed him as head of the nations by giving him abundant grace.

Because God is with us with abundant grace, He manifests that He is alive even when we are in need. However, many times we see our own poverty rather than feeling the abundant grace of God. The reason is our own “self-sufficiency.” Those who truly desire God’s abundant grace, even in need, cry out to the Lord in poverty, and hear the voice of the Lord, “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Cor. 12:9). These are not self-sufficiency, but God-sufficiency. And those who are God-sufficiency confess, “Our adequacy is from God” (3:5).

### **Third and last, the Lord places us head of the world by strengthening us.**

Look at Psalms 18:45 – “Foreigners fade away, And come trembling out of their fortresses.” Although it may seem strong when the enemies attack David, in the end, God was with His servant David in power. Therefore, God strengthened him (vs. 32, 39), weakening David’s enemies and making them afraid of David.

Our God is Almighty God who not only has girded His servant David with strengthen but also us as well (vv. 32, 39). When we are in weakness by our enemies, God is with us in his power. Therefore, through our weakness, He manifests His power, breaking down the strength of our enemies and making them afraid of us. After all, our God strengthens us, so He is the God who makes us victorious. Therefore, He is the God who places us head of the nations.

Then, what should be our reaction to God’s grace that places us head of the world?

### **First, we must bless the Lord and exalt Him.**

Look at Psalms 18:46 – “The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock; And exalted be the God of my salvation.” David blessed God and exalted His name by experiencing the God who strengthened him. God is

Almighty and just God who breaks down the solidity of the world. Therefore, God is the one who strengthens us. The God who is our rock is the God who lifts us up on a solid rock and lifts up his glory. We must boast and exalt this God.

**Second, we must give thanks to God among the world.**

Look at Psalms 18:49 – “Therefore I will give thanks to You among the nations, O LORD, And I will sing praises to Your name.” David gave thanks to God after experiencing (or in the midst of) God’s work, which made him the head of the nations because God enriched him. Like David, we must give thanks to God. We should also thank God even for our own needs. And we need to thank God for our weaknesses. The reason is that we experience God’s abundance and also His power. We should thank God.

**Third and last, we must wait for the Lord’s return in assurance of salvation and victory.**

Look at Psalms 18:50 – “He gives great deliverance to His king, And shows lovingkindness to His anointed, To David and his descendants forever.” Here “His king” and “His anointed” refers to the David’s descendant Jesus Christ. David waited longing for the first coming of the Messiah, the Almighty, the Savior who is abundant in grace and love. We must wait for the Lord Jesus Christ who came first and gave us the grace of salvation and who will come again. In that waiting, we must wait with the assurance of salvation and of victory.

I once again ponder this statement by the British romantic poet Byron, ‘The trials are the foremost path to truth.’ Even if no one wants to walk this way, we Christians must walk faithfully on that way, relying on God’s grace of salvation and His abundant grace and mighty power. We must bless the Lord and give thanks to Him for the grace of God, who saves us, enriches us, and strengthens us and placing us the head of the world as long as we live in this world. And we must exalt Him and wait for the Second Coming of the Lord with assurance of salvation and of victory.

With gratitude for the grace of God, who makes foolish, needy, and incompetent people the head of the world,

James Kim

(By faith looking at God who delivers, enriches and strengthens me)

# The Word of God

## [Psalms 19]

As God's people, we Christians must draw close to God and keep the world away. We should live close to the Word of God and not be paired with the world. One of the reasons is that when we live in harmony with the world, we will leave God's Word and lean left or right to sin against God. What is terrifying is that when we leave the Word of God, we do not regard sin as sin. As a result, we commit more and more sins. In habitual sin, we are no longer drawn to God's Word, but to sin. The frightening thing is that this degeneration of faith is so rapid. The faith that falls so quickly, ultimately, is due to the rapid departure of the Word of God. According to Deuteronomy 17:19, in order to be a king of Israel, he had to read His Word all the days of his life so that he might learn to fear the Lord his God, by carefully observing all the words. We are kingly priests. Therefore, we also must keep God's Word aside and read it throughout our lives.

If we look at Psalms 19, especially from verse 7, the psalmist David speaks about "The law of the Lord." So under the heading "The Word of God," I want to think about what the Word of God is and what our reactions to it should be.

What is the Word of God? David teaches four things:

### **First, the Word of God is perfect, restoring the soul.**

Look at Psalms 19:7 – "The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul ...." Here, the word "perfect" means perfection in God's Word, which refers to the supernatural nature of God's Word (Park). In other words, the Word of God can regenerate a dying soul with supernatural powers. This is the purpose of truth. The Word of God saves the dying soul, and has the power to revive the dead soul who has left God. It also has the power to raise and build a discouraged soul of the imperfect believers. Therefore, we experience the restoration of our discouraged souls by the perfect Word of God.

### **Second, the Word of God is sure, making wise the simple.**

Look at Psalms 19:7 – "... The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple." When the Word of God, which is the truth that allows us to know God, is 'to be sure', it means to be true (Park) and it makes wise the simple. Here, the word "simple" refers to the one who is opened in the original Hebrew. In other words, the true

Word of God works in those who have opened their hearts, making them wise. When the seeds of the word are sown in an open mind like the field of the soil, they bear the fruit of wisdom. Therefore, we must open our hearts and receive the Word of God by faith and obey it.

### **Third, the Word of God is right, rejoicing the heart.**

Look at Psalms 19:8 – “The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart ....” The Word of God is right and it pierces the sinner’s heart and makes him to repent. People are happy when they repent (Park). The heart that is not right or bent can be corrected by repenting through the word of God that pierces the heart. The Word of God is right. When our hearts are right, our hearts can be truly happy. True joy is in the right heart. There is no doubt that there will be no true joy in a crooked heart.

### **Fourth and last, the Word of God is pure, enlightening the eyes.**

Look at Psalms 19:8 – “... The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.” Here, the word “pure” means “clean.” In other words, the Word of God is clean. With that pure Word, our spirit is brightened when our souls are washed away. Then we will see God (Mt. 5:8). We will experience God. A good example is Job. Job made this confession after walking through the affliction: “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You” (Job 42:5). The lesson we learn from this confession is that we hold onto the pure Word of God and endure the path of suffering, so that in the purity of the soul, we who hear God with our ears will see God in bright spirit. We must purify our souls by obeying the Word of God (1 Pet. 1:22). Then we can experience God in our suffering life.

So what should be our reaction to the Word of God? We can think of four things:

#### **First, we must fear God.**

Look at Psalms 19:9 – “The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.” The Word of God allows us to know God who is holy and just (“The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether” refers to the God’s certain righteous judgments). As a result, we fear God and obey God’s Word. In doing so, we are purified by the Word of God. There can be no sin in a pure heart that fears God. In the end, those who are pure (v. 8) live a life away from sin by fearing God as they see their holy and just God with their spiritual eyes.

#### **Second, we must desire the Word of God.**

Look at Psalms 19:10 – “They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.” Gold can bring the wealth of the world, but not the wealth of the soul.

The Word of God enriches our souls (Park). Gold may bring the wealth of the world, but too many times it makes our souls poor. Therefore, we must desire the Word of God that brings the wealth of our souls. The more we taste the sweetness of God's Word that brings the rich of our souls, the more we will desire the Word of God. In the end, those who are right (v. 8) cannot but desire His Word. Therefore, the right people can taste the joy of the heart and enjoy it.

### **Third, we must keep the Word of God.**

Look at Psalms 19:11 – “Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.” David was warned by the Word of God. He kept the Word of God to avoid sin. The reason is because there is “great reward.” In other words, the reason why David kept the Word of God is because the person who keeps the Word has the great reward. We also shouldn't ignore God's boundary. We must keep the Word of God to the end, so that our soul can be saved. Eventually, the one who has an open mind is a wise person who keeps the Word of God.

### **Fourth and last, we must pray.**

Look at Psalms 19:12-13: “Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults. Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; Let them not rule over me; Then I will be blameless, And I shall be acquitted of great transgression.” David prayed to God so that he could realize his errors through the Word of God. In particular, he wanted to realize his “presumptuous sins” and to stop sinning them. That was why his prayer was “Acquit me of hidden faults” (v. 12) and “I shall be acquitted of great transgression” (v. 13). If we keep on sinning the presumptuous sins, then that sins will have control over us (Park). In other words, sins will rule over us. That was why David prayed to God “Let them not rule over me” (v. 13). The Bible says that the perfect and mature Christians are people of prayers. I hope and pray that as we pray to God by faith in the word of God, our souls can be restored (v. 7).

David, who was close to God, wanted the words of his mouth and the meditation of his heart be acceptable in the sight of the Lord who was his rock and his Redeemer (v. 14). He was a man of prayer. He was the one who desired the Word of God and kept His Word. He was a man who feared God. A saint, who lives a life centered on the Word fears God, desires the Word, keeps the Word, holds onto the Word and prays. He experiences the perfect Word of God, the sure word, the right and pure Word of God, that restores the soul, becomes wise, brings joy to the heart, and brightens the soul. I hope and pray that all the blessings of the Word of God be upon us all.

Sola de Scriptura!

James Kim

(With gratitude for enjoying the blessing of being led by the Word of God's promise)

## **“They are more desirable than gold”**

**“They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.” (Ps. 19:10)**

These days, I feel the importance of field experience while watching the renovation of the main hall of our church. Of course, the work is done by experts and I see their works. And as I talk with them, listening to the problems of the chapel and how to repair them, I am receiving challenges and lessons from the Lord. If I come and see once before the construction starts and then come and see after the construction is over, I'm sure I can recognize the differences, but I won't know the process of those changes. Even if I know, I will know through someone who knows well and it cannot be my direct experience from what I have seen, heard, and felt at the construction site. Looking at the construction site, I realized that our church main sanctuary ceiling was almost collapsing. It seemed even the experts had no idea that the ceiling would be so bad before tearing it off. However, when they actually tore the ceiling, they found out that it was almost collapsing. So they did very good job fixing it thoroughly. I am just thankful for them.

One of the spiritual lessons I have received through the renovation of our church is 'Experience God's Word for ourselves.' As I open and read the Bible and meditate on the Bible, I have realized once again how important it is to live and experience the Word of God that is living and active by obeying and applying it in our lives. This is how we can make God's Word our possession (Ps. 119:56). If we indirectly encounter God's Word through someone, we will not experience God's Word as deeply. This is because we are listening and learning through the person who has experienced God's Word. Through such an indirect experience, we cannot deeply experience the Word of God. The reason why the church has such Bible study is to let those who learn the Word of God grow up to the place where they can eat the Word of God by themselves. We have to meditate on the Word of God ourselves and go to the place of studying and learning. In the midst of this, we must experience the Word of God ourselves. Then, like the psalmist, we can confess that the word of God is sweeter than honey and the drippings (19:10).

If we look at Psalms 19:10, why did the psalmist David exhort to desire the Word of God more than gold? Why was that? This was because David experienced the fact that the word of God is sweeter than honey and the drippings. I thought of David's Word experience as four processes:

**First, the Word of God gives warning to us.**



Look at Psalms 19:11 – “Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.” The Word of God draws the border for us. Living within that boundary is a blessing. We can enjoy true freedom when we live in the truth (Jn. 8:32). Therefore, it is a blessing to be warned by the Word of God.

### **Second, the Word of God allows us to discern our errors.**

Look at Psalms 19:12 – “Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults.” The Word of God exposes our sins (Eph. 5:11, 13). His Word exposes even our deep, hidden sins. His Word, like a borderline, allows our conscience to realize that we have sinned when we cross it. However, some of us have very hard consciences. The reason our consciences are so hardened is because we are repeating our lives of crossing the borderline. Then we may feel guilty in the first place because of our conscience, but gradually, the more we live a sinful life that crosses the borderline, the more we become accustomed to that life, and eventually we don’t even see sin as a sin. In other words, we lose our ability to regard sin as sin. Therefore, it is a blessing to realize through God’s Word that we have crossed the borderline. It is a blessing to realize our sins with the Word of God. That’s why David prayed “keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins” (Ps. 19:13). If we live beyond the borderline, we intentionally commit sins because we like them. Without being guilty, we will be drawn to sin by breaking the Word of God. It is not being drawn by the Word of God but being led by sin. Therefore, we shouldn’t disobey God’s Word that gives us the borderline. If we break the God’s Word, we must realize it through His Word. We must let God’s holy Word expose our sins. Then we will confess our sins to God and repent them.

### **Third, the Word of God restores our souls.**

Look at Psalms 19:7 - “The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.” When we have sinned before God beyond the boundary of God’s Word, our souls are suppressed by sins and thus heavy and cannot be peaceful. Especially when we realize the sins that we have committed through the Word of God, our souls can become discouraged and despaired by sins. It is the Word of God that evokes our discouraged and despaired soul. God makes us realize our transgressions through the Word of God, hold onto the Word, and confess our sins and repent. And God makes our discouraged soul to be restored with the Word of God’s hope. Therefore, we can enjoy the grace of reconciliation and of restoration through repentance.

### **Fourth and last, the Word of God makes our hearts rejoicing.**

Look at Psalms 19:8 – “The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.” The repentant heart not only enjoys peace in its heart in the assurance of forgiveness, but also the joy that God gives. Also, since the Word of God brightens his eyes, he will have more of the discernment of good and evil. And he see the boundary of God’s Word more clearly. Therefore, he will never

allow the sin to assert his heart again. Rather, he makes the Word of God to claim his heart. He is no longer the simple because of sin, but becomes wise because of the word of God (v. 7), discerning truth and falsehood, and choosing the truth to enjoy freedom in that truth. In doing so, he rejoices because of God's given joy.

When I think of the Word of God that warns us, that exposes our sins, that restores our our souls, and that makes our hearts rejoicing, I remembered the hymn "Sing Them Over Again to Me", verse 1 and the chorus: "Sing them over again to me, Wonderful words of life; Let me more of their beauty see, Wonderful words of life; Words of life and beauty, Teach me faith and duty; Beautiful words, Wonderful words, Wonderful words of life. Beautiful words, Wonderful words, Wonderful words of life." I hope and pray that we all taste the Word of God. Like David, I hope and pray that we all taste the Word of God that is sweeter than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Let us all desire the Word of God more than gold, yes, more than much fine gold.

Devoted to live the God's Word-centered life,

James Kim

(Sola Scriptura!)

## “Now I know”

### [Psalms 20]

Have you ever had difficult and hard time asking God for help and realizing that God was answering that prayer? If you have experienced, when was the last time you experienced it? How did you feel when you had that experience? These days I feel that God is driving me to the corner and making me to pray to Him. So these days, I am struggling to pray in the midst of lack of this and that. Also, since we make our church realize that we should pray together through the Book of Acts, we are striving to pray together in one mind. But the question is, 'Do I know that God is answering my prayer and our prayer?' The reason I asked this question was because of the phrase “Now I know” in Psalms 20:6. So I would like to meditate on the words of Psalms 20 under the title “Now I know”.

What did the psalmist David know? It is the Lord's answer to him in the day of trouble (v. 1). David knew that God answered his cry out in the day of trouble. He knew that God would fulfill all his petitions (v. 5). Here, “the day of trouble” refers to war. How can we know this? We can know this by the word “We will sing for joy over your victory, And in the name of our God we will set up our banners ...” (v. 5). Here, if we look at the words “victory” and “banners” here, we can see that the background of Psalms 20 was war. In addition, in Psalms 20:1, David said, “May the name of the God of Jacob set you securely on high!” Here, “the God of Jacob” is like God who hears prayer. Don't you remember when Jacob sent his two wives, two maids, his eleven children and whatever he had across the ford of the Jabbok and wrestled with the angel, he resolved and prayed, “I will not let you go unless You bless me”? (Gen. 32:22-26) When God, who heard David's prayer, said He would set David securely on high (Ps. 20:1), it means He would make David to win all the battles and to exalt the national prestige (Park). What we have to think about here is that for David, war could be a national crisis. Fighting against another country(s) as king of one country is a national crisis that goes beyond one individual's crisis. At this time, King David himself cried out to God first. We can also have individual crises, family crises, work/business crises, church crises, and national crises. What should we do then? We should pray like David. In addition to individual prayers, we must also pray together. For example, in addition to the King David's prayer in the national crisis, the Israelites must cry out to God together. Likewise, when there is family crisis, the whole family should come together and cry out to God with one heart, not just each person in the family prays to God. So is the church. When there is a crisis in the church, the church must pray together, from a pastor to all the church members. In that way, we can experience God's answer of our prayers in the midst of crisis.

So how did God answer David's prayer? How does God answer our prayers? I thought about it

in five ways:

### **First, God helps us.**

Look at Psalms 20:2 – “May He send you help from the sanctuary And support you from Zion!” God is the God who helps us. God’s help may seem too late for us, but his help is certain. We must believe this fact. This is what the psalmist confesses in Psalms 121:1-2: “I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From where shall my help come? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.”

### **Second, God supports us.**

Look at Psalms 20:2 – “... And support you from Zion!” This means that God will support us and keep us from falling. The psalmist says in Psalms 121:3, “He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber.” Here we can take the example of Asaph, who wrote Psalm 73. His feet came close to stumbling and his steps had almost slipped (73:2), but eventually didn’t. The reason why Asaph’s feet came close to stumbling and his steps had almost slipped was because the righteous were suffering, but the wicked were prosperous.

### **Third, God accepts our offering (worship).**

Look at Psalms 20:3 – “May He remember all your meal offerings And find your burnt offering acceptable! Selah.” Here “meal offerings” refers to ‘offerings.’ The “burnt offering” means ascending, which means burning the sacrifice entirely on the altar (Lev. 1:3-9). If we speak in today’s term, we can say that it refers to worship. The question is how we should understand that God is receiving our worship in answering our prayers. Looking at Hannah in the first chapter of 1 Samuel, she also worshiped God in the midst of her great distress like David (1 Sam. 1:10). It teaches us that we should worship God even in times of trouble. We must worship God beyond the circumstances. This should be the subject of our prayer: ‘Please receive our worship!’

### **Fourth, God grants us our hearts’ desire.**

Look at Psalms 20:4 – “May He grant you your heart’s desire And fulfill all your counsel!” Here, “your heart’s desire” is the desire that fits the will of God. Then God will fulfill the desire of our hearts.

### **Fifth and last, God makes us victorious.**

Look at Psalms 20:5 – “We will sing for joy over your victory, And in the name of our God we will set up our banners ....” Our God is the God of victory. He is the God who makes us victorious. He is the God who causes us to win the war and to sing a song of victory. Our God makes us to set up the banners of victory.

So how did David pray to God? How should we pray to God?

**First, we must pray to God with the assurance of salvation.**

Look at Psalms 20:6 – “Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven With the saving strength of His right hand.” Here, “His anointed” refers to David, but ultimately Christ. Although the people crucified and killed Jesus Christ, God raised Him from the dead and manifested His saving power. Like this, when the church cries out to God in the day of trouble, God saves the church. God shows us the power of His salvation. Therefore, we should ask Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus, with the assurance of salvation. True prayer closes with confidence. And that confidence the prelude to the fulfillment of the prayer since God gives it to us (Park).

**Second, we must trust in God.**

Look at Psalms 20:7 – “Some boast in chariots and some in horses, But we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God.” I remember the story of David’s victory over Goliath. Like David, who went in the name of the Lord Almighty and defeated Goliath, we must fight the spiritual battle as we trust only in God. The Bible tells us, “Stop trusting in man” (Isa. 2:22). We must not trust in people, in force, in what we have and so on. It will all be gone. We should pray to Heavenly Father, trusting only in the eternal God and the God of salvation.

**Third, we must pray to God with assurance of victory.**

Look at Psalms 20:8 – “They are brought to their knees and fall, but we rise up and stand firm.” The God who made David victorious in the war is the God who triumphs in the spiritual war as well. So we must pray with the assurance of victory. And we must win by prayer. This is what Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:13 – “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”

**Fourth and last, we must pray until we receive an answer.**

Look at Psalms 20:9 – “O LORD, save the king! Answer us when we call!” Like David, we cry out to God in the day of trouble, but we must pray until God answers our prayers.

As I meditated on Hannah’s prayer in 1 Samuel 1 during the prayer meeting today, I realized that God was answering my prayer. Like Hannah, I prayed to God with my anguish heart, and I realized that God was answering that prayer. As David said, “Now I know,” God the Holy Spirit also made me to understand so I could say “Now I know” so I felt my heavy cross lightly. Since the Holy Spirit made me understand, I was strengthened. When we

come to know God who answers our prayers in the day of trouble, we can sing the song of victory and set up the banners of victory. Until the day when we set up the final banner of victory, let us fight the good fight and be victorious. Victory!

With gratitude to God's grace for answering my prayer and knowing that it will be answered,,

James Kim

(After being strengthened in knowledge)

## **Heavenly Father who cannot refuse the desire of my heart**

**“May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed” (Psalms 20:4), “You have granted him the desire of his heart and have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah” (21:2).**

Yesterday Thursday I met all four of my friends who I hadn't met for a long time. Three of them have been friends since I immigrated to the United States when I was 12 years old. Another friend is an old friend and I presided his wedding even though he is one year older than me. We met for a long time, had lunch together, played the Korean billiards, had dinner together, and played bowling. I think it was the first time that five people had hit bowling together. The reason we met together yesterday was because I learned that one of these four friends was in trouble. So I talked to another friend on the phone to help our friend and he organized the yesterday gathering. Even though it was a situation where it wasn't easy to have serious conversation, I did open my heart and shared what was in my heart because God gave me bold heart and encouraged me to share my feelings with them. Since I spoke seriously, they couldn't drink and listened to what I said. I shared my heart's earnest wish with my four friends whom I love. My wish is the salvation of their souls. I told them my wife also knows my heart's wish for them. I also told them that when my wife and I got married, I came home around 3 am after meeting them and my wife wasn't sleeping, so I talked to her about my heart's wish for them. And since I often pray for my friends habitually, I even told them about meeting my friends intentionally in order for my heart to be broken. Furthermore, I even told my friends about my tears after meeting them while driving home since my heart was broken. In a way, my story could be enough to break the atmosphere of eating and drinking. Nevertheless, my friends kept listening to this story from my heart. If it was before, there could be some words and actions. But yesterday my friends seriously listened to my heart wish. I told them that we could be eternal friends in Jesus, and I also shared my desire that we could be such friends. And I also told them that from the point of view of death, it seemed like we don't have much time. I just told them that I want them to believe in Jesus and serve the Lord's church together with me. I let them know that this is my heart's wish. Then I invited these friends to the “New Life Festival” of evangelism meeting in our church on Saturday, at 6 pm. I kind of beg them to come. And I will ask them again today.

Yesterday I gave my friends a ride to one of my friend's house since they all parked their cars in his house) and I came home. When I got home, it was around 10 PM. My children fell asleep and my wife greeted me. Even though I was late, my wife didn't say anything and she didn't even call me when I was with my friends. The reason was because she knows my heart's wishes for them. As I shared with my wife what happened yesterday, I shared

the parts of God's prayers and answers. One friend said that God put a friend who believed in Jesus and he promised to go to church with him if his big problem would resolve. Another friend told me that his boss at a new job is a deacon of the church, and he had continued to witness to him. And another friend, who had been sending his 3-year-old daughter to a church kindergarten, said that his daughter continued to learn the Christian songs, the gospel songs and the hymns so he would continue to send her to that church kindergarten. And another friend told me yesterday that his family had been actively attending the Catholic Church. When I found out all these about my friends, I found out that God had been answering the prayers of my heart desire which I had been praying for more than 20 years for their salvation as I asked God 'How long?' would He answer my prayer many times (Ps. 13:1-2). As I meditated on the words of Psalms 20:4 and 21:2 during the morning prayer meeting this morning, I came to realize it more clearly that my God couldn't refuse the desire of my heart. I came to realize that Heavenly Father, who loves me so much, even gave His only begotten Son on the cross, is the loving Heavenly Father who cannot refuse the prayers of my heart. My heart was thrilled when I felt the heart of the Father God in meditation and prayer. I felt gratitude and comfort in my heart when I felt the loving heart of God who couldn't refuse my heart's wish prayer. I couldn't understand why my generous God loves such man like me. I just wanted to lean on my Heavenly Father. And I started dreaming before Heavenly Father. I started dreaming a grand dream. I started dreaming that people can't achieve, only God can achieve. And this dream began to become my heart's wish prayer. The dream is to christianize the city that the Lord is leading through my former college roommates or friends who will trust Jesus in the future, or precious encounters that God has allowed, just as John Calvin christianized Geneva. It is to build the Lord-centered community that is a church-centered with the Christian schools, a Christian hospital, a Christian law firm and so on and to raise the Christ-centered visionary leaders and send them out to expand the kingdom of God. I had this dream when I first went to Korea in 1995. At that time, when I came back to the United States, I invited my roommates to my church and shared my dream with them. However, as we haven't had the same dream in our hearts for many years, I've been giving up praying. However, I started dreaming again during the Morning Prayer meetings. Nowadays, I am experiencing my heart firing up and excitement as I pray this dream to God. And when I look at myself, I see a shift from passive prayer to more active prayer. The reason is because from now on, I began to look only my Heavenly Father rather than looking at my former college roommates or situations. Since God is helping me to understand Heavenly Father's heart a little more, I started to dream again with more active prayers. I can only pray because God is the only One who can fulfill this great dream. I am praying only to God because I know and believe that God is the One who cannot refuse my heart's prayer. I pray that only the glory of God will be manifested.

“Oh, to be like Thee! Blessed Redeemer, This is my constant longing and prayer.

Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures, Seeking Thy perfect likeness to wear.

Oh, to be like Thee! Oh, to be like Thee, Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art!

Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness; Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.



(Hymn "Oh, to be like Thee", verse 1 and the chorus)

Eagerly wishing to learn the heart of God's Father,

James Kim

(Prayerfully desire to participate in New Life Festival with the heart of God who loves a soul)

## The Lord's strength

### [Psalms 21]

These days, I sometimes remember the Korean gospel song “When I wept in pain”. So I sing in my heart, “When I wept in pain, Disappointed with myself and enfeebled, ....” It seems that there are so many things that make us to weep in pain and to be disappointed. When I see fellow brothers and sisters in Christ whom God brings in my life these days, they are struggling with many different things. What should we do when we are in pain and disappointed? I think as the song “When I wept in pain” says, we should hear God’s voice and meet Him who wipes away our tears with His nailed hands. We must experience our Heavenly Father coming to us, His children, who are in pain and disappointed, wiping our tears with His nail hands and restoring our disappointed souls with the Word of God.

If we look at Psalms 21:1, the word “Your strength” comes out. It refers to the Lord’s strength. We must experience the word of the Lord giving us His strengthen when we are weakened by adversity who make us to be in pain and be disappointed in our lives. In order to do that, I would like to meditate on the Lord’s strength in four ways:

#### **First, the Lord’s strength is ‘The Power of Answered Prayer.’**

Look at Psalms 21:2 – “You have given him his heart’s desire, And You have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah.” The psalmist David’s prayer is said to be the prayer of “the king” (v. 1). In other words, David trusted God and prayed to God. Indeed, it must be ‘the precious king’ (Park). This precious king prayed to God and received the answer to that prayer. The contents of the prayer are “the desire of his heart” and “the request of his lips” (v. 2). We can think “the desire of his heart” and “the request of his lips” in two ways:

##### (1) The first prayer topic was the victory in the war.

Look at Psalms 21:3 – “For You meet him with the blessings of good things; You set a crown of fine gold on his head.” Here, the term “a crown of fine gold” refers to the crown that was taken as a loot after conquering and winning the war against the Gentiles (Ammonites?) (Park). In fact, the David’s motive for writing this Psalms 21 was to appreciate victory (Park). David already wrote a poem that experienced victory in Psalms 20:5 – “We will sing for joy over your victory, And in the name of our God we will set up our banners May the LORD fulfill all your petitions.”

(2) The second prayer topic was length of days forever and ever.

Look at Psalms 21:4 – “He asked life of You, You gave it to him, Length of days forever and ever.” What is the power of prayer response? It is joy and rejoicing. Look at Psalms 21:1 – “O LORD, the king rejoices in your strength. How great is his joy in the victories you give!” Look also John 16:24, a passage of assurance of answered prayer: “Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.” We must remember the words of Nehemiah 8:10 – “... for the joy of the LORD is your strength.” Our strength is to joy of the Lord who answers our prayers. We must keep this in mind.

**Second, the Lord’s strength is ‘The Power of Salvation.’**

Look at Psalms 21:5 – “His glory is great through Your salvation, Splendor and majesty You place upon him.” David confessed that the winning the war was by the salvation of the Lord. In other words, David acknowledged that the power of God’s salvation led him to win the war. Then, what blessing did God give to David through the power of salvation? God magnified David’s glory and also gave him splendor and majesty. As a result, David became God’s most blessed man forever, and he was joyful with gladness in God’s presence (v. 6).

We, like David, must experience the power of God’s salvation, so that we can be joyful with gladness in God’s presence because we have become God’s most blessed people. In order to do this, we must seek God our Savior when we are in pain and disappointed by the adversities and crises in our lives. We must cry out to God. In doing so, God, who wants to hear our hearts’ desire and the requests of our lips, will show us the power of salvation in our lives, which will greatly magnify our glory and give us splendor and majesty. Then we will be able to rejoice and be glad in God’s presence through His salvation.

**Third, the Lord’s strength is ‘The Power of Lovingkindness.’**

Look at Psalms 21:7 – “For the king trusts in the LORD, And through the lovingkindness of the Most High he will not be shaken.” David was a king who trusted in God. It is relatively easy to trust in God when there is no power. But it is difficult to trust in Him when we have power like David because there are many dangers of pride in that situation (Park). After all, David didn’t shake because he trusted in God through the lovingkindness. In other words, David was firm through the God’s lovingkindness.

But why do we sometimes shake? The reason is because there is a problem after we have received our prayer answered when we eagerly seek God in our pains and disappointments due to our adversity. It is as if the Israelites cried out to God when they were suffering as a result of their sins by their adversities during the time of Judges, and God gave them the grace of salvation through the judges when the Israelites prayed to God but

afterward they couldn't feel Heavenly Father's love and His kindness, so hardened their hearts again and disobeyed Him. It is as if the children don't listen to the father and cry out when they are in pain because they have sinned in their own choices so the father has mercy on him and embraces him in his arms of love and he feels the father's love, we too are in the Heavenly Father's arms of love and experience His love after we have experienced God's answer of our prayers and His salvation and thus we stand firm in the Lord. The children who don't feel the love of their father cannot stand firm. Our steadfastness is based on God's loving-kindness by trusting in God. God made King David, who is God's chosen king, the king after God's own heart, and the king whom God loves, to stand firmly so that no one could harm him. Likewise, our solidity is to dwell in His love, trusting only in the Lord. Those who trust in the Most High God won't be shaken because God raises them up so that no one or any power can harm them.

#### **Fourth and last, the Lord's strength is 'The Power of Wrath.'**

Look at Psalms 21:9 – “You will make them as a fiery oven in the time of your anger; The LORD will swallow them up in His wrath, And fire will devour them.” God, who heard the prayer of David whom He loved, He poured out His wrath upon David's enemies to save him. How did God pour out his wrath on the enemies of David?

##### (1) God found all of David's enemies.

Look at Psalms 21:8 – “Your hand will find out all your enemies; Your right hand will find out those who hate you.” It means that God Himself would find all the enemies of David. So, who could hide from God?

##### (2) God devoured all David's enemies.

Look at Psalms 21:9 – “You will make them as a fiery oven in the time of your anger; The LORD will swallow them up in His wrath, And fire will devour them.” God swallowed and destroyed all of David's enemies He found.

##### (3) God destroyed even the descendants of all David's enemies.

Look at Psalms 21:10 – “Their offspring You will destroy from the earth, And their descendants from among the sons of men.” God not only destroys the enemies who want to oppose, persecute and kill those who are pleased with God but also their descendants as well.

##### (4) God didn't allow all of David's enemies to succeed.

Look at Psalms 21:11 – “Though they intended evil against You And devised a plot, They will not succeed.” How can a plan be fulfilled that God is not with. Much more, how could the David's enemies who had the plan to

resist King David, who God raised, be succeed?

Those who experience the Lord's strength cannot but praise His power. David did. He praised the Lord's strength after experiencing the power of answered prayer of the Lord, the power of salvation, the power of lovingkindness, and the power of wrath towards David's enemies: "Be exalted, O LORD, in Your strength; We will sing and praise Your power" (v. 13). It's true. When we weep in pain, are disappointed with ourselves and enfeebled, we should cry out to and should experience the power of answered prayer, the power of salvation, the power of lovingkindness, and the power of wrath towards our enemies. Then we cannot but praise the Lord's strength. Hallelujah!

Praising the Lord who gives strength "When I wept in pain, Disappointed with myself and enfeebled,"

James Kim

(Determined to do ministry with only the Lord's strength)

## When there is no one to help

### [Psalms 22:1-11]

When was the most intense pain that you experienced in your life? What were you thinking at that time? Perhaps one of the thoughts you thought was ‘No one understands me.’ Because no one understands us, we can think that no one can help us. What should we do if such thoughts come to our minds? I often sing the Korean gospel song “I never want anything”: “I never want anything in my life to take Your place. I never want to live by any other grace. My longing and my heart’s desire is to see Your face. O Lord, and become a friend of God. I love You day and night. I love You all my life. I love You Lord heart and soul. I long to be a friend of God.” When my heart is in pain and heavy, I sometimes sing this gospel song. And when I sing especially “I never want to live by any other grace. My longing and my heart’s desire is to see Your face,” sometimes my heart moved. Just as a child in pain who sees the face of his parents and is comforted and in peace when we children of God seek the face of the Lord who will help us in severe suffering, our hearts are comforted and empowered by being filled with the hope and longing to see Him.

In Psalms 22:11, the psalmist David says, “Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.” In trouble, David relied on the Lord, confessing that no one could help him. Based on Psalms 22:1-11, I want to think about what we should do when there is no one to help us. We must trust in the Lord. Look at Psalms 22:4 – “In you our fathers put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them.” Then how should we trust in the Lord? We can think of three ways:

#### **First, those who trust in the Lord cry out to the Lord without giving up.**

Look at Psalms 22:1-2: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent.” What was the environment of David’s prayer? He cried out to God in extreme suffering. David cried out to God while feeling the wrath of God (Park). And his prayers never ceased. He cried out to God in the daytime and in the night time with being silent. David didn’t stop his prayer life even in the midst of the difficult tribulation, when prayer was not answered for a long time (Park). Despite God’s seeming disregard for David’s prayer (v. 1), David continued to cry out to God without giving up. Although David felt that God was forsaking him and He was being so far from saving him, he cried to God without giving up. When the prayer is not answered, it seems that God is far from those who cry out to Him. However, in reality, God doesn’t leave the true saints far away. God simply doesn’t answer them in order to make their hearts more earnest (Park).

We should cry out to the Lord without giving up. Even if our feelings are so exhausted and our pains are so severe that we feel like God has left us and forsake us, and we are so tired to endure, we should not give up and keep on crying out to God. We shouldn't give up on praying because God's answer to our prayer is slow. Also, if we feel like God is turning away from our groaning, we should not give up on praying. Why should we pray to God without giving up? The reason is because God will surely answer our prayers. Look at Psalms 22:3 – “Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel.” Why did David write this verse 3 after verses 1-2? In other words, in verses 1-2, after saying that there was no answer no matter how much he cried out in the sense that God had forsaken him and was so far away from him, why did he suddenly praise God and confess that He was holy in verse 3? This is because David was convinced that the Holy God would answer his prayers. Praise is singing about what God has done in our lives. David confessed that the Lord who dwells in the praise was holy because he was sure that God would answer his prayers. One of the reasons David prayed courageously without discouragement even in difficult times was because he believed that God was holy and that He would certainly listen to the saints' prayers (Park). Our Holy Lord, who dwells in praises, is the God who answers our prayers and makes us to praise His holy name.

### **Second, those who trust in the Lord reflect on the grace of salvation in the past.**

Look at Psalms 22:4-5: “In you our fathers put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. They cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed.” We are too busy. Since we say we are too busy in pursuing our goals, we don't know how to pause and look back. Our excuse is that we cannot afford to have time to reflect our lives. But those who trust in the Lord must pause and know how to look back. David was a wise man who could look back. Instead of remembering the hurts and pains of the past that were of no benefit and wasn't in discouragement and resentment, he was convinced that ‘He who trusts in God is saved’ by remembering (recalling) God who saved Israel's fathers in the past. In particular, David recalled that when Israel's fathers cried to the Lord, they were saved (v. 5). So David also cried out to God in agony with assurance of answering prayer. He also remembered that his forefathers not only were saved because they trusted in the Lord, but also they were “not disappointed” (v. 5). Those who trust in God are not disappointed.

We must know how to look back wisely. We, like the Israelites of Exodus, should not commit the sin of blaming God and someone, looking back on our past when we faced suffering, adversity, and crisis. Rather, we must look to God when we are suffering, adversity, and crisis. We must meditate on the God of salvation who has delivered us from crisis and adversity of the past. In the midst of that, our thoughts, feelings and will should be controlled by God our Savior, rather than by the circumstances of crisis. Dr. Yoon-sun Park said: ‘It is certain to have courage in faith by thinking about the faith of the saints of the past who have gone ahead.’ Not only did David cry out to God because of his dependence on Him in extreme suffering, but he also had confidence in salvation and courage in faith by remembering (recalling) God, who gave the grace of salvation to the forefathers of Israel in the

past. Also, as David remembered his forefathers who trusted in the Lord and wasn't disappointed, he also trusted in the Lord and cried to Him in the midst of the severe sufferings he faced and wasn't disappointed, but rather convinced of God's salvation.

### **Third and last, those who trust in the Lord keep their true faith in all circumstances.**

Look at Psalms 22:6 – “But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people.” The situation David was facing was being persecuted by wicked people who looked down on him as “a worm” (Park). In fact, David poured out his complaint before the Lord because he was mocked and reproached by his enemies (vv. 6-8) (Park). All the enemies laughed at David and mocked, and they hurled insults, shaking their heads: ‘He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him’ (vv. 7-8). For some reason, this ridicule that David received reminds me of the ridicule of those who said that Jesus couldn't save Himself even though He could save others when He was on the cross.

Even in this situation, David trusted only in the Lord. Look at Psalms 22:9-10: “Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother's breast. From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother's womb you have been my God.” In these words of “you made me trust in you” and “I was cast upon you,” we must learn what true faith is. It is nothing more than faith is dependence, and it is also humility and devotion (Park). ‘Faith without devotion is not yet definite faith’ (Park). If we don't dedicate ourselves to God and just say that we trust in Him, then it is not definite faith. However, David confessed that he had believed in the Lord from a young age, and that he lived by trusting in Him and by dedicating himself to the Lord (v. 10). What a beautiful faith? David, who was dedicated to God from birth and had been living only by trusting in Him, showed his devotion to the Lord by trusting in Him even though the suffering he was facing was severe. Dr. Yoon-sun Park said this: ‘When we know that we are sure that we have dedicated ourselves to the Lord, we are sure to pray and be confident that we will receive God's salvation and grace. Anyone who doesn't trust God and wants to be helped by Him is like a person who wants his disease to get healed without a doctor's surgery.’ We must trust and dedicate ourselves to the Lord completely and cry out to Him in faith.

Let's meditate on Psalms 22:1 again: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? ...” We can hear David's cry also on Jesus' cross: “... Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” (“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”) (Mk. 15:34). Heavenly Father turned away the prayer of Jesus, the Son of God who cried out to Heavenly Father. Heavenly Father didn't ‘save’ His Son Jesus. God forsook His Son, Jesus, who had died on the cross to fulfill His will by relying on Heavenly Father. Why did Heavenly Father do that? The reason is because God wanted to save us who deserve to be forsaken by God and die forever when there was no one to help us by even forsaking His begotten Son Jesus Christ on the cross. Jesus was forsaken by His own Father God because Father God wants to hear our prayers when we pray to Him in Jesus' Name. Heavenly Father forsook Jesus on the cross



because He wanted to give us true faith. This is God's grace and God's love.

Living by God's help in His abundant love and grace,

James Kim

(After proclaiming this word during the Wednesday prayer meeting)

## “come quickly to help me”

### [Psalms 22:12-21]

When trouble is near and there is no one to help (Ps. 22:11), we can feel that no one understands us. When we feel that way, we look forward to having someone next to us who can understand us. It is a strange phenomenon. I think that this is what we look like, on the one hand, looking for someone to understand us, thinking that no one understands us. That’s why we are fragile humans who are easily feel lonely. But the question is, in such loneliness, we should consider at least once ‘Who am I surrounded by? What kind of people are around me?’ If we have no one to call, or to meet and speak openly, we would indeed suffer more in trouble.

The psalmist David who comes out in Psalms 22:12-21 was like that. He was forced to suffer even more during the trouble. He couldn’t go to anyone. He was in a situation where he had no choice but to go to God. In severe suffering and trouble, David was surrounded by his enemies (v. 12). That was why he asked God, who was his Strength, to help him (v. 19). I would like to think about David’s urgent situation that needed God’s help and what the urgent prayers were based on Psalms 22:19, under the heading “come quickly to help me” and to apply in our lives.

We can think of the David’s urgent situation in two ways:

**First, from the circumstantial perspective, David was surrounded by his enemies.**

Look at Psalms 22:12 – “Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.” Here, the “bulls” and “strong bulls” refers to those who opposed David. In other words, the enemies of David were strong, like strong bulls of Bashan who didn’t hesitate to harm David (Park). The strong bulls of Bashan were said to be very fat and the largest (WBC). The bulls and the strong bulls of Bashan were powerful, large and dangerous animals, and the enemies of David who surrounded David were like those bulls (v. 12). David also referred to his enemies as ‘dogs’ and “a band of evil men” and they had encircled David and pierced his hands and his feet (v. 16). Here, ‘dogs’ refers to sacred, unclean, wicked men who harm others (Park), and these wicked men surrounded David and made him suffered as if they nailed Jesus on the cross. In Psalms 17:9, David was surrounded by his enemies: “from the wicked who assail me, from my mortal enemies who surround me.” This is Satan’s scheme. Satan’s plan is to slowly take our breath away by surrounding us, God’s people. This is what Luke 19:43 says: “For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side.” Eventually, Satan surrounds us and confines us. He builds the earthen fortifications and confines us as

if we were to build walls in all directions. Then Satan confines us and tries to devour us (Ps. 22:13). After surrounded David, his enemies attacked him to devour him like a roaring lion. So Apostle Peter exhorts us like this: “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8).

### **Second, the David’s urgent situation can be viewed from a personal perspective.**

Look at Psalms 22:14-15: “I am poured out like water, And all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And my tongue cleaves to my jaws; And You lay me in the dust of death.” As a sufferer, David felt as if he had become unused as if he had run out of water and his bones had been crushed (WBC). It is evident that he suffered frailness and his feelings got weakened during the suffering (Park). To what extent was his body weakened, David confessed, “I can count all my bones” (v. 17). In other words, David suffered too much and his bones became prominent and counted (Park). And the David’s enemies didn’t have any compassion to David who had this kind of pale form but just looked and stared at him (v. 17, Park). And they divided David’s garments among them and cast lots for his clothing (v. 18). Although our bodies and feelings can get weakened like David by our enemies’ persecution, this can happen to us when we don’t repent our sins: “When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah” (Ps. 32:3-4).

Eventually, when we see David in two perspectives, the circumstantial perspective and the personal perspective, he was surrounded by his enemies and was in severe tribulation and suffering. What did David do at this time? He offered an urgent prayer to God for help. What were his urgent prayers?

### **First, David urgently asked God to come near to him.**

Look at Psalms 22:19 – “But You, O LORD, be not far off; ....” The words of Pastor Matthew Henry are very meaningful: ‘The closeness of the problem brings us closer to God. In the midst of that, we hope that God will come near to us.’ I think the critical and difficult situations in our lives make us to choose between the two: Whether to we pray to go closer to God or we resent God and become more distant from God. David asked God to draw closer to God in his urgent and extreme painful situation. To say that oneself draws close to God in prayer is an act that wants God to draw close to oneself. Isn’t it amazing that David, who was experiencing great pain in the midst of his enemies being so close to eating him as wild oxen and like a lion, asked to draw closer to God? David’s faith makes us to pray to God more.

### **Second, David urgently asked God, his strength, for help.**

Look at Psalms 22:19 – “... O my Strength, come quickly to help me.” Here, the “Strength” in Hebrew “eyal” means ‘essence of power’ (Park). In other words, David asked God to help him quickly with faith in seeing God as the source of strength. I remember the word of Psalm 18:1 – “I love You, O LORD, my strength.” David, who was so entrenched in the midst of the persecution by his enemies, sought God as his strength. And he asked God for help. Look at Psalms 22:14b-15a: “... My heart is like wax; It is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, ....” In that sense, I think it’s good to lose some strength. This is because when there is no strength, we desperately seek God, our Strength. What was the prayer request that David asked God for help? It was ‘salvation.’ Look at Psalms 22:20-21: “Deliver my soul from the sword, My only life from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion’s mouth; From the horns of the wild oxen You answer me.” The animals, “wild oxen”, “dog”, and “lion” that symbolize the enemies who oppose David and us. Here, the “wild oxen” is ignorant and strong in physical power, “dog” is dirty and bites and “lion” is cruel as a carnivore. This is the nature of our enemies (Park). David asked God to deliver him from his enemies (vv. 20-21).

God gives us the grace of salvation when we ask help from God, who is our Strength in an urgent situation (v. 21). Even if we have been surrounded by enemies like David, God surrounds us with songs of salvation when we pray to God (32:7).

In Psalms 22:12-21, we find in David’s image something that are very similar to Jesus’ crucifixion. Jesus, who was suffering, didn’t his enemies surround Him and stab his hands and feet and just stare at Him who was in pain and make Him a spectacle, and also split his outer garments and also the tunic? (Jn. 19:24) However, Heavenly Father turned away from the cry of His Son Jesus who was suffering, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mt. 27:46) Heavenly Father was silent and didn’t save His begotten Son Jesus when He was dying on the cross. Why did Father God do it? It was because He wanted to save us. In order to give us eternal life, Heavenly Father turned away from Jesus’ prayer and didn’t help Him quickly. So now whenever we ask Heavenly Father to help us quickly in the name of Jesus, Heavenly Father hears our prayers and quickly saves us and gives us grace of salvation. Hallelujah!

With gratitude for the grace of God’s salvation, who hears our prayers and quickly helps us,

James Kim

(Trusting in God who is with me and is my strength)

## **‘The Lord has done it.’**

### **[Psalms 22:22-31]**

Yesterday Tuesday I spent some time with my children at home and had an interesting conversation with my youngest daughter, Karis. Karis asked me to help her with something that she wanted to eat. So I helped her and she didn't say anything to me and turned her back to me in no response. So I said to Karis, 'welcome'. The reason I said that was because I expected Karis to say "Thank you". But she said, "Welcome" to me, and then went on her way again. In that image, I thought about the relationship between God and God's children. I thought about our response to God after we received an answer of our prayer to Him in a difficult situation. We might not respond to God or turn our back on Him and perhaps just go our way without expressing gratitude to Him. When I was wondering why we tend to do that, I found the cause in what Rev. Swindoll said in his book, "The Grace Awakening": "The one I consider the most dangerous heresy on earth is the emphasis on what we do for God, instead of what God does for us" (Swindoll).

The reason why we go our way without expressing gratitude to God even after we have received God's answer of our prayer in our difficulties is because we focus on what we are doing (or have to do) for God instead of what God has done for us. I am concerned that we have too much attention and emphasis on what we have done for God and for the church of the Lord's body rather than meditating on what God has done in our lives and what He is doing now. As a result, we are falling into religious life of legalism rather than staying in God's grace. Therefore, we are pursuing our own glory rather than giving glory to God, so hierarchy is prevailing in the church.

In Psalms 22:31, the psalmist David confesses, "for he has done it." It means that the Lord has accomplished salvation (Park). David confesses that the Lord accomplished salvation because he has experienced the grace of His salvation. Therefore, I would like to think about how anyone who has experienced the grace of the Lord's salvation behaves and apply them to our lives.

### **First, those who have experienced the grace of the Lord's salvation praise God.**

Look at Psalms 22:22-23: "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you. You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! ...." Why did David praise God? This was because God answered David's earnest prayer. Look at verse 24: "For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help." In the original text of the Hebrew, at the beginning of this verse, there is the word "For". This conjunction introduces the

clause of verse 24 that explains the reason why all the saints should praise God in verse 23 (Park). The reason for the praise is because God has heard the cry of “the afflicted one,” David, who is persecuted by his enemies (v. 24). The prayer was, in one word, “deliverance”. As we had already meditated in verse 20-21, David prayed to God for deliverance from his enemies, such as “dogs,” “lions” and “wild oxen,” God answered his prayer and answered David to deliver him from his enemies. Interestingly, as David prayed, he initially felt that God wasn’t answering his prayers. So he prayed in verse 1, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?” However, while David didn’t give up and prayed God, he eventually received his prayer answered from God.

When we pray to God, we must pray without giving up. As we learn from the parable of prayer in Luke 18, we should pray and not lost heart. Rather, we must pray until God answers prayers (Lk. 18:1-8). Just as Jacob wrestled with an angel in the Jabbok River and determined not to let go until he was blessed, so we need to pray with determination not to give up prayer until God answers our prayer. Even if we feel like God isn’t listening to our prayers at first, we shouldn’t give up and pray to God until we receive prayer answers by faith with assurance that God will surely hear our prayers.

So who can praise God? Look at Psalms 22:26: “The afflicted will eat and be satisfied; Those who seek Him will praise the LORD ....” In other words, since the afflicted one who is humble seeks God and the person who seeks God enjoys satisfaction from God, he praises God. The heart of those who enjoy such satisfaction will live forever (v. 26). In other words, those who enjoy the riches of spiritual life blessed forever can give praise to God (Park). So David said: “All the prosperous of the earth will eat and worship ...” (v. 29). David prayed earnestly to God in need, and God answered David’s prayer and satisfied his heart. Therefore, he confessed “From You comes my praise in the great assembly ...” (v. 25). The confession that our praises have come from God is confessing that we are saved only by God’s grace. Since David knew that the salvation he had received during the tribulation was purely from God, he confessed and praised that his praise had come from God.

The lesson we need to learn here is that our God is Savior God answers our prayers because He wants to be praised. The name “Jesus” means “Savior”. Therefore, his divine character is God who is pleased to save us. Therefore, when we cry out to Him, He answers our prayers and gives us the grace of salvation. The soul who has tasted that grace of salvation cannot but praise God.

## **Second, those who have experienced the grace of the Lord’s salvation glorify God.**

In Psalms 22:23, David said “... All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him ....” We who have experienced the grace of the Lord’s salvation must give glory to God. How should we glorify God?

(1) We should glorify God by offering praise and worship to God (vv. 27, 29).

When David praised God, the assembly praised the Lord (v. 22) and also praised God's righteousness (v. 31). In other words, they praised God's salvation (Park).

(2) We should glorify God by serving Him.

Look at Psalms 22:30 – “Posterity will serve Him; ....” Here, the word “Posterity” refers to the descendants of believers mentioned in the previous verse (Park). In other words, not only we should glorify God by serving Him, but also our descendants should glorify God by serving Him as well.

(3) We should glorify God by proclaiming the Lord.

Look at Psalms 22:22, 30, 31: “I will tell of Your name to my brethren ...” (v. 20), “... It will be told of the Lord to the coming generation” (v. 30), “They will come and will declare His righteousness To a people who will be born, that He has performed it” (v. 31). We must proclaim the name of the Lord. We must tell the successive generations of His work of salvation He has done for us. We must say, ‘The Lord has done it’ (v. 31). Therefore, we must give glory to God.

**Third, those who have experienced the grace of the Lord's salvation revere God.**

Look at Psalms 22:23 – “...Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!” After receiving answer of our prayer from God and experiencing the grace of His salvation, it is easy for us to become proud. As a result, we seek our own glory rather than glorifying our holy God. Also, we preach ourselves rather than preach the Lord. Therefore, we must revere God even more after experiencing the grace of God's salvation. How should we revere God?

(1) We must remember God first.

Look at Psalms 22:27 – “All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD ....” Those who revere God remember that there is only the Lord is the Savior on earth. However, the Israelites in Judges sinned against God because they didn't revere God and remember Him (Judg. 8:34-35). This is what the psalmist Asaph said in Psalms 77:11-12: “I shall remember the deeds of the LORD; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will meditate on all Your work And muse on Your deeds.”

(2) We must turn to God.

Look at Psalms 22:27 – “All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, ....” Those who fear God not only remember God, but return to God. God blesses those who return (Deut. 30:10). Only those who know and believe that salvation is in God will return to God their Savior. They don't waste time

to seek other helping hands of salvation. They only return to God their Savior and seek His grace of salvation from Him.

(3) We must fulfill our vows.

Look at Psalms 22:25 – “...before those who fear you will I fulfill my vows.” Now after he was saved, David now said that he would fulfill what he had pledged to God when he was in trouble. Those who fear God are those who fulfill their vow to God.

Our Jesus is our Savior. He is the Lord who gives us the grace of salvation. After experiencing the salvation that He is doing for us, we must confess, like David, ‘The Lord has done this salvation.’ We who have experienced this grace of God’s salvation must praise God, glorify Him and revere Him even more.

‘The Lord has done this salvation,’

James Kim

(Praying and hoping that my heart will be filled with the grace of God’s salvation)



## A satisfied life

### [Psalms 23]

Are you satisfied with your life? Jin-ho Lee who wrote a book titled '99 Hope Formulas That Make Life Tasty' says modern people suffer from a deficiency of satisfaction. The philosopher Socrates said, 'The richest person in the world is a person who can satisfied by even a least thing.' However, there are more people in the world who aren't satisfied than those who are satisfied. An American writer Gail Sheehy said in her best-selling book, "Path Finders", the people who live with great satisfaction are: (1) A person who knows the meaning of his life and direction to go, (2) A person who isn't disappointed that he has been living his life in vain, (3) A person who has a clear long-term plan and is gradually accomplishing it, (4) A person who has someone whom he loves truly, (5) A person who has a good friend whom he can open up his heart and talk to, (6) A person who is cheerful and interprets and deal a difficult things positively, (7) A person who can listen generously to other people's criticisms, (8) A person who has the strong mental power to overcome fear or anxiety (Internet).

In Psalms 23, we see the psalmist David who lived a satisfied life. He confessed "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" (v. 1). In other words, David confessed that he lived the satisfied life because the Lord was his shepherd. The life of a saint who lives with God is satisfied. Based on Psalms 23, I would like to meditate on the six things to do in order to live a life without deficiency (or the satisfied life). In the midst of that, I hope and pray that we can have satisfying life too.

### **First, in order to live the satisfied life, we must be supplied by the Shepherd Lord.**

Look at Psalms 23:2 – "He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters." The true shepherd provides food and drinking water for the sheep. The reason why the shepherd makes the sheep to lie down in green pastures is because the green pastures have soft grass that sheep like to eat. Like this, the good shepherd feeds the sheep. In addition, the good shepherd leads the sheep beside quiet waters to let them drink water. Here, "quiet water" is slow flowing water, so the sheep can drink water easily and is beneficial to their health (Calvin). Our good Shepherd Lord not only feeds us, the sheep, the physical food but also the spiritual food, the word of God. He feeds us abundantly. The Lord is "The Lord Will Provide" who provides us (Gen. 22:14).

However, at the time of Ezekiel, the Israeli shepherds were those who fed themselves. So God told them through the prophet Ezekiel: "... Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the

shepherds feed the flock?” (Ezek. 34:2) The Israel shepherds ate the fat and clothed themselves with the wool and slaughtered the fat sheep without feeding the flock (v. 3). What happens to sheep when shepherds don’t supply the food they need? The sheep wander and scatter, eventually becoming Satan’s food: “They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek for them” (vv. 5-6).

Many of the believers are wandering and scattered, falling into the Satan’s temptation. What is the problem? We can think of the problem in two ways:

(1) The pastors’ problem.

Why are the pastors’ problems? This is because, like the shepherds of Israel in the time of Ezekiel, the pastors are feeding themselves without feeding the church members. Another pastors’ problem is because they don’t feed the church members the healthy food, the church members are spiritually malnourished. In other words, the pastors don’t prepare the word of God faithfully and proclaim and teach the word to the church members that the church members are spiritually malnourished.

(2) The church members’ problem.

Even if the pastors prepare the spiritual food, the word of God, well on the ‘table’ and wait for the church members to come and eat their spiritual food, the saints don’t come and eat. The reason may be because the sheep’s stomach is full, or the ‘spiritual digestive function’ is not working properly. Isn’t this strange? In this era in which we live, even though there is the ‘Flood of the Word,’ there is a phenomenon that the church members refuse to eat the Word. It’s like a mother who has prepared the table with great effort to feed the children three meals a day at home, the children refused to eat the meals. Why is that? Sometimes it’s because our children eat sweets, candy, or snacks before meals, and at other times, they don’t eat regularly, so they don’t get hungry at meals. In the case of me, I sometimes skipped breakfast because I ate late at night and was still indigestible and my stomach was full. Like this, we may feel like we don’t have to eat God’s word more than once a week after Sunday and live for a whole week. In other words, as we do not digest well, we don’t feel the need to receive and eat the Word again because we are unable to properly digest it at that time. And the reason we are unable to properly digest it is because we don’t obey the Word that we have eaten on Sunday. However, it seems that there are some Christians whose spiritual digestive function is broken.

In order for us to live the satisfied life, we must be the church members who receive the Word of God, our spiritual food, as well as the daily food provided by the Lord who is our Shepherd. And our spiritual digestive

function should work well. To do this, we must take the Word and obey (apply) it in our daily lives. Therefore, we must run toward the Word of God and eat the Word more and more (Ps. 119:32).

### **Second, in order to live the satisfied life, we must be restored by our Shepherd Lord.**

Look at Psalms 23:3 – “He restores my soul ....” Here, ‘restoring the soul’ means repentance of the soul who has sinned so that he can receive true life (Park). When we aren’t repenting after sinning against God, our souls are under pressure. David was like that. Look at Psalms 32:3-4: “When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah.” The souls that don’t solve the problem of sin always feel something are lacking. Not only is his soul crushed, but he is also bound by sin, so his soul isn’t free. An unrepentant heart cannot be satisfied. The souls with dry tears of repentance can’t be satisfied. Dr. Yoon-sun Park said: ‘The soul dies only because of sin, and it is only by repenting of the sins that the soul lives again’ (Park). Yes. When we repent of our sins, our crushed souls can be revived. But this is only possible by God’s grace. In other words, when our Lord reveals our sins through His Word through the Holy Spirit that we will be able to regard them as sins, acknowledge our sins and truly repent them. Only the Lord, the Shepherd, can restore our souls.

In terms of the Shepherd Lord restoring our souls, it is deeply connected with His words. For example, look at Psalms 119: “My soul cleaves to the dust; Revive me according to Your word” (v. 25), “My soul weeps because of grief; Strengthen me according to Your word” (v. 28), “... And revive me in Your ways” (v. 37), and “That Your word has revived me” (v. 50). The Lord revives our souls, and He does so by His word. The Lord revives our souls by providing us with the Word, the spiritual food, as our Shepherd.

Too many of us are living without real freedom of faith because our souls are crushed by unrepented sin. As a result, we say that we live a religious life, but we lack true satisfaction. What is the problem? The problem is that we don’t receive the Word of God properly and aren’t faithfully able to live the life of reflecting ourselves with His Word. In the midst of that, we don’t regard sin as sin and we aren’t praying for repentance. As a result, our souls are crushed. We should seek the provision of the word of our Shepherd Lord. In the midst of that, we must thoroughly repent of our sins as we reflect ourselves on the Word of God and as the Holy Spirit reveals our sins. In doing so, the Lord revives our souls with His Word. We can be satisfied when we live a life restored by the Word of God.

### **Third, in order to live the satisfied life, we must be led by our Shepherd Lord.**

Look at Psalms 23:3 – “... He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake.” Here, the word “He guides me in the paths of righteousness” means that the Lord who is the Shepherd leads us in a straight path (Park). Many people in this sinful world where we are living now are taking the path of evil and walking that

path rather than the path of righteousness. But our Christians must walk the path of righteousness. Then we, like the righteous Lot, walk among the paths of evil, and every day we see and hear their unlawful deeds, and our righteous souls are tormented (2 Pet. 2:8). Only when our Shepherd Lord restores our tormented righteous souls with His Word we can walk the path of righteousness. One surprising fact is that the reason the Lord leads us to the path of righteousness isn't because of any good conditions for our humanity, but because of His name's sake (Park). God is not only the God who blots our sins for His name's sake, but also He is the Lord who revives our souls and who leads us in the path of righteousness for His name's sake.

Dr. Yoon-sun Park said: 'In God's sight, a straight path may be a rough and narrow path in people's sight. But that is the path to get into heaven.' That makes sense. God's point of view and our point of view can be very different. Therefore, we must believe and obey our Shepherd Lord in order to be led by the Lord. We the sheep must only listen and follow the voice of the Shepherd Lord. Look at John 10:26-27: "But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." We should never follow a hired hand, who is not a shepherd. The reason is this: "He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep" (vv. 12-13).

We must not deny the guidance of the Shepherd Lord. Like a child who refuses his father who tries to lead him to walk on the dry ground by holding his hand and walks through the muddy water so that his shoes and pants get wet, we must not refuse our Heavenly Father who tries to guide us and walk on our own way. We must hold on to the Lord's hand, receive His Word, and be guided by the Lord as His Word revives our souls. Our Shepherd Lord leads us in the way of righteousness for His name's sake. With His guidance, we can live the satisfying life when we walk on the straight and right path.

#### **Fourth, in order to live the satisfied life, we must be protected by the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 23:4 – "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." Here, "the valley of the shadow of death" refers to the extreme of danger (Park). David made the Lord his Shepherd, so he wasn't afraid of any danger. The reason was because he believed that God was with him. Since God was with Joseph, he was blessed with prosperity and was protected by God, whether serving as slave in the house of Potiphar or in prison. As the Shepherd Lord was with David and protected him with His rod and His staff. Just as the shepherd protects the sheep from the beast with a staff and a stick and leads the sheep to the green pastures and quiet waters, the Shepherd Lord protects us from Satan and his servants like beasts and leads us.

David made this confession to the Lord: "You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah" (32:7). The Lord, our hiding place, is the Lord who keeps us as the

apple of the eye and hides us in the shadow of His wings (17:8). Look at Ruth 2:12. Boaz said to Ruth: "... the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge." Like Ruth, who was protected under the wings of the Lord, we are also under the protection of the Shepherd Lord, so we aren't afraid of any extreme danger. We are the Lord's sheep who live under the care of the Shepherd Lord. And we, who are protected by Him, aren't in want. Therefore, we agree with the psalmist's confession: "The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun will not smite you by day, Nor the moon by night" (121:5-6).

### **Fifth, in order to live the satisfied life, we must be exalted by the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 23:5 – "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows." The Lord is the Shepherd who rewards us in the sight of our enemies. As the Shepherd, the Lord gave a joyful victory to David as He prepared a banquet for him in front of his enemies who tried to destroy David (Park). In addition, the phrase "You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows" was said in consideration of the custom of anointing the VIP at the banquet (Park). God treated David, who was persecuted before the enemy, like a VIP and invited him to the banquet. As a result, the hospitality and portion that David received was rich and overflowing (Park).

Our Shepherd Lord is the Lord who exalts us before our enemies. He is the Lord who makes us victorious, and who gives us the banquet with great riches. Therefore, we are living the satisfied life.

### **Sixth and last, in order to live the satisfied life, we must be filled with love and hope that the Lord gives.**

Look at Psalms 23:6 – "Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever." Here, David looked forward to his future as he recalled the graceful experience of the past. He believed in his future to be everlasting, because he was loved and helped by God in the past (vv. 1-5). This is because the Lord's goodness and lovingkindness have always been with him. So David had a sure hope to dwell in the Lord's house, the kingdom of God forever. There is no want in the life filled with hope. There is a definite future for a life that is loved by the Shepherd Lord, that is, the Lord's provision, revitalization, guidance, protection, and exaltation. He lives the satisfying life because he lives his present life with clear future hope to dwell in the kingdom of God forever.

When the end of life approaches, we should be able to look back at our lives and confess that, like David, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" (v. 1). If we could make such confession, we could say that we had the satisfied life. If we receive the Shepherd Lord's provision, and experience His restoring work, receive His guidance and protection, and His grace that exalts us even in the sight of our enemies, with the love and hope from the Lord, then we can surely say that we lived the satisfied life. Only such a person can confess, like David, "The Lord is my

shepherd, I shall not want” (v. 1). May such blessings be upon us.

With desire to confess, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want,”

James Kim

(Praying to be satisfied with the Lord alone)

## **We must thoroughly feel our want.**

### **“The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want”(Psalms 23:1).**

On New Year's Day January 2, 2006, during family relatives worship service, I remembered the words of Psalm 23:1. This is because my grandmother, who already went to heaven, liked Psalms 23. As I meditate on Psalms 23, there is the new insight given by the Holy Spirit. The insight is that we have to feel thoroughly want. So I proclaimed and prayed to my own soul: 'My soul, you James, must thoroughly feel your own want!'

There is no want for the sheep who have the Lord as the Shepherd and follow His voice by hearing and obeying Him. But if we are like sheep that have gone astray, have turned to our own way (Isa. 53:6), we have no choice but to confess like this: 'Even though the Lord is my shepherd, I am in want because I have gone my own way.' A good example is the prodigal son of Luke 15. He left his father's house and went on his own way and went wrong to live a vain life (Lk. 15:13). Then, after he had spent everything, "a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished" (v. 14). He was thoroughly experiencing want. So the prodigal son said, "How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!" (v. 17) If we hear the voice of Satan, the voice of the world, the voice of the environment, or our own emotional voice and disobey the Lord's voice, then we will surely experience want. And we need to experience it thoroughly. The reason is that if we don't thoroughly feel our deficiencies, we will not turn to the Shepherd Lord. Just as we must be thoroughly destitute and seek the abundant grace of the Lord, we need to be thoroughly want to seek God's abundance in our want.

As a pastor, I was troubled by my own deficiency since before Christmas 2005. In the New Year's Worship in 2005, I started with the weakness and lack of my physical body, but in the New Year 2006, the lack of my own personality and of the inner person began to grow. Therefore, I have no choice but to rely on the Lord more and more, and have longed for the power of prayer, the power of the Holy Spirit, the power of the gospel (the Word), and the power of love. But I am still far away from fill with those powers. I still don't feel my want and deficiency thoroughly. Even if there is pain and suffering, I want to thoroughly feel my lack and my want. Therefore, I sincerely hope and pray that I will fulfill the pastoral ministry without deficiency and want by relying more on the Lord and obeying His will.

With wish to thoroughly feel my want and lack,

James Kim

(Praying to be satisfied with only the Shepherd Lord)



# Fellowship with God

## [Psalms 24]

Parting is not easy, but we must learn to part. Of course, parting can mean death that a person leaves this world, but also parting is leaving home and parting while dating. In this diverse parting, we can be sad, weeping and discouraged, and can also be desperate. But in that separation, we must remember that there is another encounter. I have been in Korea for about 3 years and enjoyed the blessing of meeting another people while parting with all the family members, church members, friends, and so on. The first is meeting with God, the second is meeting myself, and the third is the blessing of meeting with co-workers and precious meetings with brothers and sisters in Christ.

In Psalms 24:3, the psalmist David says, “Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place?” These words tell us who can have fellowship with the great God, the creator of all things in heaven and earth (vv. 1-2). As we meditate on four things about the qualifications for fellowship with God, based on Psalms 24, I hope that we will also be able to achieve such qualifications.

### **First, those who have fellowship with God must be pure.**

Look at Psalms 24:4 – “He who has clean hands and a pure heart ....” This means that those who have fellowship with God must be pure externally or internally. The word “clean hands” refers to external pure conduct, and the word “a pure heart” refers to internal purity. In a word, those who are pure in conduct and heart can have fellowship with God. Of course, the purity we’re talking about here doesn’t necessarily mean innocence. This means that the believer belongs to God First Principles and doesn’t serve the two masters, but ‘looks’ for Him to serve only God, and also “seeks” Him (v. 6, Park).

Although external purity is important to us for cleansing, we must focus on internal purity before that. The reason is because the pursuit of the purity of our conduct while the heart is unclean is the uncleanness of the whole. We must clean our hearts first just as we wash our bodies. In other words, we need to take a spiritual shower. It is possible by obeying the Word of God: “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart” (1 Pet. 1:22). However, it is real challenge for us to keep our conducts and hearts pure living in this sinful world. So the psalmist Asaph said in Psalm 73:13, “Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure And washed my hands in innocence.” Why did Asaph think this? This is because he was envious of the arrogant (v. 3). Asaph’s feet came close to stumbling and his steps had almost slipped (v. 2). Many Christians are tempted to give up their purity in the midst of their hardships, like Asaph while seeing the prosperity of the arrogant and the wicked. In the end, even though we shouldn’t serve the two masters by belonging

to God First, we are serving God and wealth. But Jesus clearly said, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth” (Mt. 6:24). We shouldn’t serve two masters in our hearts. We should serve only the Lord. In doing so, we must keep our hearts well. And we must serve the Lord with our pure hearts and pure conducts.

### **Second, those who have fellowship with God don’t lift up their souls to falsehood.**

Look at Psalms 24:4 – “... Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood ...” Here, the word “falsehood” refers to the vain glory of all the world that does not belong to the truth of God and vain greed of the property and profit (Park). Those who have pure heart and an act of fellowship with God put their will only in God, and not in other empty things. This is because they are purifying themselves by loving the truth in their hearts and obeying the words of the truth by conduct (1 Pet. 1:22). Those who purify their souls have no falsehood. Therefore, they aren’t deceived by falsehood and don’t pursue vain glory and wealth in this world. They know that the worldly glory and wealth in this world are vain greed. So they dwell in the truth that purifies their souls. In other words, because they love God, they obey the Word of God’s truth (1 Pet. 1:22).

But when we look back on ourselves, aren’t we living faith of ‘the thorn’ in the parable of the sowing? Seeing the parable of the seed in Luke 8, this is what the Bible says about the seed which fell among the thorns: “The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.” Here we can find three things that block ‘my faith maturity’: (1) life’s worries, (2) riches, and (3) pleasures. When we are worried, anxious, and trying to satisfy ourselves with the pleasures of the world by following idols and serving money in the same level as God, we cannot bring the maturity of our faith even though we hear the word of God. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this religious life is a ‘thorny’ religious life. Apostle Paul exhorted in Philippians 2:3 – “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.” We shouldn’t put the meaning in vain. Everything in the world is vain. We shouldn’t leave ourselves alone in the way that satisfies our lustful desires, so as to hinder our faith’s growth. We must devote ourselves to giving glory to God and fulfilling God’s will on this earth.

### **Third, those who have fellowship with God shouldn’t swear deceitfully.**

Look at Psalms 24:4 – “... And has not sworn deceitfully.” Those who are not clean in their conduct and their hearts put their meaning in vain, so they live false life. Those who live such life aren’t afraid to make false oaths. However, the word that David didn’t swear deceitfully with God can mean two things:

- (1) In order to have fellowship with God, we must not lie.

Those who have put the meaning in vain live to fulfill it. But those who have put the meaning in God don't lie. That is, they don't give false witness (Park).

(2) We must practice the determination that we have made before God without in vain (Park).

In other words, those who have fellowship with God carry out the vow in their hearts. We have to practice the vows that we have sworn to our own hurt and must not change (15:4).

We are already cleansed by the word of God, and the word of the Lord dwells within us. Look at John 15:3-4, 7: "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. "Abide in Me, and I in you. ... "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ...." We who are being purified by the word of God is like a branch dwelling in the Lord, the vine, and there is no lie in us. Therefore, we shouldn't give false witness. We must tell the truth. Also, we must live the life of truth. We must strive to make our hearts and deeds to proclaim the word of God's truth.

**Fourth and last, those who have fellowship with God must receive God with all their hearts.**

Look at Psalms 24:7-10: "Lift up your heads, O gates, And be lifted up, O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in! Who is the King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O gates, And lift them up, O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in! Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah." In these words, David said that the temple door should be open so that the King of glory may come in. So he said in verse 7: "Lift up your heads, O gates, And be lifted up, O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in!" Dr. Yoon-sun Park said: 'If we don't serve God with all our hearts, then we have not received God as the King of glory.' Therefore, we must open the door of our hearts as wide as the temple door. And we must let the Spirit of God, who dwells in us, to work freely. In the midst of this, we must have intimate fellowship with our great God.

We must separate ourselves from this world full of filthy, empty and falsehood. We must have an intimate encounter with God in our separation from the world. We must purify our hearts and conducts in order to have intimate fellowship with God. We must not put our hearts in empty things and lift our souls to falsehood. Rather, we must open the door of our hearts wide and accept God with all our hearts.

Longing to have intimate fellowship with God,

James Kim (Dreaming the church that is built as the pure bride of Christ)

## **“Remember, O Lord”**

### **[Psalms 25:1-7]**

I have an unforgettable memory. And that memory is about my first baby, Charis. On April 29, 1998, after I finished my church ministry, I went to the Los Angeles Children’s Hospital where my first baby Charis was hospitalized. And Charis’ doctor came up to me and asked me to make the most difficult decision in my life: ‘Do you want your baby to die quickly or slowly?’ After the doctor had done her best, she asked me that question because there was nothing she could do anymore. At that time, I answered her to let Charis die slowly. When I think about why I asked the doctor to let my baby die slowly, I think it was my greed that I wanted her to live even though the baby must have been very painful. The next day, April 30 Monday morning, I meditated on the words of Psalms 63:3 with my wife and then told Charis’ doctor that we would let our baby Charis die quickly. And then I called her and there so my parents, my older brother and his wife and my sister came to the hospital ICU and we worshiped God together. After worship, she held my baby Charis in my arms for the first and the last time. And she fell asleep in my arms. She died peacefully. Today that memory especially came to my mind.

We all have our own memories. Although we may have many good memories, we may have more bad memories: wounded memories, painful memories, etc.. All of us probably have painful memories from the past that we don’t want to remember, and the wounded memories that we try to forget. These are painful memories that we want to hide and keep in our mind so that no one may know them. But these memories, which we don’t want to see or tell anyone, may seem to have been forgotten by ourselves over time, but in the end, there are times when those memories are reminded by another painful event. At those times, we try to suppress those painful memories again and again. If we are living that way, we should listen to what Henry Nowen said in his book “The Living Reminder”: ‘By not trying to confront our painful memories, we are missing out on the opportunity to mature as we change our minds and repent.’ Only those who are truly courageous to face their wounds and their painful memories will not miss the opportunity to mature as they change their minds and repent. If we are not mature, maybe our problem is due to the painful memories that are still in our hearts. Perhaps we are missing out on our own growth and maturity opportunities because we don’t change our hearts and repent in the face of those memories. We must open our closed hearts to God. It can only be opened by faith. It is our sinful nature not to open the door of our hearts to God by not believing in God’s healing. Therefore, we must open our hearts and repent our sins of not believing in the power of God. The real healing process is to constantly remembering our painful memories again and to reconnect them with the Jesus’ painful memories. When we reconnect them, the God’s work of healing will begin in us.

When we look at Psalms 25:6, this is how the psalmist David prayed to God: “Remember, O LORD, Your compassion and Your lovingkindness, For they have been from of old.” Have you ever prayed to God, “Remember, O Lord”? I don’t think I ever prayed like that before. I think this David’s prayer is strange prayer. God is God of compassion and of lovingkindness, how did David pray to God to remember His compassion and lovingkindness? Why did he pray to the Lord and ask the Lord to remember His compassion and lovingkindness? This was because David himself remembered the Lord’s compassion and lovingkindness. He wanted to receive the Lord’s mercy as he repented his sins. He remembered the Lord’s compassion as he prayed for not to be disciplined by God because of his sins. Also, he remembered His lovingkindness because he longed for His forgiveness.

Then, I want to think about what do those who remember the Lord’s compassion and lovingkindness will do in four ways:

**First, those who remember the Lord’s compassion and lovingkindness lift up their souls.**

Look at Psalms 25:1 – “To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul.” The psalmist David lifted up his soul in the midst of the persecution from his enemies and those who dealt treacherously without cause (vv. 2, 3). It’s not easy to lift up our souls to the Lord. This is what Dr. Park said, ‘It is not easy to lift up the soul. Since the soul is in a stagnant state, unable to turn to God, as if it were low on the ground, because of the sins that are deep inside of the soul.’ I have to agree. When I think about what’s wrong with the soul that can’t turn to God, the soul that’s stuck low on the ground, I have to admit that it’s because of ‘my sin.’ Because of our sins that don’t repent to our holy God, we cannot lift our souls to Him. But Prophet Jonah lifted his soul to God. Prophet Jonah confessed that it was on account of him the great storm had come upon the people on the ship (Jonah 1:12). And he prayed to God in the belly of the big fish (Jonah 2). This is what Jonah prayed in Jonah 2:4 – “... I have been expelled from Your sight Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy temple.” Jonah determined to look again toward the Lord in the belly of the big fish. A soul who confesses his sins and repents can look to the Lord again like Jonah. But an unrepentant soul will not and cannot look to the Lord.

To say that “I lift up my soul” means that David trusted in the Lord completely (Ps. 25:2). This is what John Calvin said about prayer: ‘The biggest hindrance to prayer is that the mind is shaken back and forth, knowing that there will be help outside of God’ (Calvin). When there is disturbance in our hearts, we cannot lift up our souls to the Lord. It’s because we keep thinking of other people and things other than the Lord. What is the problem? The problem is the doubt that exists in our hearts. This is what Apostle James said about doubt: “But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind” (Jam. 1:6). Then, what do those who trust in the Lord do? They wait for the Lord (Ps. 25:3). In other words, David waited patiently in the hope of the Lord while trusting solely on the Lord and looking up toward Him (Park).

**Second, those who remember the Lord's compassion and lovingkindness want the Lord's protection.**

Look at Psalms 25:2-3: "O my God, in You I trust, Do not let me be ashamed; Do not let my enemies exult over me. Indeed, none of those who wait for You will be ashamed; Those who deal treacherously without cause will be ashamed." David prayed for the Lord's protection in difficult situations, persecuted by enemies and deceivers (vv. 2, 3). Here "Do not let me be ashamed" means David asked the Lord to prevent him from failing, which is to protect him (Park). David asked God to protect him and to take care of him in the situation of extreme oppression by his enemies. David didn't take any revenge to overcome those who had oppressed him with his own power, but he trusted only God. This is the attitude of the saints (Park). Do we have this attitude? If we have this faith attitude that depend entirely on God, without attempting to repay the enemy with our own strength will not be ashamed by our enemies. Rather, God makes our enemies or "Those who deal treacherously without cause" that is, those who deceive us in vain to be ashamed (v. 3, Park). We may feel this or that failure when our enemies deceive us with lies and make us to suffer. The feeling of failure may appear in our minds as a doubt, and as a result, our hearts can be shaken, so we can depend on ourselves or others rather than on God. So we must pray to God to protect our hearts. We must pray for God's protection of our hearts so that we will not fall into the lies (deceptions) of our enemies.

**Third, those who remember the Lord's compassion and lovingkindness want the Lord to teach them His truth.**

Look at Psalms 24:4-5: "Make me know Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; For You I wait all the day." David's enemies (v. 2), that is, "Those who deal treacherously without cause" (v. 3), unreasonably made lies and deceived and persecuted truthful David with lies. At that time, David not only sought God's protection, but also asked God to teach him the truth. Here, "Your ways," "Your paths," "Your truth" are all synonymous. In a word, it means the Lord's will. Satan, our enemy, uses lies and deception to confuse us regarding the Lord's will. And Satan, through his servants, confuses us with the Lord's will. Therefore, we desperately need the Lord's compassion and lovingkindness. How many times do we confuse the Lord's will and do our own will? That is why we absolutely need the Lord's compassion. And, like David, we also absolutely need God's lovingkindness. This is because God shows us His will in His lovingkindness. In order to know God's will, we need God's revelation (v. 4). We cannot understand the word of God unless God reveals it so that we can understand His word. According to Matthew 16:17, after Jesus heard Peter's confession "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," He said "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." We cannot understand the Lord's will unless God teaches us (Ps. 25:4-5). That was why David prayed like this: "Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name" (86:11). Only by God's guidance can we

realize the will of the Lord (25:5).

**Fourth and last, those who remember the Lord's compassion and lovingkindness want the Lord to forgive their sins.**

Look at Psalms 25:7 – “Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; According to Your lovingkindness remember me, For Your goodness' sake, O LORD.” David remembered and repented his transgressions of youth to God while looking to God in the midst of the persecution by his enemies. Persecution and hardship rather lead us to God. And as we go to God, our sins are revealed before His holy presence, not only the present sin, but also the past sins of our youth. So David prayed to God and asked Him to remember His compassion and lovingkindness.

There is such saying in an article by Lu Gurung' in his writing 'Looking out from One Step': 'Remembering only what is grateful: Strangely, what I am disappointed is rarely forgotten but what I am thankful is furtively forgotten. Conversely, I remember for a long time that I gave something to others, but I easily forget that I hurt others. If we remember being helped or favored by others, and forgetting the resentment of others, our lives will be much more free. It's a short life to only remember what we are thankful.' Let us all live in memory of God's compassion and lovingkindness. Let's lift up our souls to the Lord. Let's move forward as we ask the Lord to protect and teach the truth to us and forgive us for our sins.

As I remember God's compassion and lovingkindness,

James Kim

(With thanksgiving heart for God's compassion and lovingkindness in my 9 years married life with my beloved wife)

## **“According to Your lovingkindness remember me”**

**“Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; According to Your lovingkindness remember me, For Your goodness’ sake, O LORD.”  
(Psalms 25:7)**

Life is ‘making memories’. There are memories that are planted in each of our hearts in our lives with our parents when we were born, and memories that are made in our lives with our siblings and friends as we grow up, etc.. We are making memories of this and that in meetings with people. We can divide these memories into two types: good memories and bad memories. Of course, in addition to these two kinds of memories, there are painful and sad memories as well. But these memories could be good memories or bad memories. Do you have many good memories or bad memories in your mind? Often we need to take time to look back at our lives and reflect on the memories in our minds. In the midst of that, we must devote ourselves to making more and more good memories. And we should try to overcome and cover bad memories with good memories. In that way, we will be able to become true rich people in our hearts.

In Psalm 25:7, the psalmist David prayed to God not to remember his sins of youth or his transgressions but to remember him according to His lovingkindness. He cried out to God, relying on His lovingkindness. What would happen if he prayed to God to remember him according to God’s holiness? Can you imagine? What would happen to David if God remembered David according to His holiness? I can’t imagine. What would happen to David if God knew and remembered all of David’s sins and transgressions that were revealed in God’s holiness? I can’t imagine. If God remembers us according to His holiness, then we would not have been able to escape God’s wrath and punishment. But the surprising fact is that God poured all our sins and transgressions on Jesus, His begotten Son, and Jesus was crucified to death. Therefore, now God not only forgives us but also not remembers our sins and transgressions when we repent our sins and transgressions. David relied on this lovingkindness of the Lord and asked God: “According to Your lovingkindness remember me” (v.7). And he asked God to remember him for His goodness’ sake (v. 7).

We must also offer this prayer to God. Like David, we must pray to God by relying on the Lord’s lovingkindness. Like David, we must pray to God, “According to Your lovingkindness remember me, For Your goodness’ sake, O Lord” (v. 7). And when we pray like this, we must pray by relying on the love of God, who loves us like this even giving His begotten Son Jesus on the cross for our salvation (Jn. 3:16). We must hold onto God’s Word by faith that Heavenly Father’s thoughts of love for us are outnumbered the sand and pray to Him (Ps. 139:17-



18). And we must pray to God who is filled with those thoughts of love and who will not only forgive us when we confess our sins and repent, but also will not remember our sins, but rather have good memories towards us for His goodness. Then we must strive to remember our dear brothers and sisters in Christ according to the Lord's love. And we should try to cover the bad memories towards them with good memories. We must overcome evil memories with good memories. Therefore, we must fill our minds and hearts with memories of love in the Lord. I hope and pray that we can dedicate ourselves in making these good memories in our hearts.

Devoted to making good memories of love,

James Kim

(I want to be someone who reminds Jesus to others)

## The way I should choose

### [Psalms 25:8-15]

Do you feel regret when you look back on the road you have walked by? Have you ever thought ‘What if I had walked the other way, what would my life be like? Wouldn’t it have been better for my life? Maybe I have walked the wrong way.’ When I look back at myself, I think, ‘If I hadn’t wondered around in adolescence, what kind of pastor would I have become now?’ But what is the use of regretting the path that I have walked in the past. Although it’s no use, I don’t think it’s too bad to look back on the path we’ve been walking through and to take lessons from the past and think about which path we should take now and in the future.

In Psalms 25:12, the psalmist David said, “Who is the man who fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way he should choose.” When I think about the way he chose, I think it is “the way of the righteous”(1:6). David said in Psalm 1 that there were only two paths in life: One is the way of the righteous, the other is the way of the wicked. Here, the way of the righteous is the way of the Word. He who walks on the way of righteous delights in the word of God and meditates on it day and night (v. 2). David, who walked the way of the righteous, always took root deeply in the Word of God, and, like the tree planted in the stream, was always supplied with the water of God (v. 3). Then, what is the way of the wicked? The way of the wicked is the way of ignoring the word of God and following the counsel of the wicked. The wicked don’t try to live good by judging the conscience in the light of God’s Word, but live according to the rules of the world. So he stands in the path of sinners (v. 1). And he sits in the seat of scoffers who deny God (v. 1). Such a person doesn’t take root in God’s Word, so he cannot bear fruit. The only thing he bears is like chaff which the wind drives away (v. 4). In the end, the chaff is forced to plunge into the ground. Even if it falls on the ground, there is no grain, so it cannot take root at all. It blows again in the wind. In this way, the life of a wicked is always light, capricious and repeats the rise and fall.

Although we have two feet, we cannot walk on both paths at the same time. We have to choose the path of the righteous or the path of the wicked. We should always do our best to choose one path. And we have to take the results of our choice boldly. In life, the two ways are clearly divided. What path do we choose to live? With the words of Psalms 25:8-15, I want to meditate on three things about which way we should choose, hoping that we, like David, can choose the way God wants us to walk faithfully.

### **First, the way we sinners should choose is the good and upright way.**

Look at Psalms 25:8 – “Good and upright is the LORD; Therefore He instructs sinners in the way.” Here

are two ways we sinners should choose and walk:

(1) The first way is good way.

The good way is the way of the moral goodness. In other words, the good way that we must walk is the way of forsaking evil and do good (34:14). In other words, the word walking the good way is a life of forsaking sin and doing good. This is what Rev. Tommy Tenny said in his book “God’s eye view”: ‘God wants to reveal His filling without hiding by using our emptiness.’ We must empty our sinful thoughts. We must empty the heart that loves the world, the heart that hates others, and all evil thoughts. Then God will fill our hearts with His words and His love. Also, the good way is the way of compassion. The word “good” in the phrase God is “good” (25:8) refers to God’s compassion for the sinner (Calvin). Choosing the way of compassion and walking that way means we don’t forsake the same sinners like us and take care of them just as God is good and doesn’t forsake such sinners like us. In the end, the good way means to abandon sin but not sinners, but forgive and take care of them with love. We must have compassionate heart toward sinners like Jesus came to call sinners. And we have to be compassionate to them. We should not guilty of judging and condemning others by our own standards. Rather, we must live the life of forgiveness for the sins of others, just as God has forgiven our sins. So David prayed, “For Your name’s sake, O LORD, Pardon my iniquity, for it is great” (v. 11). Isn’t it amazing? Even though David’s enemies persecuted David by dealing treacherously without cause (vv. 3-4), David confessed how great his sins were before God and asked God for forgiveness, rather than exposing his enemies’ sins.

(2) The second way is upright way.

In Psalms 25:8, David said that the upright God instructs us, and that instruction is that we too must be upright like God. Since David knew that God tried the heart and delighted in uprightness (1 Chron. 29:17), he lived uprightly before God who searched his heart. So what does it mean to walk on the upright way? Luke 1:6 says, “They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.” The upright man obeys God’s commandments. He also leads sinners in the right way, just as God leads us in the right way. In other words, he leads sinners to Jesus. The reason is that only by the blood of Jesus can sinners be forgiven.

**Second, the way we the humble should choose is the way of justice.**

Look at Psalms 25:9 – “He leads the humble in justice, And He teaches the humble His way.” Here, “the humble” means those who have been disciplined by God and humble in spirit (Calvin). God disciplines His children when they sin with justice and makes them humble (Park). In the end, David’s heart, which recognized that he was a sinner who had committed a great sin before God, and asked God for forgiveness of his sins and repented to God,

became humble. When we repent, our hearts can be humble. God makes us humble by His chastisement in His love when we don't repent after we have sinned. Then God teaches the way of justice to the humble heart so we can walk the way of justice. This age in which we live is a world filled with lawlessness like the days of the Prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 9:9). What way should we choose who are living in this time? In God's goodness and uprightness, we must be humble and choose his righteous path as we are taught and humbled by His words.

### **Third and last, the way we who fear God should choose is the way of covenant.**

Look at Psalms 25:14 – “The secret of the LORD is for those who fear Him, And He will make them know His covenant.” David lived in the fear of God as he lived in an lawless age where the deceptions of his enemies were rampant (vv. 2, 3). So he was able to choose the way of righteous (v. 12). In a situation where there weren't many people who feared God, God taught David the way to take when he was in the midst of actually sleeping in the weakness of his flesh rather than following the Lord (Calvin, Park). It was the way of good, the way of compassion and the path of upright. David, who faithfully walked these ways, had intimate relationship with God. In other words, only those who have intimate fellowship with God can choose the way God wants them to walk. The way God wants us to choose is the way of the covenant. In other words, the way we must choose is the way of God's promise. We must hold onto the word of God's promise and walk in faith the way of God's promise he opens to us. It is the way of the Lord, the way of lovingkindness and truth (v. 10). Dr. Yoon-sun Park said this: ‘God's promise (covenant) about the salvation and blessing of the saints is known only to those who fear God. It doesn't make sense to the hypocrites and those who aren't chosen.’ Yes. The hypocrites and those who aren't chosen don't fear God and cannot know or enjoy the blessings of God's promise (covenant). But we are those who know the way of the Lord's promises and walk with patience in faith. Therefore, as we fear God, like David, we must be in close fellowship with God. In the midst of this, we must faithfully walk on the way of the covenant God shows us (v. 14).

The way we must walk is the way of the righteous, the way of good, the way of upright, the way of justice, and the way of covenant. In a word, the way we must walk is the way the cross the Lord has walked. The way of the cross is never wide. The Bible says it's a narrow road. We must choose to deny ourselves and take our own cross and walk the way Jesus walked. We must choose this way and walk faithfully. In order to do that, I hope and pray that our eyes are continually toward the Lord (v. 15).

With gratitude for such sinner like me has a privilege to walk the Lord's way by the grace of God,

James Kim

(Hoping to walk the narrow way of the cross all the way to the end)

## **“Guard my soul and deliver me”**

### **[Psalms 25:16-22]**

Satan is an adversary who always aims at our hearts. He randomly sprinkles seeds of sins to get our hearts into his hands. He is persistently attacking our hearts through what we see with our eyes, what we hear with our ears and what we think by making us to conceive the seeds of sins. At that time, when evil and unclean thoughts take root in our hearts, our hearts will be occupied by Satan’s sinful thoughts. Then it is only a matter of time before our hearts are moved away from holiness and sinning with our actions. The Bible Luke 12:34 says that if we aren’t on guard, “so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life.” Here, the phrase ‘the hearts is weighted down’ means that the hearts have been hardened because they have been neglected for a long time with sins. As a result, the hearts have become insensitive to the spiritual things. Why does that happen? It is because we have failed to keep our hearts.

In Psalms 25:20, the psalmist David is praying God to guard his soul and deliver him. I want to meditate on when and how we should guard our souls based on the words of Psalms 25:16-22 and to receive valuable lessons from His words.

### **First, when we are lonely and afflicted, we must guard our hearts well.**

Look at Psalms 25:16 – “Turn to me and be gracious to me, For I am lonely and afflicted.” When we are lonely and afflicted, Satan can attack our hearts and sow the seeds of sins. So we must keep our hearts well. Why are we sometimes lonely and afflicted? The cause of David’s loneliness and affliction was because he didn’t compromise with all the non-truths in the world (Park). If we compromise with the world and live in harmony with it, then we might be less lonely. But the way of the saints who are guided by the truth is lonely and painful. David had many people who dealt treacherously without cause, that is, there were many enemies around him who afflicted him with vain deceptions (v. 3). In such a situation, he prayed, “Lead me in Your truth and teach me” (v. 5). He cried out to God so that he might be taught and guided by the Lord’s truth in situation in which the deceptions were rampant. We should pray to God in lonely places when we are lonely and afflicted. We must imitate Jesus’ example. Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed (Lk. 5:16). Here, the Greek translation of the word “lonely places” is “desert.” In his loneliness and affliction, the title of David’s prayer was “Turn to me and be gracious to me” (v. 16). Here, the prayer, “Turn to me” means that David was longing for the face of God. David was asking God to turn His face back to him. David was heading from the lonely wilderness to the garden of

solitude. Solitude is not alone. Solitude is God's presence. David longed for God's presence. He also relied on God's compassion. Since David knew that God's compassion and lovingkindness were from eternity (v. 6), he asked God to remember this. Therefore, like David, when we are lonely and afflicted, we must go to the lonely place and pray to God. We should seek God's compassion as we long for God's face. That way we can guard our hearts when we are lonely and afflicted. Then God will listen to our supplications and guard our souls.

### **Second, when there are troubles in our hearts, we must guard our hearts.**

Look at Psalms 25:17 – “The troubles of my heart are enlarged; Bring me out of my distresses.” Why was David's heart troubled? The reason was because he felt strongly the suffering of the body and the sins he committed (Park). So David prayed repentance to God, saying, “For Your name's sake, O LORD, Pardon my iniquity, for it is great” (v. 11). He was troubled in the pain of the flesh because of his sin. However, such trouble is beneficial trouble that leads to repentance. This is what Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7:10 – “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.” He said “worldly sorrow brings death.” But godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation. Prophet Jonah prayed to God in suffering, after disobeying God's command and committed sin: “I called out of my distress to the LORD, And He answered me I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; You heard my voice” (Jonah 2:2). When we sin, our hearts are troubled. When we are troubled, we fall deeply into suffering. At that time, like David, we have to ask God to deliver from our suffering. Then God will guard our souls in trouble and deliver us out of suffering.

### **Third, when we are afflicted and in trouble, we must guard our hearts.**

Look at Psalms 25:18 – “Look upon my affliction and my trouble, And forgive all my sins.” Here it shows two meanings: First, some suffering comes because of sin, and second, if anyone suffers humbly by repenting of his sin, there is a hope that it will be released because of God's forgiveness (Park). That was why David offered prayer of repentance, “For Your name's sake, O LORD, Pardon my iniquity, for it is great” (v. 11). David repented after he realized his great sin in the midst of suffering through persecution by his enemies rather than criticizing them by exposing their sins of deception. From that perspective, affliction is good for us. So David confessed: “Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word” (Ps. 119:67), “It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes” (v. 71). The benefit of suffering is the grace that makes us aware of our sins so that we can repent to God. Therefore, we must repent our sins to God when our great sins are revealed through troubles and afflictions. As we repent and our souls are being purified by obeying the truth, we must be established as God's people who have sincere love for our brothers and sisters in Christ (1 Pet. 1:22). God will guard such souls.

### **Fourth and last, when our enemies hate us with violent hatred, we must guard our hearts.**

Look at Psalms 25:19 – “Look upon my enemies, for they are many, And they hate me with violent hatred.” We, the saints, aren’t without enemies. However, since we are God’s children, only the enemies of God will be our enemies. God’s enemies are our enemies (Park). And our enemies are Satan and his evil servants. They oppose, deceive, and persecute us, the children of God. They hate us very much. There were many enemies of David who hated him very much. So David took refuge in God and cried to Him: “Guard my soul and deliver me; Do not let me be ashamed, for I take refuge in You. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, For I wait for You” (vv. 20-21). Here, “integrity” means without hypocrisy and act wholeheartedly and “uprightness” means walking straight to the truth without wavering (Park). Even though David was in adversity through the deception of his enemies, he didn’t try to escape the way of truth and seek his own life. In the midst of that, David prayed to God wholeheartedly to direct him to the truth (Park). The soul itself has been darkened by sin and has no power to save itself. The soul can only be guarded and saved by God (Park). When our enemies hate us with violent hatred, we must take refuge in Him and look at Him who loves us the most. In the hatred of the enemy, we must meditate and realize the great love of God even more deeply. God will guard our souls.

We must commit ourselves to guard our own hearts. Satan is trying to make us lonely, afflicted, trouble in our hearts, and to dwell in affliction and trouble. In the midst of these works of Satan, we have a responsibility to guard our own souls. In order to do that, we must take refuge in the Lord and cry out to Him. As we cry out to God for His protection, we have to ask Him to guard our souls. And we must ask God to save us. This was how David cried out to God: “Turn to me and be gracious to me” (v. 16), “Bring me out of my distresses” (v. 17), “And forgive all my sins” (v. 18), “Guard my soul and deliver me” (v. 20). We must pray too. May God answer our prayers and deliver us from all troubles (v. 22) and guard our hearts.

He who didn’t guard his heart well,,

James Kim

(Praying for God’s protection)

## Love the place where God's glory dwells! (1)

### [Psalms 26]

In his book "God's eye view," Pastor Tommy Tenny said: 'Public worship is not a matter of how many people have come to the meeting, but of how much God is present.' I think it makes sense. But, for some reason, we seem to want 'cheaply-microwave revival' as Pastor Tommy Tenny said, rather than God's presence. It's like putting a bag of popcorn in a microwave to make the popcorn grains swell. It's simple, fast, and requires little effort. The reason why we want this "microwave revival" is because our spiritual taste likes "fast food". Like the fast food we often eat, we love "fast food" too in our spiritual lives. We want the worship service to be simple and quick. And we don't like to have homework for the Bible study. When we pray over our problems, we complain because of the answer of our prayer isn't fast and so on. Our spiritual tastes seem to have changed a lot. What is the result? The result is "spiritual atherosclerosis" (Tenny). Our appetite for fast food, short worship, or simple ceremonies eventually leads to spiritual atherosclerosis. Why do we get atherosclerosis? The causes include increased blood cholesterol, tobacco, high blood pressure, obesity, and lack of exercise. Of these causes, when we consider obesity and lack of exercise, these also apply to our spiritual life of faith. The Word of God seems to be poured out like a flood and we eat full, but it is plagued by spiritual obesity because we don't obey the Word. The lack of spiritual exercise is the problem. Taking the word of God is not without problems, of course, but it is a bigger problem not to exercise spiritually after taking it. After all, spiritual atherosclerosis is twisting and paralyzing our thoughts as if the blood vessels are blocked and causing a stroke. In addition, spiritual arteriosclerosis prevents our heart from being changed into the heart of Christ and to love souls, as if the cardiovascular system is blocked, resulting in angina, myocardial tachycardia, or sudden death. This is the work of Satan. "Microwave-style revival" and "spiritual atherosclerosis" are all Satan's work. Satan is trying to stop us from offering true worship to God. He is trying to keep us from entering the glory of God and not experiencing God's presence by blocking worship that is like our lifeline. One example is Job. Satan first touched the cattle, including the cows and sheep that belonged to Job, to remove Job's ability to worship from Job so that he would not worship God. But we must see the glory of God in worship. We must experience God's presence in worship. Therefore, we must dwell in the glory of God. And we must love the place where his glory dwells and yearn even more.

In Psalms 26:8, the psalmist David confesses "O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house And the place where Your glory dwells." So, I want to meditate on how people who love the place where God's glory dwells under the heading "Love the place where God's glory dwells!"



In Psalms 26:1 and 11, it is said that those who love the place where the glory of God dwells walk in his integrity: “Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, And I have trusted in the LORD without wavering” (v. 1), “But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity; Redeem me, and be gracious to me” (v. 11). What does it mean to walk in integrity here? This doesn’t mean that David was perfect and innocent like God. It means that David didn’t make any mistakes in that matter and believed in the Lord at that time. In other words, he was never assimilated at that time with the guilty crowd (vv. 4, 5) (Park). In a word, David faithfully acted wholeheartedly. [“The word “integrity” is “tom” in the Hebrew language and has the meaning of sincerity, wholeheartedness (Park)]. In other words, David, who loved the place where the glory of God dwells, walked sincerely and wholeheartedly. Then, how does he who walks sincerely and wholeheartedly live his spiritual life? I want to meditate on one thing based on Psalms 26.

### **He who walks sincerely and wholeheartedly trusts in the Lord without wavering.**

Look at Psalms 26:1 – “Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, And I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.” The situation in which David walked in his integrity because he loved the place where the glory of God dwells was filled with wicked people. The wicked people are described as follow: “deceitful men” (v. 4), “pretenders” (v. 4), “evildoers” (v. 5), “the wicked” (v. 5), “sinners” (v. 9) and “bloodshed” (v. 9). In the midst of these many wicked people, David didn’t waver and trusted in the Lord. To be unwavering is to have no doubt in trusting God. If we are in the same situation as David, can we also trust in the Lord without wavering? Can we really trust in Him and not doubt in trusting in Him? This is true faith. True faith is completely dependent on God without wavering. David had pure faith with no doubt at all in trusting in God (cf. Jam. 1:6). David, who trusted entirely on God without doubting, asked God in faith like this: “Vindicate me, O LORD” (Ps. 26:1). David sought God’s vindication. He asked God to judge between the innocent and the wicked who oppose him. David also prayed: “Examine me, O LORD, and try me; Test my mind and my heart” (v. 2). The word “Examine” here means ‘look deeply into the heart,’ and the word “Test” means ‘to put on a trial of fire to purify the metal’ (Park). ‘These words seem to refer to the shaking of things with something like tribulation because there are impurities in the person’s faith here (Park). David not only took the difficult situation he faced as an opportunity to look deeply into his own heart through the eyes of God, but also an opportunity for trial of his faith. Therefore, he became more and more steadfast in trusting in God. Here is the solidity of faith. David had this solid faith, a faith that he could use as a chance to look back on himself and train his will and heart by trusting in God, even in difficult and painful situation that were piled up with wicked people.

How is our faith? Is our faith as solid as David’s faith? Do we completely trust in God without wavering? Like David, we need to make crisis and adversity an opportunity to strengthen our own faith. In order to do that, we need to apply two lessons, like David in today’s text: one, in crisis and adversity, we must examine ourselves deeply with the word of God, and the other is take crisis and adversity as an opportunity to strengthen our own will and

heart. We must pray for forgiveness of our sins to God by realizing our many and great sins as we examine our hearts deeply with His words in the midst of crisis and adversity (25:11). Furthermore, we must obey His will, not ours, when we realize His will through crisis and adversity. David received this heart training in the midst of the dark forces surrounding him and persecuting him. Therefore, like David, we must know how to take crisis and adversity as the opportunity. Therefore, through the crisis and adversity we face, we must reveal God's glory even more. I hope and pray that we love the place where God's glory dwells so that in the midst of crisis and adversity we may shine His glory.

With the desire to experience the glory of God in worship,

James Kim

(While feeling the need for the training of heart)

## Love the place where God's glory dwells! (2)

### [Psalms 26]

One day, I had scanned all the very old pictures in church albums to introduce our church history in a slide. As I scanned the old photos, I thought about how the years have passed so quickly. But while looking at the old photos of those who had been coming to our church from a long time ago, I thought that the spiritual attitude of faithfulness is really important in the true faith life. In particular, I think it's really precious to be serving the same church faithfully for a long time in the many church situations, in which there are a lot of people who move around from church to church.

David, the psalmist in Psalms 26, was truly faithful man. He confesses that he had walked in his integrity because he loved the place where God's glory dwells (vv. 1, 11). Here "I have walked in my integrity" doesn't mean that David was perfect and innocent like God. It means that David was never assimilated at that time with the guilty crowd (vv. 4, 5) (Park). In a word, David faithfully acted wholeheartedly ["The word "integrity" is "tom" in the Hebrew language and has the meaning of sincerity, wholeheartedness (Park)]. In other words, David, who loved the place where the glory of God dwells, walked sincerely and wholeheartedly. I want to meditate on three things about the lessons we can learn from David, who had acted faithfully.

### **First, those who act faithfully don't waver, but trust in the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 26:1 – "Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, And I have trusted in the LORD without wavering." David steadfastly trusted in the Lord, even in the difficult circumstances he was in. Rather, he took the difficult situation as an opportunity to pray to God. David prayed, "Examine me, O LORD, and try me; Test my mind and my heart" (v. 2). Here, the word "Examine" means 'look deeply into the heart,' and the word "Test" means 'to put on a trial of fire to purify the metal' (Park). 'These words seem to refer to the shaking of things with something like tribulation because there are impurities in the person's faith here (Park). We need to shake ourselves through adversity. The reason is that without pain and adversity, we don't look deeply into our hearts. We seem to have time to stop and look back on ourselves only when there is a painful event. David not only took the difficult and painful situation he faced as an opportunity to look deeply into his heart through the eyes of God, but furthermore, he used that situation as an opportunity for him to be refine himself. Therefore, David was steadfast in his dependence on God. Like David, we must act faithfully, but we must trust in the Lord without wavering.

## **Second, those who act faithfully walk in the Lord's truth.**

Look at Psalms 26:3 – “For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes, And I have walked in Your truth.” In the midst of adversity, David didn't compromise with the sinful world and the wicked, but faithfully walk in the word of the Lord. Although he could sit with a vain man and walk with unfaithful man, he lived a life of faith that transcended all those situations. How was this possible? How could David walk in the truth of the Lord, even among the false people and in the false world? It was because of the Lord's lovingkindness. In other words, David was able to walk in the Lord's truth because he saw His lovingkindness before his eyes as he looked at himself, even in trouble and adversity, as the opportunity to refine his will and heart. Are we living with the spiritual eyes to see God's lovingkindness?

Last week, I experienced God's lovingkindness as I was reading the book “Be Decisive” by Pastor Warren Wiersbe. I felt God's lovingkindness through not only the God's prophet word to His servant Prophet Jeremiah, but also protecting Jeremiah until the word of prophecy was fulfilled. When I applied this word to my church, like God will fulfill His promise of Matthew 16:18 – “... I ... will build My church” – and will protect me until His promise will be fulfilled, I was comforted and encouraged greatly. Since David saw God's lovingkindness before his eyes, he could walk in the truth of the Lord without compromising with the vain and the cunning people. We can think of this in reverse. In other words, the reason why do we sometimes compromise in adversity without acting in His truth is because we don't see God's lovingkindness before our eyes. In the absence of this spiritual experience of seeing the Lord's lovingkindness with our spiritual eyes and when only our physical eyes focus on the adversity we face, we cannot help but compromise the truth.

We can describe three things about life of David who walked in the truth of the Lord through His lovingkindness:

### (1) David was not with those who didn't follow the truth.

David didn't even go with deceitful men and pretenders. He hated the assembly of evildoers (vv. 4-5). Here, the “deceitful men” refers to those who don't walk in the Lord's truth (Park). David, who walked in His truth, didn't follow the principle of those who didn't act according to the truth of the Lord (Park). Here, the “pretenders” refers to those who cover up themselves, those whose content is the most evil but outwardly pretend to be the best people (Park). Anyone who walks in the truth can distinguish these pretenders. They can distinguish the evildoers who pretend to be good outwardly but inwardly false. Furthermore, David hated the gatherings of evildoers, the gatherers of evildoers, and didn't want to have fellowship with the fellows of the wicked, that is, the ones who are self-indulgent without steadfastness in practicing morally, and do whatever they want.

(2) David had fellowship with God as he lived a pure life.

Look at Psalms 26:6 – “I shall wash my hands in innocence, And I will go about Your altar, O LORD.” This is to keep in mind the fact that the priest washes his hands before starting to serve on the altar (Exod. 40; Deut. 21:6, 7, 30-33). David came to the altar and purified his usual day life before fellowship with God (Park). I think it is like living a pure life during the week and coming up before the Lord’s on Sunday and have fellowship with God.

(3) David thanked God and declared all God’s wonders.

Look at Psalms 26:7 – “That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving And declare all Your wonders.” Thankfulness for what God has done is a personal responsibility that the person should have (Park). But David further went on to testify to others what God had done in his life. He took on the responsibility of the evangelist to let others know God and be saved (Park).

**Third and last, those who act faithfully love the church.**

Look at Psalms 26:8 – “O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house And the place where Your glory dwells.” This means that David would love the temple of God, the church. Then, what do those who love the church where the glory of the Lord dwells do?

(1) Those who love the church faithfully hate lies.

How can those who love the church built on the rock of truth like lies? They have no choice but to hate lies and sins. We must hate that sin so that the lies and sins will never enter into the church. Especially in pain, we look into the depths of our hearts with the eyes of the Lord, so that we can realize the sin of hypocrisy in us and repent thoroughly.

(2) Those who love the church faithfully aren’t with sinners.

Those who walk in the truth aren’t with false sinners and don’t listen to them. This is because there is a wicked scheme in their hands and full of bribes in their right hands (v. 10).

(3) Those who love the church faithfully hate the assembly of evildoers.

Those who love the church where God’s glory dwells hate the assembly of evildoers that is without God’s glory. The reason is because God hates that kind of assembly. This is what God said through Prophet Isaiah: “Bring your worthless offerings no longer, Incense is an abomination to Me New moon and sabbath,

the calling of assemblies — I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them” (Isa. 1:13-14).

I remember crying as I was singing the Korean gospel song “As The Water Cover The Sea.” I miss the tears that were shed as I was thinking of the day when the glory of God will fill the whole world. As we live in this sinful world, as God’s holy name is defiled, I would like all of us to praise God with our hearts that repents our sins of bringing shame to God’s glory, and to long for the glory of God. I believe that day will come. I believe that the world full of God’s glory, the day of full praise and worship to God in that glory will come. Until that day come, let us walk by faith, longing for the glorious place of God as we live in this sinful world. I hope and pray that no matter what, we will not be moved by trusting in God completely, and we will live in the Lord’s truth without compromising falsehood in a false world, and will love the Lord’s church that Jesus bought with His precious blood even more.

Korean Hymn “I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord”:

- (1) I love Thy Kingdom, Lord, The house of Thine abode, The Church our blest Redeemer saved  
With His own precious blood.
- (2) I love Thy Church, O God; Her walls before Thee stand, Dear as the apple of Thine eye,  
And graven on Thy hand.
- (3) For her my tears shall fall, For her my prayers ascend; To her my cares and toils be given,  
Till toils and cares shall end.
- (4) Beyond my highest joy I prize her heavenly ways, Her sweet communion, solemn vows,  
Her hymns of love and praise.
- (5) Sure as Thy truth shall last, To Zion shall be given The brightest glories earth can yield,  
And brighter bliss of heaven. Amen.

Trusting in the Lord who is the Head of the Victory Presbyterian Church and remembering the tears of love that the Spirit enabled me to shed as I was singing the hymn “I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord,”

James Kim

(With heart of loving the Lord and of His church)

## A fearful situation

### [Psalms 27:1-6]

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

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

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

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

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

(1) The first reason is because David looked at God. Therefore, we must look to God in our

fearful situation in order for us to be confident.

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

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

(2) The second reason is because David looked back at the past grace of God's salvation.

Therefore, we also need to remember the experience of victory (salvation) of the past in order for us to be confident in the fearful situation.

Look at Psalms 27:2 – "When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh, My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell." As David looked back at the past of the dark situation that he faced and



remembered how God made his enemies to stumbled and fell, he was confident in his fearful situation. Like David, in order for us to be confident in our fearful situation, we should reflect back and remember God's salvation in the past instead of thinking about our present dark situation and worry about our future. By doing so, we must have conviction of God's salvation and victory.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Look at Psalms 27:5 – "For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; In the secret place

of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock.” The reason why David sought to dwell in the house of the Lord and to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord was because he longed for the protection of Heavenly Father. The reason why David wanted to have fellowship with the Lord in the temple of God (v. 4) was because he believed that it was the way to be saved in all its dangers (Park Yun-sun).

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

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

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

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

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

Look at Psalms 27:6 – “... And I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will

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

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

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

Desiring to be established as a worshiper, who is bold, prays and praises even in a fearful situation,

James Kim

(As I pursue the change of my heart more than change of the fearful situation)

## **“One thing I have asked from the LORD”**

**“One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD And to meditate in His temple.” (Psalms 27:4)**

Since college, I remember crying a lot while playing a guitar and singing the gospel song “One Think I Ask” by myself. After I was called by God in my first year in college and decided to obey that call, I came to love this song because of my own difficulties and hardships. The difficulties and hardships that I was going through made me seek one thing. And that one thing was “That I may dwell in the house of the Lord to behold the beauty of the Lord.”

In Psalms 27:5, David sought the Lord’s house in trouble. Why did he seek the Lord’s house? What this world can give us is trouble, pain, and sorrow. Although we may be mistaken to see this world through joy and pleasure temporary, this world can give us only trouble, pain, and tears. But the surprising thing is that when we Christians experience the trouble, suffering, and sorrow, we eagerly ask God for “one thing”. When we see the world’s ugly appearance, we are discouraged, disappointed, hurt, painful, and weeping, the Holy Spirit fills our hearts with the eagerness to see the beauty of the Lord in the house of the Lord. It is when we experience trouble, suffering, and adversity that our hearts are burning for longing of the Lord in the house of the Lord, not in the home of this world. The more and more the pain we get, the more and more we eagerly ask for one thing. Why is that? The reason was because David wanted the Lord to conceal and hide him in His tabernacle, in the secret place of His tent and lift him up on a rock (v. 5). When our enemies, the Devil, pour out all the temptations, persecutions, and sufferings to devour us, just as the chicks dwell in the arms of their mothers or under their wings when they feel the danger of an eagle, we desperately seek to throw ourselves in the arms of the Lord in the house of the Lord.

So trouble is blessing for us to pray to God. And trouble makes us to seek one thing. And that one thing is “That I may dwell in the house of the Lord to behold the beauty of the Lord.” The Christians who see the beauty of the Lord even in the midst of trouble are men and women of prayers who seek only one thing. Since they saw the beauty of the Lord in prayer with their spiritual eyes, they can finish prayer after being raised on the rock. I would like to pray like this too.

Hopping to go to the Lord's house and to meet my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ who are in the arms of our Heavenly Father,

James Kim

(After singing the Korean hymn, "I'm Pressing on the Upward Way")

## **‘Wait for the Lord, O my soul!’**

### **[Psalms 27:7-14]**

A person named Stormy Omashan says in the article, ‘Why are you worried when you can pray?’: ‘We don’t like waiting. We want to act.’ I think it’s a very meaningful word. We are quick to act rather than to stay quietly before God and wait for Him. When we cannot wait any longer, we ask the question, ‘When should I wait?’ and then we just act. In response, Stormy Omashan says that it is best to see the time of waiting as the time to serve God. He encourages us to try our thoughts like this: ‘If you think that you are serving God rather than enduring the current situation, it is much easier to endure’ (Internet).

In Psalms 27:14, the psalmist David says, “Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD.” Here he uses the word “wait” twice. He is emphasizing the word ‘wait, o my soul’. David is giving us the lesson of waiting for God quietly. Dr. Yoon-sun Park speaks of four things to do when the saints face adversity: (1) We must remember and wait that the adversity we face is not what God doesn’t know, (2) We have to wait at the Lord’s feet, because we aren’t aware of what God is doing and it is difficult for humans to know, (3) When the time comes, God will solve the adversity, so we must wait in a prayerful manner, and (4) At some time, it is better for the saints to wait for the Lord quietly in solving the problems than to work. Under the heading “Wait for the Lord, O my soul!”, I would like to meditate and learn three things what those who wait for the Lord do.

### **First, those who wait for the Lord want the Lord’s grace.**

Look at Psalms 27:7 – “Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice, And be gracious to me and answer me.” Why did David want the Lord’s grace? If I was David, I would ask God’s justice for my enemies so that God would punish my enemies of evildoers (v. 2), rather than seeking God’s grace. Why did David ask for God’s grace? This was because David was afraid that the Lord would be angry and abandon him (v. 9). This was because David feared being forsaken by God like Saul (Park). So why was King Saul forsaken by God? The reason is because he had rejected the word of God. So the Lord had also rejected him from being king (1 Sam. 15:23). Although King Saul received God’s command through Samuel, that is to utterly destroy Amalek, he disobeyed God (v. 3). Why did he disobey God’s command? The reason was because King Saul initially considered himself small, but after winning the war against Amalek, he became proud enough to set up a monument for himself (v. 12). The Bible says that God looks at the heart, not our appearance like us (16:7). King Saul’s heart was proud. And because his heart was proud, he disobeyed God and was eventually abandoned by God. David was afraid of this. He was afraid that like

Saul he might disobey God's commands in pride and be abandoned by God. Interestingly, David was afraid of God rather than fear of people in situations where he could fear people enough. In other words, David wasn't afraid of being abandoned by people, but afraid of being abandoned by God. His situation was in the midst of "trouble" (v. 5) due to the persecution of his enemies and enemies of evildoers (v. 2), and despite the fact that a host encamped against David (v. 3), David didn't fear them but the holy God. David who feared that God would be angry and abandoned him, feared that the bud of pride would grow in his heart and be abandoned by God.

How about us? Do we fear God, like David, that the bud of pride will grow in our hearts and be forsaken by God? Or are we living a life of disobedience to the word of God in pride like Saul? If we have forsaken the word of God and have lived the life of disobedience, we should wait for God's grace, like David. And if we want God's grace like David, we must cry out to God (v. 7). And as we cry out to God, we must wait for God to answer our prayers.

### **Second, those who wait for the Lord seek the Lord's face.**

Look at Psalms 27:8 – "When You said, 'Seek My face,' my heart said to You, 'Your face, O LORD, I shall seek.'" Here, the word 'Seek the Lords face' means to wait with desire for the Lord's grace (face) (Park). The reason why David, who was afraid of committing sins to God his heart, wanted the Lord's graceful face (face) was because he knew that he would commit sin in his heart if God wouldn't show His grace and help him.

After finishing my work last week, I went home to eat and shared my thoughts with my wife. My thought was that if God isn't gracious to us and if He doesn't work, we cannot change even a very small wrong habit. I thought about how we could keep our corrupt heart from pride without God's help if we couldn't even fix our little wrong habits without God's grace. This is what David said in Psalms 27:9 – "Do not hide Your face from me, Do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; Do not abandon me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation!" David, who longed for the Lord's face, wished God's help and wanted to live a life with God through His grace. That was why he prayed to God, "Do not abandon me nor forsake me" (v. 9). Then David had faith that his parents forsook him, but the Lord wouldn't take him up (v. 10). Not only was he feared that his heart be proud and sin against God, but also he feared that the Lord might hide His face from him. He feared that he could no longer see the gracious Lord like a baby who is afraid because he can't see his parents' face. So David prayed to the Lord so that he could see His face. In that prayer, David was sure to see God's grace: "... I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD ..." (v. 13). How precious is this assurance. God, who shows His face to those who seek God's face, David, who longed for His gracious face, was convinced to see the Lord's grace. David, who feared that he would sin against God through pride of his heart, prayed to fill his heart with the grace of God and had assurance that God would answer his prayer, because he was more and more eager to see God's face in his heart (v. 8). We must guard against pride in our hearts, and our hearts must seek His face like David. The wave of

God's grace will flow through our lives as we seek and find the Lord's grace.

### **Third and last, those who wait for the Lord see the Lord's way.**

Look at Psalms 27:11 – “Teach me Your way, O LORD, And lead me in a level path Because of my foes.” David, who wanted to walk with the Lord, was convinced to see the Lord's grace while seeking His grace. In the midst of that, he asked the Lord to teach him the way of the Lord through God's grace so that he could walk that way. Here, “Your way” refers to the “righteous way” (Park). In the midst of the persecution of evil adversaries who practiced injustice, he feared God that he would be abandoned by God because of pride of his heart. At the same time, he asked God to teach him the Lord's way by God's grace. David also prayed to God, “And lead me in a level path” and this is the prayer that David asked for the Lord's help as he was walking on the way of righteous (Park). David's adversaries and enemies of evildoers were persecuting David to stop walking in the right way. So David prayed to the Lord, acknowledging that he could not faithfully walk in the right way without His help. In particular, in verse 12, we can learn more about David's situation: “Do not deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries, For false witnesses have risen against me, And such as breathe out violence.” With the enemies of David were trying to harm David by false witness, criticism, that is by biting remarks in malice, David prayed to the Lord to help him so that he could walk the Lord's way, the way righteous way.

I wonder how the Lord's way David wanted to walk was the level path. The reason for this was because David's circumstances and situations that he was facing were by no means the level path. How could the Lord's path that David was walking be the level path in the midst of persecution from his enemies, evildoers, and perjurers? We can find the answer when we meditate on the way of the cross of Jesus Christ. Even though it is never a smooth path in people's perspective, when each of us deny ourselves and carry the given cross and walk the Lord's way in following Him, the Lord will give us peace that the world cannot give. In other words, our Lord makes the smooth way in our hearts. It was as if Moses had sinned against God by grumbling because the path was blocked in front of the Red Sea, but God made the way of peace in his heart because Moses looked at God and asked Him for deliverance. As a result, Moses and the Israelites walked the Red Sea, like the ground. Likewise, when we were in a situation of adversity and trouble like David, so in human perspective there is no smooth path, our Lord gives the way of Zion in our hearts. What an amazing grace of God? Then, our Lord gives us the smooth way and guides us faithfully even in our life situation, just as God split the Red sea in our lives.

What are we waiting for? Are we seeking the Lord's compassion and grace and waiting like David, no matter what adversity and danger we are facing and walking the Lord's way? Are we faithfully walking on the Lord's path to that high place of heaven? Our Lord, who makes the path of our lives smooth, continues to smooth our path, both now and in the future, not to lean to the left or to the right. Let us seek God's compassion and grace and faithfully head toward the heaven with His help.



Giving thanks to God for His compassion and grace for enabling me to walk the Lord's way boldly by strengthening and empowering my soul with His Word,

James Kim

(Looking at the Lord of peace, who makes the smooth path of the Lord in my heart)

## **Do you believe for sure?**

**“I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living.” (Psalms 27:13)**

Yesterday, during the Wednesday prayer meeting, I received the powerful message of the good news, the gospel, through the retired pastor of our church (Text: Rom. 1:16-17). When I received the message, I came to think of two things. One of those two things is that this world gives us sorrow, but the Lord gives us joy through the gospel. That is why we can rejoice even in the tears. Every time we think of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have to rejoice because of the grace of salvation that the Lord has given us. I was reading Psalms chapters 26-31 for the Thursday morning prayer meeting in my church office after I finished the Wednesday prayer meeting. Then, while reading Psalms 27:3 and 11 in English, I paused and meditated. In particular, the reason I meditate on those two verses is because there are words that are repeated in those verses. The word is “confident”. In verse 3 says “even then will I be confident” and verse 13 says “I am still confident of this.” This is the lesson I have learned from meditating on these two verses: ‘He who believes that he will see the goodness of God can be confident in the midst of a crisis.’

In the context of Psalms 27, we can see that the psalmist David was facing a crisis. The crisis was a situation where “evildoers” (v. 2), “enemies” (vv. 2, 6, 11) and “a host” (v. 3) were opposing David (v. 3). In particular, his enemies surrounded David (v. 6) as if they were encamping everywhere in war (v. 3). They were false witnesses who breathed out violence (v. 12). It was a crisis of those adversaries who rose up to attack David (v. 12). Even in such a crisis, David certainly believed. It was that he would see God’s goodness in the land of the living (v. 13). David was not afraid because of this sure faith (v. 1). Not only was he not afraid, but he was still confident (v. 3). And he asked God for one thing: “... that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD And to meditate in His temple” (v. 4). Furthermore, David offered in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy, and sang praises to God (v. 6). He cried out with his voice (v. 7). He sought the Lord’s face (v. 8). And David declared to his soul: “Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD” (v. 14).

A crisis is an opportunity for us Christians. What kind of opportunity is it? It is a precious opportunity to see God’s goodness. What is God’s goodness that we will see in crisis? I thought about six things:

**First, God’s goodness that we will see in crisis is God’s protection.**

Look at Psalms 27:5 – “For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; In the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock.” God protected David on the day of trouble (v. 5). He concealed him in His tabernacle, in the secret place of His tent He hid him (v. 5).

There was an gospel song which God made me enjoy listening in the midst of the great crisis in my life. That gospel song is “Hide me in the shelter”. When we look at the lyrics of the song, this is what it says: “Under the shadow of your wings Here in the secret place of your holiness ... And keep me in the shadow of your wings Safe in the secret place of holiness ....” Every night when I had my first baby, Charis lying down in the intensive care unit, and came out of the hospital to drive to the house, I listened to this gospel song. The reason was because I desperately wanted God to keep Charis safe in His holy and secret place. The crisis certainly is a great opportunity to experience God’s protection

### **Second, God’s goodness that we will see in crisis is God’s exaltation.**

Look at Psalms 27:5b-6a: “... He will lift me up on a rock. And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me ....” God lifted David on a rock in the midst of the crisis (v. 5). In other words, God exalted David above his enemies who were around him (v. 6).

One of the lessons that God has taught me during the difficult times of my life is that ‘It is better to be exalted by God than to be exalted by people.’ And in order to be exalted by God, we have to humble ourselves before God and people. In other words, when we humble ourselves before God and people, God will exalt us (cf. Phil. 2:5-11). Crisis is an opportunity because God humbles us through crisis. Also crisis is a good opportunity for God to exalt us.

### **Third, God’s goodness that we will see in crisis is God’s answers of our prayers.**

Look at Psalms 27:7 – “Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice, And be gracious to me and answer me.” David cried with his voice to God (v. 7) when the host encamped against him (v. 3) and surrounded him (v. 6). His cry was one (v. 4). One thing was to live in the house of God for the rest of his life, looking to the beauty of God and meditating in His temple (v. 4). In this way, David’s supplication was narrowed down to one in the midst of many crises.

When we face the extreme crisis of life, our supplication seems to be more simplified. Rather than asking God for this and that, our difficult heart is buoyed up with the desire to live in God’s house like David. Therefore, we desire the Lord even more in the hope of everlasting kingdom. During the despair caused by the crisis, the Lord rather makes us to hope and to desire the Lord. The Lord makes us cry out to God through crisis. Not only that, crisis also allows us to experience God’s answer of our prayers. Not only does our heart dwell in the eternal house

of God, but it also allows us to see the beauty of God in the ugliness of this world. Therefore, crisis is the opportunity to cry out to God and the good opportunity to receive God's answers of our prayers.

#### **Fourth, God's goodness that we will see in crisis is God's help.**

Look at Psalms 27:9 – “Do not hide Your face from me, Do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; Do not abandon me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation!” In the midst of the crisis he faced, David cried out to God and recalled God's help in helping him from the past to the present (v. 9). This was because he was convinced that God, who helped in the past, would help in the present. And he believed that “God my Savior,” who is “my helper” not only wouldn't forsake him, but also would help him to save him (v. 9).

Crisis creates uncertainty in our hearts. The uncertain situation of crisis can shake the root of our hearts. However, through the crisis, the Lord who makes us to stand on the solid rock gives us great confidence in Him. That great confidence is that “God of my salvation” certainly will help me and will rescue (saves) me. Through crisis, we can meet God, our helper. Crisis is a great opportunity to experience God's help deeply.

#### **Fifth, God's goodness that we will see in crisis is God's reception.**

Look at Psalms 27:10 – “Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me.” David was confident that the Lord would receive him when he was surrounded by his enemies everywhere. Although no one would receive him, he believed that the Lord alone would receive him alone.

Even when we are in extreme hardships and crises, where “my brothers” are alienated from us (Job 19:13), or “my kinsmen” have gone away (v. 14) or “my servant” doesn't answer us (v. 16), or all “my intimate friends” detest us (v. 19), or even our breath is offensive to “my wife” (v. 17), we must like David have sure faith that God will receive us no matter what (Ps. 27:10). The Lord never forsakes us. He never leaves us. Actually our Lord not only cannot forsake us, but also he cannot leave us. We are sure to learn this through the crisis. Therefore, crisis is the good opportunity to experience God's reception.

#### **Sixth and last, God's goodness that we will see in crisis is God's guidance.**

Look at Psalms 27:11 – “Teach me your way, O LORD; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors.” David cried out to God, who received him and answered his prayers, to lead him to the straight path at the crossroads of life and death (v. 11). In fact, David asked God to guide him to the straight path even in the point of life and death. And he asked the Lord to teach him “your way” (v. 11).

Isn't it interesting to ask God to teach him and guide him to the straight path in the midst of such crisis. If we were in David's situation, we would pray to teach us the way out or show us how to get out of the way of life and

death situation. But David asked God to lead him to the Lord's way and the straight path. Perhaps the crisis in our life is a good opportunity to learn the Lord's way. Perhaps the time when the problems of east and west and north and south are encamping is a good opportunity to long for the way forward to heaven. Crisis can be the great opportunity to dramatically experience the Lord's guidance as the way of life, as we look to Him and follow Him in our journey of faith. Crisis is the great opportunity to experience the Shepherd Lord leading us to green pastures, quiet waters, and the paths of righteousness (23:2-3).

Crisis is the opportunity for us. Crisis is the great opportunity to see God's protection, God's exaltation, God's answers of our prayers, God's help, God's reception, and God's guidance for those who believe in God's goodness even in times of crisis. We shouldn't miss this great opportunity, but must earnestly pray to God even in the midst of crisis and expect and wait for God to answer our prayers. Even in situations where we may be afraid enough, we should wait with strong and bold heart. We should wait God confidently in faith. Anyone who believes that he will see God's goodness in this way is confident in the midst of a crisis.

"Be still, and know that I am God ..." (46:10a).

Wanting to live with firm faith in the Lord,

James Kim

["Taste and see that the Lord is good ..." (34:8)]

## **The church that isn't constructed by the Lord**

### **[Psalms 28]**

Are you sure that the Lord is building our church as He promised? (Mt. 16:18) Not only that you believe but have conviction that the Lord will build His church, do you also see with your spiritual eyes that the Lord is building our church as His promise to us 'I will build my church' (Mt. 16:18)? In Psalms 28:5b, the psalmist David said, "... he will tear them down and never build them up again." Based on this word, I would like to meditate on three things as to what church the Lord does not build. Nowadays, many books are published about the church growth and many pastors and lay leaders are interested in church growth. But I want to think about how the Lord does not build the church. Therefore, I want to be taught three things by Psalms 28:1-9 about what our responsibility in order for our church to be built by the Lord.

### **First, the church that isn't constructed by the Lord doesn't make the Lord the Rock.**

Look at Psalms 28:1 – "To you I call, O LORD my Rock; do not turn a deaf ear to me. For if you remain silent, I will be like those who have gone down to the pit." The fact is that church that doesn't have the Lord as the Rock doesn't pray. The psalmist David made the Lord the Rock and cried out to Him in the midst of the misery of the wicked enemies (Park). The fact that David cried to God indicates that David's heart relied on God. Look at verse 7: "The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song." David cried out to God earnestly for God's help in his terrible situation, because without God's salvation (vv. 8, 9) he would be like those who have gone down to the pit (v. 1b). David regarded God's unanswered prayer as death. That is, David considered the answer of his prayer as a life (Park). This precious lesson this fact gives us is that the church that makes the Lord the Rock is a prayer church that considers prayer as life.

Like David, we should make the Lord "My rock" and cry out to Him. Look at David: "Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help, as I lift up my hands toward your Most Holy Place" (v. 2). Look at verse 6: "Praise be to the LORD, for he has heard my cry for mercy." The church that the Lord doesn't build doesn't pray and thus there is no answer of prayer. Therefore the church doesn't give praise to God. In other words, the church that the Lord doesn't build has no prayer and no praise. But our church is a church that the Lord builds. Our church is the church that cries out to the Lord as we consider Jesus and His promise word as the rock. We should continue to rely on the Lord and ask Him to help us.

**Second, the church that isn't constructed by the Lord is the church whose words and hearts do not match.**

Look at Psalms 28:3 – “Do not drag me away with the wicked, with those who do evil, who speak cordially with their neighbors but harbor malice in their hearts.” Here, the phrase “the wicked, ... those who do evil” isn't normal wicked but the extreme wicked whom God cannot accept even in His longsuffering (Park). David, who was suffering because of these wicked men, cried out to his Rock, and David pleaded that ‘their end would not be like the end of the wicked (vv. 3-5) (Park). What are the characteristics of these wicked men? They speak peace with their neighbors, while evil is in their hearts (v. 3). In short, the wicked and those who do evil are hypocrites. They speak peace, while evil is in their hearts. David sought God's justice and asked God to repay the actions of these wicked and their evil. In other words, David asked for a just God to repay the wicked and those who do evil. Look at verse 4: “Requite them according to their work and according to the evil of their practices; Requite them according to the deeds of their hands; Repay them their recompense.” These wicked men, or hypocrites, don't regard the works of the Lord nor the deeds of His hands. Look at verse 5: “Because they do not regard the works of the LORD Nor the deeds of His hands, He will tear them down and not build them up.” Not only the hypocrites don't do the God's work nor can they do so because they don't regard the works of the Lord nor the deed of His hands.

We should strive to be in harmony with our words and our hearts. We shouldn't be guilty of hypocrites around us, saying words of peace to our neighbors, but have evil in our hearts (v. 3). In order to do this, our hearts must rely on God who is “my strength and my shield”. Look at verse 7: “The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusts in Him, ...” If our hearts rely on God like David, we will not have evil in our hearts as the wicked and those who do evil. And our lips will not speak “peace” in lies, but rather we will praise God like David (v. 6). What is the reason? It is because our hearts will leap for joy like David's heart (v. 7). Our church must be in harmony with words and actions, and our hearts must be filled with His love. Never should our hearts be filled with evil and say, ‘Peace’, ‘I love you.’ Above all, we must all bear the fruit of the Spire more and more so that we may be able to love others with action rather than just mere words.

**Third and last, the church that isn't constructed by the Lord is the church that does not make Him as their Shepherd.**

Look at Psalm 28:9 – “Save your people and bless your inheritance; be their shepherd and carry them forever.” David cried out to God in the midst of the persecution of the wicked and those who do evil. In the midst of that, he was convinced that God would answer his prayers. He believed that God would help him. In this conviction, David prayed for the Israelites (v. 9). One of these prayers was, “be their shepherd and carry them forever” (v. 9). David asked the Lord to be the shepherd of the Israelites, so that the Lord would lift them up and

carry them as if the shepherd were carrying sheep. But the wicked and those who do evil don't make the Lord as their shepherd. They show no regard for the works of the Lord. And they don't seek the shepherd's guidance or protection.

The saints who don't have the Lord as their shepherd cannot be built by the Lord. The church is same. The church that doesn't make the Lord the Shepherd will not be built by the Lord. It makes no sense to build the church without making the Lord the Shepherd, who is the Head of the Church and the Cornerstone, just as if we are trying to build a house without asking for the help of the builder. The wicked and those who do evil refuse the Lord to be their shepherd and refuse to be led by Him. But we the church must consider the Lord who is the head of the church as our Shepherd. We need to hold on to the word of the Lord's promises and obey that word, putting our efforts in raising the Christ-centered leaders. In the meantime, as Psalm 23: 1 says, we must confess that "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want" and live according to that confession.

As I see my heart shaking in doubt as to whether the Lord is building our church or not, I see myself not making Him the "my rock" like David. I see myself in times when I don't rely solely on the Lord and ask Him in faith, but in doubt, there is no confidence in answer of my prayers and no praise in my heart toward Him. Going further, I see myself sinning against God and doing ministry by having so many sinful thoughts in my thought realm and by not having consistency in my word and my action. I also see myself that even though I am saying that the Lord is my Shepherd, I don't even listen to His voice even when I hear it. I am not trusting in Him completely and I am not continuing in what I have learned and have become convinced (2 Tim. 3:14). Nevertheless, the Lord is faithful in building His church as the Lord has promised to us in Matthew 16:18. How can we know this? We can know this when we look at our church leadership. Now I am convinced that Satan was attacking the leadership of our church, but in the midst of that, God was protecting us and was building stronger leadership. The Lord, who enables me to see this sovereign work of God with the spiritual eyes and enables me to dwell in conviction, is causing me to stand firm on the Rock Jesus Christ and His Word. And the Lord my Shepherd is guiding me and leading me. This Lord is carrying us. I pray that the Lord will answer our prayers and make us praise Him as our church relies on Him and prays to Him whenever it is difficult. Our church must be the church that regards Jesus as the Rock and stand firm on His Word. Our church must be the church that is in harmony with the heart and words. And our church must be the church with the Lord as our Shepherd. In the meantime, we are eagerly pray that the Lord continues to build His church for His glory.

Senior pastor of Victory Presbyterian Church that is being built by the Lord,

James Kim

(Relying on the Rock of the Church, the Lord Jesus)



## **The church that isn't built by the Lord**

**“Since they show no regard for the works of the LORD and what his hands have done, he will tear them down and never build them up again.” (Psalms 28:5)**

One day I had a conversation with my church visitation pastor on our way to lunch. I heard through my church visitation pastor that the Korean restaurant we were going to was sued by another restaurant with a similar name. When I that from him, I unconsciously said, 'That restaurant is no different from a church.' After speaking, I thought and found something wrong. It was awkward to say unconsciously that the restaurant is suing another restaurant like the church instead of the church is suing another church in a court like the restaurant. Perhaps I said so because before I went to eat I saw on a Christian website bulletin board that one of the large immigrant churches under the title '... It's not division' and what people wrote about it.

Too often we see problems in the church going to the world court. Precious offerings from the church believers are widely used to fight in the courts of the world. It is an unfortunate reality that the church offerings by the saints are being abused by the church in attorney's fees and newspaper advertisements, and so on. Think about how our Lord would see these great problems in the church whom He died on the cross and shed His precious blood. I fear whether the Lord will build these churches.

When we look at Psalms 28:5b, the Bible says that there are churches that God “will tear them down and never build them up again.” I would like to receive two lessons, centered on Psalm 28:3 and 5, which church is such church that the Lord doesn't build?

**First, the church that isn't built by the Lord is a church that does not really love its neighbors.**

Look at Psalms 28: 3 – “Do not drag me away with the wicked, with those who do evil, who speak cordially with their neighbors but harbor malice in their hearts.” The church that the Lord doesn't build is a church whose lips resemble the Lord but whose heart is filled with hatred, envy, and jealousy. On our lips, we say “peace,” but if there is evil in our hearts, that church won't be built by the Lord. Rather, the Bible says that the Lord will “tear them down” such church (v. 5). The wise man says in Proverbs 10:18: “He who conceals his hatred has lying lips .... ”

We should listen to this word with fear. If we don't love our neighbors in truth and in action but only with our lips, our church will not be built by the Lord. Narrowly speaking, if we, the Korean Ministry members, speak only peace with our lips and don't live the life of the peacemaker, but live the life of peace breakers, then the Lord will not build our church. More broadly, if we, the Korean Ministry members, say that Hispanic Ministry members are one family of the Lord with our lips, but have preconceived notions and discriminate against them like the people in the world, then the Lord will not build our church. If our lips are sweet but our hearts is bitter, then it is false love. It is not true love. False love cannot build the other person. It will rather destroy him/her. The wise man says in Proverbs 26:23, "Like a coating of glaze over earthenware are fervent lips with an evil heart." We must listen to 1 John 3:18 and obey: "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth." We, the Korean Ministry, should be the mother ministry. That means we should take on the role of a mother in our church. Therefore, we must love our church members with love and deeds, especially both English Ministry and Hispanic Ministry members. Just like a mother who loves and cherishes her children no matter what, we the Korean Ministry members should embrace and love English and Hispanic ministries members. In addition, we must not just say "peace" in words but actually become peacemakers, demonstrating to the world that we are breaking down all the walls between us with the gospel of Christ and are truly one body of Christ.

**Second and last, the church that isn't built by the Lord is a church that shows no regard for the works of the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 28:5 – "Since they show no regard for the works of the LORD and what his hands have done, he will tear them down and never build them up again." If we apply this word to our church, the Lord will not build our church if we don't believe the Lord's promise that 'I will build My church' (Mt. 16:18) unless we acknowledge that He is building His church. Rather, He will 'tear down' the church. Therefore, we must ask our Lord to open our spiritual eyes to the Lord to see the Lord's work of building up His church. Then we will be able to confess with our hearts that "this work had been done with the help of our God" (Neh. 6:16).

Without the Lord's help, no church can be built. In our strength, the church can never be built. Only when the faithful Lord fulfills His word of promise of Matthew 16:18 that His church can be built. The amazing fact is that this work is still being done by our Lord. First of all, I am experiencing the building work of the Lord, who shows the "gap" (Neh. 6:1) in me that I am lacking and He breaks down what is to be broken down and is rebuilding me. Furthermore, I am seeing the work of the Lord in building in the lives of each of the pastors and the English ministry leaders.

Our church is the Lord's church and the Lord is building His church (Mt. 16:18). In order to be the church that is being built by the Lord, we must all love our neighbors and think about the things that He is doing. But if we don't do the ministry of making peace but love our neighbors only with our lips, then the Lord will not build our

church. And if we don't acknowledge that the Lord is building the church even though we see it, then the Lord will not build our church. I hope and pray that we can participate in the Lord's work of building His church as we humbly receive these lessons. Victory!

Victory Presbyterian Church that the Lord builds,

James Kim

(Hearing the word of God that wakes the morning)

## **Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name!**

### **[Psalms 29]**

In the Old Testament, there are seven important names of Jehovah: (1) “Jehovah-jireh” means “The Lord Will Provide” (Gen. 22:14), (2) “Jehovah Rapha” means “The Lord Who Heals You” (Exod. 15:26; Ps. 103:3), (3) “Jehovah-nissi” means “The Lord is my Banner” (Exod. 17:15), (4) “Jehovah Shalom” means “The Lord Is Peace” (Judg. 6:24), (5) “Jehovah Raah” means “The Lord Is My Shepherd” (Ps. 23:1; Jn. 10:19), (6) “Jehovah Tsidkenu” means “The Lord Our Righteousness (Jere. 23:6; 1 Cor. 1:30), (7) “Jehovan Shammah” means “The Lord Is There” (Ezek. 48:35; Rev. 21:3). The Bible says of God’s holy name: “You shall not give any of your offspring to offer them to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God; I am the LORD” (Lev. 18:21). The people in this world see God through us, the Christians. Therefore, if we are flawed by unbelievers, they speak not only of human error but also they profaned God’s name. The Bible Leviticus 21:6 says that we should be holy to our God and we shouldn’t profane His name. If we are unholy in our thoughts and life before God, then we are dishonoring God’s name.

The Bible Psalms 29:2a says, “Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name ....” I would like to receive two lessons how we to ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name. And I want to meditate on the blessings to those who give glory to God’s name as we live according to His instructions, I pray that God’s grace be with us all.

**First, those who ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name worship God “in holy array.”**

Look at Psalms 29:2 – “Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the LORD in holy array.” Here the phrase “in holy array” means to have holy character (Park). In order to ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name, we must have proper character. And that proper character is ‘holy character’. What kind of life does the worshipers with holy character live? They live pure life as those who bear the holy name of God (Park).

We must pursue a holy life. We must live a pure life in the sight of God, receiving the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, and live a separate life, not in pairs with the world. But who will be able to purify and boast in the presence of the Lord, even if we throw away all our wrongdoing and all sinful thoughts are forsaken. After all, we can only rely on the blood of Jesus that He shed on the cross. We, who have been washed away by the precious blood of Jesus, must rely on His blood to go to the throne of God’s grace and worship Him (Heb. 4:16). We, who want to ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name, should seek holy life in order to worship God.

In the Old Testament, there are people who distinguish themselves and have dedicated themselves to God. They are called “Nazirites.” Here, the meaning of the word “Nazirites” comes from the Hebrew word ‘nazir’ that means “consecrated,” “separated,” “distinguished” or “devoted.” In other words, the Nazirites are those who made a dedication of themselves to live a holy life before God. We must become the Nazirite worshipers. Like the Nazirites who devoted themselves to living the holy life, we are the distinguished and dedicated ones who live in this sinful world. Therefore, we need to become worshipers who live by resembling our holy God, aiming at the standard of faith that says, “Be holy, because I am holy” (Lev. 11:45; 1 Pet. 1:16). We must also ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name. I hope and pray that we will be able to worship God in obedience and dedication to living holy life like the Nazirites. Therefore, I hope and pray that we can ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name.

**Second, those who ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name worship God hear the voice of God.**

In Psalm 29:3-9, David uses the word “the voice of the Lord” seven times. This is not a meaningless repetition, but a response to the spiritual interpretation of thunders that appeared as a natural phenomenon and is regarded as the voice of God (Park). David, who expresses the voice of God as the thunder of the storm, tells us how dignified the Word of God is. Those who ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name wear holy clothes and worship God, listen to God’s majestic words. The majestic word is powerful (v. 4), and it even breaks the cedars (v. 5). David, who heard this voice of God, said, “And in His temple everything says, ‘Glory!’ (v. 9) This refers to the praises of all the saints (Calvin). All the saints who recognize the glory of God in nature must praise God (Park).

We must give God the glory He deserves. We, who want to do that, must listen to God’s majestic words as we ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name. As we recognize that God’s majestic word spoken in Psalms 29 was in the context of judgment, we must ask the question, ‘How should we respond to the Word of God we are hearing?’ We can think in four ways:

(1) We must be in awe of God’s word while hearing the God’s majestic word.

We should never take His word lightly. Therefore, we must try not to commit sins even in our hearts with unholy acts on the Word, such as adding and subtracting to the Word of God.

(2) As we listen to the powerful word of God, our harden heart like cedar must be broken.

Through God’s majestic words, our harden hearts and our stubbornness must be broken. We must break up our unplowed ground with the powerful word of the Lord.

(3) Our dry hearts, like the wilderness, must be shaken by the word of God (v. 8).

As we hear the word of God that is alive and works, our dry hearts must be stirred up (Hag 1:14).

(4) We must be spiritually naked while hearing the holy word of God.

Look at Psalms 29:9 – “The voice of the LORD makes the deer to calve And strips the forests bare; And in His temple everything says, ‘Glory!’” We shouldn’t come out in a packaged form and worship God. We shouldn’t worship God in pursuit of a form of godliness. We must go to God humbly just as we are, as we reveal all the things hidden deeply in us by God’s holy word. In order to do that, we must come to Him with spiritual nakedness through the word of God. Those who ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name are worshipers. They are also listeners. They hear the majestic voice of God.

What blessings come to those who ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name in this way? The Bible says that when we bring glory to God’s name, we are blessed with strength and peace from God. Look at Psalms 29:11 – “The LORD will give strength to His people; The LORD will bless His people with peace.” Those who ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name are true worshipers and listeners. God’s blessing to such people is “strength” and “peace.” What kind of strength do the saints need? We can think in two ways: (1) The strength the Lord gives to us in worship. That strength is “the joy of the Lord” (Neh. 8:10), (2) The strength the Lord gives is the strength of the word of God that we receive from hearing His word and obey it. This strength eventually gives saints who are on the side of justice the courage and comfort even in the judgment of God (Park). “Peace” is the blessing that God makes us to enjoy in the life of worship and life of hearing His word and obeying it.

God says, “I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went” (Ezek. 36:21). God is God who concerns for His holy name. Although we, like the Israelites, have profaned God’s holy name in this world, God has promised to vindicate the holiness of His great name (v. 23). Although we have profaned the precious name of Jesus in this world, God has promised to prove Himself holy among us in the worldly people’s sight because He has concern for His holy name. If we get to know this grace of God, then we will worship God “in holy array” (Ps. 29:2) and will humbly hear God’s majestic voice, hoping to ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name. Therefore, we will enjoy the blessings of God’s strength and peace. May these blessings be upon us.

May the Name of Jesus receive honor and glory.

James Kim

(Partially enjoying His strength and peace)

## **“O Lord, be my helper”**

### **[Psalms 30]**

As I watched my church elder suffering from his back injury, I was able to sympathize with him and his pain a little because I hurt my back badly before. I thought of this when I looked at the elder who hurt his back so bad that he couldn't even wear the socks without someone's help: 'It seems that we humans need our parents' help when we are born, and later we are old can't move our body freely, we need others' help again.' After all, we need help from others. But what should we do if no one can help us?

In Psalms 22:11, the psalmist David says: “Be not far from me, for trouble is near; For there is none to help.” In trouble, David trusted in the Lord, confessing that no one could help him. Like David, we must trust in the Lord when no one helps us. We must cry out to the Lord. Even if we feel that our prayers aren't being answered by God, we should keep on crying out to God without giving up (vv. 1-2). And we must look back and reflect on God's saving grace (vv. 4-5). Finally, we must cast all our cares upon the Lord (vv. 9-10).

The Bible Psalms 30:10 says, “... O LORD, be my helper.” The psalmist David admits that there is only the Lord can help him, so he is asking the Lord for help. I would like to receive His grace by meditating on 5 things about how the Lord, who is our helper, helps us.

#### **First, the Lord who is our helper lifts us up.**

Look at Psalms 30:1 – “I will extol You, O LORD, for You have lifted me up, And have not let my enemies rejoice over me.” David was determined to exalt the Lord. How did he determine to exalt the Lord? It was by praising the Lord, serving Him, and loving Him with everything (Park). Then why did David determine to exalt the Lord like this? It was because the Lord brought David up from his adversary (v. 3). Here the word “brought up” in Arabic is “dalah” and is used for drawing up water from a well (Internet). This word refers to the act of God's salvation that lifts and saves the life from a place to die, as if drawing up water from the well (Park). I think the Lord saves us when we fall into the deep water and thus we feel very helpless because we can't do anything to save ourselves. It's like when Peter saw the wind, became frightened, began to sink and cried out, “Lord, save me!”, the Lord Jesus immediately stretch out His hand and took hold of him and saved him (Mt. 14:30-31). Then, where did God lift David up and deliver him? God lifted him up and brought him up from Sheol (Ps. 30:3). God didn't let David go down to the pit (v. 3). In a situation almost near death, that is, in an extreme situation that seemed to be buried by death, God delivered David (Park). So, the Lord had not let David's enemies to rejoice over him (v. 1).

Satan and his children oppose us and want to make us to sin no matter how so that we may enjoy sinning against Him. But David was confident with his experience. It was none other than that the Lord delivered David out of the hand of his adversary, preventing his enemies from having anything to rejoice. This fact is a great comfort to us. Our God, who makes our enemies not to rejoice, is our deliverer. Our God is the God who, when we fall into the place of death, draws us out of that place as if we were to draw water out of it. Those of us who experience the grace of God's salvation must exalt God like David. We must praise the Lord, serve Him and love Him with everything. It is said that St. Cardarine lived to exalt the Lord by obeying as if he had no will in front of the Lord (Park). Like St. Cardarine, we must live a life that exalts the Lord through the grace of the Lord's salvation.

### **Second, the Lord who is our helper heals us.**

Look at Psalms 30:2 – “O LORD my God, I cried to You for help, and You healed me.” David was crying for help from God when he was being persecuted from his enemies. Then the Lord answered his prayer and healed him. Here, the word “healed” means that there was a temporary failure, but it was restored by God's help (Park). If so, what is this “temporary failure” that David committed? It was pride to say to himself, “... in my prosperity, ‘I will never b moved’” (vv. 6-7). Eventually, because of this sin, the Lord concealed His face from David, which caused David to be dismayed (v. 7). How precious is this dismay? This dismay isn't worldly but a godly that leads to repentance. In this dismay, David cried out to the Lord (vv. 2, 8). His prayer was, “Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me; O LORD, be my helper” (v. 10). Here, the prayer title of ‘Be gracious to me’ is the prayer topic that we who have sinned should seek from God. As a result of that prayer, David was restored with the help of God's grace. We are like David failed God so many times. When we think about what to do, we must like David first seek for God's grace. We should use our failure as an opportunity to seek God. And in the midst of that, we should take our failures as the opportunity to experience God's grace. And with His grace, our relationship with God must be restored. But what we need to keep in mind is that there is no real reconciliation without real repentance. By truly repenting our sins to God, we must experience the love of God's reconciliation. We must experience the love of God's reconciliation through repentance by His discipline in His holy love.

### **Third, the Lord who is our helper gives us joy.**

Look at Psalms 30:5 – “For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; Weeping may last for the night, But a shout of joy comes in the morning.” The truth that David realized after being helped (saved) and healed by God's help was that there are actually more joyful things than sad things. In other words, there was more amount of joy that David enjoyed being saved than the amount of suffering in his difficult place (Park). What do you think? Do you think there are more joyful things than sad things? But our human nature remembers sad things better than joyful things. It's like not remembering the smell of a rose, but remembering that we were stabbed in its thorn for a long time (Park). However, because God's anger is but for a moment, the pain that comes from God's



anger is for the moment and His grace is for a lifetime (v. 5). Therefore, even though there is weeping that last for the night due to the sufferings by God's anger, there is a shout of joy in the morning by His grace.

As I was reading J. I. Packers' "God's Plan for you" last Monday, the heart that God gave me was "... I will rejoice and will rejoice" (Phil. 1:18). No matter what the circumstances I may be in, the Holy Spirit has made me to resolve by making me to speak to my own soul: 'I should be glad and rejoice!' We have to experience momentary tears and sorrows because of pains. But these tears and sorrows make us taste more joy. Dr. Yoon-sun Park said, '... It is a fact that when we humbly receive suffering from God's anger, the suffering itself changes its taste and becomes a blessing to us' (Park). The taste of pain from God's anger may be bitter like a Chinese medicine in our lips when we taste it, but it is great help to our soul. Eventually, like David, we want to confess, "You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness" (Ps. 30:11).

#### **Fourth, the Lord who is our helper makes us not to be moved.**

Look at Psalms 30:6-7: "Now as for me, I said in my prosperity, 'I will never be moved.' O LORD, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong; You hid Your face, I was dismayed." God answered the David's prayer and helped him in strengthening his kingdom. This is the meaning of the word "You have made my mountain to stand strong" (Park). Just as God has strengthened the David's kingdom, our Lord strengthens us individually, our homes, and the church that He bought with His blood, so that it will never be moved. But it is self-conceit and pride that we must guard ourselves against. Although God established the David's kingdom to be strong, David was proud and said, "I will never be moved" (v. 6, Park). Eventually, God was angry with David, who became proud, and David was troubled in his repentance. It isn't easy for a person to repent when he is under God's discipline (Park). But David repented at such time (see 51:4). What we must keep in mind is "O Lord, by Your favor" (30:7). In other words, it isn't because we are humble, good, and so on that the Lord makes us strong and make us not to be moved, but because of His grace. We must not forget this.

#### **Fifth and last, the Lord who is our helper makes us to praise Him.**

Look at Psalms 30:12 – "That my soul may sing praise to You and not be silent O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever." In the end, the God who helps us makes us to praise the Lord. The God of salvation, who draws us out of our trouble, heals (restores) us, gives us joy, and also strengthens us so that we will not be moved under any circumstances. And we, who are blessed by the Lord, must praise him. So David declares in verse 4: "Sing praise to the LORD, you His godly ones, And give thanks to His holy name." David couldn't stay silent while thinking of God's grace. He cried out to God in his trouble, and because he received his prayer answered, he was overjoyed and vowed to praise God forever. David, who said before God how the dead could praise Him and declare His faithfulness (v. 9), was finally saved by God's grace, from his enemy, from sorrow, from

His anger, and His favor for the lifetime (v. 5). Therefore, he vowed to praise God forever. We must not forget God's grace for us. Therefore, we must praise God. We who receive His help, as those who enjoy His grace, should thank the Lord and glorify Him with praise.

When we look at the cross, the surprising thing is that God who is our helper, heard His Son Jesus' prayer on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" but didn't help Jesus (Mt. 27:46). Heavenly Father didn't help His Son Jesus even though He saw Jesus, His begotten Son, descending into the gates of Hades. Why did Heavenly Father do that? The reason was to save us who were headed for eternal death, in order to restore our relationship with God, Heavenly Father left Jesus to die on the cross. He didn't help His Son Jesus on the cross in order to give us His divine joy and to strengthen us. After all, God makes us to praise Him. Therefore, we must live a life that exalts the Lord who is our helper.

Praising the Lord who is my helper,

James Kim

(After the Lord's help)

# Trust in the Lord!

## [Psalms 31:1-8]

Let's ask this question to ourselves: 'Do I always trust in the Lord, or Do I sometimes trust in vain gods or vain things?' To answer this question, we must first think about what we trust in. In the article 'Trusting is Faith,' there is a lesson we can learn from a evangelical pastor of the Church of England Canon Battersby's sermon on the story of a royal official whose son was sick at Capernaum when he visited Jesus from Capernaum to Ghana and asked Him to cure his son's illness. The lesson was that the royal official believed the words of Jesus, "Go, your son lives" (Jn. 4:50) and as he was going down, his slaves met him, saying that his son was living (v. 51). Here, faith is when God promises that He will protect me, I confess that 'The word of the Lord is enough' even if there is nothing to rely on in this world. This is faith and this is trusting (Internet). I asked myself this question: 'Is it enough for me with just the Lord's promise to our church 'I will build My church' (Mt. 16:18)?' Or 'Do I trust in myself and/or other people instead of trusting in His promise?' Obviously, if I trust in the Lord's promise completely and do the pastoral ministry with full faith, then I won't be afraid of any situation, nor will I be anxious and discouraged by anything. A soul who believes and is convinced that the word of the Lord's promises is sufficient completely trust in the Lord. We must live our Christian life, confessing that there is nothing but the Lord to trust in as we go through the years.

In Psalms 31:6, we see that the psalmist David resolves, "I hate those who regard vain idols, But I trust in the LORD." I want to meditate on two things about those who trust in the Lord, under the heading "Trust in the Lord!" I hope and pray that we all become like David who trust in the Lord.

### **First, those who trust in the Lord take refuge in Him.**

Look at Psalms 31:1 – "In You, O LORD, I have taken refuge; Let me never be ashamed; ...." David suffered and took refuge in the Lord. The word taking refuge in the Lord means that David made God his refuge and cried out to Him. David, who had taken refuge in the Lord, prayed to God. What were the prayers of David who had taken refuge in Him? We can think of it in three ways:

#### (1) David's first prayer was 'Deliver me.'

Look at Psalms 31:1 – "... In Your righteousness deliver me." David prayed to God for deliverance in the midst of his crisis. The crisis was that David's powerful and crafty enemies were trying to capture him like

catching the animals with the net which they had secretly laid for David (v. 4). In this crisis, David trusted in the Lord completely and cried out to Him, who was the David's refuge, to deliver him by pulling him out of the net which his enemies secretly laid for him (v. 4). Interestingly, David didn't ask God to deliver him on the basis of his own righteousness, but rather on the basis of the righteousness of the Lord (v. 1). David sought the Lord to deliver him based on the Lord's righteous act in protecting His elect faithfully (Calvin). The precious lesson we need to learn here is that we should pray for deliverance (salvation) to our Father God not on the basis of our righteousness, but only on the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

(2) David's second prayer was "Be to me a rock of strength, A stronghold to save me."

Look at Psalms 31:2 – "Incline Your ear to me, rescue me quickly; Be to me a rock of strength, A stronghold to save me." This is a prayer for God's protection. And this prayer is the prayer that trust in God's omnipotence and His strength. Here in verse 2, "a rock of strength" means "a bulwark on the rock that can be concealed," and "A stronghold" refers to a sheltered building on the top of the mountain. These names compared God who is able to protect (Park). After David had taken refuge in the Lord in the midst of severe suffering and prayed to Him for deliverance on the basis of Jesus's righteousness, he asked God's protection. Our only rock to take refuge is the Lord. He alone can protect us from any suffering and adversity.

(3) David's third prayer was "You will lead me and guide me."

Look at Psalms 31:3 – "For You are my rock and my fortress; For Your name's sake You will lead me and guide me." David cried out to the Lord, who was his rock and his fortress, to lead him and guide him. For whom did David pray? He did so for the Lord's name's sake. David, who asked for the grace of salvation by relying on the righteousness of the Lord, prayed for God's lead and guidance for the Lord's name's sake, as God of the covenant must fulfill His promise and show His faithfulness (v. 3). Like David, we must seek God's lead and guidance. Why is that? The reason is because without His lead and guidance, we will wander like sheep who have lost their way, and we have no choice but to become the mock of the enemy.

David, who trusted in the Lord, took refuge in Him and asked Him with the three prayer topics above. And he prayed "Let me never be ashamed" (v. 1). In other words, David prayed that he would not be ashamed because of failure (Park). This shows that David was convinced that the Lord would help him when he took refuge in Him. If God didn't help David, he would fail. Then those who paid attention to him would laugh (Park). That was why David offered this prayer to God.

**Second and last, those who trust in the Lord commit their spirit to the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 31:5 – “Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have ransomed me, O LORD, God of truth.” This means that David entrusted his life and death entirely to God. Why did David commit his spirit to the Lord? There were two reasons:

(1) It was because the Lord is the God of truth.

The reason David committed his soul (the life and death problem) to God, who gave the grace of salvation in the past when he was suffering, was because he believed that the Lord was the God of truth. In other words, David was able to commit his life and death entirely to the Lord because he knew that the Lord was the only true God. David, who had experienced this true God who revealed Himself and who faithfully fulfilled His covenant at any time, committed his life and death to God of the truth in his present extreme suffering. Therefore, he who had already experienced the grace of God’s salvation of the truth in the past, made this determination even in the extreme suffering of the present: “I hate those who regard vain idols, But I trust in the LORD” (v. 6). David hated the sinful acts of idolaters.

(2) It was because he rejoiced and was glad in the Lord’s lovingkindness.

Look at Psalms 31:7 – “I will rejoice and be glad in Your lovingkindness, Because You have seen my affliction; You have known the troubles of my soul.” David rejoiced and was glad in the midst of present suffering by remembering the Lord’s faithful salvation of the past again and feeling His lovingkindness. Isn’t it amazing that David was able to rejoice and be glad in the Lord’s lovingkindness in the midst of extreme suffering? This is faith. Particularly, the reason why he rejoiced and was glad by the Lord’s lovingkindness was because the Lord who saw the David’s affliction and knew the troubles of his soul (v. 7) didn’t give him over into the hand of the enemy but had set his feet in a large place (v. 8).

Look at Psalms 31:5 – “Into Your hand I commit my spirit ....” This reminds me of the words of Jesus’ crucifixion in Luke 23:46 – “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” The surprising thing about comparing these two verses is that when the begotten Jesus committed his life and death to God, God didn’t deliver Him from the death on the cross. When David committed his spirit to God, God heard his prayer and saved him. But God didn’t save His begotten Son Jesus before His death on the cross. Why was that? It was to give us eternal life. Those who remember this grace of redemption receive God’s saving grace, protection, and guidance while trusting completely in the true God. May this blessing be upon you.

Looking at the Lord who is in charge of life and death,

James Kim (Trusting in the Lord who is my refuge)

## **“But as for me” faith**

### **[Psalms 31:9-14]**

The story of Daniel’s three friends in the book of Daniel tells of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who didn’t serve King Nebuchadnezzar’s gods or worship the golden image that he had set up (Dan. 3:18). So King Nebuchadnezzar threatened them to cast them into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire (v. 15). But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied as follow: “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up” (vv. 16-18). When I think of this reply, I want to call the Daniel’s three friends’ faith as “But even if He does not” faith (v. 18). What is “But even if He does not” faith? We can think of it three ways: (1) “But even if He does not” faith is faith that trusts in God (3:28), (2) “But even if He does not” faith is faith that obeys God’s commandments. Daniel’s three friends obeyed God’s first and second commandments, (3) “But even if He does not” faith is faith that sacrifices for the glory of God. Although Daniel’s three friends had assurance of God’s salvation, they determined neither to serve King Nebuchadnezzar’s gods nor to worship the golden image that he had set up even if God didn’t save them. They were determined to give life in obedience to the word of the Lord, even if the will of the Lord wasn’t their deliverance from the furnace of blazing fire.

In Psalms 31:14, we can see “But as for me” faith: “But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD, I say, ‘You are my God.’” The psalmist David had faith that he would trust in the Lord no matter what the situation was. As I want to imitate on David’s “But as for me” faith, I also want to imitate that faith of David. I want to think about five circumstances under which David trust in God and apply it in our daily lives.

### **First, “But as for me” faith trust in the Lord in the midst of distress and grief.**

Look at Psalms 31:9 – “Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; My eye is wasted away from grief, my soul and my body also.” Here from verse 9, David made the statements about his extreme painful situation that he was facing, and the first statement was his “distress” and “grief.” In other words, David had his own distress and grief that he was experiencing and feeling. What was the cause? It was because of his “adversaries” (v. 11). But this was an external cause. The deeper inner cause of David’s distress and grief was because of his iniquity (v. 10). David was in grief because of his iniquity and was in distress because of his enemies, which was God’s discipline due to his iniquity, just as loving God chastened His people because they didn’t repent their sins. Are we

realizing that this is because of our sins when we are in distress and grief? Or are we guilty of a greater sin against God because we blame others and the environment in ignorance? David was grieved because of his sins, and his eyes, soul, and body were wasted away from grief (v. 9). In other words, he was becoming more and more debilitated by grief both physically and spiritually. In the midst of distress and grief, David trusted in the Lord and sought God's grace: "Be gracious to me ..." (v. 9).

Each of us have our own distress that we feel and experience. It is 'my distress' and 'our distress'. Because of that distress, we are grieved, and ultimately, through grief, we are debilitated both spiritually and physically. How should we depend more and more on the Lord when we are in this state? The word of Isaiah 38:17 gives us a consistent biblical view of this problem of distress: "Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. ...." It is nothing more than the fact that suffering is beneficial to us. The benefit of suffering was an opportunity for King Hezekiah to experience God's love. In other words, it was an opportunity to be delivered by God's grace and to be forgiven of all his sins (v. 17). This is what 2 Corinthians 7:10 says about "sorrow": "For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death." When we have a lot of sorrow, we must be sorrow according to God's will, not the sorrow of the world. In other words, in sorrow, we must repent. We must repent of God in weakness in spirit and flesh.

### **Second, "But as for me" faith trust in the Lord in the midst of anguish and groaning.**

Look at Psalms 31:10 – "My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak." David's "sorrow" and "groaning" mentioned here were beneficial sorrow and groaning. In other words, it was beneficial sorrow and groaning for David because he was sorrow and groaning according to God's will among the painful things (persecution of the adversaries) that had been caused by his iniquity (v. 10). This sorrow eventually led David to acknowledge his sins to God (32:5). Our Lord's hand will be heavy upon us day and night when we don't repent our sins (v. 4). Therefore, we must rely on the Lord's mercy even in suffering and sorrow, and cast all our sins to Him.

We must once again remember the words of Psalms 30:11 that we have already meditated on sorrow: "You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness." We must trust in the Lord who turns our mourning into dancing (joy) even when we are groaning in sorrow. The reason is because the Lord's anger is but for a moment, but His favor is for a lifetime" (v. 5). Although weeping may remain for a night, rejoicing will come in the morning (v. 5).

### **Third, "But as for me" faith trust in the Lord even when we are in reproach.**

Look at Psalms 31:11 – "Because of all my adversaries, I have become a reproach, Especially to my

neighbors, And an object of dread to my acquaintances; Those who see me in the street flee from me.” The David’s adversaries hated David because he was more righteous than them (Park). In the midst of that, David was alienated by his neighbors and friends (v. 11). Not only have his adversaries fled from David, but also his neighbors, and even his friends, turned away from David. When they saw David in the street, they flee from him (v. 11). In this situation, David trusted in the Lord. Even when he was buried in society, David trusted in the Lord (25:16).

Our instinct is to fear being alone. Speaking a little differently, our human nature wants to be recognized and praised by people. The reason is that no one wants to be alienated by people. Who wants to be alienated by those around them? However, when we see David who was thoroughly alienated, I think we need to be alienated sometimes as well. The reason is because we need to test our own faith to see if we rely solely on the Lord like David in situations of alienation. We are trying to live a religious life in front of people. It is not a God-centered life of faith, but a people-centered life of faith. We should listen to Dr. Yoon-sun Park: ‘... The saints don’t need to attach great importance to the praise or defamation of the people of this world. The saints must respect God’s praise and judgment only and live by that standard.’

#### **Fourth, “But as for me” faith trust in the Lord even when we are forgotten.**

Look at Psalms 31:12 – “I am forgotten as a dead man, out of mind; I am like a broken vessel.” David was abandoned in human society. He was abandoned “like a broken vessel” (v. 12). In other words, David had the feeling of becoming useless like the broken vessel. He became a socially useless person. Such a person is said to be the forgotten man (v. 12). Even at such times, David trusted in the Lord. Although everybody alienated him, so he became a forgotten man, David trusted only in the Lord.

How many times are we saying, ‘I am useless at home, in society, in the church, etc.’ How many times we say, ‘People have forgotten me now. I have to die soon because my heyday has already passed?’ I personally believe that God remembered our church member Mrs. Park who used to suffer with dementia until she passed away even though she lost all her memory and was abandoned by people and society in a way. We must be sure that our Lord never forgets us even if all people turn away from us and alienate us and we have forgotten from society. Let’s hold onto Isaiah 49:15 – “‘Can a woman forget her nursing child And have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you” (cf. Ps. 27:10).

#### **Fifth and last, “But as for me” faith trust in the Lord even when we are in terror.**

Look at Psalms 31:13 – “For I have heard the slander of many, Terror is on every side; While they took counsel together against me, They schemed to take away my life.” The persecution that David was facing was that his enemies first tried to bury David by the press, second, threatened him by frightening him, and third, planned to kill David (Park). Despite this fearful situation, David trusted in the Lord.



Like David, we must trust in the Lord even when there are fears everywhere. Let us all hold onto the words of 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.”

David who had “But as for me” faith trusted only in the Lord whatever circumstance he was in confessed like this: “You are my God” (v. 14). Our God is God even when we are in distress and grief, even when we are in anguish and groaning, even when we are in reproach, even when we are forgotten, and even when we are in terror. While acknowledging God’s sovereignty, we have to confess, “The Lord is my God,” by believing that we are in the will of the Lord even if we do not understand His will. These are the owners of “But as for me” faith. I hope and pray that we all become the owners of “But as for me” faith.

“But as for me, I trust in You, O Lord” (v. 14),

James Kim

(In weakness)

## Those who trust God

### [Psalms 31:15-24]

Do you trust God? What is the way of trust? Brennan Manning says: ‘The way of trust is not to enter into a future that is all planned and determined and clearly described, but to an unknown and uncertain world. The next step is revealed only by discerning God who works in the wilderness of the present moment. The life of a pilgrim who leaves a clear, sure, and safe world enters an unknown world without any rational explanation to justify our decision or to secure the future. Why do we do that? It is because God sent a signal to move and gave His presence and promise’ (Internet). Of course, there would have been days in which the pilgrims entering the unknown world were dominated by anxiety and uncertainty. But we could also have had a calm voice somewhere reassuring us: “Do not fear, for I am with you ...” (Isa. 41:10). What can give us more trust than God’s presence? A person named Job confesses at the crossroads of life and death, “Though he slays me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15, KJV). What an amazing trust? By looking at Job’s trust in God more than his life, we should ask ourselves if we really trust God like Job.

Are we confessing like Job? Do we believe that, as Brennan Manning said, ‘What is more trustworthy than God’s presence’? Under the heading “Those who trust God,” based on Psalms 31:15-24, I want to meditate on three things about how to trust God and apply them in our lives.

**First, those who trust God know that everything that they go through in their lives is in His hand.**

Look at Psalms 31:15 – “My times are in Your hand; Deliver me from the hand of my enemies and from those who persecute me.” Here, the word “My times” means ‘my current affairs’, all the events that will take place throughout my life (Park). For the psalmist David, all the events, circumstances, and changes that will take place throughout his life are in the hands of the Lord. David knew this and believed it. David, who had “But as for me” faith (v. 14), trusted God completely whatever circumstances he was in. He had confidence that everything was in the hands of the Lord. So David, who trusted in God, relied on the Lord’s lovingkindness no matter what happened in his life. Look at Psalms 31:16 – “Make Your face to shine upon Your servant; Save me in Your lovingkindness.” David was being persecuted by the enemy (v. 15). His enemies were the wicked (v. 17) who were arrogantly against the righteous David with pride and contempt (v. 18). Even in these circumstances, David, who trusted in God, longed for the face of the Lord. The reason was that when he was suffering, he could think and feel that the Lord

had covered His face, so David asked God to shine His face upon him in times of suffering (v. 16). In doing so, he trusted in the Lord's lovingkindness. Isn't this amazing that David trusted in the Lord's lovingkindness even in the midst of persecution from his enemies? Those who trust in God depend on the Lord's lovingkindness. And those who trust in the Lord's lovingkindness have assurance of deliverance and salvation because they know that the Lord's hand can't compare to the hand of his enemies and from those who persecuted him (v. 15). David, who prayed in this assurance, was also confident that the Lord would not put him to shame but would put the wicked to shame (v. 17). How would God put the saint who trusts in Him to shame? Rather, the Lord put the saints' enemies to shame by making things to come not as they expected, causing them to be disappointed and in shame (Park). David was convinced of this.

We must live in confidence like David. What confidence? We must be confident that everything in our lifetime is in the hand of the Lord. We must believe and be confident that we are in the Lord's sovereign will, even though we don't know His will at the time when we face adversities, difficulties, and painful things in our lives. In that conviction, we must seek the grace of God's salvation by trusting in the Lord's lovingkindness.

### **Second, those who trust God know how great the His goodness is.**

Look at Psalms 31:19 – “How great is Your goodness, Which You have stored up for those who fear You, Which You have wrought for those who take refuge in You, Before the sons of men!” In the midst of the persecution of the proud wicked enemies, David looked back and meditated on the great goodness of the Lord that He had given him. What's interesting is that our God has stored up His goodness to those who fear Him. In other words, He is the God who stores up His goodness that He will give in the future. Eventually, David remembered and meditated on the great goodness of God in the past in the midst of the severe sufferings of the present, and realized that the great goodness He had accumulated was also for his sake. David was convinced that there was great goodness of God which had already accumulated for David who was suffering. Are we really confident and expecting that ‘There must be great grace that the Lord has already accumulated (prepared) for me at this moment?’ even in the mist of our present suffering? What was God's goodness for David? What kind of God's great goodness of the past did David meditate on? It was God's protection. Look at Psalms 31:20 – “You hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the conspiracies of man; You keep them secretly in a shelter from the strife of tongues.” David remembered God's protection when his enemies persecuted him in the conspiracies of man with the strife of tongues (v. 20). He described it with the verbs “hide” and “keep them secretly” and with the words “the secret place of Your presence” and “a shelter” (v. 20). David already prayed this prayer of assurance in Psalms 27:5 – “For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; In the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock.” David remembered the grace of the Lord's salvation in the past when God protected him whenever he was in danger, by hiding him in the secret of His presence so that no one would harm him. David, who was convinced that everything was in the hands of the Lord, was confident that the Lord would protect him again

while meditating on the Lord's goodness in the past during trouble and persecution.

We must think of God's past goodness, like David, in the present painful circumstance. We must remember God's goodness of protecting us in the past. We must remember God's goodness in protecting us in the past. We must believe that the Lord has accumulated His goodness in advance to give great grace even in our present suffering. And we must firmly believe that the Lord gives that great goodness when we are in trouble and suffering.

### **Third and last, those who trust God obey the Lord's commands.**

In Psalms 31:21-24, David said that those who trust God obey the three commands of the Lord:

#### **(1) The first command is 'Praise the Lord'.**

Look at Psalms 31:21 – “Praise be to the LORD, for he showed his wonderful love to me when I was in a besieged city.” Those who trust God meditate on the great goodness of God in the past in faith in the belief that everything is in the Lord's hand, and praise God in the present painful circumstance. He praised God as he thought about His wonderful love to him when he was in a besieged city (v. 21). He praised God because the Lord's grace and love which God brought him out of danger and brought him to the safe place. What should we do? Even in the midst of our present suffering, we who trust God should praise God as we meditate on His wonderful love that was given to us in the past.

#### **(2) The second command is 'Love the Lord'.**

Look at Psalms 31:23 – “Love the LORD, all his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful, but the proud he pays back in full.” David, who trusted God, experienced the Lord's lovingkindness in the persecution of his enemies (v. 16). He experienced the great goodness of the Lord's salvation of receiving His grace and protection. The Lord's love was “marvelous” (v. 21). David, who experienced this love, exhorted us to love the Lord “all you His godly ones” (v. 23). We must love God. This is the commandment of Jesus. Who is the ones who love God? Those who love God are “His godly ones” (v. 23). God protects those who faithfully trust God and live their faith. But He reveals His justice to those who act proudly.

#### **(3) The third command is 'Be strong and take heart'.**

Look at Psalms 31:24 – “Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the LORD.” Nowadays, while meditating on the words of Joshua 1:6-9, I am meditating on the words “Be strong and courageous” (vv, 6, 7, 9). Since God is with us, we are challenged to be strong and take heart. Also, since God with us has given the word of promise and will fulfill it, we must be strong and courageous. Those who trust God are

strong and courageous.

We are those who trust God. We are pilgrims who enter the unknown world. The reason we left this pilgrimage is because God's presence and that He has promised us. As we walk the path of trust toward the promised land of Heaven, we must be sure that everything that happens in that journey is in God's sovereign hand. In addition, we must pray, expect, and wait for the great grace and goodness that He has accumulated in the midst of our current tribulation and suffering, remembering the great grace of God in the past. In the midst of this, we must praise God and love Him through His grace. Furthermore, in the midst of the current tribulation and suffering, we who desire God must move forward toward Heaven as we are strong and take heart.

As I am being established as he who trust God,

James Kim

(Praying for God's grace and goodness to live in obedience to His Word)

## “Blessed is the man”

### [Psalms 32]

If we look at Jeremiah 17:7-8, we can see something similar to Psalms 1. The similarity is that both passages tell us who the blessed person is. Prophet Jeremiah says that a person who is blessed is a person who trusts in the Lord. And this is how he describes the blessed man who trusts in Him: “For he will be like a tree planted by the water, That extends its roots by a stream And will not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be green, And it will not be anxious in a year of drought Nor cease to yield fruit” (Jere. 17:8). We can come to this conclusion when we meditate on Psalm 1 and Jeremiah 17:7-8 together: ‘Blessed is the man who trust in the Lord, who meditates on His Word day and night.’ In a way, trust in the Lord means trust in His Word. And trusting in His Word can mean trusting in the Lord.

In Psalms 32:1–2, the word “blessed” is repeated twice. The psalmist David tells us who the blessed person is. I want to receive God’s grace humbly as I meditate on three things about who the blessed man is based on Psalms 32.

#### **First, the blessed man is he whose sin is forgiven (Ps. 32:1-5).**

Look at Psalms 32:1 – “How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered!” Here, “is forgiven” means ‘to be taken away, and “is covered” means ‘to be invisible to God’s eyes’ (Park). In other words, the person who is blessed is the person whose sin has been put away in the sight of God. Since there are three children in my house, our house is often messy. But last week, my mother-in-law and my sister-in-law came and cleaned the house. I was surprised to see how clean it was. But there was one that wasn’t removed; it was a trash bin outside the house. So, this Monday morning, after a garbage truck came and took the garbage, I washed it all with water and dried it. Then it didn’t seem to smell, and it was very clean. Even in our spiritual lives, there are things in us that smell like rotten stuff in the trash can that are there are truly stinking sins in us. Although we know that we must smell like the fragrance of Christ, but we aren’t able to do so because of our unrepentant sins. So we have our own sin problems. We know that we have to confess our sins and repent, and there are many times when we are frustrated by seeing ourselves unable to repent. The reason is because we have realized that without God’s grace we cannot repent our sins. What should we do with our sin problem? We can think of it in two ways:

(1) We must confess our sins to God.

It means that we must admit and acknowledge our sins to our holy God. If not, we need to groan all day long like David (v. 3). How painful it would have been if David had not confessed his sins, so that he would groan all day long and his body wasted away? We can't imagine. This is what Dr. Yoon-sun Park said regarding unrepented sins: 'Sin is so strong. If we keep it in us, it will destroy life in us there.'

(2) We must yearn for the Lord's hand that is heavy upon us.

Look at Psalms 32:4 – “For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah.” When we don't confess our sins to God, the Lord makes our hearts heavy. Our hearts should be heavy after we sinned against God. Personally, when I look at myself, I feel light regarding my sins that I have little heaviness in my heart and less psychological pain. When I look at myself like this and don't even confess my sins to God like David, I confess that I need to beg for the grace of the Lord's hand to be heavy upon me “day and night” (v. 4). Eventually, David confessed his sins to God when the Lord's hand was heavy upon him. He no longer hid his sins but confessed them to God: “I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”; And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah” (v. 5). Here we see the grace and love of God, who ultimately exposes our sins and enables us to confess and repent them. What an amazing blessing of God?

Then, what is confession of sin? We can think of it in two ways (Park):

(1) Confessing of sin is to acknowledge our wrongdoing before God.

It isn't just trying to blindfold our sins in order to keep our appearance in front of other people. When we truly acknowledge our sins, God will be pleased with our attitude.

(2) Confessing of sin is to trust God's love.

Therefore, our faithful God doesn't fail that faith and doesn't waste it. Therefore, we must confess our sins to our holy God. There should be no deceit in our spirits (v. 2). Those whose spirits don't have deceit don't cover up their sins but repent. Therefore the Lord doesn't impute iniquity (v. 2). In other words, they are the ones whose sins aren't regarded as sins (Park). And they are the ones whose sins are forgiven and thus they are the blessed people (Rom. 4:6).

**Second, the blessed man is godly (Ps. 32:6-9).**

Look at Psalms 32:6 – “Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him.” Those who are blessed in the sight of God are godly. Who is a godly person? Does the godly person refer to a person who never sin? It isn’t. The godly person is a person whose sins are forgiven by confessing his sins to God. More theologically speaking, the godly person refers to a person who is justified by God, the “righteous”. This godly man prays to God in a time when God may be found (v. 6). The prayer opportunity to meet the Lord refers to times when David wasn’t repenting (vv. 3-4). In other words, it was an opportunity to meet the Lord when the Lord’s hand was heavy upon his unrepentant heart. At this time, like David, we must confess our sins and pray to God for repentance. What was the result of David’s confession and repentance? In other words, what was David’s answer to prayer?

(4) The answer to the prayer was forgiveness of his sins (vv. 1-2).

(5) The answer to the prayer was to be saved in trouble (v. 6).

In other words, God gives us the grace of salvation even during our trouble (Park).

(6) David was preserved by God in response to the prayer (v. 7).

David was no longer in the wrath of God (v. 4), and he was now convinced to praise God because God would become his hiding place and because God would preserve him from trouble (v. 7, Park). Therefore, like David, we must take the opportunity to meet the Lord and pray to Him. It is the opportunity to meet the Lord when the Lord’s hand is heavy upon us because we keep silent about our sins. At this time, we should pray to the Lord. And we must receive our prayer answers from the Lord. Because we are forgiven of our sins and are saved even in the midst of our trouble, we need to be preserved by the Lord who is our hiding place.

### **Third and last, the blessed man trusts in the Lord (vv. 10-11).**

Look at Psalms 32:10 – “Many are the sorrows of the wicked, But he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him.” In other words, the wicked who don’t repent have a lot of sorrow, but he who trusts in the Lord repents his sins, and God’s lovingkindness is with him. David, who has experienced God’s lovingkindness, decides to teach others (v. 8). What did he determine to teach? It was repentance. David himself had the courage to teach repentance to others after experiencing the happiness of receiving forgiveness through his own repentance (51:13) (Park). What was David’s instruction about repentance? Look at Psalms 32:9 – “Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, Otherwise they will not come near to you.” Here, the phrase “Do not be as the horse or as the mule” is an exhortation not to be a person who doesn’t obey unless he is forced to be dominated (Park). We must not harden our hearts. We must repent to the Lord when we have sin to repent. We must not become people like “the horse” and



“the mule” who don’t repent our sins unless God forcefully makes us to do so.

David, who confessed his sins and repented, says: “Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones; And shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart” (v. 11). Here, “the righteous” and “the upright” refer to the repentant (Park). David encourages repentants to be glad and rejoice in the Lord. And he encourages them to praise God in joy. We must be forgiven of our sins and justified by truly repenting our sins to God. Therefore, I hope and pray that we who are glad in the Lord and rejoice in Him as we fully trusts in the Lord.

Thinking of my mother-in-law who is a blessed woman,

Sharing Pastor James

(By entrusting my mother-in-law who enjoys freedom from sin to God)

## What is fitting for the upright?

### [Psalms 33]

When I meditated on the words of Jeremiah 1:4-10, I was instructed about what is fitting for a preacher and a teacher of the Word. The verse 7 summarizes that instruction well: “But the LORD said to me, ‘Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ Because everywhere I send you, you shall go, And all that I command you, you shall speak.’” Here I learned three lessons: (1) I shouldn’t say that I am a youth. I shouldn’t say ‘I can’t do it because I’m not enough, because I’m still young’, and so on and make excuses. (2) If the Lord says to me to go, then I must go. If the Lord commands us to go, we must go, whether we like it or not. (3) If the Lord commands, we must speak. As the preacher and as the teacher of the Word, we must not be afraid of people (and their reaction). We must boldly proclaim and teach the Word, knowing that God is with us. This is a challenge because not only the Word of God raises and builds the listeners, but it also breaks them down (v. 10). Let’s ask ourselves honestly and sincerely if we have been faithful in this matter.

Are we, as Christians, living well in this world and doing what we supposed to do as God’s holy children? But before asking this question, we must first answer what we is fitting for us to do. This is what the psalmist says in Psalms 33:1 – “Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him.” As we who are righteous and the upright, I want to think about what is fitting for us to do in three ways and to apply them in our own lives.

### **First, it is fitting for the upright to praise the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 33:1 – “Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him.” The only reason why the upright can praise the Lord is because only he doesn’t glorify himself when he praises Him (Park). Why is the upright man should praise the Lord? This is because He is our Creator (vv. 6-7). What kind of Creator is our God? Our God is the Creator God who made heaven with His word (v. 6). We must praise God because God, who fulfills the work of the new creation, is working in our hearts with His powerful word in transforming into new hearts. Then how shall we praise God? We should give thanks to Him with musical instruments (v. 2) and short for joy with a new song (v. 3). Why should we praise God with the new song? The reason is that we the believers have new joy and our hearts are deeply moved by God’s great salvation event (Park). We should have this new joy and deeply moved hearts every day. As we experience and realize that the Holy Spirit,

who fulfills the work of new creation, is transforming our hearts more and more into the hearts of Jesus through the word of God, we should have this new joy and deeply moved hearts every day. Therefore, we must sing to the Lord with the new song and give thanks to Him with musical instruments.

### **Second, it is fitting for the upright to be faithful in all he does.**

Look at Psalms 33:4 – “For the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.” Here, what does it mean to be faithful? We can think of it in two ways, both of which are the same as the front and the back of a coin.

#### (1) To be faithful means to obey the word of the Lord that is upright.

In order to obey the word of the Lord, what we need is to fear Him (v. 8). When we obey His word in fear of God, the Lord’s will be done (v. 9). In other words, when we obey His Word, we fulfill the Lord’s will and establish His will firmly. But if we disobey His word, then the Lord will nullify our counsel and will frustrate our plans (v. 10). Unbelief has the consequences of disobedience. In addition, the result of disobedience is that our counsel will be nullified and our plans will be frustrated.

#### (2) To be faithful means to love what the Lord loves.

What does God love? Look at Psalms 33:5 – “He loves righteousness and justice; The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD.” Here we see two attributes of God’s holiness. They are “righteousness” and “justice”. Interestingly, they are both perfect in all to God, and among them, the amount of lovingkindness is richer than the amount of righteousness (v. 5) (Park). Therefore, we are receiving more blessings through God’s love than disasters caused by God’s justice. Therefore, those who love righteousness and justice which God loves fear God and hope for His lovingkindness (v. 18). This is what the Bible says about God’s blessing to them: “Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, On those who hope for His lovingkindness, To deliver their soul from death And to keep them alive in famine” (vv. 18-19).

### **Third and last, it is fitting for the upright to make God as his Lord.**

Look at Psalms 33:12 – “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, The people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance.” The psalmist is a blessed man who made God his Lord. What he is teaching us is that the

upright man makes God as his Lord. The reason is that God has already chosen us as His people and His children. Therefore, we are “His own inheritance” (v. 12). In other words, we are God’s possession (Park). And the upright man who is God’s possession rejoices in God and trusts in His holy name (v. 22). Doubt brings sorrow, faith produces joy (Spurgeon). Then why does the upright man rejoice and trust in God? The reason is that God is the help and the shield of the upright (v. 20). This upright man is blessed. What blessings does he have? We can think of it in two ways.

(1) The upright, the blessed man is in the providence of God (vv. 13-14).

Our God is God who provides everything on the earth. In His absolute sovereignty, He has insight to the hearts of the people in this world and He rules over them (Park). The upright man is blessed because he is ruled by God in His providence. This is a great blessing.

(2) The upright, the blessed man receives God’s blessing of salvation.

Look at Psalms 33:18-19: “Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, On those who hope for His lovingkindness. To deliver their soul from death And to keep them alive in famine.” Here, it suggests that the upright man may sometimes have a problem of life and death, and sometimes times he may be in need. The Bible doesn’t say that we should be blessed without these things. And the reason why the upright man is blessed is because God cares for him, saves him in times of crisis, and helps him to live in need. Now we are experiencing this blessing in our lives.

Yesterday, I went to the hospital to visit my beloved mother-in-law who made God her Lord and sings praises to Him and live faithfully. My father-in-law praised God who saved her who had been on the crossroads of life and death in a car accident and still working in her so that we were able to see that He is restoring her health surprisingly. Then, my father-in-law talked to his wife with eyes of love and kissed her forehead. As I saw it, I experienced God’s lovingkindness. As I saw the beautiful couple loving each other with the love of Christ, God’s blessings are upon them who are upright. I could see the glimpse of God’s blessing of remarkable fast recovery in His providence even though her head was injured in the car accident. As I watched my father-in-law and mother-in-law who made God their Lord in the intensive care unit, my heart compelled to praise God.

1. Savior, more than life to me, I am clinging close to Thee;  
Let Thy precious blood applied, Keep me ever, ever near Thy side.

2. Thro’ this changing world below, Lead me gently, gently as I go;

- Trusting Thee, I cannot stray, I can never, never lose my way.
3. Let me love Thee more and more, Till this fleeting, fleeting life is o'er;  
Till my soul is lost in love, In a brighter, brighter world above.

[Chorus]

Every day, every hour, Let me feel Thy cleansing power;  
May thy tender love to me Bind me closer, closer, Lord, to Thee. Amen.

[Hymn: "Savior, More Than Life to Me"]

After praising the grace of God's salvation to the upright,

James Kim

(As I think about my father-in-law and mother-in-law)

## **Even if my plan doesn't work**

**“But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations” (Psalms 33:11).**

Nowadays, there is a praise that the indwelling Holy Spirit calls to my lips. That praise is “Thanks to God.” Although I can't memorize all the lyrics, I am happy and strengthened even when I think and sing the first part of the lyrics “Thanks to God for my Redeemer.” And the more I sing this song, the more I am thankful in my heart. I am thankful for as the song lyrics say “Thanks for thorns their stems contain” and “Thanks for prayers that Thou hast answered, Thanks for what Thou dost deny!” Of course, in my opinion, if God answers my prayer, I will be more thankful than when He refuses it. Of course, I will be more thankful if God only gives me a rose that is without thorns. But the indwelling Holy Spirit enables me to see in God's perspective and helps me to be thankful for what God denies my prayers and for the thorny hardships He allows on my journey of faith. In particular, the Holy Spirit makes me to believe in God's thoughts and plans in a situation that isn't in accordance with my thoughts and plans. He enables me to accept the situation that isn't accordance with my thoughts and plans and to pray for His will and His plan to be done: ‘Not my will, but Your will be done’ and ‘Not my plan, but Your plan will be done.’

This is what Proverbs 19:21 says: “Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.” What does it mean? First of all, it means there are many plans in our minds. It implies that we have to make plans as we live on this earth. It is an unbalanced thought and an irresponsible attitude of faith to live by saying that only God's will needs to be fulfilled without any human plan. But even if we plan our course in our hearts, we must know that it is God determines our steps (16:9). And we must long for only the God's will to be fully stand. We must pray that God's sovereign will be done on earth as it is in heaven, whether God's will is fulfilled through our plans or not.

In Psalms 33:11, the psalmist said that God's plan stands forever, and the purpose of His heart through all generations. In other words, the plan of the Lord and the purpose of his heart stand forever. God's sovereign plan in the heart of the Lord who loves righteousness and justice (v. 5) and in His right and true heart reaches all generations. And because He is true, everything He does is also true (v. 4). That's why whatever He speaks, it will come to be (v. 9). Look at Numbers 23:19 – “God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?” Since our God is true, He will do what He has said. Look at Isaiah 55:11 – “So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will

not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.” The words coming out of God’s mouth are never in vain, and it will never return to God. But it will surely fulfill God’s pleasing will and bring success to His work. How comforting is this to us. Because God is true (Ps. 33:4) and He fulfills what He spoke (v. 9), we can have hope. What kind of hope? It is the hope that the word of God’s promise will be fulfilled. Because we have this hope, we can bear and endure it. Because of this hope, we rejoice even during our troubles and faithfully fulfill our mission. Because of this hope, we not only don’t mind about bearing on our bodies the brand-makes of Jesus, but rather we consider them our glory (cf. Gal. 6:17). Therefore, we have no choice but to thank God even if our plan is not fulfilled (Cf. Ps. 33:10). Even if things don’t go as we thought, we have no choice but to give thanks to God. Because God has already accomplished the salvation promised to us in Jesus Christ, and is still fulfilling it and will fulfill it in the future, we will have no choice but to thank God in all circumstances.

This is what Job 42:2 says: “I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.” Our almighty God can do everything and can accomplish in any plan. The true God will fulfill His grand plan of salvation through the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ. Even if it doesn’t go according to our plan, God’s plan will surely and forever be fulfilled.

Trusting in true God,

James Kim

(Hoping and praying that my plan fits God’s plan)

## **Those who look to the Lord are radiant.**

### **[Psalms 34:1-7]**

According to Ephesians 5:27 in the Bible, the purpose of husbands in loving their wives is to “present her to himself as a radiant church.” Here, the radiant church in the eyes of the Lord refers to the church that is “without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (v. 27). This is the purpose of the Lord, the Head of the Church, who loves us, His church. Our Lord loves us to the end to make us His radiant church. Then what must the husbands do to make their wives radiant? Apostle Paul’s answer in Ephesians 5:25-26 is this: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.” In other words, the Bible says that it is the husbands’ responsibility to cleanse their wives with the word of God and to make them the radiant wives.

This is what Psalms 34:5 says, “Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.” Here, the word “radiant” means ‘to become light’ or ‘to light like a lamp’ (Park). The meaning of verse 5 is that David, who was driven out of madness in front of Amimelech, or that “the afflicted” (v. 2) received spiritual grace in their distressed situation and definitely looking at the future hope of blessing while looking to the Lord (Park). I want to meditate about what do those radiant people who look to the Lord do in two ways, based on Psalms 37:1-4, under the heading “Those who look to the Lord are radiant.” I hope and pray that we received those two lessons humbly and obey them to so that our lives can be radiant in this dark world.

### **First, those radiant people who look to the Lord praise the Lord (vv. 1-3).**

In Psalms 34:1-3, the psalmist David expresses the exhortation to praise God in three words. David uses these three words to teach us a more comprehensive meaning about praising God:

#### (1) The first word is “extol”.

Look at Psalms 34:1 – “I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.” Here the word “extol” in Hebrew means “to kneel.” This refers to worship or humble attitude. This word instructs us to praise God in a humble attitude. Then, when David humbly praised God, especially His divine character, David praised God’s lovingkindness and faithfulness (31:21). Therefore, extorting God is



challenging us not only to praise His lovingkindness and faithfulness in worship, but also to manifest His lovingkindness and faithfulness in our lives of worship.

(2) The second word is “boast”.

Look at Psalms 34:2 – “My soul will boast in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice.” Here, the word “boast in the Lord” refers to giving glory to God, knowing that all good things have come from God (Park). This boasting is the joy of hearing to “the afflicted” who have been lowered before the Lord because of suffering and tribulation (Park).

(3) The third word is “exalt”.

Look at Psalms 34:3 – “Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together.” Here the word “exalt” is similar to ‘magnify.’ How can we humans dare to make God greater since our God is already great God? We just have to pray that God’s greatness will be manifested through our weakness and lowering.

Then how should we praise God? The Bible teaches us three things:

(1) We must praise God “at all times” (Ps. 34:1).

According to 1 Thessalonians 5:16, Apostle Paul says rejoice always. And according to Psalms 34:1, David exhorts us to extol the Lord at all times. In order to do that, we must experience the work of God in our lives. Then we can extol the Lord because of what He has done. How about if we don’t experience his work? Does it mean that we cannot extol the Lord at all times? No. There is one eternal reason to praise “God” at all times. That is what God did on the cross. Whenever we think of this unchanging work of God, the one thing God did for us on the cross, we must praise God at all times for His work of salvation.

(2) We must praise God with ‘my soul’ (Ps. 34:2).

David didn’t praise God only with his mouth, but with his soul. Here, the word ‘praising God with my soul’ means to praise with the whole character (Park). We should praise God not just with our lips, but with all our character, our intellect, our emotions, and our will.

(3) We must praise God ‘together’ (Ps. 34:3).

This refers to 'communal praise'. David asked those who were afflicted like him, who were in such a difficult situation, to praise God together with him. Why did he request this? The first reason is that his own soul also needs cooperation with others so that he could wake up even more and could be empowered to praise God. The second reason is because he wanted to add other's gratitude since he was so thankful for the grace that he had received. The third reason is because the grace that he had received was beneficial to other believers. The fourth reason is because he hoped for others to receive the same grace that he had received (Park).

Even when we are in a situation where we cannot praise God, we must be able to praise God with our souls even by considering the grace of salvation God has given us in Jesus Christ. In particular, we should give great glory by praising the great Lord, while relying on the Lord's lovingkindness and faithfulness, convinced that God's good will be fulfilled through all circumstances (Rom. 8:28). Then, we who are radiant can shine the light of Jesus Christ in this dark world.

## **Second, those radiant people who look to the Lord seek the Lord (Ps. 34:4-6).**

In Psalms 34:4-6, David expresses three words in his prayer to God:

(1) The first word is "sought".

Look at Psalms 34:4 – "I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears." Here, the word 'to seek' God means 'to seek hard for God. It refers to the act of earnestly praying to God continually (Park).

(2) The second word is "look".

Look at Psalms 34:5 – "Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame." Here, the word "look" to God means looking fervently for God's salvation. In this complex and deceptive world, if we don't look at the Lord, then we have no choice but to fall into all those deceptions (Park). If we look to the Lord and seek His salvation fervently, then we will not be ashamed.

(3) The third word is "cried".

Look at Psalms 34:6 – "This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him And saved him out of all his troubles." Here, the word 'cry' refers to 'strongly crying and asking before God.' This prayer is more

valuable because of its central earnestness than the sound level (Park).

What was the answer of David's prayer when he sought God earnestly, eagerly seeking God's salvation, and crying out loudly as he looked to Him? God delivered him from all his fears (v. 4) and all his troubles (v. 6). This teaches us that prayer is all-around. When we pray, God internally delivers us from all fear. Therefore, God makes us not to fear our enemies and the environment and so on, but rather makes us to fear God (v. 7). Also, when we pray, God externally delivers us from all tribulation. Our God is the God of salvation.

Those radiant people praise God and seek Him. They are delivered by God. And they experience God's grace of salvation from all our fears and all our troubles. Therefore, while living in this dark world, we should humbly praise God as those who are radiant people of God. In faith that all good things come from God, we must exalt the great and holy name of God. We should always praise God with the thought of the grace of the cross of Jesus Christ and praise Him with our souls. Also, we should praise God with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We must pray. We must seek hard for God and we must cry out earnestly to Him as we long for His salvation. Then God will listen to the supplications of those who fear Him, and He will save them from all fear and all their troubles.

'Praise God, O my soul. Pray to God, O my soul.'

Praying for the Lord's church to be built as His radiant church by obeying the word of Jesus Christ,

James Kim

(Seeking the power of praise and of prayer)

## **Fear the Lord!**

### **[Psalms 34:8-14]**

Who are truly happy Christians? In the Bible, Deuteronomy 10:12-13, God is telling us to keep God's command to us for our own good and happiness. One of those commands is found in Amos 5:14-15 and the command is to hate evil and love good. But often we don't seem to regard evil as evil. That's why there are times when we live a life that satisfies our sinful instincts that we like rather than life that hates evil. What does the Bible say? The Bible says, "To fear the Lord is to hate evil ..." (Prov. 8:13). We must live in fear of God.

Today, I read the book "Awe in God's Fear" and saw what I wrote on the Internet. There was an article that reminded me of one thing as I read it. In summary, in the fear of God, we must have the same attitude of God who hates sin. But God does not stand as a judge and punisher of our sins but He is hurting when we sin against Him. These are two quotes from those passages: 'After I learned that heart of God, in my heart I immediately hated sin. No that I was afraid of being disciplined for sinning, but there is hatred toward sin in my heart' (Internet). Are we developing hatred in our hearts toward the sin? If we answer "Yes", then we should ask ourselves whether the motives of such heart arise because we realize that Heavenly Father is hurting because of our sins rather than because we fear that we may be disciplined by God.

I want to meditate on Psalms 34:8-14, under the heading of "Fear the Lord" and learn four lessons about those who fear God.

### **First, those who fear God take refuge in the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 34:8 – "O taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!" Here, the word 'to take refuge in the Lord' means 'to trust God and to put hope only in Him and obey Him' (Park). In other words, those who fear God are those who trust in God and put their hope only in the Lord and obey His commandments. Such people taste the goodness of God. In other words, those who take refuge in Him experience God's goodness. David already made this confession about those who took refuge in the Lord because they fear Him in Psalms 31:19 – "How great is Your goodness, Which You have stored up for those who fear You, Which You have wrought for those who take refuge in You, Before the sons of men!" Those who take refuge in the Lord not only experience God's great grace of protection (5:11) but also His wonderful lovingkindness (17:7) through His salvation. In addition to God's lovingkindness, David experienced His goodness.

Have you ever experienced God's goodness? I experienced God's goodness through my marriage. With God's guidance, I met my wife, and with God's great love and grace, I married her. And during the marriage worship, God gave me this word of Psalms 34:8. Indeed, I experienced that my God is a good and God who causes all things to work together for good to me (Rom. 8:28). Our God is a very good God. Our God is a very good God. He is loving and good God. Therefore, we must trust Him. It is a blessing to us when we put our hope in the Lord and obey His word. How is it blessing for us to obey His word? Those who fear God take refuge in Him, and those who take refuge in Him experience God's goodness. In order to experience the goodness of God, we must trust God and hope only in Him and obey His word. That is the blessed life.

### **Second, those who fear God lack nothing.**

Look at Psalms 34:9-10: "Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing. The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing." Those who fear God not only take refuge in God but also seek Him. In a dangerous situation, those who fear God first take refuge in Him and seek Him. And the one who seeks God lack nothing (v. 9). "Lion" is cruel, harming others and seizing them, so there is no worry to be in need. Then, 'the saints who don't harm others with integrity are likely to starve to death (Park). But the Bible says that even though the lion starves, owe saints will not: "I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread" (37:25). The lions symbolize 'self-sufficiency' for the form of physical needs. In contrast, those who fear God cannot satisfy themselves. Those who fear God depend on God for the basic needs of their daily lives. The Lord is with those who fear God. Which Lord is with them? The Lord who is the shepherd is with those who fear God. Then, like David, they confess: "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want" (Ps. 23:1). Those who fear God and those who take refuge in Him and seek the Shepherd, they are not in want because they experience His fullness through His richness. God has stored up for those who fear Him and bestow on them who take refuge in Him (31:19). That's why those who fear God lack nothing.

### **Third, those who fear God will see good.**

Look at Psalms 34:12 – "Who is the man who desires life And loves length of days that he may see good?" What is "good" here? It is nothing more than longing for life, a longevity blessing. The terms "life" and "longevity" in this sense have the same meaning as "eternal life" which the New Testament clearly refers (J. Ridderbos, Park). David tried to teach his disciples ["you children"(v.11)] the fear of the Lord in the midst of lacking nothing by taking refuge in Him in a dangerous situation (v. 11). The lesson David wanted to teach his disciples as a teacher was the most fundamental of all things that is the meaning of life. That is 'desiring life,' 'longevity', or 'wanting to be blessed' (v. 12). David, who had enjoyed it satisfactorily, taught his disciples because he wanted to enjoy the satisfaction of such life in their lives as well. In that teaching, he taught them how to be blessed, which is the

meaning of life in their lives, that is to discern God's purpose and live properly according to that purpose. Living properly according to God's purpose is a life of praising Him and praying to Him in fear of God to reveal His glory (vv. 1-7). Furthermore, David is giving two lessons to live properly according to God's purpose (vv. 13-14): (1) We must keep our tongue from evil and from speaking deceit (v. 13), (2) We must depart from evil and do good and seek peace (v. 14) . We must praise God because we fear Him and live a life of praising Him and praying to Him in order to glorify Him. By controlling our lips and forsaking evil and doing good, we must enjoy the blessing of eternal life that God has given us.

#### **Fourth and last, those who fear God depart from evil and do good.**

Look at Psalms 34:14 – “Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it.” This is one of the answers to verse 12, 'Who is the man who loves to see good.' In other words, those who long for life and want to be blessed by longevity must fear God and forsake evil and do good. Look at Proverbs 8:13 – “To fear the LORD is to hate evil ....” Those who depart evil because they fear God are wise (14:16). David says that those who fear God passively depart evil and actively do good (P. 34:14). Here, the word ‘to do good’ means ‘to find and pursue peace’. So how do we find and pursue peace? We can find the answer in Psalms 34:13 – “Keep your tongue from evil And your lips from speaking deceit.” This means to keep away the sins that harm others with our lips, that is, insults, curses, flattery, slander, and leaks (Park). We must control our lips in the church in order to find and pursue peace in the community. Failure to do so will break and destroy the peace of the church. The reason is that if we use the tongue incorrectly, it is “a restless evil and full of deadly poison” (Jam. 3:8).

Those who fear God are blessed and happy. They take refuge in the Lord and experience God's goodness. They also enjoy God's great grace that He has stored up for those who fear Him. Not only they receive God's protection and salvation, but they also experience His wonderful love. They gain strength by trusting in God and obeying His commandments in hope. They aren't lacking anything because the Lord, the shepherd, is with them. They depart from evil and do good and seek peace and pursue it. That's why they keep their tongue from evil. Those who fear God are truly blessed and happy.

Being established as God's blessed and happy child,

James Kim

(Seeking His wisdom to fear God)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Look at Psalms 34:18 – “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted And saves those who are crushed in spirit.” The God the psalmist David met in his afflictions is the God who is near to the brokenhearted. Why was David heartbroken? Why was he crushed in spirit? I think it was because he sinned against God. Of course, we don’t know for sure what the sin of David was in today’s text. I don’t know whether he was pretended to be ‘crazy’,

whether he lied and sinned, or whether he couldn't get rid of his sin in his suffering, or he committed sin with his lips (vv. 13-14). But one thing is clear is that the righteous David was brokenhearted in many afflictions (v. 18). And when he was going through many afflictions, he was crushed in spirit. This is the sacrifice of God. Look at Psalms 51:17 – “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.”

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

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

'The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and he saves those who are truly contrite.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, For the comfort of the Lord will surround him.

The Lord of love defies pride but searches for those who mourn.

Will you share the cup of suffering for the Lord and for your neighbor?

What is so good that you are laughing? The Lord is crying for those lost souls'

(Gospel song "To the brokenhearted").

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

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



doing so, our God listens to our cry (v. 15).

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

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

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

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

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but they enjoy the God's blessing in their afflictions. And the blessing that they enjoy is experiencing God's presence. Our God is the God who is near to the brokenhearted, the God who hears their cries, and the God who delivers them from all their sufferings. The righteous people who meet this God take their suffering lightly. The reason is because they know that Jesus endured their sufferings instead. When we look to Jesus Christ suffering on our behalf on the cross by faith, we must think of God who has distanced Himself from his Son Jesus who was brokenhearted. Furthermore, we must think of our Father in Heaven, who has

forsaken Jesus who was brokenhearted. Our Heavenly Father didn't answer Jesus' cry and save Jesus when He cried on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mk. 15:34). Why didn't Heavenly Father answer Jesus' prayer on the cross and save Him? It is because of us. It is because of all our sins. Jesus bore all our sins and died on the cross in order to wash away all our sins. And the Lord has blessed us with all good things by delivering us from all afflictions, tribulations, and fears (Ps. 34:10; Eph. 1:4). Therefore, we can only praise God (Ps. 34:1-3).

Experiencing God's presence during suffering,

James Kim

(As I think about those who are suffering)

## **“Let them be like chaff before the wind”**

### **[Psalms 35:1-8]**

Yesterday, during the presbytery meeting, there were opinions from several pastors, including me, about the sermons of one of the two evangelists who wanted to be licensed to preach. In his preaching, he spoke about a spiritual battle, and the words of Ephesians 6:12 that he quoted during his preaching made me to think. The thought is that whether my fight (“our struggle”) is against flesh and blood or against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. In other words, I wondered if my fight was a fight against flesh or a spiritual fight. But for some reason, I thought that I was paying more attention and spend more energy to the fight against the flesh rather than the spiritual battle. This is the proof that I am not spiritually awake.

In the article under the heading ‘Christian Life Spiritual Battle, Pastor Nam-Jun Kim said like this about us who are spiritually blind: ‘Night blindness, in other words, is called a night-blind person, and is a disease that we cannot see things in a dark place. ... It makes me sad that some of Christ’s warriors who fought in spiritual battles show signs of night blindness. Our adversaries are the rulers of this dark world (Eph. 6:12). If we become prisoners of darkness and are trapped in the darkness, like a night blind patient who cannot even make a single step, there is no fighting odds. It is impossible to discern the age and understand the will of God in the darkness that cannot even discern who the enemy is and who our forces are (Internet). I wonder how many of us are recklessly fighting this hopeless spiritual battle. Eventually, we fall down, tumble and become passive in the consciousness of defeat, and often seem to give up in discouragement. But we have hope. This is because the Emmanuel Lord is with us and is working in our spiritual battle for us. I want to think about our God who works in our spiritual battle in two ways based on Psalms 35:1-8 so that we can win our spiritual battle by His gracious work and help.

### **First, the God who works in our spiritual battle is the God who fights for us.**

Look at Psalms 35:1 – “Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me; Fight against those who fight against me.” In the midst of suffering by vicious enemies, the psalmist David asked God to fight for him (Park). Then who are the enemies of David? This is how David describe them in Psalms 35: Those who seek his life (v. 4), those who robe him (v. 10), “Malicious witnesses” (v. 11), “Like godless jesters” (v. 16), “my enemies” (v. 19), “those who hate me” (v. 19), those who rejoice at his distress (v. 26). It is reckless that David himself fought

himself against these vicious enemies. Knowing that, he relied on God and asked Him to fight his enemies for him. Apostle Paul said not to take revenge but leave room for God's wrath (Rom. 12:19). The reason is because God will repay our enemy. Why did David absolutely depend on God and ask Him to fight for him? The text teaches us two things:

(1) It is because God is our sure shield.

Look at Psalms 35:2 – “Take hold of buckler and shield And rise up for my help.” Here, “shield” refers to a large shield to protect the whole body and “buckler” refers to a small shield to protect the head (Park). David was able to feel safe because God, who was his unconquerable commander, defended and protected His beloved servant David. We are same. We can feel secure when we, like David, rely entirely on God and ask Him to fight our enemies for us.

(2) The reason why David relied on God and asked Him to fight for him was because God was an attacker who can surely bring victory to David.

Look at Psalms 35:3 – “Draw also the spear and the battle-axe to meet those who pursue me; Say to my soul, ‘I am your salvation.’” In verse 2, David speaks of the “shield” and “buckler” used in defense, and in verse 3 he speaks of “the spear”, an offensive weapon used to fight on the battlefield. In fighting instead for His people, God took this spear, an offensive weapon, and blocked the way for those who pursued David. The God of David described here, our God, is like a fully armed soldier, preparing shields and spears. One thing is certain, there was no mistake at all because God was surely armed and fought in fighting for David (Park). Eventually, God saved David because God wanted him to confess that ‘God is my salvation.’ We should pray to God, like David “Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me; Fight against those who fight against me” (v. 1) as we trust God who is our sure shield and brings a sure victory to us.

**Second, the God who works in our spiritual battle is the God who destroys our enemies.**

Look at Psalms 35:8 – “Let destruction come upon him unawares, And let the net which he hid catch himself; Into that very destruction let him fall.” Our God fights on our behalf and delivers (saves) us out of the hands of our enemies. One thing we shouldn't forget then is the fact that God destroys our enemies for our salvation. In other words, when our God gives us the grace of salvation, at the same time, He also manifests His justice. Our salvation is the destruction of our enemies. So how does God's justice (holy) appear to our enemies? We can think

of it in four ways:

(1) Our just God causes our enemies to fail.

Look at Psalms 35:4 – “Let those be ashamed and dishonored who seek my life; Let those be turned back and humiliated who devise evil against me.” The lesson this word teaches us is that our enemies are those who seek our lives and those who want to harm us. But our God is God who protects us and fights our enemies on our behalf. Therefore, God makes those who seek our lives and harms us to be ashamed and to be turned back and humiliated.

(2) Our just God makes our enemies like chaff before the wind.

Look at Psalms 35:5 – “Let them be like chaff before the wind, With the angel of the LORD driving them on.” How is the chaff before the wind? The chaff have no choice but to fly because they are light. This reminds us of Psalms 1:4 – “The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.” The wicked will not stand in the judgment (v. 5) (Park).

(3) Our just God makes our enemies’ way slippery.

Look at Psalms 35:6 – “Let their way be dark and slippery, With the angel of the LORD pursuing them.” When we look at Psalms 73, the psalmist Asaph said he was envious of the arrogant as he saw the prosperity of the wicked (v. 3). So his feet had almost slipped (v. 2). But he confesses the truth that he realized only when he entered the sanctuary of God (v. 17): “Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin” (v. 18).

(4) Eventually, our just God destroys our enemies.

Look at Psalms 35:8 – “Let destruction come upon him unawares, And let the net which he hid catch himself; Into that very destruction let him fall.” Eventually, God causes our enemies to slip and to be swept away completely (73:19).

We who are spiritually night blind, struggle so recklessly with their blood or with their emotions and powers rather than asking God to fight for us as we relying entirely on God. Also, they don’t want God’s justice that the grace of God’s salvation is the destruction of the wicked. As a result, they cling onto a fight that is without odds as they become prisoners of darkness. However, the true believers like David, whose spiritual eyes are opened,

asks the Lord to fight for them because they trust God completely. They rely on God who protects them as a shield and enjoy a sense of security. We must become this kind of Christians. Therefore, we must experience God's salvation through God's destruction of our enemies.

Desire to be trained as a man of prayer who pray to God of salvation and expect and wait upon Him who fights on my behalf and who makes my enemies like the chaff in the wind,

James Kim

(Thanks to God's uplifting salvation grace for victory in spiritual battles)

## **‘God who delivers me’**

### **[Psalms 35:9-16]**

Pastor Spurgeon said: ‘Christians should be the iron support when the worldly people smash with a sledgehammer.’ The ‘sledgehammer’ we are talking about here is diverse. It can be insult, persecution, tribulation, slander, and evil. Satan is making his children to attack us, the saints, and to knock us down with different kinds of ‘sledgehammer.’ What should we do then?

In Psalms 35:9-16, we see the psalmist David who is being hit by the Satan’s children with various kinds of sledgehammer. Even in such circumstance, David confesses, “And my soul shall rejoice in the LORD; It shall exult in His salvation” (v. 9). Surprisingly, this confession was made in the midst of tribulation and persecution by his enemies, and not after David had already been saved from that tribulation and persecution. How was this possible? This was possible only by faith. Furthermore, David is making this confident confession in faith in verse 10: “All my bones will say, ‘LORD, who is like You, Who delivers the afflicted from him who is too strong for him, And the afflicted and the needy from him who robs him?’” Here David acknowledges and confesses that who is like God, He is the God of salvation, the God who delivers us. Today, I want to meditate on Psalms 35:9-16, under the heading “God who delivers me” and think about four things regarding from whom God saves us and apply them in our lives. Therefore, I hope and pray that we, like David, will be able to confess, “And my soul shall rejoice in the LORD; It shall exult in His salvation” (v. 9).

**First, ‘God who delivers me’ is the God who saves us from those ruthless witnesses who question us.**

Look at Psalms 35:11 – “Ruthless witnesses come forward; they question me on things I know nothing about.” Here, “Ruthless witnesses” refers to ‘false witnesses who lay fasten sins on innocent David’. These false witnesses came to David, who was innocent, and questioned David and laid fasten sins on him by questioning him (Park). Why did the ruthless witnesses lay fasten sins on David by questioning him? This was because the ruthless witnesses tried to harm David’s life ‘without cause’ (2x) (v. 7).

The Satan’s children try to harm us, the God’s children, without cause. They come to us as they did to David, and they lay fasten sins to us by questioning us with things we do not know. In any way possible, they try to

make us to live a sin-centered life. Therefore, they are trying to make us to be guilt-driven. We must be vigilant. We must not be caught up in the questioning of the ruthless witnesses. In particular, we must not be dominated by thoughts such as the questions by the ruthless witnesses. The ruthless witnesses try to make us to stop relying on the merits of Jesus' cross and keep trying to make us to focus on our human merits. In doing so, we keep focusing on our actions rather than trusting and relying on Jesus. We cannot live a life of faith because of the guilt we give ourselves. When I think of the word "question" here, I remember the word of Acts 4:14 when Apostle Peter and John's enemies "had nothing to say in reply" when those enemies saw the man who had been healed standing with Peter and John. Why was there nothing to say? The reason is because there was no solid evidence. The obvious evidence of the miracle that the lame man walked again in the name of Jesus stood with Peter and John, so their adversaries had nothing to say. This is our responsibility. We are living in a faith in a gray area that is neither this nor that. That's why we are providing the Satan's ruthless witnesses something to question us. How can the ruthless witnesses question us if we have solid evidence is being manifested in our lives? But we should not be discouraged when we provide the ruthless witnesses things to ask, like David, in the midst of our weaknesses. Rather, like David, we must yearn for the grace of God's salvation. We must seek God's saving grace from our guilt. God saves us, but He saves us by looking at Jesus, who suffered the innocent death on the cross. In other words, God saves us from the feeling of guilt by the truth that we are forgiven through the blood of Jesus on the cross.

**Second, 'God who delivers me' is the God who saves us from those who make our soul forlorn.**

Look at Psalms 35:12 – "They repay me evil for good and leave my soul forlorn." The surprising fact is that the psalmist David loved his enemies and did good to them. But the enemies returned David's good for evil. At that time, David felt lonely. What was the good that David did to his enemies?

(1) David prayed for his enemies.

Look at Psalms 35:13 – "Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting. When my prayers returned to me unanswered." David prayed with fasting when his enemies were sick, but his enemies were too evil to reject David, a benefactor who prayed and mourned for them (Park)

(2) David was concerned about his enemies.

Look at Psalms 35:14 – "I went about mourning as though for my friend or brother. I bowed my head in



grief as though weeping for my mother.” Here “I bowed my head in grief” refers to heavy sorrow. In other words, David was concerned because of the disease of his enemies (Park).

The Bible says that we are “His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph. 2:10). In other words, our saint’s responsibility is to do good. Even if they are our enemies, like David, we must do good to them. But his enemies, who repaid David’s good for evil, weren’t usually kind of evil. This is what Dr. Park Yun-sun said: ‘He who harms us who has done good to him is a man who has no conscience and no human duty and he is God’s enemy and the saints’ enemy’ (Park). As we do good, we must do good even to our enemies. We intercede for them, and we should be concern about them when they are ill or in trouble. But what we need to keep in mind is that doing this good can discourage us. We can be discouraged, especially when we do good but the other party pays back with evil. At that time, we may be thinking, ‘Why should I do this?’ We may be wondering how long we have to endure and do good. In that thought, we may feel spiritually lonely. The reason is because we have to do something that no one knows. That is, we must do things that only the Lord knows. We must look to the Lord for deliverance when we fall into this spiritual loneliness: “Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted” (25:16).

### **Third, ‘God who delivers me’ is the God who saves us from those who rejoice in our stumbling.**

Look at Psalms 35:15 – “But at my stumbling they rejoiced and gathered themselves together; The smiters whom I did not know gathered together against me, They slandered me without ceasing.” David’s enemies gathered with joy and celebrated on seeing David’s troubles and then to further harm him. It is evidence that they were extremely evil (Park). Those who rejoice when we are in trouble, those who gather to rejoice at when things go wrong in our lives rather than to comfort and help us, and talk to each other and gossip about us, and David knew that kind of gathering. And even the lowest among the people (see Job 19:18, 30:1) (Park) joined that gathering and rejoiced in David’s tribulation.

It is very interesting that in opposing God’s children, Satan’s children become friends even when they were enemies (ex. Herod and Pilate), and they unite regardless of status, whether low or high. In Psalms 35:15, David said “I did not know” and it means that even the smiters he didn’t know, even the lowest among the people, gathered together with his enemies against him and rejoiced David’s tribulation without ceasing. We have already seen the phrase “I do not know” in verse 11. For some reason, the enemies of David and also our enemies seem to consist of people who question us and whom we don’t know. In other words, someone whom we don’t know opposes us and question us and harasses us with things we don’t know. But one thing is certain: they rejoice together when we are in trouble. The lesson here is that our souls rejoice in the Lord and rejoice in His salvation (v. 9), but our enemies

rejoice in our stumbling (v. 15). The reason for each other's joy is so different. Even if our enemies gather together and rejoice in the midst of our tribulation, and mock our character with slander and insult, we must rejoice in God and in His salvation (v. 9).

**Fourth and last, 'God who delivers me' is the God who saves us from those gnash at us with their teeth.**

Look at Psalms 35:16 – “Like godless jesters at a feast, They gnashed at me with their teeth.” In this verse, we can see that the enemies of David, even at the table of the banquet, concealed David, their benefactor, as a ridicule, and tried to harm him at any time. Although the banquet is a place where even the enmity is being released, David's enemies attempted to be jealous and harmed the benefactor. This was an extremely unjust spirit (Park).

These spirits are always trying to harm us by forming a team around us all the time and attack us. This is Satan's scheme. Look at Acts 7:54 – “Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him.” Those who were listening to the sermon of Stephen who was filled with the Holy Spirit and who opposed Stephen, were cut to the quick and began to gnash their teeth instead of repenting their sins. And eventually they went on stoning Stephen and killed him (vv. 59-60). David rejoiced in God and rejoiced in His salvation, believing that God would deliver him from his enemies who were gnashing at David with their teeth.

I personally realize that I need to change my prayers. I am receiving the lesson that even though it is important to pray with my heart as I intercede and cry out for those whom I love, I also must pray by faith with the assurance of salvation. I hope and pray that we are determined to rejoice in the Lord and His salvation as we look to Him and as well remember God's past deliverance even in the circumstance in which our enemies strike us with 'a sledgehammer.' Therefore, I hope and pray that we may eventually experience the grace of God's salvation.

By praying, looking forward, waiting by faith in the salvation of God who delivers me,

Sharing Pastor James

(With gratitude to God's grace)

## The Lord who delights in my prosperity

### [Psalms 35:17-28]

What is a “prosperity”? The term “prosperity” is often expressed in Hebrew as “sakal” and “tsalach”. “Sakal” means to thrive and succeed. And “tsalach” means to advance, prosper, make progress, succeed, be profitable. Also, the word “shalom” is often used, which means “safe,” “prosperity,” “peace”. Here comes the word “shalom,” that is, goodbye, peace, happiness, and the Hebrews greet each other with this word. Therefore, it can be seen that prosperity refers not only to the external and material aspects, but also to the internal, mental, and spiritual aspects (Internet). But for some reason, it seems that many of us are thinking that “prosperity” is everything turns out as we wished that is without hardship and adversity. We think that prosperity is without any hardship and adversity but success and flourish. But we shouldn’t hope for this kind of “prosperity”. Basically, I think that the attitude to thinking that everything turns out as we wished is not right. I don’t think there is such thing as everything turns out as we wished. On a website, I came across this saying: ‘God leads us to a curved line rather than a straight line to protect our souls. Here is the deep will of God’ (Internet). I agree. There are a lot of curves in our lives, like riding a roller coaster in Disneyland. But what’s surprising is that we are glad that we also have curves in our life’s journey to discover God’s deep will, just as it is not fun for the children to ride on a train without a roller coaster.

Let’s take an example of two people in the Bible who have experienced a curve in their lives. The first example is Joseph from Genesis in the Old Testament. We can learn true biblical prosperity through Joseph. The prosperity that we can learn through Joseph is the fact that God is with us is prosperous, even if there is suffering and adversity and not everything goes well without any suffering (Gen. 39:2, 3, 23). True prosperity is not whether we have suffering for not and whether we are abundant or needy. True prosperity is God with us so that His will can be accomplished. The second example is Apostle Paul in Acts 16 of the New Testament. On the Sabbath day, Paul and Silas went outside the gate to a riverside, where they supposed that there would be a place of prayer (Acts 16:13) and met a woman named Lydia and eventually both her and her household believed in Jesus and were baptized (v. 15). And when they were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met them (v. 16). After the she was healed, Paul and Silas were persecuted and eventually went to prison (vv. 17-24). But about midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns of praise to God (v. 25). Then, in response to prayer, the prison door was opened by the presence of God, and the guard and the whole house believed in God (v. 34). There were so many curves in Paul’s life, but eventually God’s will for salvation came true. And the Philippian Church was also established. When I think about “prosperity” in these two examples, I think prosperity is “the Lord’s will being

done.”

The Bible Psalms 35:27 says, “Let them shout for joy and rejoice, who favor my vindication; And let them say continually, ‘The LORD be magnified, Who delights in the prosperity of His servant.’” I would like to receive grace by thinking of God in two stages how He makes us prosper under the heading “The Lord who delights in my prosperity”.

### **The first step in God’s making us prosperous is ‘the look on stage’.**

Look at Psalms 35:17 – “Lord, how long will You look on? Rescue my soul from their ravages, My only life from the lions.” The psalmist David who was in the midst of suffering by his enemies cried out to the Lord, “Lord, how long will You look on? ...” When we suffer too long, we sometimes feel the limit of patience and lament “How long should I suffer like this?” In the midst of such lament, we sometimes look at God with a frustrated heart, like David, how long will the Lord just look on? This is what David already said in Psalms 13:1-2: “How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, Having sorrow in my heart all the day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?” The lament prayer of “How long?” is asking why God is only looking on him who is in pain and who feels the limit of patience. We can say this look on stage ‘the silent stage’. Look at Psalms 35:22 – “You have seen it, O LORD, do not keep silent; O Lord, do not be far from me.” David cried out to God for help even though he didn’t understand why God was silent and why He was away from him, when he was suffering.

Why is God seems to be just looking at us and still silent when we are suffering? It is for our spiritual benefit (Park). In other words, it is for our spiritual benefit that God is silent when we suffer. Then, what is that spiritual benefit? It is none other than ‘prayer training’ and ‘patience and test’ (Park). The reason God is silent when we are in trouble is so that we can pray to Him and depend on Him more (Ps. 28:1, 7). This is what Isaiah 30:15 says, “... In quietness and trust is your strength ....” Even when God is silent, we must trust Him and rely on Him. Therefore, we should pray to Him. What was David’s prayer topic in Psalms 35? Look at Psalms 35:19-21: “Do not let those who are wrongfully my enemies rejoice over me; Nor let those who hate me without cause wink maliciously. For they do not speak peace, But they devise deceitful words against those who are quiet in the land. They opened their mouth wide against me; They said, ‘Aha, aha, our eyes have seen it!’” David’s prayer topic was that the enemies who hated him would not be pleased with the reality that God wasn’t helping David when he was suffering. Another spiritual benefit is that we learn patience through the tunnel of suffering, and also through patience, the proven character, that is character becomes more and more like Jesus. Our character is being shaped by suffering. Look at Psalms 119:71 – “It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.” Because we learn the commandments of God through suffering, through obedience to those commandments, our

character becomes more and more like Jesus.

This is what Won-Jun Song said about silence in his book 'Silent God': 'God may be silent. God was silent for forty years when he took Moses out of the court of Egypt and then caused him to live in the Midian wilderness. God anointed David as king at the age of seventeen and remained silent until he was crowned. God was silent about the tearful prayer of Paul who did the mission to the world, that is, the prayer of the petition to cure the disease that became a thorn in his flesh. He refused his earnest prayers and said to him, 'My grace is sufficient for you.' And God was silent when the Man on the cross cried out to Him 'take this cup from me.' ... Henry Nowen declared that God's absence is like God's active presence. ... The psalmist didn't know this fact, so he was coldhearted because of the silent God. But God is working hard in silence! God rather strengthens my heart in silence. ... God rather makes us to pray in silence' (Internet). Personally, as I was reading this, I thought I should be passive. In other words, once again I determined to become a passive Mary rather than an active Martha. The reason is because God gave me the belief that when I became passive, God would work more actively. As we depend more and more on God, we pray that we will wait in anticipation of God's greater and more active work while praying in silence.

### **The second step in God's making us prosperous is 'the stir up and awake stage'.**

Look at Psalms 35:23 – "Stir up Yourself, and awake to my right And to my cause, my God and my Lord." When 'God who delights in my prosperity' kept silent even though He saw David's hardship (v. 22), David asked God to stir up Himself and awake to judge his enemies (v. 23). Here, the word 'stir up' here means 'to give more effort to be courageous,' and "awake' means 'to wake up from sleeping like state to judge' (Park). Is God really asleep? Does God really need to wake up? This is what Psalms 121:3-4 say: "He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep." David prayed that God would awake from sleep and judge his enemies with His justice. David didn't want his enemies to rejoice in his defeat and say, "We have swallowed him up!" as God judged with His justice (vv. 24-25). Further, he asked God that the enemies would fail. In other words, David prayed that God would no longer wait, but stir up Himself and awake to reproach his enemies: "Let those be ashamed and humiliated altogether who rejoice at my distress; Let those be clothed with shame and dishonor who magnify themselves over me" (v. 26). Also, David's prayer was asking God to help saints like him to sing praise to Him: "Let them shout for joy and rejoice, who favor my vindication; And let them say continually, 'The LORD be magnified, Who delights in the prosperity of His servant'" (v. 27). This supplication was possible because God's answer allowed David to overcome his enemies. In doing so, David was able to praise God with such saints, those who considered David righteous [those "who favor my vindication" (v. 27)].

The Lord who leads us to a place with a curve rather than a straight line, where He shows His deep will to us. Why is “God who delights in my prosperity” just looking at our pains and sufferings? Are we seeing with the eyes of faith that God is working hard and actively in His absence and silence? Are we being trained in prayer as we quietly trust God? Are we enjoying the blessings of patience training and character building? Eventually, God strips up and awakens, judging our enemies with justice, causing our enemies to fail and perish. Therefore, He makes us to be grateful and sing praise to God: “I will give You thanks in the great congregation; I will praise You among a mighty throng” (v. 18).

Desire to experience the active work of God, who delights in my prosperity in my passive prayer attitude,

James Kim

(In the process of being established as a worshiper who praises God at the end of the curve)

## **“In Your light we see light”**

### **[Psalms 36]**

Is the church shining in a dark world? If we look at the article written by a person named Min-Young Jung, he said that ‘While the church is asleep, the choice is ours, whether we wake up shine, or fall asleep and perish’ (Internet). However, it seems that the church that needs to light up the dark world and wake the sleeping world is falling asleep in the middle of the night. So, as the Gentile sailors who woke up sleeping Jonah, the world seems to awakening the church today. That is why non-religious and mass media are blaming the church now.

In Psalms 36, we see the psalmist David who laments the rebellion of the wicked and then is comforted by looking at God’s lovingkindness and justice (Park). As I meditate on the “darkness of the wicked” and “the light of the righteous” based on Psalms 36, under the heading “In Your light we see light (v. 9), I hope and pray that we will also be comforted by looking at God’s lovingkindness and justice, rather than listening and seeing the rebellion of the wicked and be discouraged.

#### **First, let’s meditate on the darkness of the wicked.**

Pastor D. L. Moody said that Psalms 36:1-4 refers to the seven steps that go deep into sin. That is, in verses 1-4, the Bible reveals the seven darkness of the wicked:

##### **(1) There is no fear of God.**

Look at Psalms 36:1 – “Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; There is no fear of God before his eyes.” David had understanding in his mind as he saw the transgression of the wicked. In other words, even though the wicked runs toward sin without fear of God, David pledged to fear God even more (in his heart) when he looked at the wicked. John Calvin said: ‘Although the wicked man is vigilant and runs toward iniquity, the saint is ruled by the fear of God.’ This is because sin speaks to the heart of the wicked and God speaks to the heart of the righteous (Hos. 2:14).

##### **(2) The wicked doesn’t hate the sins he committed, but instead he flatters his hearts and thinks it’s okay.**

Look at Psalms 36:2 – “For in his own eyes he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his sin.” This is to think himself ‘it’s okay, it’s okay’ as the wicked did evil and this was flattering to himself, at the same time deceiving himself, and going straight to the path of destruction (Park). How foolish is this? See how lightly he feels when he commits sins. He flatters himself and says, “It’s okay” regarding the thing that are hated for his sins. John Calvin said, ‘The wicked man flatters himself in his heart, but the saint strictly reflects on himself and keeps in check.’ The saint who fears God hates evil thoroughly, but the wicked man in darkness doesn’t have fear of God, so he regards sins lightly and runs toward sins.

(3) His mouth is good at lying.

Look at Psalms 36:3a – “The words of his mouth are wicked and deceitful ....” The wicked man commits sins by using his mouth recklessly because he considers sinning lightly. Our mouths are for showing grace to others and telling them the truth. On the contrary, the wicked men use the tongue to harm others and to tell non-truth (Park). This is what Apostle Paul said: “Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.” The mouth of the wicked is to pour out lies.

(4) The wicked man has ceased to be wise and do good.

Look at Psalms 36:3b – “... he has ceased to be wise and to do good.” The wicked man in the darkness has become totally deteriorated, so there is no wisdom and therefore the ability to do good. Wisdom became unnecessary for the wicked man. Since the wisdom became unnecessary to do good, in the end, the wicked has no choice but to leave wisdom and good and to do evil. The wicked man has no wisdom, and there is no good deed to be right (Mt. 11:19).

(5) Even on his bed, he plots evil.

Look at Psalms 36:4a – “Even on his bed he plots evil ....” For the saints, the “bed” is a good place for self-reflection and repentance (4:4), but the wicked man rather devises evil plans there (Park). If we look at it, he is full of evil even in the deep part of the soul, and he uses good opportunities for evil. And he isn’t a person who is suddenly attracted to evil and does evil, but he deliberately does evil.

(6) He commits himself to a sinful course.

Look at Psalms 36:4b – “... he commits himself to a sinful course ....” In other words, the wicked man



doesn't reluctantly fall into sin because he is attracted to foreign coercion or temptation, but rather deliberately doing it with pleasure (Park). I think there is a process leading to the joy of sin. The process is found in Psalm 1:1 – "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!"

(7) He doesn't hate evil.

Look at Psalms 36:4 c – "... and does not reject what is wrong." Those who fear God hate evil, but those without fear don't hate evil and love it.

Even in the darkness of the wicked, the righteous say: "For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light" (v.9).

**Second, let us meditate on the light of the righteous.**

In Lord, the source of life, in His light, we see the light. In other words, in the darkness of the wicked, David looked at the light of the Lord. What is that light? It refers to the God's divinity. I would like to think about God's divinity in two ways:

(1) God's divinity is God's love and faithfulness.

Look at Psalms 36:5 – "Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies." When God's light, His love and faithfulness, reaches to the heavens and is in the skies, it means that His love and faithfulness shine brightly. So David confessed because he was protected by the Lord: "How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings" (v. 7). Furthermore, David was satisfied in his soul by the abundant grace of God. Look at verse 8: "They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights." Here, "your river of delights" refers to the abundance of grace that satisfies life spiritually (Park). The Bible John 1:14 says that Jesus is "full of grace and truth." When we think of the light of God's love and faithfulness, we will think of Jesus' full grace. Even when we are in the darkness of the wicked, we go forward while looking at the Lord's light, that is, His love and faithfulness.

(2) God's divinity is God's righteousness and justice.

Look at Psalms 36:6 – “Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the great deep. O LORD, you preserve both man and beast.” This means that God, like a high mountain, doesn’t change, and sees all the oppressive circumstances of the people He has chosen, and reveals His justice. His judgment in the midst of His justice is like “the great deep.” This refers to the God’s mysterious actions and judgments to people (Park).

When I meditate on Psalms 36, I think the psalmist David points to Jesus. When we think of Jesus, who was surrounded by the darkness of the wicked, and His cross, we can see the glimpse God’s love, faithfulness and His righteousness and justice. In the end, Jesus satisfied God’s righteousness and justice through His death on the cross, and as a result, He made us to drink from His river of delights. And the Lord makes us to keep on tasting His love (v. 10), causing us to drink from His river of delights. The God who satisfies our soul will continue to show His love and faithfulness throughout our lives and will not let the foot of the wicked to come against us (v. 11). Eventually, the Lord will not allow the wicked to rise again in His wise judgment (v. 12).

Overcoming darkness by looking at the light of the Lord,

James Kim

(Confessing that the Lord’s love is better than my life)

## Those who hope in the Lord

### [Psalms 37]

In John C. Maxwell's book "Winning With People", there is the impressive words by Ralph Stayer, the owner and chief executive officer of Johnsonville Foods: 'There is a fact that I realize early and often think about it, that is, the most of the problems come from myself. I realized that the biggest stumbling block to success was my own mental state and my expectation' (Internet). I wonder what the word "my expectation" would be the biggest stumbling block to success. Everyone will have expectations of themselves. The greater that expectation, the more risk we will be disappointed with ourselves. The reason is because we have to face our incompetence, which we don't want to admit. But who wants to admit his own incompetence? We need to be thoroughly disappointed with ourselves so that we can realize our incompetence a little more thoroughly. The reason is because when we do that, we will rely solely on God and seek help from Him. As a result, we will be captured by the power of God in our total incompetence. And we will be able to lead a life that reveals His power by being driven by His power.

This is what the psalmist David said in Psalms 37:9 – "For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land." Here, "hope in the Lord" refers to the long-awaited faith that only God's help is a real blessing (Park). David, who knew that only God's help was the real blessing, went further and thought, 'It was a greater blessing (happiness) to meet God Himself rather than God's aid (Park). As I meditate on David who had this thought, I would like to receive some lessons by thinking of four things about how people who expect God will live their faith.

### **First, those who hope in the Lord don't fret.**

Look at Psalms 37:1, 7 – "Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; ... Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes." This means that the saints shouldn't complain because of those who do evil but seem to be doing well (Park). The word "Do not .. be envious" is similar word (v. 1b). In other words, 'envy' refers to the displeasure of seeing others' vigor, which is unworthy to the saints (Park). Complaining is a bad habit. John Maxwell's book "Winning With People" tells us this story: When one grandfather took a nap, naughty grandchildren cut rotten cheese and put it like a beard under his grandfather's nose. When my grandfather woke up, it smelled rotten. So, he went to the kitchen and it smelled really rotten. So when he opened the window and breathed in fresh

air, it smelled rotten again. The whole world vibrates with a rotten smell. It was because of the rotten cheese under the nose (Internet). The lesson from this example is that if our hearts are rotten, everything looks rotten. For example, if there is a complaint in our hearts, then everything looks complainable. Therefore, we are looking for complaints. Why do we complain and be envious even though these aren't appropriate to the saints? The cause is "anger." This is what David said in verse 8: "Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil." So Proverbs 24:19 says, "Do not fret because of evildoers Or be envious of the wicked." Why is David telling us not to fret evildoers in Psalms 37:8? Why is he telling us not to be envious of those who do wrong? (1) David said the first reason: "for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away" (v. 2). The reason why we shouldn't fret about bad guys is because the prosperity of the wicked will not last long like "the grass" or "green plants" that disappear quickly (Park) (cf. Isa. 40:6-8). (2) The second reason is given in Psalms 37:8b – "... it leads only to evil." This is what Dr. Park said: 'As anger belongs to the hot-blooded, it doesn't remedy the outer world's unfairness, but rather creates disorder in one's own soul. It increases evil. The saint should always have peaceful mind and should wish other well and shouldn't be envious and have jealousy' (Park). So what should we do when we see the prosperity of the wicked? We must listen to the counsel of the wise: (1) First, we must fear God: "Do not let your heart envy sinners, But live in the fear of the LORD always" (Prov. 23:17). (2) Second, we must not desire to be with evil men: "Do not be envious of evil men, Nor desire to be with them" (24:1).

## **Second, those who hope in the Lord trust in the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 37:3 – "Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture." We the believers have nothing to complain about, even if we haven't achieved physical prosperity. The reason is because it is greater blessing to trust in the Lord than physical prosperity (Park). Do we really know that trusting God is greater blessing than physical prosperity? The prosperity of the wicked eventually becomes a curse to himself. The reason is because he lives more self-reliant lives through his own prosperity. And he thinks that he is prosperous because he is good. Such wicked man eventually lives for himself, so he doesn't know how to do good to his neighbor. And a life without knowing how to do good to his neighbor can never be said to be a blessed life. This is what Dr. Park said: 'Who can do true good without trusting God? The hope of the believer who does good is in God's reward, and the ability to do good is also received by trusting God' (Park). Then, how should we trust in God specifically in whom we hope?

### **(1) We must trust God's faithfulness.**

In other words, we shouldn't envy the prosperity of the wicked and complain about them. Rather we should hope for His "faithful reward" while trusting in the faithfulness of God.

(2) We must commit our way to the Lord.

Look at Psalms 37:5 – “Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this.” Here, the “way” refers to all the anxious things of the believer and the unknown way ahead. And the word “commit” in the original Hebrew is “gowl” and it means “to roll” (Park). ‘Climbing with a large stone is difficult, but it is easy and pleasant to roll it from the top of the mountain. It is impossible to ascend with burdens of trouble and sin, but it is easy and pleasant to entrust all my burdens to Jesus who came down from heaven to earth to bear my burdens. This is the rest we get by faith’ (Park).

What is the result of committing our way to God? Look at verse 6: “He will bring forth your righteousness as the light And your judgment as the noonday.” In other words, the just God doesn’t leave us alone when we go through unfair things and are miserable because of the wicked, when we commit those unfair things to the Lord. The Lord strangely vindicates for us and moreover He exalts us like the light.

**Third, those who hope in the Lord delight themselves in the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 37:4 – “Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart.” Faith that delights in the Lord is faith that has grown even more than faith that trusts in Him (v. 3) (Park). It is the faith that has advanced to the stage of life where God’s will is taken as his will. Therefore, David’s prayers and wishes were fulfilled. What an amazing faith? Beyond the faith in God, we need the faith that delights ourselves in the Lord. What is the faith that delights in the Lord?

(1) The faith that delights ourselves in the Lord is the faith delights in the law of the Lord and meditates in His law day and night.

Look at Psalms 1:2 – “But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.”

(2) The faith that delights ourselves in the Lord is the faith that praises God.

Look at Psalms 43:4 – “Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And upon the lyre I shall praise You, O God, my God.”

(3) The faith that delights ourselves in the Lord is the faith that knows how much God is rejoicing with him.

Look at Zephaniah 3:17 — “The LORD your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.”

**Fourth and last, those who hope in the Lord are still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him.**

Look at Psalms 37:7 - “Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.” We cannot be still due to the disorder in our hearts when we are jealous and angry as we see the prosperity of the evil men and those who do wrong. In other words, we cannot have rest in the Lord. Eventually, we will be shaken. The psalmist Asaph was like that. We can know this when we look at Psalms 73. He was envious of the arrogant as he saw the prosperity of the wicked (v. 3). So, he confessed that his feet came close to stumbling and his step had almost slipped (v. 2). Then Asaph came to realize the end of the wicked when he went into the sanctuary of God (v. 17). And the end of the wicked is sudden destruction (vv. 18-20). At that time, Asaph confessed: “When my heart was embittered And I was pierced within, Then I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a beast before You” (vv. 21-22). We need to be still before God. Our hearts must not be shaken because of the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous. There is no need to envy evil people and be jealous of them. Only we must be still before God and wait for His salvation and judgment. Clearly, our Lord will judge the wicked and save us (from our suffering). By faith in this Lord, we must be still and wait patiently. Look at Psalms 37:9-10: “For evildoers will be cut off, But those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land. Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more; And you will look carefully for his place and he will not be there.” Clearly, the wicked will be gone. Although it seems that they are prosperous now, the time of prosperity is brief. Also, their prosperity will be a curse to them. They will commit more sins against God because of their prosperity. Therefore, God’s judgment will come upon them.

Those who hope in the Lord are humble (v. 11). The humble men don’t fret and complain when he sees the wicked. The humble men are those who trust in the Lord and commit all their ways to Him. And the humble men are those who rejoice in the Lord and know how to be still and wait patiently before Him. So eventually, they will inherit the land (v. 11). And they will get the inheritance in the coming age (Park). Furthermore, they will delight themselves in abundant prosperity. Those who are humble hope only in the Lord and are satisfied with Him, so their hearts are always joyful and peaceful (Park). May this blessing be up on you.

As I hope in the Lord,

James Kim (As I look to the Lord who takes great delight in me)

## **Do not fret!**

**“Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; ... Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil” (Psalms 37:1, 7, 8).**

During the Friday morning prayer meeting yesterday, I was thinking again while meditating on the word based on Psalms 33:11 under the heading of “Even if my plan doesn’t work”: ‘The reason I am dissatisfied with my heart is because I don’t trust God completely.’ When I think about what I get angry and discourage when my plan doesn’t work, I think the reason is because I’m not entirely trusting God even though I say it with my mouth. With that thought in mind, I began reading from Psalms 37 to 41, the words that I supposed to read for today’s Morning Prayer meeting yesterday evening. As I was doing so, the phrase “Do not fret ...” (Ps. 37:1), “... do not fret ...” (v. 7) and “... do not fret ...” (v. 8) caught my attention. I thought about why the psalmist David prayed to God three times, proclaiming to his soul, ‘Don’t fret’ (vv. 1, 7, 8). Then, during today Saturday’s Morning Prayer meeting, after proclaiming the word of God based on the words of Psalms 37:1-11, I am sitting down in my shepherd’s room and meditating this passage again and writing down. I tried to set the title of the meditation “Don’t fret!”

The Bible Psalms 37:1, 7, 8 are telling us three times not to fret. In other words, the Bible tells us not to be envious of those evil men and those who do wrong (v. 1) when we see them succeeding in their ways (v. 7). When I was meditating on this, the words of Psalms 73 came to my mind again. The reason is because before an elder died many years ago he asked me ‘Why the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper?’ and then God made me to meditate on Psalms 73 and gave me the answer to the elder’s question. So whenever I meditate on the subject of ‘the prosperity of the wicked,’ Psalms 73 comes to my mind. That’s because Asaph, the psalmist, was jealous of the arrogant when he saw the prosperity of the wicked (Ps. 73:1). When Asaph saw the wicked, who have no struggles, their bodies are healthy and strong (v. 4), are free from the burdens common to man (v. 5) and their minds know no limits (v. 7), his feet had almost slipped (v. 2) because he envied the arrogant (v. 3). In particular, when Asaph saw the wicked being always carefree and increase in wealth (v. 12), he even said, “Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence” (v. 13). When we Christians see the righteous suffer, and the wicked prosperous, we can envy the wicked, like Asaph or David. Not only can we be envious of the wicked, we can even see and rage against prosperous wicked people (37:8). And we can complain and fret enough in dissatisfaction (vv. 1, 7, 8). But in Psalms 37:1, 7, 8, the Bible clearly tells us three times ‘Do not fret’. Why is that?

The reason is because fret leads only to evil (v. 8). In other words, since we envy the wicked because we saw their prosperity, we must not fret because fret will lead us to commit sin against God. Also, the reason we should not fret when we see the prosperity of the wicked is because the wicked will be cut off quickly (37:2, 9, 22, 28, 34, 36, 38). The wicked will be cut off quickly like the grass that will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away (v. 2). In Psalms 73, the psalmist Asaph realized this only when he entered the sanctuary of God (v. 17). What did he realize? It is the final destiny of the wicked (v. 17). What is the final destiny of the wicked? It is ruin (v. 18). The final destiny of the wicked is sudden destruction (v. 19). As a dream when one awakes, so when we arise, we will despise them as fantasies (v. 20).

The evil men will surely be cut off (Ps. 37:9). Those wicked whom the Lord curses and their offspring will be cut off (vv. 22, 28). Also, the future of the wicked will be cut off (v. 38). We will clearly see the wicked will be cut off (v. 34). So we should not complain and fret when we see the wicked are prosperous and be envious of them. Instead, what should we do? First, we must trust God (v. 3). And we must dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness (v. 3). Also, we must delight ourselves in the Lord (v. 4). Then He will give us the desires of our hearts (v. 4). We must commit our ways to the Lord (v. 5). If we trust in the Lord, He will do it (v. 5). We need to rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him (v. 7). The reason is because we are the ones who wait for the Lord (v. 9). And we must be humble (v. 11) and blameless (v. 37). Then we will inherit the land and will delight ourselves in abundant prosperity (v. 11).

Not wanting to live a life of disobedience to the Word of God in complaining and fret,

James Kim

(Rather wanting to trust in the Lord and be satisfied with Him alone and live a life of thanksgiving in all circumstance again to Heavenly Father)



## **Wait patiently!**

**“Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes” (Psalms 37:7).**

How should we do business as a Christian? As a Christian, how should we work in our work places? We may work either man-centered or God-centered. The Bible Psalms 37 tells us two phenomena may occur in man-centered businessmen or office workers:

### **First, they envy those who fret and do wrong.**

Look at Psalms 37:1 – “Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong.” The reason why they envy those who fret and do wrong is because the evil men or those who do wrong succeed in their ways (v. 7). The righteous are susceptible to commit sin of complaining, fretting and of jealousy because the wicked men carry out wicked schemes (v. 7). In a competitive society, we can defeat the comparative consciousness and complain to God about the prosperity of the wicked while looking at people rather than looking at God in the agony of the suffering of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked.

**Second, they anger toward God. Complaints and envy of the prosperity of the wicked eventually leads to anger toward God.**

Look at Psalms 37:8 – “Cease from anger and forsake wrath; Do not fret; it leads only to evildoing.” Anger toward God leads only to evildoing (v. 8). Complaints, fret and enviousness toward evildoers are easy to develop into anger toward God without being cut off from anger toward them. If we look deeply at the anger of Christian businessmen and office workers, I doubt how much we can say that their anger isn’t toward God.

Then, what kind of life does the God-centered businessmen or office workers live? We can think in two ways:

- (1) The God-centered Christian businessmen or office workers wait patiently in anticipation of God.

Look at Psalms 37:7, 9 – “Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. ... For evildoers will be cut off, But those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land.” Knowing that the end of the prosperity of the wicked is destruction (Ps. 74), they wait patiently for the Lord. They can endure and wait patiently because they believe that the Lord will defeat the wicked schemes, and their momentarily “prosperity”. They delight themselves in the Lord rather than rejoicing the “prosperity” of the world (v. 4), commit their ways to God (v. 5), and do righteousness and justice (v. 6).

(2) The God-centered Christian businessmen or office workers faithfully do good.

Look at Psalms 37:3 – “Trust in the LORD and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.” The Bible says that the God-centered Christian businessmen or office workers who trust in God in difficult circumstances do good faithfully. Since they cultivate faithfulness (v. 3) are sure that God will fulfill the desire of their hearts (v. 4), they don’t stop doing good in any situation.

Are we living God-centered life as Christian businessmen or workers? Or are we living in a way that doesn’t trust in God at all, but complains, fret, envy, and anger and doesn’t commit our ways to Him? He who delights himself in the Lord, trusts in Him, and commits his way to the Lord waits patiently for Him and faithfully does good. I hope and pray that we may be able to wait patiently for Him.

In the Lord,

James Kim

(After visiting the church saint’s business and leading the worship service)

## **The wicked Vs. The righteous**

### **[Psalms 37:12-22]**

According to a psychologist, a person has six prisons: (1) the first prison is a prison for self-abduction. We cannot stop ‘princess disease’ and ‘prince disease.’ (2) The second prison is a prison of criticism. We always like to see and criticize others’ shortcomings. (3) The third prison is a prison of despair. We always look at the world negatively, complain and despair. (4) The fourth prison is a past-oriented prison. We say that the old days were good and waste the present. (5) The fifth prison is a prison of envy. We don’t know the importance of our own rice cake and only see other people’s rice cake as big. (6) The sixth prison is a prison of jealousy. When we see others doing well, our stomach hurts and we want to slander them. Out of these six prisons, I personally think that many of our saints often live in the sixth prison, ‘the prison of jealousy.’ In particular, as the psalmist Asaph said in Psalms 73, it seems that many of us often are jealous of the wicked when we see the prosperity of the wicked (v. 3).

So David, the author of Psalm 37, says in verse 1: “Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong.” But Satan tries to put us, the believers, in this prison of jealousy no matter what. Further, Satan, like a crying lion, uses his servants, the wicked, to devour us, to torment us, persecute us, to fall into sin, to try to keep us out of our faith in Jesus Christ. We see Satan trying to harm the righteous David through his servants, the wicked, even in Psalms 37:12-22. Based on Psalms 37:12-22, I want to think about the wicked and the righteous, under the heading “The wicked Vs. The righteous”, and receive the grace that God gives us.

### **The wicked are cursed by the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 37:22b – “... but those he curses will be cut off.” The wicked who are cursed by the Lord try to harm the righteous. How do the wicked try to harm the righteous? We can think in two ways.

#### **(1) The wicked plot against the righteous.**

Look at Psalms 37:12 – “The wicked plot against the righteous and gnash their teeth at them.” The psalmist David said these wicked people were the ones who carried out their wicked schemes (v. 7). One of the schemes of the wicked was to borrow and didn’t repay (v. 21). The wicked could be abundant in their greed and not returning to others even after they borrowed from them, so that they

could be wealthy (v. 16). They were wicked people who tried to accumulate their wealth even by harming the righteous. We can see the wicked, who carried out their wicked schemes (v. 7), gnashing their teeth (v. 12) also in Acts 7 in which the Jews gnashed their teeth toward Stephen: “Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him” (Acts 7:54). When the wicked hears the preaching of the righteous and are cut to the quick, they become angry toward the righteous. However, this anger eventually leads to evil (Psalm 37:8).

(2) The wicked are trying to kill the righteous.

Look at Psalms 37:14 – “The wicked draw the sword and bend the bow to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose ways are upright.” What we can see here is that the wicked man had the wicked schemes to kill the righteous by killing the righteous with his weapons, such as “the sword” or “the bow.” The Bible says that the righteous are “poor and needy” as opposed to the wicked who lived like this, “still breathing threats and murder” (Acts 9:1) against the righteous (Ps. 37:14). This appearance of righteousness refers to the saints who cannot receive help even among human beings (Park). What a contrast to the appearance of the wicked? Thinking about the appearance of a righteous man who look weak and have no power and no help, they are good food for wicked people who are still breathing threats and murder. This contrast between the wicked and the righteous can also be seen in Acts 9. Saul, who was still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that he might bring those who belonged to the Way bound to Jerusalem (vv. 1-2).

What should we do when we encounter the wicked people who do evil to us? We shouldn't be sad but look at the Lord's laugh in faith. Look at Psalms 37:13 – “but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he knows their day is coming.” The Lord's laugh is also found in Psalms 2:4. When the kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the Messiah Lord (v. 2), the Lord laughs (v. 4). So, even if the wicked plot against us, we shouldn't be sad, but should participate in the joy of God. This is because the time of the Lord's judgment (destruction) toward the wicked is near. We don't have to cry when God laughs. The reason why the saints often cry in front of the fact that God laughs is because the saints themselves have become dark (Park). Therefore, we must pray. When we pray our spiritual eyes will be opened and we will be able to see God's laugh. Also, we can participate in God's joy even in sorrow (Calvin). Why shouldn't we be afraid of the wicked, but rather to participate in God's joy? This is what David said about its reason: “But their swords will pierce their own hearts, and their bows will be broken” (37:15). It is the time for the destruction of the wicked when the wicked are still breathing threats and murder and make the last blow (Park). This is what David said in Psalms 37:20 – “But the wicked will perish: The LORD's enemies will be like the beauty of the fields, they will vanish—vanish like smoke.” Imagine

the burning of oil and smoke. Likewise, the destruction of the wicked will be a sure annihilation and will be sudden. Eventually, the wicked who are cursed by the Lord will be cut off (v. 22, cf. vv 9-10).

### **The righteous are blessed by the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 37:22a – “those the LORD blesses will inherit the land ....” What is the Lord’s blessing for the righteous? The Bible says two things:

(1) The blessing of the Lord, which the righteous receives, is that the Lord upholds them.

Look at Psalms 37:17 – “for the power of the wicked will be broken, but the LORD upholds the righteous.” This verse explains the reason for the verse 16 — “Better the little that the righteous have than the wealth of many wicked.” In other words, “the power of the wicked”, the power that the wicked believed, that is, God will break the abundance of matter. However, even though the property of the righteous is little, it is a blessing to the righteous because God upholds the righteous (v. 17). How is the little property of the righteous blessing to them? There are two reasons (Park): (a) First, even the little possession of the righteous, since it is from the Almighty God, it is a blessing to the righteous because He will give it again when it becomes insufficient. (b) Second, it is a blessing to the righteous because the little possession of the righteous is not obtained unrighteously, and leads to a pleasant and happy life. Another blessing is that we may not boast because of our small possessions. The great blessing of material can be a small spiritual blessing to us, but the small possession of material can be a great spiritual blessing to us. We must listen to Dr. Yoon-sun Park’s words: ‘True life is not in abundance of possessions (Lk. 12:15), but in possession of righteousness.’ Didn’t we, the saints, justified by the merits of Jesus’ cross? Therefore, God justified us. What a great blessing? Owning this righteousness cannot be compared to the abundance of matter.

(2) The blessing of the Lord, which the righteous receives, is that God promises that our inheritance will endure forever.

Look at Psalms 37:18 – “The days of the blameless are known to the LORD, and their inheritance will endure forever.” Here, “the blameless” doesn’t refer to the innocent men at all, but pure men who walk in faith conscience before God. God knows “The days” of those who are pure, striving to do God’s will, their lives (Park). Therefore, the inheritance of the ones who are known by God, the possession that they will enjoy as they live is forever indefinite. Since God is their savior and protector, there is no way that their inheritance will disappear (Park). That is, the inheritance of the righteous doesn’t fail even in times of trouble, and God gives them sufficient grace (v. 19). Therefore, even in the famine, the righteous men give

generously with God's sufficient grace (v. 21b). There are some remain because the righteous men live simple life with their small possession. So they can help others. Although they are poor, they are generous. Eventually, the wicked go to destruction even if they are rich, and the righteous occupy the land even though they are scattered and their descendants will be prosperous (Park).

The wicked, cursed by the Lord, are plotting against us, and even trying to kill us with the last blow. Nevertheless, we the righteous ones must look to God who is laughing in faith. The wicked will surely perish. They will definitely be cut off. So, even in sorrow, we can participate in God's joy. Let's remember. Let's proclaim to our soul that 'I am the one who is blessed by the Lord.' It is a true blessing that God upholds us. Let's not be discouraged that our possessions are small compared to the riches of the wicked. God is the God who breaks the abundance of matter, the power that the wicked believe. And even if the property of the righteous is small, it is a blessing to us because God upholds them. The God who sustains us is our eternal inheritance. Our Lord, the source of blessing, is our blessing. Therefore, we can give generously to others through God's sufficient grace to us, whether in times of trouble or famine. I hope and pray that we can live such blessed life in the Lord.

A blessed man,

James Kim

(Praying to see God's laugh in faith)

## The Lord who makes our way firm

### [Psalms 37:23-40]

Can we thank God even when we are in a situation that we cannot give thanks? This is the news I had while writing a thank you letter. I heard that the wife of the pastor, whom I had studied at the seminary, have the last stage of the stomach cancer. I thought of my first baby, Charis, who had already gone to heaven intentionally so that I may be in pain with the pastor's couple together and pray for them. I was able to sympathize with the pastor's couple at least little bit since the pastor's couple found that she had stomach cancer in November, the month of thanksgiving as I found out that Charis had some problems in the hospital in November as well. I heard that the church that Pastor Kim serves seems to testify this Sunday with a title of gratitude. And Pastor Kim went to the hospital on Monday with at least thought of gratitude that God would let his wife to have a surgery.

In this time, I think one of the Bible verses that we often think and share is the words of Job 23:10 – “But He knows the way I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” When I meditated on this word, I meditated a lot on the second half of the verse, “When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” I almost never meditated deeply on the words, “But He knows the way I take” (v. 10a). When I meditate on this word that the all-knowing God knows the ways we take, Psalms 37:23 says that “... He makes his steps firm.” In other words, God has already made our way. And the Bible says that God delights in the way that He has already decided (v. 23). The God who knows our way, the God who predetermines and guides our steps, is the God who makes our way firm. And the God who makes our way firm delights in the way we walk. I would like to receive the grace of God by meditating on three things about what the Lord makes our way firm based on Psalms 37:23-40.

**First, the Lord who makes our way firm is the One who upholds us when we stumble.**

Look at Psalms 37:24 – “though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand.” The phrase “though he stumble” here teaches us that David or us are those who are truly vulnerable to stumble. Why is that? Why are we prone to stumble? Here are three related reasons in Psalms 37:23-40:

- (1) The first reason why we stumble is because Satan knows our weaknesses, and attacks us to knock us down.

To borrow David's expression from today's text, he says: "The wicked lie in wait for the righteous, seeking their very lives" (v. 32). One day, I remember seeing a lion in the animal kingdom, lowering his posture to see and eat the prey, sneaking very quietly towards the prey, and then suddenly standing up and running to eat the prey. It seems like Satan does the same. The devil, who prowls around like a roaring lion, is trying 'to eat' the believer somehow, waiting still and looking for "an opportunity to kill" us. Therefore, if we aren't of sound judgment and sober spirit, and if we are not awake, Satan will attack us ceaselessly if we show "the gap" in our weakness. So wouldn't David or we stumble?

(2) The second reason why we stumble is because of the great power of the wicked.

Look at Psalms 37:35 – "I have seen a wicked and ruthless man flourishing like a green tree in its native soil." Here David says that the great power of the wicked is "like a green tree in its native soil." In LXX (Septuagint), it was translated as 'Lebanon's cedar', which reminds us of a vigorous tree. It means that the power of the wicked is great, like the vast trees and vigorous branches (Park).

(3) The third reason why we stumble is because of trouble.

Look at Psalms 37:39 – "The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD; he is their stronghold in time of trouble." Since the Satan's wicked servants spy upon the righteous (v. 32) with their great power, to attack and defeat us, we stumble in trouble. However, even if we fall for a while, we don't fall very far from the path we walk on, but we get up again and walk the path (v. 24). We fall for a moment because of Satan's attack and temptation, and the persecution of the wicked. But since our Heavenly Father upholds us in His hand, we must rise again and walk on the path God foreordained.

What, then, is our responsibility in walking the path that God has foreordained? It is the responsibility to turn from evil and do good (v. 27). There are wicked people all around. And it seems like they are attacking the crowds at once with their great power. In the meantime, we have to choose between them: Either turn from evil and do good or turn from good and do evil. Although when we leave the good and do evil, our conscience may be stricken at first and feel guilty in our hearts, when we do evil little by little, all those guilty feeling will go away so that we may feel peaceful in worldly perspective. We can also be rich in possession (v. 16). But this is only a moment. If we compromise with the wicked and forsake good and do evil, we will perish. But if we turn from evil and do good, there is blessing from God to us. That blessing is that our children will be blessed (v. 26). Psalms 37:25-26 speak of David's experience. The experience is that David had never seen, from his childhood to the old age, the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread (v. 25) and the righteous were always generous and lend freely (v. 26). So it was David's conviction that the descendants of the righteous would be blessed. Dr. Yoon-sun



Park said, ‘People are very concerned about their children’s livelihood in the future. It is a vain concern. They shouldn’t worry about it. They should just try to live righteously. That is, they must strive to be righteous in relation to matter.’

### **Second, the Lord who makes our way firm is the One who protects us in trouble.**

Look at Psalms 37:28 – “For the LORD loves justice And does not forsake His godly ones; They are preserved forever, But the descendants of the wicked will be cut off.” What kind of saints is God protecting? Those who love justice are faithful (v. 28). The God of justice loves justice, and he is pleased to protect those who love and do justice. Also, God doesn’t forsake faithful believers. In a word, God protects the saints who faithfully do justice. Then what must we do to do justice faithfully? The law of our God must be in our hearts (v. 31). This is the key to do justice faithfully. Then our mouth can speak wisdom and justice (v. 30).

Then how does our God protect us when we faithfully do justice?

(1) God doesn’t let our steps to slip.

Look at Psalms 37:31 – “The law of his God is in his heart; His steps do not slip.” God doesn’t let our feet slip. Therefore, we can continue to stand firm and walk on our way.

(2) God doesn’t leave us in the hand of the wicked.

Look at Psalms 37:33 – “The LORD will not leave him in his hand Or let him be condemned when he is judged.” Although the wicked men can bring the righteous to trial to kill them, God doesn’t just look at the wicked to condemn the righteous. No matter how powerful the hand of the wicked is, God’s hand is omnipotent, so He doesn’t leave the righteous in their hands.

### **Third and last, the Lord who makes our way firm is the One who gives us peace.**

Look at Psalms 37:37 – “Mark the blameless man, and behold the upright; For the man of peace will have a posterity.” How does God give us peace?

(1) God gives us peace by saving us.

Look at Psalms 37:39 – “But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; He is their strength in time of trouble.” Our God is the God who helps the righteous and saves them from the wicked (v. 40).

(2) God gives us peace by being our strength in time of trouble.

Look at Psalms 37:39 again: “But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; He is their strength in time of trouble.” Our God is our hiding place during times of trouble. When we take refuge in Him, He protects us and gives us peace. Where will we find peace when we are in trouble if it’s not in the Lord?

What, then, is our responsibility to be at peace? Two things we can learn from today’s text:

(1) We must become “the blameless man” and “the upright.”

Look at Psalms 37:37 – “Mark the blameless man, and behold the upright; For the man of peace will have a posterity.” Here, “the blameless man” refers to a person who is pure and not crafty, and “the upright” refers to a person who lives rightly and without hiding in front of God (Park). In order to enjoy the God’s given peace even in times of trouble, we must live purely without being crafty and live rightly in front of God.

(2) We must take refuge in the Lord.

Look at Psalms 37:40 – “The LORD helps them and delivers them; He delivers them from the wicked and saves them, Because they take refuge in Him.” We must walk by faith, not by sight. Then we will be able to enjoy the peace given by God that the world cannot understand.

God, who has already foreordained our way, guides and protects us. And God upholds us when we fall and raises us up again so that we can continue to walk the way. And our God is pleased with the way. If so, I am meditating on whether Jesus was pleased with the way of the cross that His Heavenly Father has already decided for Him. Which parents would be pleased if the path of the beloved children that the Lord had decided is the way of martyrdom? There are parents who aren’t happy when their children walk on the path of the Lord’s servants. But if their children walk on the path of Jesus’ cross, the path of martyrdom, I cannot understand their parents can be happy for them to walk on that path. However, if our Heavenly Father was happy for His begotten Son Jesus to walk the path from the Bethlehem manger to the cross of Calvary, which He already predetermined, I think about what our hearts should be. When we follow the footsteps of Jesus and walk on the path of each of our crosses that God has already set for us, we must rejoice as we walk along that path. Even though we fall in trouble through the

Satan's temptations and the powerful attacks of the wicked, God upholds with His powerful hand, raises us up again, and enables us to walk the path of each of our own crosses. And in the midst of trouble, God protects us so that we can walk the path faithfully. It is God who protects us forever. After all, our God gives us peace that the world cannot understand or give. That God will make our way firm even more.

In the hope of rejoicing in faith while walking on the way of the cross given to me

James Kim

(In the conviction that even if I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I can be thankful for being guided by the Lord, my Shepherd)

## **Things that make us to slip**

### **“The law of his God is in his heart; His steps do not slip” (Psalms 37:31).**

I almost had a crash when I was driving last Sunday evening. When I was following my wife’s car, she suddenly stepped on the brake because there was another car suddenly turned right in front her car. So I had to step on my brake quickly as well. It seems that the space between my wife’s car and my car was less than a meter. And I saw a big SUV behind my car turning the steering wheel sideways. I learned later that the reason my car didn’t slip a lot, despite having a quick brake on the rain, was because there was an unique device in my car brakes.

There are many times when our path of faith is slippery like rain. In other words, there are many dangers of slips on the path of our faith. I found at least three things that make us to slip in Psalms 37.

#### **The first thing that makes us to slip is ‘envy.’**

Look at Psalms 37:1b – “... Be not envious toward wrongdoers.” If there is jealousy or envy in our hearts, we will slip. A small church pastor can be envious toward a big church pastor. A poor Christian can envy the rich. In Psalms 73, the psalmist Asaph almost slipped in jealousy as he saw the prosperity of the wicked in the midst of the suffering of the righteous. Therefore, we should often check our hearts whether there is envy or not.

#### **The second thing that makes us to slip is ‘fret.’**

Look at Psalms 37:1a – “Do not fret because of evildoers ....” David told us not to fret because of those who were prospers in their ways (v. 7). What was the reason? The reason was because when we fret, it would lead us only to evildoing (v. 8).

#### **The third thing that makes us to slip is ‘anger.’**

Look at Psalms 37:8a – “Cease from anger and forsake wrath ....” Why should we cease from anger and forsake wrath? The reason is that when we’re angry, it will lead us only to evildoing. I think it is very difficult to control our anger. We live in a world where there are more and more angry things. People seem to get angry more easily. That is evidence that we are losing ability to control our anger. If we have anger in our hearts, we will slip.

So how can we overcome the factors that are causing us to slip? The Bible teaches us to put the law of God in our heart. Look at Psalms 37:31 – “The law of his God is in his heart; His steps do not slip.” If God’s Word is in our hearts, we will not slip. The reason is because if God’s Word is in our hearts, we will delight to the Lord’s will (40:8). Then what is the will of the Lord? It is to do wisdom and justice (v. 30). We who puts the word of God in our hearts see the evildoers from the point of view of God’s justice, not only knows their destruction, but believe in the truth that vengeance is God’s. So we cast the evildoers to God. Also, we don’t envy them, fret and angry against the evildoers. But we who have the word of God in our hearts respond wisely. In other words, the wise men who have the word of God in their hearts trust God to do good (v. 3), delight themselves in the Lord (v. 4), and commit their ways to Him (v. 5), wait patiently for Him (v. 7) and hope in God (v. 9). Therefore, those who have the word of God in their hearts walk the path of the Lord faithfully by overcoming envy, fret and anger. May we be able to walk the Lord’s path faithfully.

Trying to put His word in my heart,

James Kim

(Trying to keep away from envy, fret and anger)

## “because of my sin”

### [Psalms 38:1-12]

As I read Pastor Junsu Kim’s book ‘Healing of the Mind’, there is an saying that comes to my mind: ‘What we see on the surface is only a mask to cover our true self. People think that if they are well-packed on the outside and are recognized by other people, their inner wounds and inferiority will be overlooked.’ Based on this saying, I wrote something under the heading ‘Wearing a Mask’:

‘When I make my true appearance sincerely and transparently, if I don’t have a friend in the Lord who can accept me as I am, then I think my life is truly pitiful. Eventually, I wear my mask again and again and live by forgetting even my true self and by becoming too accustomed to the life of the person that I am not. What a pity if I am still living like that. I think more pitiful person is the one who is wearing a mask even in front of Heavenly Father. I think about how unfortunate it is to God if we go to God, only cover ourselves with the form of godliness and pretend to be holy, to have good faith, in order to worship Him.’

What is the problem? The problem is that we are not honest with ourselves. The problem is that we don’t have the courage to face our own problems.

When we face ourselves, we have to take a look at our own inner world by peeling it off as if we were peeling an onion. In the midst of that, we must develop the ability to see ourselves from God’s point of view. This is never easy. We must face our own problems and our own deeply hidden sins. Then we can humbly accept what is happening in our lives because of our sins. Furthermore, we can experience the discipline of God’s love.

We are being disciplined by God for our sins. So in Psalms 38:3, the psalmist David was disciplined by God “because of my sin,” so he asked God: “O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath” (v. 1). Then, what was God’s discipline to David before of his sin? I want to take a look at six things and take time to look back at my life as I see how terrible the consequences of my sin are.

**First, God’s discipline is that His hand coming down upon me.**

Look at Psalms 38:2 – “For Your arrows have sunk deep into me, And Your hand has pressed down on me.” The word “press” here is also found in Psalms 32:4, which we have already meditated on: “For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah.” I don’t know what the phrase “heavy upon me” specifically means, but one thing is clear: God makes us confess our sins even through something like trouble (v. 3). Perhaps the phrase “For your arrows have pierced me” is God’s work of piercing our conscience with His word that is like His arrows so that we may confess our sins.

### **Second, God’s discipline is physical pain.**

Look at Psalms 38:3, 7 – “Because of your wrath there is no health in my body; my bones have no soundness because of my sin. ... My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body.” In these two verses, David repeatedly says, ‘There is no health in my body.’ This was because the wrath of the Lord came upon David because of his sin (vv. 1, 3). Because of the wrath of the Lord, physical pain came upon David, and there is no health in his bones (v. 3). Here, the phrase that there is no health in David’s bones means the extreme pain (Park). Why do we sometimes have such a terrible pain like David? David explains why in verse 4: “For my iniquities are gone over my head; As a heavy burden they weigh too much for me.” Because of our many sins, we go through physical sufferings as His discipline in His wrath. And that disciplines is like “a heavy burden” (v. 4). The Bible describes our physical pains as the discipline of God because of our sins as follow: “My heart throbs, my strength fails me; And the light of my eyes, even that has gone from me” (v. 10). Here, the phrase “My heart throbs” refers not pleasant feeling of faith, but unstable and confused heart (Park). How can a guilty heart be pleasant? That heart cannot but be unstable and confused. Eventually, the heart that is confused by sin is bound to shake. And the phrase “my strength fails me; And the light of my eyes, even that has gone from me” refers to the fact that David suffered severe hardships and darkened his eyes because of the physical discipline (Park).

### **Third, God’s discipline is “wounds” and “mourning”.**

Look at Psalms 38:5-6: “My wounds grow foul and fester Because of my folly. I am bent over and greatly bowed down; I go mourning all day long.” What I feel when I talk to my wife these days is that even though “joy” is a blessing from God, we cannot rejoice but are sad because of our sinful choices. How painful is this? Eventually, our hearts are hurting and we mourn because of our disobedience to His word. Of course, the “wound” mentioned in verse 5 may refer to a physical wound rather than a broken heart. But whether the “wounds” are physical or heart or both, the important thing is that the wounds “fester and are loathsome” (v. 5). It can be seen that the psalmist David had been disciplined by God for a long time (Park). We must recognize that the consequences of sin are terrifying when we imagine that we grieve in our wounds for a long time. Dr. Yoon-sun Park said, ‘His sorrow isn’t due to any unfortunate conditions in this world, but purely to the punishment of his sin’ (Park). Although the sorrow

of his punishment can be said God's discipline, it is indeed a beneficial sorrow for us. These are beneficial tears that make us repent.

#### **Fourth, God's discipline is "anguish of heart".**

Look at Psalms 38:8 – "I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart." After we have sinned, we feel the anguish of our hearts. The unbelievers don't feel this anguish. Since they don't regard sin as a sin, their hearts cannot be in anguish due to that sin. However, since we the believers regard sin as a sin, we feel pains due to the consequence of our sin and we can be feeble and utterly crushed and groan in anguish of heart. When I think about the comparison between the phrase "anguish of heart" (37:8) with Psalms 6:3, I think we can say that "my soul is greatly dismayed" (6:3). This is the result of experiencing long-term suffering due to God's discipline. I think this is a symptom (a phenomenon) of the mind that comes when we feel the limits of human patience as we experience the long-term suffering due to God's discipline. In this anguish of heart, we have no choice but to groan or sigh. In Ezekiel 21:6, God commanded the prophet Ezekiel: "As for you, son of man, groan with breaking heart and bitter grief, groan in their sight." What was the reason? It was "Because of the news that was coming" (v. 7). The news refers to destruction. What was the result of hearing that news of destruction? "Every heart will melt and every hand go limp; every spirit will become faint and every knee become as weak as water" (v. 7). We are feeble and utterly crushed and groan in anguish of heart because of our sins (Ps. 38:8).

#### **Fifth, God's discipline is to be in lonely in situation.**

Look at Psalms 37:11 – "My friends and companions avoid me because of my wounds; my neighbors stay far away." It is truly God's terrible discipline. I am sure it is very painful and difficult to go through physical pain, wounds and sorrows, and anguish of the heart. But we feel lonely when people who are close to us turn away from us because of our sins. This reminds me Job. I am sure Job felt very lonely when his wife told him "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!" (Job. 2:9), when he was going through the physical pain that was beyond our imagination. When even his wife, the closest one, didn't understand him and said the foolish thing to him, he had no choice but to be lonely. Sin is such a scary thing. Sin isolates a person completely. I think God is cutting off all our family and friends who we rely on as His discipline in love.

#### **Sixth and last, God's discipline is to allow our enemies to attach us.**

Look at Psalms 38:12 – "Those who seek my life set their traps, those who would harm me talk of my ruin; all day long they plot deception." This is the action of David's enemies. His enemies tried to harm David by setting



traps, talking about his ruin, and plotting deception. Here, 'setting their traps' refers to an act of conspiracy to insidiously harm David, 'talking about his ruin' refers to talking about how to destroy David, and 'plotting deception' refers to a special examination to deceive David (Park). If we look at Romans 1:24, 26, 28, there is a repeated word 'gave them over': "Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity ..." (1:24), "For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions ..." (v. 26) and "... God gave them over to a depraved mind ..." (v. 28). When we make a sinful choice, God just gives us over to our sinful choose and thus go through the result of our sinful choice. One of the things that He gives us over is that He allows us to be attacked by our enemies and don't protect us.

What should we do when we receive these disciplines from God for our own sins? We must pray to God. We must repent our sins to Him. Look at Psalms 38:9 – "All my longings lie open before you, O Lord; my sighing is not hidden from you." And when we repent our sins to Him, we must look to Jesus Christ, who was crucified "because of my sin" (v. 3). Jesus, who was without sin, was crucified for all our sins. Jesus suffered not only the physical suffering that we couldn't imagine, but also the inner suffering, the suffering that He was forsaken by His own Heavenly Father. Why did Jesus go through all these sufferings? He did so in order to forgive our sins and save us. Heavenly Father poured out His wrath on Jesus, His own begotten Son. Therefore, we are forgiven of our sins. Now we are no longer lonely. The reason is because Jesus is always with us. We don't have to be afraid anymore. Since God is protecting us, who can attack us and hurt us? Therefore, we look at Jesus who died on the cross, and move forward.

Meditating on the truth that Jesus suffered and died "because of my sin",

James Kim

(Being grateful for His grace and love)

## Relationships

**“My friends and companions avoid me because of my wounds; my neighbors stay far away” (Psalms 38:11).**

Why are our loved ones moving away from us? The reason is because we are moving away from God. Among the books I’m reading these days is Eugene Peterson’s “Leap Over a Wall.” There is a chapter about David and his son Absalom in the book. As I was reading that chapter, the Lord gave me some precious understandings. One of them was that when David didn’t truly forgive his son Absalom, David refused to see him even though he brought him to the royal palace (2 Sam. 14:24, 28). In other words, David didn’t really forgive Absalom who murdered Amnon. So even after he allowed Absalom to return to the palace, he never tried to meet Absalom or let him come to him. In a word, David kept Absalom away. Although Absalom, the son who wanted to be accepted by his father David and who wanted personal forgiveness from his father David, David refused to accept Absalom and forgave him impersonally. What a miserable relationship between father and son?

But this isn’t just the problem between David and Absalom in the Bible. Look at our marital relationship. Look at the mother-daughter relationship. Looking at these relationships alone, how many family relationships are becoming more and more distant as David has kept Absalom away? What is the problem? The Bible says it is a sin. The problem of relationships is the sin of not forgiving, the sin of refusing to be forgiven, that is the sin of moving far away from God. Because of that sin, there is no rest in our hearts (Ps. 38:3), and we have no choice but to carry heavy burdens in our hearts (v. 4). Furthermore, our sins stink (v. 5) eventually causes “My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off” (v. 11).

Then, how can we smoothly restore human relations, such as our marital relations, the father-son relations and the mother-daughter relations? We should pray to God like David: “Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me” (v. 21). David was eventually abandoned by Absalom. Eventually, Absalom tried to kill his own father, David. Then David fled to the wilderness, and three things are restored: humility, prayer, and lovingkindness (Peterson). In short, David restored his self-worth (‘Davidness’) while he was suffering in the wilderness. As he humbly prayed to the Lord in the wilderness, the Lord came near to David and restored his love for Absalom. So David instructed his army generals not to kill Absalom (2 Sam. 18:5). But Joab killed Absalom. When David heard this news, he wept and cried with sorrow: “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!” (v. 33)

Before it's too late, we need to restore our distant marital relationship, father/mother and child relationship, relatives and friends, etc.. In order to do so, I hope and pray that we, who seek beautiful relationship in the eyes of the Lord, must recognize our own sinfulness of being away from the Lord and humbly pray for repentance and give true forgiveness with His love.

With a humble prayer to the Immanuel Lord for the fruit of love,

James Kim

(As I taste the joy of forgiveness and of confession)

## “O Lord my Savior”

### [Psalms 38:12-22]

What do you think is living the best life? One pastor said in his book: ‘Living the best life is to realize what your mission is and live a life that meets that mission’ (Internet). Then he said:

‘Young people are often self-centered. When they realize themselves, they seem to realize the world. But when they give up themselves, they think that the world is over. But the world is flowing along God’s great stream of salvation. We cut in in that process secretly. Therefore, after we have done our part to fulfill God’s given mission to us, we should disappear quietly. Even so, God’s salvation history remains unchanged. It keeps flowing. However, there are those who can’t disappear or die quietly. ‘I have to do all this...’ If someone says this, I will immediately say, ‘You can relax and die.’ It is because God even works through others’ (Internet).

It is our individual historical mission to realize what we must do and in what context God has called us in the great overall flow of God’s great work of salvation. Each of us must think seriously what our mission is in the course of God’s work of salvation. What kind of life is it to live up to that mission? We must ask this kind of question and make every effort to achieve the unique mission given to each of us. In the midst of this, we must overcome the adversities and difficulties that come from completing each of our missions and the temptations and persecutions that come from Satan. In order to do this, we must experience God’s work of salvation in our personal lives. In other words, we must realize and understand the flow of God’s work of salvation in our individual lives. In other words, the essential element in fulfilling the mission is knowing and believing that the Lord is my Savior.

The psalmist David in Psalms 38 was a person who knew and experienced the Lord as the Savior. In the midst of the trouble and persecution because of his sin, he prayed to God: “Come quickly to help me, O Lord my Savior” (v. 22). I would like to receive the grace given by meditating in three ways about the life of those who know, believe, and experience the Lord as their Savior.

**First, those who know, believe, and experience the Lord as their Savior wait for the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 38:15 – “I wait for you, O LORD; you will answer, O Lord my God.” The psalmist David became like a deaf man and a mute when those who sought his life set their traps and who tried to harm him and talked of his ruin and plotted deception (vv. 12-13). In other words, David looked only at the Lord in silence with his ears closed and his mouth closed when his enemies tried to harm him in wicked scheme. Like David, we should be like the deaf people who don’t listen to the things that we aren’t supposed to listen. David didn’t listen to the enemies who surrounded him when they talked of his ruin (v. 12), or speaking about the destruction of David (Park). How can we live by listening to all those who hate us and oppose us? When we need to cover our ears, we need to do so. In particular, we must close our ears to the voices of the world and open our ears to listen to the voice of the Lord. Also, we need to be mute like David who don’t open our mouth. When we need to be silent, we should be silent. David didn’t try to protect himself by opening his mouth and making some defenses while his enemies were conspiring to harm him in their wicked schemes and trying to destroy him (v. 14).

I am sure we experienced that when we opened our mouth to defend ourselves, a problem got bigger. Sometimes excuses make the problem bigger. It is said that the famous philosopher Plato once had serious misunderstandings from those around him. So even though many people criticized him, he didn’t try to excuse his situation. So a disciple asked Plato: ‘Teacher! Why don’t you make an excuse?’ At that time Plato replied: ‘It is not my excuse to end their accusations. The only way to silence their accusations is my righteous deeds (Internet). As we live in this world, we sometimes are accused because of misunderstanding. So we may have tried a number of way to solve the misunderstanding. However, it isn’t easily solved, but we see that there are times when the misunderstanding deepens like the thread that is entangled. We the saints must know how to quietly wait for God’s guidance and God’s time. It would be foolish to go before God and try to solve the problem that is before us. Jesus was misunderstood and criticized so many times on this earth. But Jesus patiently waited for the Father’s time. It is a beautiful life that completely obeys God’s will (Internet).

When we are suffering and struggling with an unfair accusation, we should be silent and look at the Lord. We shouldn’t open our ears and try to be too sensitive to what people say. Just because we open our mouths and make excuses doesn’t mean that the misunderstanding will be resolved. Like David, we should be like the deaf and the mute people and quietly go to the Lord and ask the Lord in silence. Especially when we go to God and pray to Him, we should pray with the assurance of answered prayers like David. Look at Psalms 38:15 – “For I hope in You, O LORD; You will answer, O Lord my God.” If we translate this literally, it is ‘You will soon answer. My Lord and my God’ (Park). Like David, who prayed with confidence in prayer answers while hoping only in the Lord, we should hope only in God in silence.

**Second, those who know, believe, and experience the Lord as their Savior open their mouth and confess their iniquity.**

Look at Psalms 38:18 – “For I confess my iniquity; I am full of anxiety because of my sin.” It is interesting and amazing how David is confessing his sins. I am sure David saw the sins of his enemies. But instead of focusing on their sins, David focused on his own sins and confessed them before God. This reminds us to think about the attitude of faith again. In other words, in the persecution, adversity, suffering, and pain because of the enemies, there is no need to be stressed and pained by opening your ears to people and by hearing such slanders or accusations, and we don’t need to open our mouth and make excuses. Instead, while quietly hoping in the Lord in silence, we must realize our sin in God’s holy presence and confess our sins to Him. David, who used his enemies’ opposition and persecution as opportunities not for resentment and complaining but for examining himself before God and confessing his sin to Him, teaches us to be deaf and mute and go to God to pour out our hearts to Him in repentance. In Psalms 38:16-18, we can see what David asking God while he is hoping only in the Lord. We can summarize his prayer in two ways.

- (1) The first prayer is found in Psalms 38:16 – “For I said, ‘May they not rejoice over me, Who, when my foot slips, would magnify themselves against me.’”

David’s prayer was two: (a) One is David prayed that his enemies wouldn’t rejoice when he failed, (b) another one is he prayed that his enemies wouldn’t ignore God and magnify themselves against him if he fails (Park). This prayer is actually the prayer that pursuit God’s glory. The reason is that David, in the midst of his enemies’ persecution, was hoping only in God and praying to Him. But if God didn’t answer his prayer, then his enemies would magnify themselves and proud of themselves. Then his prayer in trusting God would become useless and it wouldn’t be glorifying God but would bring shame to Him. That was why David asked God to hear his supplication even for His own glory.

- (2) The second prayer is about David confessing his sin to God (v. 18). Because of his sin, David was ready to fall, and his sorrow was continually before him (v. 17).

In light of verse 3, David was in so much pain because of his sin that there was no health in his bones (v. 3). Then, in the end, we see how he confessed his sin to God, that is he mourned for his sin. When the Lord’s hand was heavy upon David day and night, David acknowledged his sin to God (32:4; 38:2). What an amazing work of God? He could have opened his mouth to defend himself and make excuses. But God made David to confess his sin in suffering and sorrow. As we are silent before people, we need to open our mouth to God and confess our sins to Him.

**Third and last, those who know, believe, and experience the Lord as their Savior**

## **follow what is good.**

Look at Psalms 38:20 – “Do not forsake me, O LORD; O my God, do not be far from me!” Even in the midst of his enemies’ persecution, David didn’t stop pursuing good while confessing his sins in his prayer to God. He did good to his enemies, but they repaid David’s good for evil. That is, they opposed David. It is an amazing faith that David pursued good even in the midst of his enemies opposing him. Interestingly, the more we do good, the bigger and stronger Satan’s work will be. Look at the work of David’s enemies when David did good amidst the his enemies’ persecution: “But my enemies are vigorous and strong, And many are those who hate me wrongfully” (v. 19). Will we still pursue good when our enemies hate us and persecute us more actively and strongly as we do good to them?

This is the life of a believer who looks at and hope only in the Lord who is our salvation. The secret of living a life of closing our ears to our enemies’ voices and our mouths to them but of opening our ears and mouths to God, and listening to His voice, confessing our sins to Him in prayers and pursuing good is to look to God and hope and trust in Him. So, in pursuit of good, David prayed to God when his enemies opposed him: “O LORD, do not forsake me; be not far from me, O my God. Come quickly to help me, O Lord my Savior” (vv. 21-22).

In the great flow of God’s work of salvation, we must know, meet and experience the Lord our Savior every day in order to realize our mission and devote ourselves fully to fulfill it. In other words, the stream of God’s work of salvation must flow in our lives. As we experience the flow of that salvation work, we must hold onto the words of Zephaniah 3:17 and sing toward the salvation of the Lord and go toward that heaven:

“The LORD your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior He will exult over you with joy,  
He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.”

As I quietly look to Almighty God in faith who will bring salvation,

James Kim

(Confession my sin of doubt to Him)

## **“O my God, do not be far from me!”**

### **[Psalms 38:21-22]**

In the book “The Problem of Pain”, written by C. S. Lewis, a great thinker of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who tried to spread Christian love and faith with a cold mind and warm gaze, he asked this question: ‘If God is good and omnipotent, why does He allow creatures to suffer?’ In other words, the question is, ‘If God is all-powerful and good, why does evil and suffering coexist in this world?’ Have any of you ever asked this question like C. S. Lewis? Especially when you were suffering, didn’t you ask the question, ‘If God is good, why is He giving me this pain and just leave me alone?’ C. S. Lewis solved this problem of pain theologically, which seems to be an unsolvable task for humans: ‘Pain is the megaphone of God to awaken the deaf world.’ He said that suffering is what God calls attention to awaken us. In other words, pain provides the only opportunity to reform (repentance) and perfection through suffering.

When I personally think of “pain,” I divide it into two: Suffering of Discipline and Suffering of Correction.

#### (1) First, Suffering of Discipline.

The suffering of discipline is the pain that God allows us in His sovereignty, through which God allows us to grow and mature in our faith. One good example is the character Job in the Bible book of Job. The Bible Job 1:1 says that Job “was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.” Even God boasted Job to Satan: “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil” (1:8; 2:3). However, as we know, there seems to be no one in the Bible who suffers as much as Job. He not only lost all of his possessions (1:13-17), but also all his children (v. 19). He even suffered from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head (2:7), so he sat among the ashes and took a potsherd to scrape himself (v. 8). Why did God allow Satan to strike such the blameless and upright Job who fears God? The reason is given in Job 42:5 – “have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You.” The reason God allowed Job to suffer severe pain was because he wanted to give the blessing of faith to him so that he could see God with his own spiritual eyes, that is, to experience God deeply.

#### (2) Second, Suffering of Correction.

Suffering of correction is the suffering that the Holy God gives us as punishment for suffering as a result of



our sins, ultimately allowing us to save us from our sins because we confess and repent of our sins. A good example of this suffering of correction is a character named David in Psalms 38. I would like to receive a message that God admonishes us even through David who suffered this suffering of correction while meditating on the whole Psalms 38, centered on the words of Psalms 38:21-22.

As I meditate on Psalms 38, I would like to ask two questions to hear the message God wants to give to us: (1) The first question is, what is the suffering that we Christians receive who have sinned against God? (2) The second question is what should we do when we are suffering?

### **First, what is the suffering that we Christians receive who have sinned against God?**

David said in Psalms 38:2 about the suffering we suffered: “For Your arrows have sunk deep into me, And Your hand has pressed down on me.” God not only stabs our conscience with His word, the sword of the Holy Spirit, but also His hand is heavy upon us when we aren’t confessing our sins after we have sinned. This expression “heavy” is also appeared in Psalms 32:4 – “For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah.” Here we don’t know exactly what the phrase ‘the Lord’s hand is heavy upon us day and night’ means. But one thing is clear that God makes us to confess our sins, even though suffering (v. 3).

David suffered three pains because the Lord’s arrow had sunk deep into him and His hand had pressed down on him:

#### (1) The first pain is the physical pain.

Look at Psalms 38:3, 7 – “Because of your wrath there is no health in my body; my bones have no soundness because of my sin. ... My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body.” David repeatedly confessed, “there is no health in my body” because the Lord’s arrow had pierced him (vv. 3, 7), and His hand had pressed down on him (v. 2). In other words, David lost his health. Not only his strength failed him, but also even the light of his eyes had gone from him (v. 10). In short, David suffered physical pain. When we are healthy and lose our health, we must realize our sins even through that physical suffering. C. S. Lewis said, ‘Pain is a God’s megaphone that calls and wakes up the deaf world.’ We must wake up spiritually, even through physical pain, to hear the voice of God’s reproof, God’s pointing out our sins with the Word of God, the sword of the Holy Spirit. This reminds me John 5:14. After Jesus healed a 38-year-old sick man in a pool called Bethesda in Jerusalem, he found him in the temple and said to him, “Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you” (v. 14). How do you hear this word of Jesus? What if we continue to commit the same sin even after being healed from the physical illness that God has used to make us to confess and repent of our sins? Aren’t we afraid?

(2) The second pain is the pain of the heart.

Not only did David lose his health (v. 3) because of the heavy burden on him (v. 4), but also he even groan in anguish of heart (v. 8). As a result, he was wounded not only in the flesh but also in the heart (v. 5) and was forced to go mourning all day long (v. 6). What a painful consequences of sin? After we sin, we Christians groan in anguish of heart. The unbelievers don't groan in anguish of heart because they don't and can't regard sin as a sin and thus it cannot hurt their hearts. However, since we believers feel pain because of our sins, we become tired and our hearts are hurt and thus we end up with groan in anguish of our hearts. This is the result of experiencing long-term suffering due to God's discipline. I think this is a phenomenon of the mind that comes while we feel the limit of human patience until 'How long I should suffer like this?' In this anguish of heart, we have no choice but to groan or sigh. In the midst of this, what David suffered was loneliness. Look at Psalms 38:11 – "My friends and companions avoid me because of my wounds; my neighbors stay far away." The crushing of the heart, such as physical pains, wounds, sorrow and anguish of heart is very painful. But we feel lonely when people turn away from us because of our sins. This reminds me Job in the Bible. I am sure his physical pain would have been painful beyond our imagination. But when his wife went further and said to Job, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!" (Job 2:9), I think he was very lonely. If even our closest one, our wives, don't understand us and say something foolish, then we have no choice but to be lonely. Sin is such a scary thing. It can isolate a person completely. Sometime, God cuts up all our families, relatives and friends who we rely on when He disciplines us due to our sins.

(3) The third pain is the pain of the soul.

Look at Psalms 38:12 – "Those who seek my life set their traps, those who would harm me talk of my ruin; all day long they plot deception." This is the action of David's enemies. David's enemies tried to harm David by setting their traps, talking of his ruins and plotting deception. In other words, the enemies of David not only plotted to harm David, but also tried to deceive him somehow to destroy him. Isn't it interesting that when David sinned, even his loved ones, friends, and relatives kept him away but his enemies approached David and tried to harm him and destroy him? It is spiritual battle. Our enemies, Satan, not only try to make us to commit sin against God, but he also keeps on attaching us and making us not to repent our sins, and eventually making us to betray and apostatize the Lord to fall away from faith and perish forever. Among these, the biggest pain for David was the feeling of being abandoned by God and God being far away from him. Look at verse 21: "O LORD, do not forsake me; be not far from me, O my God." David feared that God would be far away from him and forsake him because of his sin. Of course, this was David's feeling, and not the fact. Never did God leave David, nor did he forsake or alienate him. Rather, God came close to David and pressed him with His own hands, and also His arrow

pierced him (v. 2). God was close to David and wanted him to confess and repent of his sin. In a word, God wanted to save David from his sin.

**Second, what should we do when we suffer? The Bible Psalms 38 teaches us three things:**

(1) In silence, we must wait for the Lord our Savior.

Look at Psalms 38:15 – “I wait for you, O LORD; you will answer, O Lord my God.” When those who sought David’s life set their traps, talked about his ruin and plotted deception to harm him, David became deaf and mute (vv. 12-13). In other words, David didn’t try to protect himself by making any defense by opening his mouth when his enemies were insidiously plotting to harm him and destroy him (v. 14). Rather, he closed his ears, closed his mouth, and looked only at the Lord in silence. Like David, we should not listen to things that we aren’t supposed to listen. When his enemies, who surrounded him, were talking about his ruin (v. 12), that is about his destruction, David didn’t listen to them like the deaf man (Park). How can we live by listening to all things that those who hate us and oppose us say? When we need to cover our ears we need to do so. In particular, we must close our ears to the voices of the world and open our ears to listen to the voice of the Lord. Also, we must close our mouths like David and become mute. We must quietly go to God and pray to Him in silence as we become the deaf and mute. Especially as we go to God in prayer, we must go to Him with the assurance of answered prayers like David. Look at Psalms 38:15 – “I wait for you, O LORD; you will answer, O Lord my God.” If we translate this literally, David said ‘You will soon answer, O My Lord and my God’ (Park). Like David, who prayed with assurance of answered prayer while looking only at God, we should look only at God in silence and pray to Him in faith.

(2) We must open our mouths and confess our sins to the Lord.

Look at Psalms 38:18 – “I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin.” It is interesting and amazing to see how David is confessing his sin to God. Although he had seen the sins of his enemies, instead of focusing on their sins, he focused on his sin and confessed it before God. This figure of David reminds us the attitude of faith again. In other words, we don’t need to be in stress and in pain when we listen to their slander or blame in our enemies’ persecution, adversity and our suffering and pain. Also, we don’t need to open our mouths and defend ourselves, but look at only the Lord in silence and confess our sins to Him in His holy presence. David, who used His enemies’ opposition and persecution as an opportunity to examine ourselves and confess our sins to the Lord instead of the opportunity to resent and complain, we should become deaf and mute and poured out our hearts to God and make it the opportunity to pour out our sins to

Him.

(3) We must pursue what is good.

Look at Psalms 38:20 – “Those who repay my good with evil slander me when I pursue what is good.” Even in the midst of his enemies’ persecution, David didn’t stop his life of pursuing good while confessing his sins to Him God. He did good to his enemies, but they repaid David’s good for evil. That is, they opposed David. It is an amazing faith that David pursued good, even in the midst of his enemies opposing him. Interestingly, the more we do good, the bigger and stronger Satan’s work will be. When David did good even in the midst of his enemies’ persecution, we can see the work of his enemies in verse 19: “Many are those who are my vigorous enemies; those who hate me without reason are numerous.” Will we still follow good, even if we keep on doing good and thus our enemies actively and strongly hate and persecute us more? This is the life of a believer who looks at only the Lord who is his or her salvation. The key to confessing our sins and living a life of pursuing good while praying is to trust and hope only in the Lord, our Savior. So, in pursuit of good, David prayed to God because of his enemies’ oppositions: “O LORD, do not forsake me; be not far from me, O my God. Come quickly to help me, O Lord my Savior” (vv. 21-22).

The biggest pain for us is the feeling that God is far from us and has forsaken us. At that time, we must silently look to Jesus, who was forsaken by His Father God and crucified and died on the cross. Because Jesus is forsaken, our sins are forgiven. Therefore, we must confess and repent of our sins through the suffering of God’s discipline. I hope and pray that we will be blessed with the blessings of blamelessness through the suffering of God’s discipline.

As we look to Immanuel God and wait upon Him in the midst of suffering,

James Kim

(Hoping and praying that I will be able to confess and repent my great sins through even my great sufferings)

## **“let me know how fleeting is my life”**

### **[Psalms 39]**

A pastor wrote the words ‘My condolences to you, James Kim’ on my Cyworld homepage guestbook. The reason was because my name is James Kim and the person who died was James Kim as well. It was pity when I read the title of the article ‘James Kim found dead in heavy snow’ through that pastor. James Kim, a Korean-American who disappeared in heavy snow and discovered in a dead body on the 12<sup>th</sup> days later, while traveling with his family and turned the wrong way. The news of the death of husband and father James Kim, who left his family in the car to ask for help to save his wife and their two children (4 years and 7 months), was sad for many people in the world. After I heard this, I thought about my own death. In other words, I was thinking about my own end. If I know my own end and know how long I can live, I’m thinking about how I will live the rest of my life.

In Psalms 39:4 says, David was in pain. We can think about the causes of his suffering in two ways: (1) The first cause of his pain was “the wicked” or “fools” (vs. 1, 8) and (2) The second cause of his pain was ‘disease’ (vv. 10, 11, 13). In the midst of these, David prayed God, “Show me, O LORD, my life’s end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life” (v. 4). In other words, David wished to know his own weakness by knowing his own end and remaining period. David prayed to God that he would realize that his life was short when he was suffering because of wickedness and disease (Park). David wanted to realize how painlessly life would flow quickly. Based on Psalms 39:4, under the heading “let me know how fleeting is my life”, I want to learn three lessons about how to live each day, as we realize how fleeting is the life of suffering saints.

**First, we must be watching our words and actions as we realize that our suffering life is fleeting.**

Look at Psalms 39:1 – “I said, ‘I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth as long as the wicked are in my presence.’” Many of us later regret saying, ‘Why did I act like this, why did I say this?’ In other words, it’s useless to regret later after the words that we have already poured out from our mouths. So is the action. We often regret after we have acted so impatiently and have made a problem bigger. That’s why we have to work hard to think first and speak and think first and act. In other words, we need to be careful in our words and actions. As I searched the Internet, I read that this article appeared under the heading ‘The Evangelist’s Posture’: ‘The evangelist doesn’t go to the field of evangelism as an individual, but as a representative

of the church and instead of the Lord. So we should evangelize with the sense of responsibility as His representative. ... As an ambassador for the church and the Lord, the evangelist must have sense of mission to meet unbelievers, and his attitude and words must be prudent and commendable' (Internet). As this article says, we must be careful and commendable for our attitude and words and actions as evangelists. Then why did David careful in his words and actions in his suffering? This was because David tried to not to commit the sin of blaming God in adversity in the midst of a situation where it was difficult for him to endure (Park). As we meditate on the words of Psalms 38:12-22, we have been taught that we need to become deaf and mute (v. 13). In other words, when we are suffering because of the wicked, we must not listen to the words of the wicked and try to defend ourselves with words. Rather, we must open our ears to hear God's voice and open our mouths and cry out to God. In Psalms 38, David was silent before the wicked. Why was he silent in front of the wicked? The reason was that David tried not to sin against God with his lips. How wise this is. When there is resentment or complaint to the God in our hearts when we are suffering, we need to close our mouths and be silent. Also, we need to remain silent even when there is complaint and resentment toward the church leaders. Otherwise, we are more likely to sin against God because of our imprudent words and actions. But it seems like our human mouth doesn't stand still. I think if we aren't talking, our mouths seem to be dizzy. And I think there is tendency in us that we must speak so that we feel relieved. That's why Apostle James said about the tongue in James 3:8-10: "But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way." So David said in Psalms 39:1b – "... I will put a muzzle on my mouth ...." The reason why he was silent in the midst of receiving God's discipline (vv. 8, 9) and of listening to the scorn of the wicked was because he knew that to some extent he deserved to be mocked by the wicked (Park). David was suffering not only from the wicked, but also more from the sickness of God's discipline for his sin (Park). Therefore, David was silent before God in order not to sin against Him because he knew that he was being punished for his sin. How should we live? We must know our weaknesses and be careful with our words and actions when we are suffering. We shouldn't act recklessly, and open our mouths recklessly and commit sins against God and His people. We must be more cautious. Therefore, we must live right in front of God, knowing how fleeting our life is.

## **Second, we must meditate as we realize that our suffering life is fleeting.**

Look at Psalms 39:3 – "My heart grew hot within me, and as I meditated, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue." If we realize that our life is fleeting, we should stop and meditate in our busy life. We shouldn't live quickly and fast in the fast passing years. Even if we are told by the people in this world that we are slow, we should stop and think about life. This week, I read this mission letter from a Central Asian missionary sponsored by our church. The missionary asked our church members to pray for him about this: 'Pray for me so that I can slow down and love my wife and children and those whom God has let me meet here.' The reason he asked for this

prayer topic was because he was challenged by what John Ortberg said in the book: ‘The most serious cause of illness in a hurry is a decrease in the ability to love. ... Love and hurry are fundamentally contradictory. Love always takes time. But for those who are in a hurry, there is no time.’ We need to slow down a bit in this fast-paced world. We need to walk slowly, not in a hurry. In this flowing stream like time, we need to stop and look back our lives in front of God and have time of meditation.

David meditated on life before God in his suffering as he was being careful with his words and actions. In the midst of that, he has four conclusions of his meditation:

(1) The first conclusion of David’s meditation is that life is short.

David made this poetic in today’s Psalms 39:5 – “You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. ....” The expression that life is like “a mere handbreadth” and that our years is as “nothing” in God’s eyes is a poetic expression of our human life’s short life (Park).

(2) The second conclusion of David’s meditation is that life is nothing.

Our life is momentarily in this earth. After, we will leave. Look at Psalms 39:5b – “... Surely every man at his best is a mere breath. Selah.” In verse 11, David confessed, “Surely every man is a mere breath. Selah.” Apostle James draws this conclusion in James 4:14 – “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.” David said that our lives are like “a phantom” (Ps. 39:6).

(3) The third conclusion of David’s meditation is that people make an uproar for nothing.

Look at Psalms 39:6 – “... Surely they make an uproar for nothing. He amasses riches and does not know who will gather them.” According to Apostle James, there were people like this among the recipients of his letter: “... Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit” (Jam. 4:13).

(4) Fourth and last conclusion of David’s meditation is “My hope is in You.”

Look at Psalms 39:7 – “And now, Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in You.” David, who silently meditated in suffering, lamented and finally put his hope in the Lord when he deeply realized the nothingness of life. As we meditate like David, we need to deeply realize the nothingness of this world. Furthermore, we should realize the nothingness of our short life as we watch we make the uproar for nothing. Then, like David, we can truly confess, ‘My hope is in the Lord/’

### **Third and last, we must pray as we realize that our suffering life is fleeting.**

Look at Psalms 39:12 – “Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry; Do not be silent at my tears; For I am a stranger with You, A sojourner like all my fathers.” David humbly accepted his suffering whether it was by the wicked or disease because he knew that because of his sin. So he wanted to be cautious so that he wouldn’t commit greater sins against God. Like David, we should be able to realize our own sins against God when we are suffering. If not, we may complain to God and blame Him when we think about why we are suffering. That was why David said “I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle” (v. 1). But when David was silent without opening his mouth, his anguish increased (v. 2). Why was that? Why did his anguish increase when he was silent? The reason was because he wanted to ask God for his painful feeling of being victimized (Park). In other words, David’s anguish increased because he would suffer even more if he didn’t open his mouth and pray to God. My personal thought is that when David was silent, the reason his anguish increased was not only because he couldn’t pray to God for his feeling of being victimized, but also because his heart was burning because he didn’t pour out his sin to God. Look at Psalms 39:8-9: “Save me from all my transgressions; do not make me the scorn of fools. I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for you are the one who has done this.” Here, David knew that the cause of his suffering was entirely the price of his own sin, and he was convinced that being forgiven by God was the key to solving the problem (Park). That was why he asked God to forgive his sin: “Look away from me, that I may rejoice again before I depart and am no more” (v. 13). David, who prayed for forgiveness of his sin, was no longer silent before God, but he asked Him to forgive his sin: “Hear my prayer, O LORD, listen to my cry for help; be not deaf to my weeping. For I dwell with you as an alien, a stranger, as all my fathers were” (v. 12).

Years are flowing as fast as water flowing. Our lives are not that long. Rather, the Bible says that our lives are short. In this world that we come for a while and will leave, we should not be busy in vain. We must only put our hope in the Lord and strive to live a life that obeys His word. The Word of God that we receive is that we must be careful with our words and actions when we are suffering, we must meditate, and pray to God. Until the day and the moment when the Lord calls us, we must be careful with our words and actions, must meditate and pray as we realize and acknowledge that our lives are truly fragile and weak: “let me know how fleeting is my life” (v. 4).

As I am heading toward that Higher Place,

James Kim

(Considering the news of James Kim’s death as my death)



## The countless thoughts of the Lord toward us

### [Psalms 40:1-10]

As I proclaimed the word of God during the Morning Prayer meeting today, God exposed my sin. The sin is the sin of not obeying the His word as I constantly meditating on it. And that word is “keep my tongue from sin” (Ps. 39:1) that I proclaimed last Wednesday night prayer meeting. When I look back a week from the day I proclaimed it until today, I remember how I regret after talking without being careful. I regret because ‘I shouldn’t say what I said at that time,’ ‘Why did I said something that doesn’t help others?,’ ‘I should have just listen without saying anything,’ etc.. If I had been meditating on the word of God “keep my tongue from sin” (v. 1) before and during the conversation with others, then I would have restrained from speaking about other people. Therefore, I resolve to continue live as I think about His word today and obey it.

Although it is important to think God’s word, and God, which will lead us to be established as more worthy believers in God’s eyes, it is more important to know how much God thinks of us. In other words, it is more important how much God thinks of us than how much we think of God.

Look at Psalms 40:5 – “Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders which You have done, And Your thoughts toward us; There is none to compare with You If I would declare and speak of them, They would be too numerous to count.” How great is the love of God? This word of God that says God’s thoughts for us is innumerable, reminds us Psalms 139:17-18: “How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand When I awake, I am still with You.” Our God is God who loves us very much. We cannot measure his love how much he loves us when we think about His word that says the Lord’s thoughts toward us is innumerable. I hope and pray that we may experience the love of God by meditating Psalms 40:1-10 and think about what kind of God is the Lord who thinks countless thoughts toward us in four ways.

**First, the Lord who thinks countless thoughts towards us is the Lord who hears our cry.**

Look at Psalms 40:1 – “I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me and heard my cry.” I think this stage is ‘the newborn baby’ stage or ‘the crying baby’ stage. As if the newborn baby is hungry and cries eagerly to find his mother, we eagerly seek the Lord when we are go through difficulties and we need His help. However,

we seem to have a lot of time of stop crying unlike the crying newborn baby. The reason we stop praying until we are answered by God is because we fall into the temptation that there is no God. How often do we fall for the temptation that there is no God? When it seems that God isn't answering our cry, we get frustrated and discouraged and tend to blame on the people and the circumstance and even God. As a result, we give up trusting God and we swerve to the right or to the left. But those who pray trust in God to the end. Blessed is such a man: "How blessed is the man who has made the LORD his trust, And has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood" (v. 4). When God's answer of our prayer is slow, there are times when we fall into the temptation and give up trusting in God. That's why we must pray to God in faith and without giving up. Like David, we must pray to God in faith and without giving up in order to be delivered out of trouble. Then God will hear our prayers just as He had heard David's cry.

We should pray a little bit like David without giving up. Jesus gives this lesson to us in Luke 18:1-8 as a parable of prayer. His parable of prayer was "to show that all times they (we) ought to pray and not lose heart" (Lk. 18:1). In a certain city there was a judge who didn't fear God and didn't respect man (v. 2). And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and bothered him (vv. 3, 5). So he couldn't help but gave her legal protection (v. 5). Then the Lord said, "now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. ..." (vv. 7-8). Our God is God who bears long with us. And He is God who doesn't bear long with us. In other words, God is the God who bear long with us until we confess our sins and repent and return to Him. An example is Apostle Paul. Look at 1 Timothy 1:16 – "Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life." But the other side of God is that God, who has countless thoughts toward us, loves us so much that when we eagerly seek God in adversity, He is the Heavenly Father who can't bear long with us in answering our prayers. As if a mother is thinking about how to express her love while thinking about all kinds of thoughts toward her child, how would the mother quickly respond to the child's eagerness to ask her for help? Our God who thinks countless thoughts toward us is the God who hears our cry out, and the God who isn't patient in answering our prayers.

**Second, the Lord who thinks countless thoughts towards us is the Lord who makes our footsteps firm.**

Look at Psalms 40:2 – "He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm." I think this step is the step of walking and is about one to three years old. Look at Psalms 37:31 – "The law of his God is in his heart; His steps do not slip." As I meditated on this word, I thought about three factors that make our steps to slip. Those three factors are "envy", "complaint" and "anger". The way to overcome these factors is to put God's law (the Word) in our hearts. The deeper we write down the

word of God in the tablet of our hearts, the more our steps cannot slip.

In Psalms 40, David talks about his experience of God hearing his supplication and lifting him out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire (v. 2). In other words, David speaks about experiencing the grace of God's salvation. But God's saving grace didn't end here. God saved David and made his footsteps firm. In other words, God put David upon a rock (v. 2).

Personally, when I think of the word "rock," one of the few verses that comes to mind is Psalms 61:2 – "From the end of the earth I call to You when my heart is faint; Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." There are times when I pray for God's power and his omnipotence as I acknowledge my incompetence, and ask God to lead me to the rock that I cannot climb up by my own strength. In doing so, I experience God making my footsteps firm by giving strength to my heavy heart, the heart that is in complete exhaustion and in despair. Let's keep in mind that our God loves us and His thoughts toward us are innumerable. And let's not forget that God is the Lord who leads us to the rock that is higher than us and who makes our footsteps firm.

**Third, the Lord who thinks countless thoughts towards us is the Lord who puts a new song in our mouth.**

Look at Psalms 40:3 – "He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and fear And will trust in the LORD." I think this stage is 'the growing stage'. The stage of praising and worshipping God is the growing stage. The reason why the psalmist David praised God with "a new song" was because of the grace of God's salvation. After crying out to God in trouble and wait upon Him, God answered David's prayer (v. 1) and brought him up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay and set his feet upon the rock making his footsteps firm (v. 2). Therefore, David confessed that God had put the new song in his mouth, "a song of praise to our God" (v. 3). Here, "a new song" is a song sung by those who have new experience of being saved (Park). We can praise God with new songs because of God's "new experience" of salvation. How much does it apply in our lives? The challenges that come into our lives, each time we cry out for God's deliverance (salvation), we must open our hearts and lips to praise God because of the grace of God's salvation that He has given to us every moment of our lives. "But even if he does not"(Dan. 3:18) we must praise God by faith. In other words, even if God doesn't deliver us, we must give praise to God by faith. The reason is because God is worthy to be praised. Then as Paul and Silas was delivered from the prison (Acts 16:25ff)., we will be delivered as well.

Personally, God has put the hymn "The Love of God is Greater Far" in my mouth these days: "The love of God is greater far Than tongue or pen can ever tell. ... Could we with ink the ocean fill, And were the skies of parchment made, Were every stalk on earth a quill And every man a scribe by trade; To write the love of God above

Would drain the ocean dry; Nor could the scroll contain the whole, Tho' stretched from sky to sky. Oh love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong! It shall forever more endure, The saints' and angels' song." I feel God's love for me when I praise God's eternal and unchanging love. And I am growing because I feel His love.

**Fourth and last, the Lord who thinks countless thoughts towards us is the Lord who opens our ears.**

Look at Psalms 40:6 – “Sacrifice and meal offering You have not desired; My ears You have opened; Burnt offering and sin offering You have not required.” God not only opens our mouths to praise him the new song, but also He opens our ears. God opened David's ear and revealed his will. In other words, God gave David grace to open his spiritual perception as if his ears were opened, so that he could realize what God's delightful will was (Calvin). That God's delightful will is obedience. To explain a bit more, we can explain it by saying, ‘Obedience is better than sacrifice’ (1 Sam. 15:22). Dr. Yoon-sun Park said: ‘All the sacrifices that God has made in the Old Testament weren't because He wanted offerings or burnt offerings, but only the obedience of those who offered them’ (Park). How did David act when he realized this truth? “Then I said, ‘Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me’” (Ps. 40:7). In other words, David waited to do God's will before Him, as a servant appeared to obey his master and was preparing for it. Then, knowing that God's will was in the scroll, he determined to obey the words of God's law (Park).

What a beautiful spiritual attitude of waiting in front of God to obey His will. Look at the heart of David: “I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart” (v. 8). Those who have God's law in their hearts enjoy doing only the Lord's will. David, who was pleased with God, had that joy. Even in his difficult and hard circumstances, he desired to do only the Lord's will.

Those saints who experience the grace of God's salvation, by crying out to God, who has countless thoughts toward us, in the midst of tribulation and adversity and by waiting for His answer, open their mouths and praise God and proclaim the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ: “I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the great congregation; Behold, I will not restrain my lips, O LORD, You know. I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great congregation” (vv. 9-10). Like David, after receiving the grace of God's salvation, we must proclaim to the whole congregation the good news of that salvation. We must not hide the goodness and truth of the Lord, Lord, who has countless thoughts toward us, in front of the congregation. We must go forth as we proclaim His faithfulness and salvation.

With gratitude for the love of the Lord who has countless thoughts toward me,

James Kim

(After praising “The Lord of God is Greater Far” and giving thanks to God)

## **“O Lord, come quickly to help me”**

### **[Psalms 40:11-17]**

I want to introduce the last part of the poem ‘The Autumn Prayer’, written by Hyun-Seung Kim, a devout Christian poet who passed away after becoming a beautiful fallen leaf at the age of 63 in 1975: ‘Let me be alone in the fall like a crow which arrived at the dry branch by passing through the surging ocean and the valley of lily.’ Regarding this part of the poem, Pastor Jae-cheol Lee said, ‘As soon as one’s life falls like the fallen leaf, only those who realize that they are completely independent can have right relationship with the absolute God’ (Internet). Of course, after the fall and winter came, but I sympathize with the words saying that we need to reaffirm that we are completely isolated from the world as I personally read the poet’s poem and Pastor Jae-cheol Lee’s writing regarding that poem. Therefore, we must thoroughly lie down before our absolute God and cry out to Him.

In Psalms 40:11-17, we see the psalmist David, who prays to God as an independent person before his absolute God. Among the content of his prayer, this is what he said in verse 13b: “...O LORD, come quickly to help me.” Under this title “O Lord, come quickly to help me”, I would like to think about under three circumstances that David prayed to God and receive grace from the Lord.

### **The first circumstance in which David prayed to God, “O Lord, come quickly help me” was in despair.**

Look at Psalms 40:12 – “For troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me.” Here, the phrase “my heart fails within me” is to indicate that David was in the midst of despair. Why was David in the midst of despair? The first reason was due to the “troubles without number” surrounded David, and the other reason was due to countless sins. David realized his many sins in his troubles without number, the multitude of wicked people who surrounded him. David confessed that his sins were “more than the hairs of my head” (v. 12). It is interesting that David realized his many sins before God through his many troubles. That was why when he was in troubles without number, he cried out to God, “Do not withhold your mercy from me, O LORD; may your love and your truth always protect me” (v. 11). In the midst of countless troubles that never ceased, David who realized his countless sins prayed to God, “Do not withhold your mercy from me, O LORD” (v. 11). Since David knew that he had no merit to be saved, he relied on God’s love and truth. He relied on God’s unchanging virtue to look back on the saints, that is, His truth (Park).

We need to experience despair thoroughly. This is because, in despair, we can enjoy the blessing of realizing our innumerable sins, and further realize that we have none of our merits. Only then can we rely on the merits of Jesus' cross. Therefore, we must cry out to God "O Lord, come quickly to help me" when our hearts fail within us, that is, in despair: "Be pleased, O LORD, to save me; O LORD, come quickly to help me" (v. 13). In the midst of that, our despair should be turned into hope in our hearts. What hope? It is the hope of salvation.

**The second circumstance in which David prayed to God, "O Lord, come quickly help me" was about to be ruined.**

Look at Psalms 40:14 – "May all who seek to take my life be put to shame and confusion; may all who desire my ruin be turned back in disgrace." There are people in this world who want us to be well, but there are others who secretly want us to go bad. In Psalms 40, there were those who rejoiced at David's ruin. They were the ones who sought to take David's life. They surrounded David with countless troubles (v. 12) and tried to put him to shame and confusion (v. 14). These said to David "Aha! Aha!" (v. 15). At that time, David's prayer to God was, "May all who seek to take my life be put to shame and confusion; may all who desire my ruin be turned back in disgrace" (v. 14). David asked God, "May those who say to me, "Aha! Aha!" be appalled at their own shame" (v. 15). An interesting contrast is that David's enemies sought the David's life (v. 14), but David sought the Lord. And David prayed to God that all who seek God rejoice and be glad in Him (v. 16). David sought the Lord when his enemies sought to destroy his life. And he asked God to make all who seek Him to rejoice and be glad. Think about it. What makes us happy when we are in a situation like David's? How can we rejoice and be glad when we are in the situation where troubles without number surround us and we truly realize how many our sins are through those troubles? With what or because of who can we rejoice and be glad when all who seek to take our lives and who laugh at us "Aha! Aha!" to us in order to put us to shame and confusion? There is only the Lord. Only the Lord is our joy and the reason for us to be glad in the days of troubles. Then, why is it that only the Lord our joy and the reason for us to be glad in the days of troubles? The reason is that only the Lord becomes our Savior and gives us the joy of salvation. So David referred to 'the one who seeks the Lord' as 'the one who love the salvation of the Lord': "But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation always say, 'The LORD be exalted!'" (v. 16) Here, the phrase "The Lord be exalted!" means that our God will save us bountifully (Park). In the midst of countless troubles, in the midst of the tribulation by those who seek to destroy our lives, God loves and saves bountifully those who seek Him, their joy, and those who love His salvation. To this God of salvation, David prayed "O Lord, come quickly to help me" (v. 13).

We must seek the Lord when we suffer because of those who seek to ruin us. We must love and seek the salvation of the Lord. Then He will give us the joy of salvation through the God of salvation who seeks us.

**The third and last circumstance in which David prayed to God, “O Lord, come quickly help me” was when he was in poor and needy.**

Look at Psalms 40:17 – “Yet I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my help and my deliverer; O my God, do not delay.” David was in agony and in need (v. 17) because of “troubles without number” (v. 12), countless sins (v. 12), and those who sought to destroy his life (v. 14) and those who rejoiced his ruin (v. 14). David, who thought and sought the Lord at that time, believed that the Lord would think of him. The basis of this belief and conviction was the knowledge of who God is and the experience of that knowledge in his life. In other words, David knew that God was his “help” and his “deliverer” and he also experienced that God in his past life. David, who had experienced God’s help and deliverance on the journey of faith countless times, wrote Psalms 40 and believed that God would help him and deliver him. So he prayed “O my God, do not delay” (v. 17) and “O Lord, come quickly to help me” (v. 13).

We must meditate deeply on who our God is when we are in trouble and in need. Our God is “my help” and also “my deliverer” (v. 17). As we meditate on this God, we must remember our experience of God in our past lives. We must remember the grace of His help and deliverance. And we must believe and be confident that our God will help us and deliver us, even in the midst of our current trouble and need. In the midst of that, we must pray, “O my God, do not delay” and “O Lord, come quickly to help me”.

In despair, we must lie down and plead before the Absolute God. Then our God will turn our despair into hope of salvation. Also, when we are in the midst of harm and ruin, we must seek God like David, so we can taste the joy of salvation. We must experience God’s help and deliverance as we pray to God when we are in trouble and in need. May the hope and joy of our salvation, and the conviction of salvation be in the midst of despair and harm, and ruin and in suffering and in need in our lives of prayers.

After asking God for help for those whom I love who are in despair, pain, trouble and need,

James Kim

(Looking at God who gives hope, joy and assurance of salvation)



## Let us consider the helpless.

### [Psalms 41]

It's been only three days since I celebrated the New Year, but I am blessed to experience God's grace and love. On January 1<sup>st</sup>, through the whole family gathering, I experienced God's love. And through that love, God made me realize my own unloved sins. So He enabled me to confess my sins and gave me His forgiveness. So I was able to enjoy the joy of freedom in the Lord. Then, during the yesterday early morning prayer meeting on Tuesday and today's early morning prayer meeting, as I was meditating on Genesis chapters 4 through 9, God taught me about Cain who couldn't master sin (Ch. 4), about Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord (6:8) when the wickedness of man was great on earth (v. 5) and he was a righteous man, blameless in his time and walked with God (v. 9), and he built an altar to the Lord when he came out of the ark (8:2), but eventually he drank wine and became drunk and uncovered himself inside his tent (9:21). In this contrast images of the Noah, God made me to see Abel and Cain. In the end, it was the first three days of the New Year that I heard the news that those close to my beloved people were in agony because of their sins, after I saw Cain in the form of Noah who couldn't master the sin. In the midst of that, I thought that the power of sin was terrifying. I saw and heard that one person's sinful choice could bring pains and sufferings not only to himself but also to many people around him, such as his family members and church members. So I thought about how to comfort those who are in pains and sufferings based on Psalms 41.

According to Psalms 41:1, the psalmist David said, "How blessed is he who considers the helpless ...". Here, "the helpless" in Hebrew is translated as "the poor" or "the weak" in other Bible verses. This refers to a person who is in a low economic situation, vulnerable to oppression in a low position (MacArthur). The meaning of "the helpless" can refer to "the poor" (Exod. 30:15), "the weak" (1 Thess. 5:14), etc. In summary, the word "the helpless" in Psalms 41:1 refers to all suffering people under the discipline of God (Park). The Bible says to have regard for the helpless (v. 1). In other words, the Bible says to sympathize with the helpless and consider them (Park).

Then how should we consider the helpless? The first thing we should think about is some of the things that we shouldn't do to the helpless.

**First, we shouldn't disregard and criticize them that the helpless are suffering because they have been disciplined and suffered by God for their sins.**

## **Second, we shouldn't speak evil against the helpless.**

Look at Psalms 41:5 – “My enemies speak evil against me, ‘When will he die, and his name perish?’” David’s enemies spoke evil against him when he was in helpless condition, and the content of the speaking was ‘When will David die?’ In other words, the content of the evil speaking was that their desire for David’s death, that is when he would disappear from the earth. The desire of the wicked enemies who look at us, the saints who are suffering through the discipline of God’s love for our sins is our death. The example is Jesus. The unbelieving Jews, who thought that Jesus was cursed by God and thus was crucified on the cross, longed for Jesus’ death. That was why they cried out to Pilate “Crucify him! Crucify him!” (Lk. 23:21)

## **Third, we shouldn't make wicked plans toward the helpless.**

Look at Psalms 41:6 – “And when he comes to see me, he speaks falsehood; His heart gathers wickedness to itself; When he goes outside, he tells it.” When David was in pain, his enemies came to him like they loved him and said flattering words and spoke falsehood, looked at David’s situation and so on, in order to make a wicked plan in their hearts. That wicked plan was to make a bad rumor about David. In front of David, they were flattering like they loved him and then when they went outside they spoke falsehood about David and make the bad rumor about him. We must not be like this. We must not go to the helpless, flattering in front of them like we love them, but behind making the bad rumor about them.

## **Fourth, we shouldn't hate the helpless and whisper together against them.**

Look at Psalms 41:7 – “All who hate me whisper together against me; Against me they devise my hurt, saying.” What a great opportunity for us to whisper together against a person whom we don’t think very well, and now he is being disciplined by God and suffering for his sins. Or what a great opportunity for us to gossip about a person if that person is the one whom we are jealous of and now he is suffering in the midst of God’s discipline because of his sins? I think this whispering or gossiping is an act of killing the helpless again. When the helpless are already suffering because they are being disciplined by God for their sins, we are adding more pains to them if we whisper together against them. This doesn’t help the helpless at all.

## **Fifth and last, we shouldn't betray and oppose the helpless.**

Look at Psalms 41:9 – “Even my close friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me.” Here, “He lifted up his heel against me” refers to the kicking action with feet. This refers to the evil act of ungratefulness (Park). The prime example is Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus.

Then how should we consider the helpless? I would like to receive three lesson from Psalms 41:

### **First, we must be mercy on the helpless.**

Look at Psalms 41:4a and 10 a: “I said, ‘O LORD, have mercy on me ... But You, O LORD, have mercy on me ....” Those saints who experienced the discipline of God’s love because of their sins have mercy on them while sympathizing with them when they see other saints who are receiving the discipline of God’s love through their sins. Since they have suffered because of their sins, they can sympathize with others who are suffering because of their sins. In Psalms 41, the psalmist David knew that he sinned against the Lord. So he sought God’s mercy, asking Him to heal him (v. 4). Will God ignore such a person? When His beloved child admits and repents his sin, which parent will turn away their face their child? We must embrace the helpless with His love.

### **Second, we must trust the helpless.**

How can we trust the helpless? How can this be possible? We can do so by trusting in the Lord. In Psalms 41:9 we can see that David was betrayed by his close friend whom he had trusted. How painful was this to David? In a way, we can say that David betrayed God by committing sin against Him. I think it’s the same when we sin. How many times have we forsaken God’s trust and betrayed Him? Nevertheless, our God is God who accepts us and trusts us when we repent our sins and return to Him. How is this possible? This is possible because God washed away our sins with the blood of His Begotten Son Jesus Christ. We must trust each other as we trust God.

### **Third, we must raise the helpless up.**

Look at Psalms 41:10 – “But you, O LORD, have mercy on me; raise me up ....” The discipline of love that our Lord gives isn’t intended to just destroy us unconditionally. The ultimate purpose why God tries to break us down through His discipline of love is to raise up. This is why we can rely on God’s mercy. We must participate in the Lord’s rebuilding ministry, as He has promised us, and build up the Lord’s church (Mt. 16:18). In order to do that, the lesson we need to learn from Psalms 41 is that we must devote ourselves in considering the helpless and raise them up as we rely on His mercy. In order to do this, not only that we should trust the helpless by trusting God, but also our words and actions must be comforting and encouraging to them. When we go to a brother or sister in Christ who is suffering due to God’s discipline, we must refrain from speaking and acting like we are disciplining them.

When we do so, what blessings come to those who consider the helpless?

### **First, it is blessing of deliverance.**

Look at Psalms 41:1b – “... The LORD will deliver him in a day of trouble.” God is the One who delivers the one who consider the helpless on a day of trouble. Knowing that our God delivers the ones who deliver the

helpless, we must consider the helpless and experience God's deliverance.

**Second, it is blessing of protection.**

Look at Psalms 41:2a – “The LORD will protect him and keep him alive ....” The Bible says that God protects those who consider the helpless and keeps them alive. In other words, God protects the helpless.

**Third, it is blessing of being called blessed upon the earth.**

Look at Psalms 41:2b – “... And he shall be called blessed upon the earth ....” In other words, God blesses those who consider the helpless even in this world.

**Fourth and last, it is blessing of restoration of health.**

Look at Psalms 41:3 – “The LORD will sustain him upon his sickbed; In his illness, You restore him to health.” The God of healing restores those who consider the helpless when they are ill. When the helpless have sinned against God because we cannot master sin, we need to trust them and raise them up who are suffering due to God's discipline as we are merciful to them and as we trust God. We should never be guilty of killing the helpless once again by speaking evil against them, have wicked plan and whisper together against them. We should never betray the helpless and give them frustration and despair that can discourage them from rising up. In order to do that, we must look at Jesus Christ, who was truly helpless. This is because Jesus, the Son of God, who has no sin, was punished by Heavenly Father for our sins and went through all the sufferings. When we think of this Jesus, we can consider the helpless with His love, grace and mercy. Then we will receive the blessing of deliverance (salvation), the blessing of protection, the blessing of being called blessed upon the earth, and the blessing of restoration of health.

Giving thanks to God for considering the helpless,

James Kim

(Praying to love the helpless with His love)

## Put your hope in God!

### [Psalms 42]

There is a story about Satan's auction. Satan has brought consumers together to sell things like worry, fear, desire, sadness and self-sufficiency. On one side of the product display, there was an old, worn-out tag labeled "No Sale". Someone asked Satan why this wasn't on sale. Satan said, "There are plenty of other stuff, but this is the most useful thing I have. Without this, I cannot go deep into people's hearts and work. This item is called despair" (Internet). Indeed, I think that Satan's weapon "despair" can be fatal to our Christian life. What is despair? Despair is a state of losing courage, hope, and confidence (Kang). In other words, despair is a debilitating state. Despair is sometimes referred to as disappointment. Disappointment means that hope has fallen. Instead of disappointment, we sometimes use the word discouragement. Discouragement is a loss of courage. In other words, discouragement is a loss of confidence. Discouragement is the enemy of those who fulfill their dreams because of the heart of giving up.

In this New Year, I personally think about those beloved brothers and sisters in Christ who are in a situation where they can be truly discouraged, disappointed, and in despair. As we celebrate this New Year, they are suffering from such things as discouragement and despair that aren't the truly hopeful New Year and that is without vision. What should we do when we faced with this kind of challenge? We the saints should not be in despair if we are in trouble. The reason is because we know and believe in the blessings of the trouble. Then, what are the blessings of the trouble? Dr. Yoon-sun Park speaks in four ways:

- (1) The blessing of the trouble is that we receive our personality training through the trouble.

We become more and more like Jesus' character through the troubles.

- (2) The blessing of the trouble is that we are trained to thank in the midst of the trouble.

In situations where anyone can thank you, I am sure all of can thank as well. Of course, a person who complains habitually will complain in such situation as well. However, I believe that it is us the saints who can be thankful even in a very difficult situation that seems impossible to thank. Although it seems that there is no condition for us to be thankful, we can thank in all circumstances when we consider the grace of

God's salvation as a gift of Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection.

(3) The blessing of the trouble is that we will hold onto God's promises more and more through the trouble.

As we hold onto other things, the bigger the pain and suffering caused by the trouble, the bigger we put down all the things we were holding onto and eventually hold onto the word of God's promise. In the midst of that, we find that we aren't following that word of God's promise, but that word of God's promise is leading us.

(4) The blessings of the trouble is that we will trust more and more in the omnipotence of God.

In particular, God made me to trust in and seek God's omnipotence through His word, "Is anything too difficult for the Lord?" (Gen. 18:14) that was given to me at the time of the Morning Prayer

We see a psalmist in trouble in Psalms 42. We can see that when he was in trouble, he proclaimed to his soul like this and overcame: "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him For the help of His presence" (vv. 5, 11). Based on these words, under the heading "Put your hope in God!," I want to think about what does those who hope in God do in two ways and apply them in our lives.

### **First, those who hope in God aren't in despair but long for Him.**

In Psalms 42, the word "despair" is repeated three times (vv. 5, 6, 11). Why was the psalmist in despair? The reason was that he was suffering hardship (Park). That hardship that could make the psalmist to be in despair refers to the psalmist being in trouble because he was being disciplined by God for his sin. The trouble that he was in specifically was the oppression by the enemy (v. 9). And the oppression was nothing more than the enemy slandering the psalmist, saying, "Where is your God?" (vv. 3, 9) Eventually, the psalmist was saddened by the constant slander from his enemy (v. 3), and further, by his thought that God had forgotten him (v. 9).

Like the psalmist, we can be in despair. When we are disciplined because we sin against God, and when that discipline lasts for long time even though we wait for the help of God's salvation, we may be exhausted, discourage and be in despair. In particular, we can be in despair when we continue to hear the slander or ridicule from our enemies "Where is your God?" (v. 3) In the midst of that discouragement and in despair, there are times when we sin against God by doubting the existence of God. In other words, we can distrust God in despair. This is

truly dangerous. Therefore, we must guard against this pattern: Sin → God's discipline → Suffering → Despair → Unbelief.

What should we do when we are in despair? The lesson that the words of Psalms 42 is teaching us is to long for God. Look at Psalms 42:2 – “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?” When the psalmist was in despair, he longed for God. How his longing for God was expressed was that he worshiped God. In other words, since he longed for God's presence, he worshiped God and went to God. This is what he said about his longing for God: “As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God” (v. 1). This longing was that when the psalmist hoped in God without giving himself up in despair, he was full of thirst for God while deeply recognizing human utter helplessness and worthless existence. But what we need to keep in mind is that God is more longing for us than we are for Him (Nowen). If we know this, we proclaim to our own souls, “Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God” and go to God (vv. 5, 11).

### **Second and last, those who hope in God remember God and not the past.**

The psalmist was heartbroken when we remembered the past. Look at Psalmist 42:4 – “These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, With the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.” The psalmist remembered the fact that he had acted as a religious leader in the past and felt more heartbroken (Park). In other words, when he faced the suffering that as if God had left, he was heartbroken even more when he remembered the past where he received God's grace and had led others to the Lord. In this way, the psalmist was even more heartbroken when he was in despair in adversity and remembered God's grace in the past. At this time, the psalmist remembered the Lord. Look at verse 6: “O my God, my soul is in despair within me; Therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan And the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.” It is wisdom that we don't develop despair when we are in despair, but immediately take some measures to defend ourselves from it (Park). And that defense is to remember the Lord. This is what Henry Nowen said in his book, “The Living Reminder”:

‘I am sure there are painful memories in the past that we don't want to remember and the wounded memories that we are trying to get rid of. But these memories that we don't want anyone to know may seem like it has been forgotten, can be remembered by another painful event in our lives. When that happens, we try to forget those memories by pressing them again. The more we do that, the deeper the wound becomes. I think only those who are truly courageous to face their wounds and their painful memories can be established as wounded healers. To do that, we have to change our minds. We must open our closed hearts to God. Our hearts can be only opened

by faith. It is our sinful nature not to open the door of our hearts to God unless we believe in God's healing. The true healing process is to remember my painful memories again and to constantly connect those memories with Jesus' painful memories' (Nowen).

We must constantly connect our painful memories with the Lord's painful memories. In order to do that, we must pray to God as we long for Him. Look at Psalms 42:8 – “The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime; And His song will be with me in the night, A prayer to the God of my life.” The reason why the psalmist longed for God and prayed to God of life in the midst of suffering was because he believed that God would give His lovingkindness in the future. And he believed that God would make him praise God. So he prayed God. He obeyed the Lord's teaching, “they ought to pray and not to lose heart” (Lk. 18:1). Then what was the contest of his prayer? (1) The psalmist sought God's lovingkindness as he told God that he went mourning because of the oppression of his enemy (Ps. 42:9). (2) The psalmist asked God for His justice as he told Him about the slandering word of his enemy, “Where is your God?” (v. 10)

There are many times in our lives that we suffer in pain because of very unexpected things. And the longer the pain and suffering, the more we can be discouraged and be in despair. But we must proclaim to our own souls like the psalmist did in Psalms 42:5, 11: “Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.” We shouldn't be in despair but should long for God so that we can praise Him by getting help from the Lord. We no longer need to remember the past, but we must enjoy and realize that it is God's grace to participate in the Lord's suffering as we remember the Lord and constantly connect our sufferings to His sufferings (Phil. 1:29). Therefore, we aren't to be in despair and not becoming disturbed with us. But I hope and pray that we may praise God as we long for Him and by getting His help.

As I proclaim the words of Psalm 42:5, 11 to my soul and go to God in prayer so that I may not be in despair, but rather to be established as a worshiper who praises God,

James Kim who was easily be in despair  
(In the hope of the Lord Jesus Christ)



## **“Where is your God?”**

**“Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him For the help of His presence” (Psalms 42:5).**

One of the questions our Christians question is, “Why should the righteous suffer?” Especially when the wicked are prosperous, we sometimes wonder why we who are justified in believing in Jesus must suffer. Among this question is a question that disturbs us and discourage our hearts. The question is, “Where is your God?” We can be discouraged, especially when this question is thrown at us by unbelievers around us who do not believe in Jesus. Further, we can be restless and discouraged when our enemies, who harass, despise, and persecute us, throw this question at us.

That’s what happened to the psalmist in Psalms 43. He was in despair and became disturbed within him. The reason was that when the psalmist was being oppressed by his enemy (v. 9), they reviled him (v. 10) and said to him all day long, “Where is your God?” (vv. 3, 10) Then the psalmist longed for God in despair (v. 2). He longed for God in thirst as the deer panted for the water brooks (v. 1). How precious is the grace of God? God made the psalmist to long for God in despair, and this was God’s grace. The psalmist remembered the Lord in His grace (v. 6) and prayed to God of his life (v. 8). Then he hoped for God. He put his hope in God (vv. 5, 11; 43:5). Eventually, God made the psalmist’s despair to long for God, and in that longing God made him to put his hope in Him. And God made the psalmist who hoped in God to praise Him as he got the help of His presence (vv. 5, 11; 43:5). What an amazing living God’s grace?

Our God is never a dead God. Our God is the living God. And our God is Immanuel God with us. The problem of suffering given to us in God’s sovereignty, God knows and sees it. Even though it seems like there is no solution to our suffering problem, we need to be alert to our enemy’s word, “Where is your God?” We should never let that word come into our hearts and make us to doubt ‘Where is my God?’ Otherwise, we will be in despair and become disturbed with us like the psalmist. But even if we are in despair, we must make it an opportunity to long for God. Like the psalmist, we must seek God in despair and cry out to Him. Then God will give us hope. God will give us confidence in God’s help. Therefore, we will praise God in our hope. May this grace and blessing be upon you all.

Longing for God and hoping in Him in the midst of despair,

James Kim

(After preparing a saint's funeral service)

## **“To God my exceeding joy”**

### **[Psalms 43]**

According to Pastor Charles Swindoll, three of the most serious factors that deprive joy today are: first, anxiety, second, stress, and third, fear. They all look alike, but there are distinct differences. First, anxiety is outrageous worry about what might happen. While waiting for the incident to end, anxiety is to erode joy like acid that slowly revealing its effect. Second, stress is more serious than anxiety. Stress is being very nervous about something that is outside of our control, a situation that we cannot change or control. Instead of entrusting the problem to God, our hearts are being stirred up. Stress intensifies in the constant stir up of heart. Third and last, fear is more serious than anxiety or stress. It’s a terrible sense of instability in the face of danger, misery or pain. Like anxiety or stress, fear exaggerates something more than it is. What we can do to be free from these things that deprive our joy is faith (Swindoll).

How about us? Are we overcoming these three elements of anxiety, stress and fear that take away our joy by faith? We must overcome by believing in the word of God. Especially, let us all hold onto Zephaniah 3:17 – “The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.” We must overcome things such as anxiety, stress, and fear by believing that Heavenly Father is taking great delight in us. As we look to God who rejoices over us with singing, we must put off all things such as anxiety, stress, and fear within us, and put on the clothes of joy (the fruit of the Holy Spirit) that God gives us.

In Psalms 43:4, the psalmist confesses to God as “God my exceeding joy.” Here, “God my exceeding joy” can be literally translated as ‘the God of joy with whom I am rejoicing’. Why did the psalmist make God his exceeding joy? In Psalms 43, I like to find out the reasons for that. As we do so, I pray that we also can make God our exceeding joy.

**The first reason why the psalmist made God his exceeding joy is because the Lord was his Savior.**

Look at Psalms 43:1 – “Vindicate me, O God, and plead my case against an ungodly nation; O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man!” In Acts 12:1-19, we can see the story of the salvation the Lord brought to Apostle Peter out of prison. No matter how much King Herod had kept Peter in the prison with all the chains,

soldiers, and iron gates, they were useless in front of the Lord's saving power. The Lord freed Peter from "the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting" (Acts 12:11). The Lord listened and answered the prayers of the church and saved Peter. Of course, even though the church's earnest and continuous prayers weren't complete prayer and in expectation of faith, the Lord fulfilled His sovereign will, that is Peter's salvation. So, what do we have to offer after experiencing God's saving grace? Can we really show the merits of prayer before God? Since it is God's sovereign work of salvation, do we have any merits? Therefore, we who have experienced God's salvation are confessing the chorus of hymn "My Soul in Sad Exile": "I've anchored my soul in the Haven of Rest, I'll sail the wide seas no more; The tempest may sweep o'er the wild stormy deep; In Jesus I'm safe evermore." Indeed, there are many troubled things, hard work, and sinful things in this world, but in our lives, it is not easy for us to enjoy true peace and there are often no days off. Furthermore, while living in this world where there is full of death, we can rest in peace because of the saving grace of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, we can rejoice and be glad because the God of salvation.

In Psalms 43, the psalmist is bringing charge to God in prayer. Who is he bringing charge against? Look at verse 1: "Vindicate me, O God, and plead my case against an ungodly nation; O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man!" First, it is "an ungodly nation" (v. 1). The meaning of this word is 'a ruthless country,' and it seems to refer to Saul and his regime who persecuted David when they were moved by Gentile unbelief (Park, Calvin). Second, it is "unjust man" (v. 1). The psalmist brought charge against those inevitably wicked people who were deceitful unjust to the just God. And he asked God to deliver him from these wicked people.

The reason why we rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ is because He is our Savior. He saved those who were ungodly like us and those who were deceitful and unrighteous by His death and resurrection. Therefore, we have this joy of salvation. This Lord of salvation is the God who gives us the grace of deliverance (salvation) by answering our prayers even in unexpected and difficult adversities in our lives. Therefore, we have the constant joy of salvation. The God who delivers us is delivering us today and will deliver us tomorrow and will show His righteousness by delivering us from this wicked world. Therefore, we can rejoice in the God of our salvation.

**The second reason why the psalmist made God his exceeding joy is because the Lord was his strength.**

Look at Psalms 43:2 – "For You are the God of my strength; why have You rejected me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" When the psalmist was mourning in suffering by the oppression and persecution of ungodly and unbelieving wicked people, he prayed to God and confessed his honest feelings about why it seemed like God left him. In the phrases "why have You rejected me? Why do I go mourning ..?" we can feel at least little bit about the psalmist's earnestness. It is probably natural to ask the question

“why”, “why” in extreme pain. I am sure we can ask the question ‘Why?’ when we feel that God has forsaken us in our suffering and mourning by the oppression of our enemy. In Psalms 43, the psalmist’s “why” prayer is from the belief that we have already received God’s answer rather than from our complaint (Park). How can we know this? We can know this by looking at the word “strength” (v. 2). This word in Hebrew is “me’od” actually means “refuge” (Park). As the psalmist relied on the Lord who was his refuge and prayed, “... why have You rejected me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?” (v. 2) Although he mourned because of the pain to the extent that he felt that he had been forsaken by God, he knew that God was his refuge, and he gained the strength when he took refuge in Him.

Like the psalmist, we sometimes ask the question “why” when we pray to God. In particular, when we are in pain due to adversity, and when we cannot bear the pain any longer, there are times when we take refuge in the Lord and offer to Him “Why?” prayers. The psalmist was in despair and disturbed within him when he was suffering from the deceitful and unjust man (v. 5). At that time, because he put his hope in God, he was raised again with the strength that God gave him. Here I recall the words of Psalm 18:1 – “‘I love You, O LORD, my strength.” In the journey of faith where we realize our utter helplessness due to our lack of strength, we become a believer who once again flies in the sky like an eagle by relying on the Lord who is our rock, our fortress, our deliverer and the rock whom we take refuge. Therefore, the psalmist rejoiced in the Lord exceedingly.

### **Third and last reason why the psalmist made God his exceeding joy is because the Lord was his guide.**

Look at Psalms 43:3 – “O send out Your light and Your truth, let them lead me; Let them bring me to Your holy hill And to Your dwelling places.” When the psalmist was in despair and disturbed within him due to the deceitful and unrighteous actions of his enemies, he looked at the guidance of the Lord’s light even in the darkness of his heart. Is this possible? When we are passing through a tunnel of pain, there is a time when we give up in despair and anxiety because the end of darkness seems unending. The scary thing is that as we get used to the darkness, we lose the ability to see the light. Without God’s grace, even the power (or faith) to see light in the darkness is lost. God must give us grace, so that we can see the Lord, the Light, who is shining in the darkness and that we can get out of the darkness under His guidance. Here what does it mean to be led by the Lord’s truth? This truth refers to the faithfulness of fulfilling the promise that God promised to protect us the saints without failing (Park). The psalmist longed for the guidance of the Lord, the Light, in the dark tunnel of pain and suffering. He especially relied on the Lord’s faithfulness as he longed for His guidance. He prayed to the Lord, who is the Light and the Truth, to lead him to the Lord’s holy hill and His dwelling place (v. 3). Therefore, he wanted to dwell in the Lord’s presence. This reminds me Jonah 2:4 – “So I said, ‘I have been expelled from Your sight Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy temple.’” Prophet Jonah was inside the great fish (v. 1), in “the deep”, in “the very

heart of the seas” (v. 3) because he disobeyed the God’s command. But he looked again toward God’s holy temple (v. 4) and eventually was saved by the Lord (v. 9). Therefore, he confessed “Salvation comes from the LORD” (v. 9). The Lord of salvation is leading us to the heavenly place, the true Promised Land by giving us new strength as our refuge.

We aren’t in despair and disturbed within us because our God is our exceeding joy and because we rejoice and be glad in Him. Rather, we long for Him. Then we have hope. This is the hope of salvation. Therefore, we must rejoice because of our God who is our salvation, our strength, and our guide.

Rejoicing in my God who is my exceeding joy,

James Kim

(Looking and hoping in the Lord who is my Savior, my strength and my guide)

## Downcast and disturbed

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

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

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

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

Wanting to praise the Lord even in the midst of depression and anxiety by looking at God,

James Kim

(Desire to be built up as a man who knows how to make depression and anxiety as an opportunity to seek God rather than being in despair)



## **The work that the Lord did in our fathers' days**

### **[Psalms 44:1-8]**

When we go to the Israel Museum in Tel Aviv, the administrative capital of Israel, it is said that three lines of texts are written on the inner wall of the white building. The three lines of texts say, "Remember the Past, Live the Present, Look to the Future." In these three lines of texts, I think of the psalmist. The reason is because as I keep meditating on the words of the Psalms, I often see the psalmist convinced to praise the God of the future, remembering and looking back the past in the midst of the present suffering and adversity.

We can see the psalmist in Psalms 44:1 remembering the past: "O God, we have heard with our ears, Our fathers have told us The work that You did in their days, In the days of old." He remembered what the Lord had done in the past, saying that he had heard with his ears what God had done to his fathers in the past. The work that the Lord did in his fathers' days was an amazing salvation. That's why Deuteronomy 5:15 says this: "You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm ...." In Psalms 44, the psalmist remembers the work of salvation from the time of the Exodus in the days of his ancestors as Deuteronomy 5:15 says. The work of salvation refers to the event of entering the Promised Land, Canaan, rather than the Exodus from Egypt. I would like to meditate on three amazing salvation of the Lord in the past, with the title of "The work that the Lord did in our father's days", based on Psalms 44:1-8. In the midst of that, I hope and pray that we will receive the grace that God wants to give to us.

### **The first thing I want to meditate on is 'How did the Lord accomplish the wonderful work of salvation?'**

God did His work of salvation for the Israelites at the time of the Exodus by driving out the Canaanites and planting and prospering the Israelites in the land of Canaan. Look at Psalms 44:2 – "You with Your own hand drove out the nations; Then You planted them; You afflicted the peoples, Then You spread them abroad." These words point to the fact that the Lord conquered the Canaanites under the leadership of Joshua at the time of the Exodus and caused the Israelites to take over the land of Canaan. What is interesting here is that God has compared the establishment of the people of Israel to planting trees. The psalmist likened the Lord as the planter and the Israelites as the trees planted, so that the trees were well cared for and flourished, God Himself cared the Israelites and made them flourish. In order to plant the tree called Israel, God pulled up the weeds of the Canaanites who were

growing in the good land flowing with milk and honey, and planted the trees called Israel there. In the midst of that, He gave the trees a lot of fruit, that is, He made them prosperous in the land of Canaan. This is the fulfillment of 2 Samuel 7:10 – “I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly.” This expression reminds us of the Jesus’ parable of the vine in John 15. Jesus is the true vine and Heavenly Father is “the vinedresser” (Jn. 15:1). Just as we, the branches, cannot do anything apart from the Lord (v. 5), the Israelites of the Exodus also couldn’t do anything apart from the Lord who planted and prospered them.

This God is the God who pulls us out and plants us in our salvation. In particular, our God is the God who pulls out the root of bitterness in us. Look at Hebrews 12:15 – “See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled.” The root of bitterness that produces such bitter poison (Deut. 29:18) tries to destroy our souls by making us to leave God and to commit sins like idolatry. In Isaiah 5:2, the Bible tells us that we are inconsistent with God’s expectations: “He dug it all around, removed its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine And He built a tower in the middle of it And also hewed out a wine vat in it; Then He expected it to produce good grapes, But it produced only worthless ones.” The God who uproots this root of bitterness wants us to be rooted in Jesus Christ and be raised up in Him. Look at Colossians 2:6-7: “Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.”

### **The second thing I would like to meditate on is ‘Why did the Lord accomplish this amazing work of salvation?’**

The reason why the Lord accomplished the amazing work of salvation to the Israelites was because the Lord loved them. Look at Psalms 44:3 – “It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face, for you loved them.” When the Lord caused the Israelites to conquer the land of Canaan, it was clear that the Israelites didn’t overcome the Canaanites with their own strength (“arm”) and weapons and armies (“sword”). It was only through the power of God that the Israelites could triumph in the conquest of the land of Canaan (v. 3). Why did God fight for the Israelites with His power, destroyed the Canaanites, made the Israelites to triumph and conquered the land of Canaan? The reason was because God loved the Israelites (v. 3).

The Bible Isaiah 5:7 refers to the Israelites as “His delightful plant.” God saved the Israelites because He loved them. It was not for Israel’s righteousness that God showed such special grace to Israel. It was only because God had unconditional favors toward Israel according to His pleasing will (Park). Look at Deuteronomy 7:7-8: “The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples,

for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”

**The third and last thing to meditate on is ‘What did those who remember the amazing work of salvation in the past do?’**

Those who, like the psalmist, remember the amazing work of salvation in the past responds in at least three ways:

(1) They pray to the Lord.

Look at Psalms 44:4 – “You are my King and my God, who decrees victories for Jacob.” The psalmist confessed that only the Lord is his King and asked the Lord to give Israel victories. He prayed for the salvation of Israel, remembering God who gave the Israelites the grace of salvation even at the time of the Exodus in the past. Like the psalmist, we must pray for the grace of salvation by faith in the conviction that God, who gave us the grace of salvation in the past, can save us today.

(2) They trust in the Lord.

Look at Psalms 44:5-6: “Through You we will push back our adversaries; Through Your name we will trample down those who rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, Nor will my sword save me.” The psalmist trusted in God despite current adversity and suffering, thinking about the history of Israel who were saved in the past when they trusted in the Lord. He trusted in God because he was confident that only God could save the Israelites. Therefore, he didn’t trust in himself (v. 6). What a precious faith, faith that doesn’t depend on oneself, on one’s own bow or sword that cannot save oneself. The psalmist didn’t depend on his own strength. What was the reason? The Bible Psalms 44:7 answers this question: “But You have saved us from our adversaries, And You have put to shame those who hate us.”

(3) They boast the Lord all day long.

Look at Psalms 44:8 – “In God we have boasted all day long, And we will give thanks to Your name forever. Selah.” The psalmist praised God and gave thanks to Him with humility that he couldn’t trust himself and with faith in God’s primacy (Park).

As I meditated on “The work that the Lord did in our fathers’ days”, I came to think of the Korean gospel song “Song for You: “A long time ago, from the heavens/ There was a plan regarding you/ The Lord saw And said that it was good/ More precious than anything in this world/ I carefully created it with my hands/ Be happy through me/ For I love you/ I love you, I bless you/ We give you our love. ....” And I thought of my beloved brother Ho Sung Yoo and his wife Nancy Sung and a precious gift of life their baby Ji Sung. I looked at Ji Sung who was and still is suffering from ‘Acute Myeloid Leukemia’, as I remembered Charis Kim, my first baby in the past. I thought about Ji Sung as I remembered those moments when God manifested His glory by accomplishing the work of salvation in my past life through Charis. And I applied the gospel song “Song for You” to Ji Sung.

‘A long time ago, from the heavens/ There was a plan regarding you, Ji Sung.  
The Lord saw/ And said that it was good/ More precious than anything in this world/  
I carefully created you Ji Sung with my hands. Be happy through me/ For I love you Ji Sung.  
Ji Sung, I love you, I bless you/ We give you our love.’

Just as God accomplished the work of salvation for my first baby, Charis, in the past, I sincerely pray that God will accomplish the work of salvation according to His will to Ji Sung baby whom I love.

Thinking about my beloved Ho Sung and Nancy and their baby Ji Sung,

James Kim

(After praying while trusting in God)

## **“All this has come upon us”**

### **[Psalms 44:9-26]**

There are people around us who are struggling with unexpected difficulties when they are trying to move toward a new goal that they have set as they give meaning to a new start. What should we do in this situation? Maybe we should learn from Indians. Indians call January ‘the moon that stays deep in our heart’. It is said that the Indians regard January as a calming month rather than a new beginning. We need to remain silent before God in the midst of unexpected hardships. In Austria, there is a game that swims across the Danube River. The most dangerous place in this game is the vortex area in the center of the river, and it is said that many players give up the game at this point. It is said that no matter how good they swim, it is of no use at the vortex. It is said that the more they move their body, the deeper their body will be suck in to that vortex. Later, they will be exhausted and give up the game. However, it is said that those experienced players overcome the vortex well. The secret is simple. In other words, the pros leave themselves to the vortex for a while. Then, it is said that the heavy wave sucks a person’s body to the maximum and returns him to the surface of the water. Keeping still for a moment is the key to overcoming the vortex. We will meet the vortex of life again this year. Some of us have already met the vortex of life. At that time, let us entrust ourselves completely to God. He will save us and put us in the right place.

In the Old Testament, there are three friends of Daniel who met the vortex of life. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego didn’t succumb to the orders of Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar and bowed down to and worshiped the golden image. So King Nebuchadnezzar commanded certain valiant warriors to cast them into the furnace of blazing fire. At that time, they were convinced that even if they entered into the furnace of blazing fire, God could deliver them. But Daniel’s three friends, who had “But even if He does not” faith, told King Nebuchadnezzar boldly that “we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up” (Dan. 3:18). What a beautiful faith is this? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who gave their entire lives to God who was in charge of life and death, were saved even in the vortex of their lives.

When we look at Psalms 44:9-26, we see the psalmist meeting the vortex of life like Daniel’s three friends. In the midst of this, we can see that the psalmist had precious faith like Daniel’s three friends: “All this has come upon us, but we have not forgotten You, And we have not dealt falsely with Your covenant” (Ps. 44:17). I sincerely hope and pray that by the grace of God we may be able to keep His covenant without forgetting the Lord in the midst of the vortex of life that comes to us as we receive His grace in meditation of Psalms 44:9-26.

## **The first to thing to think about is “All this”.**

Look at Psalms 44:17 – “All this has come upon us, but we have not forgotten You, And we have not dealt falsely with Your covenant.” What was all that happened to the psalmist and his people, the Israelites? It was trouble. And the Bible says that the cause of the trouble was that the Lord had rejected the psalmist and the Israelites: “Yet You have rejected us and brought us to dishonor ...” (v. 9). Here, the word “rejected” refers to hatred and forsaking (Calvin). In other words, the psalmist thought that he and the Israelites were suffering because the Lord hated him and the Israelites and forsook them. But is this true? Did God really hate the Israelites? The reason why God gave the blessing of salvation to the Israelites in the process of conquering the land of Canaan at the time of the Exodus was because the Lord loved them (v. 3). Why would that God hate the psalmist and the Israelites? And how could God reject and forsake them? This was just the psalmist’s feeling and thought in the midst of extreme hardship.

In Psalms 44:9 and on, the psalmist is lamenting for the personal and national trouble that they have faced. In particular, he lamented in a way that he didn’t understand why God had forsaken the Israelites because he thought that they were in trouble because God hated them (Park). He lamented because God left the Israelites alone even though in the past He saved them with His power because He loved them. Specifically, there were two reasons why the psalmist thought that God had forsaken the Israelites.

### (1) It was because the Israelites were defeated in a war.

Look at Psalms 44:10 – “You made us retreat before the enemy, and our adversaries have plundered us.” The Israelites were defeated after fighting with their enemies and retreated before their enemy, so their enemy plundered them. What was the cause? Look at verse 9b: “... you no longer go out with our armies.” In other words, the victory of war was in the presence of God, but God wasn’t with the Israelites, so they were defeated.

### (2) It was because the conquered Israelites were oppressed.

In Psalms 44:11-16, we can think of the oppressed that the Israelites received in three ways: (a) First, some of the Israelites were slaughtered like sheep to be eaten by their enemy (v. 11) (Park), (b) Second, the Israelites were defeated in the war and were taken captive by their enemy to the foreign countries (vv. 11b-12) (Park), and (c) Third, while living in captivity, the Israelites were slandered and humiliated by their enemy. Look at Psalms 44:13-16: “You have made us a reproach to our neighbors, the scorn and derision of those around us. You have made us a byword among the nations; the peoples shake their heads at us. My disgrace is before me all day long, and my face is covered with shame at the taunts of those who

reproach and revile me, because of the enemy, who is bent on revenge.” It is inevitable that the defeated country is being reproached and reviled by the victorious country (Park). The Israelites were defeated in the war and were taken captive to the foreign countries, where they suffered all kinds of reproaches and reviles.

**The second and last thing to think about is that when all this happened to the Israelites, what they did.**

According to Psalms 44:17, the psalmist said that the Israelites didn't forget the Lord. He also testified that he and the Israelites didn't violate the Lord's covenant. How precious is this faith? The psalmist and the Israelites who were in all sorts of slander, humiliation, and suffering, didn't forget the Lord. And they also didn't break the promise (covenant) with the Lord. This is what Dr. Yoon-sun Park said: 'Faith that doesn't change even all suffering comes is precious. The weak believers try to avoid suffering by compromising with injustice and thus commit sins against God when persecution comes to them. But the faithful believers stand firm and don't shake even at such times' (Park).

Specifically, how did the psalmist and the Israelites express that they didn't forget the Lord and violate the Lord's covenant despite all the trouble? We can think in three ways:

(1) The psalmist and the Israelites didn't deviate from the Lord's way.

Look at Psalms 44:18 – “Our heart has not turned back, And our steps have not deviated from Your way.” The reason why the psalmist and the Israelites didn't deviate from the Lord's way amid all suffering and trouble was because their hearts didn't leave the Lord. Rather, they lived a rich spiritual life in the midst of trouble. This is what Dr. Yoon-sun Park said: 'It seems that those who are in a peaceful environment are happy, but their spiritual life is slack' (Park). However, the psalmist and the Israelites lived the rich spiritual life in the midst of suffering. This is what the psalmist said about how godly his innocence was and that his incision in faith was clean before God: “If we had forgotten the name of our God Or extended our hands to a strange god, Would not God find this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart” (vv. 20-21). He confessed that his godliness was pure before God who knew everything in his heart.

(2) The psalmist and the Israelites participated in the Lord's suffering.

Look at Psalms 44:22 – “But for Your sake we are killed all day long; We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” The psalmist and the Israelites suffered in the hands of persecutors unfairly 'for the Lord.' If they had forgotten God, they would have broken the covenant with God and deviated from the Lord's

truth, and would have escaped without suffering for Him. But they were considered as sheep to be slaughtered for the Lord. Apostle Paul also said in Philippians 3:10 that he was being conformed to Jesus' death in order to know the fellowship of His suffering. What was the reason? The reason was because Paul knew that it was God's grace to participate in the Lord's suffering (1:29). The psalmist and the Israelites in Psalms 44 suffered. But they didn't forget the Lord, but rather they participated in His suffering.

(3) The psalmist and the Israelites didn't forget the Lord and prayed to Him.

Look at Psalms 44:23-24: "Arouse Yourself, why do You sleep, O Lord? Awake, do not reject us forever. Why do You hide Your face And forget our affliction and our oppression?" Looking at the contents of this prayer, it seems like the psalmist is praying with a complaining heart to God, with the feeling that the Lord is sleeping. However, this prayer is earnest prayer to God while the psalmist was patience in suffering. In particular, the psalmist said that he had not forgotten the Lord among all these hardships and eagerly asked Him not to forget their suffering and oppression. He said that he and the Israelites were suffering, "For our soul has sunk down into the dust; Our body cleaves to the earth" (v. 25), in the midst of that he prayed to God: "Rise up, be our help, And redeem us for the sake of Your lovingkindness" (v. 26).

There are brothers and sisters in Christ around us who are struggling and suffering in the unexpected vortex of life. I hope and pray that we will not forget the Lord like the psalmists and the Israelites, even if all these hardships and adversities have come upon us. All of us must not break the covenant of the Lord. We must not deviate from the Lord's truth and His way. Rather, we must enjoy the grace of participating in the Lord's suffering. In the midst of that, I hope and pray that we, who rely on the mercy of the Lord, pray for His salvation.

Remembering our Lord Jesus Christ, who was forsaken by Heavenly Father and suffered all kinds of hardships and insults,

James Kim

(Thinking about those brothers and sisters in Christ who meditate on the suffering of the Lord's cross in the vortex of life)



## **“the pen of a skillful writer”**

### **[Psalms 45]**

‘Among all the members of our body, what member is the most difficult to control? It is our short tongue. God has given us two natural defenses to control our tongue. These are teeth and lips. If bad or evil words come out, we have to bite our tongue with our teeth. Also, we have to close our lips when the tongue breaks through our teeth. Despite the presence of these two defenses, we can commit any number of sins through our short tongue. We Christians must build virtue with our lips. We must declare hope with our lips. If we speak violently, we are blocking the door of evangelism. We must remove any evil that is hidden in our tongue by examining ourselves with the word of God and praying constantly to Him. That’s the virtue that the believers must build’ (Internet). So prophet Isaiah said, “The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple” (Isa. 50:4).

The psalmist in Psalms 45 said that his tongue is “the pen of a skillful writer” and he wrote a poem about the king because his heart was stirred by a noble theme (v. 1). In other words, when the psalmist saw the excellency of the king, he confessed about the king by using his prepared lips strangely. While meditating on the psalmist’s confession in three ways, I would like to think about what our attitude toward the king should be.

### **The psalmist’s first confession is “You are the most excellent of men”.**

Look at Psalms 45:2 – “You are the most excellent of men and your lips have been anointed with grace, since God has blessed you forever.” Here, as the psalmist was praising the king, he described with his tongue that “is the pen of a skillful writer” that the king was more beautiful than life. This word indicates that the virtue is superior to the appearance (Park). The psalmist says that the lips of the king, who was superior in virtue to his appearance, “have been anointed with grace” (v. 2).

I remember the hymn “My Lord Had Garments so Wondrous Find”: “My Lord has garments so wondrous find, And myrrh their texture fills. Its fragrance reached to this heart of mine, With joy my being thrills. Out of the ivory palaces Into a world of woe, Only His great eternal love, Made my Saviour go” (v. 1 and chorus). As I sing this song with my lips, I ask the question, ‘How should I reveal the beauty of Jesus?’ As I ask this question, I remember what Henry Nowen said in his book “Compassion”. All of our instincts are to pursue a life of upward.

But living a downward life like Jesus is a great discomfort to our hearts. Although everyone is relegating to a better life, a higher salary, and a more honorable position, we are responsible for reproducing Jesus' downward life on earth. We are responsible for manifesting the beauty of Jesus in low and ugly places. This is what Nowen said about God's compassion:

'Compassion isn't taking sympathetic attitude toward those who have not achieved a life of upward. On the contrary, compassion directly reaches those people, go into the place where the suffering is most extreme and settle there. ... (God's) ... compassion is the compassion of the One who keeps approaching the most forgotten places in the world. It is the compassion of the One who cannot rest comfortably unless He knows that there are people with tears' (Nowen).

We must remember Isaiah 53:2 – “For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.” The beauty of Jesus cannot be seen with the eyes of the world. The reason is because Jesus has no appearance that we should be attracted to Him. Therefore, like Jesus, there may be no beautiful appearance that worldly people should be attracted to us. Actually, there shouldn't be. Never should we pursue worldly beauty. What is the reason? The reason because even though the worldly beauty can be “a life of upward”, he life of Jesus was “a life of downward” (Nowen). We must keep in mind the fact that the beauty of Jesus is revealed in our downward life. And we must not forget that God blesses a life that reveals the beauty of Jesus: “... since God has blessed you forever” (Ps. 45:2).

### **The psalmist's second confession is 'The King is the Victor.'**

Look at Psalms 45:4 - “In your majesty ride forth victoriously in behalf of truth, humility and righteousness; let your right hand display awesome deeds.” Here we see the King of war. The purpose of the war is “truth and humility and righteousness” (v. 4). For this, the psalmist prays, “In your majesty ride forth victoriously” (v. 4). This prayer shows that the psalmist considered the king as a victor. The king who has been blessed forever by God rides on a horseback and is victorious in a war. The right hand of His power is creating all the amazing things (Park). So the psalmist says: “Let your sharp arrows pierce the hearts of the king's enemies; let the nations fall beneath your feet” (v. 5). Described as an unbeatable general, the king goes to war and breaks the heart of his enemy. This triumphant king refers to Jesus Christ, the King of Hosts. He is the spiritual victor (Rev. 19:11-21) (Park).

This is what Deuteronomy 20:4 says: “For the LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for

you against your enemies to give you victory.” The triumphant God is the God who fights for us and makes us triumphant. So Apostle Paul said, “but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57). We can overcome ourselves, sin, the world, and Satan through the God who gives us victory. But there is a question we have to ask here. It is the question of how Jesus triumphed. We must ask how Jesus fought and won Satan. The answer to that question is that Jesus triumphed on the death of the cross. So Apostle Paul said, “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law” (vv. 55-56). Jesus overcame the stinging sin of death by dying on the cross and washed away all our sins. And God gave us eternal life. Therefore, the secret of a victorious life is that we “die every day” (v. 31). Every day, we need to “hit my body and obey” (9:27). We must beat our body and make it our slave (9:27).

### **The psalmist’s third confession is ‘You love righteousness and hate wickedness’.**

Look at Psalms 45:7 – “You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.” In building His Kingdom, the victorious Lord builds His kingdom that is eternal because His kingship is “justice” (v. 6). The reason why the kingdom of God is justice is because the Lord, the King, “loves righteousness and hates wickedness” (v. 7). So there is joy in His kingdom.

If we look at Isaiah 11:1-5, there is a prophecy about the Messiah. Look at verses 3-5: “And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist.” As we have the vision in building the Christ-centered workers to expand the kingdom of God, we must live a life of pursuing justice like the Lord. We must remember Micah 6:8 – “He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?” One of the things God requires of us is to “do justice.” In order to do that, we must love righteousness and hate wickedness, like the king in Psalms 45.

The “king” in Psalms 45 refers to the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Jesus, the King of the kings, is the beautiful Lord, the victor, the Lord who loves justice and hates wickedness. What should be our attitude toward Jesus? There are three things we can think of:

#### **(1) We must cut off our ties with this world and long for the Lord only.**

Look at Psalms 45:10 – “Listen, O daughter, consider and give ear: Forget your people and your father’s house.” Here the psalmist speaks of the queen. This queen compares the believer who can be said to be the

bride of Christ (Park). Therefore, our attitude toward the king Jesus must forget our people and our father's house. We must end our relationship with the world and seek only the Lord (Park).

(2) We must worship the Lord.

Look at Psalms 45:11 – “Then the King will desire your beauty. Because He is your Lord, bow down to Him..” Here the psalmist teaches what kind of believers God sees beautifully. Those believers are the ones who worship the Lord. God finds beauty in those who worship Him. The beauty of the believers lies in humbly worshiping God. Those who humbly worship God obey. They live a life of worship. They preach the gospel through their life of worship. Therefore they see the spiritual offspring. Look at verse 16: “In place of your fathers will be your sons; You shall make them princes in all the earth.” Here, “In place of your fathers will be your sons” is a metaphor that means ‘a believer sees spiritual descendants through evangelism’ (Park). Our responsibility is to expand the kingdom of God by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, the King. In that way, we have a responsibility to obey the will of the Lord, that is to preach the gospel. In the midst of that, all kings will be made through Jesus, who is the King of kings (Rev. 5:10) (Park).

(3) We must have hope in the Lord.

Look at Psalms 45:15 – “They will be led forth with gladness and rejoicing; They will enter into the King's palace.” Our hope is to enter the Lord's palace and worship Him forever. Look at verse 13: “The King's daughter is all glorious within; Her clothing is interwoven with gold.” Here, “The King's daughter” also refers to us, the believers. And the psalmist says that we will be guided to the palace with gladness and rejoicing in order to enjoy “all glorious” in the palace (vv. 13-15).

With the desire to pursue the beauty of the life of downward in the hope of entering the royal palace of Jesus, the King of kings,

James Kim

(Praying for victory in the battle against myself through the victorious Jesus)

## The pen of a skillful writer

**“My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the king; my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer” (Psalms 45:1).**

There is a large picture frame on the wall of our living room. In the large frame, four Chinese characters in calligraphy are written, and those four letters are ‘Prayer All-around’. Of course, my wife and I don’t know Chinese. But someone who knows Chinese told that meaning to me. The phrase ‘Prayer All-around’ written in this calligraphy character was given by my father’s friend pastor as our wedding gift. And he is a missionary in Canada, reaching out to the sailors in the ships. I still remember that one day when he came to our church and preached, he told our church members to obey the Word of God. And he gave us an example of a car. He said when we drive the car, if we put it on “D”, that mean we can drive (go forward). And if we put it on “R”, that means we can go backward. If we put it on “P”, it means we have to park the car. Likewise, if God tells us to go forward, we should go forward, If He tells us to go backward, we should go backward. And if God wants us to stop, then we should stop. We just need to obey Him. I think it is a very precious word. If God commands us to go forward, we just need to move forward in faith. And if God tells us to look back, we just have to think about the graces of God that God has given us in the past. And if He commands us to be still and know that He is our God, that’s what we just need to do. When I think about the calligraphy letter “Prayer All-around” written by this missionary who, I believe that he believes that prayer is all-round and is living a life of prayer and wrote this calligraphy letter for my wife and I.

Look at Psalms 45:1b – “my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer.” When I think about this word, I remember the missionary’s calligraphy writing “Prayer All-around” that he wrote for my wife and I because I felt that the missionary’s confidence in the power of prayer and the life of prayer were more important the writing itself. In other words, the heart of the missionary who wrote the calligraphy writing is more important than the calligraphy writing itself. Likewise, even though our tongue that is the pen of skillful writer is important, but our heart using that tongue is more important. The reason is because what is in our heart comes out through the tongue. If our hearts are overflowing with love, the message of love will come out through our tongue. But if hatred in our hearts is growing and bearing fruit, the only thing that will come out through our tongue will be the voice of hate. Of course, even if we have hatred in our heart, we can still lie with our tongue, saying, “I love you.” But in common sense, if we have hatred in our heart, our tongue will make the voice of hate. Therefore, when we think about our tongue as the pen of the skillful writer that the psalmist speaks in Psalms 45:1, we must think about the heart of the

ones who have that tongue.

**First, the heart of the ones who have the tongue, that is the pen of the skillful writer, is ‘good heart’.**

Look at Psalms 45:1 – “My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the king; my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer.” Here, the psalmist confesses that “My heart overflows with good theme.” If our hearts are good, then we say good things. Then, what is ‘good heart’ here? When I thought of the English word “noble” (v. 1), I thought of “A wife of noble character” in Proverbs 31:10. The Bible says that “faithful instruction is on this noble character woman’s tongue (v. 26). In other words, the noble character woman feels and experiences God’s patience (love) in her heart, so she speaks the law of love with her tongue. Likewise, if we taste God’s love and goodness in our hearts (Ps. 34:8), we will say good words with our tongue for sure.

We who believe in Jesus must be able to confess, “God is good,” no matter how difficult we may be. If we sing “God is so good” only where there is good thing and no difficulty, and then stop singing when difficult things come, then I think it is a proof that we aren’t experiencing God’s goodness and love. If we are able to confess, “Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever (23:6), then by transcending any kinds of circumstances, we will be able to sing “God is so good” by believing that “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). Such a good heart can only say good words.

**Second, the heart of the ones who have the tongue, that is the pen of the skillful writer, is ‘gracious heart’.**

Look at Psalms 45:2 – “You are fairer than the sons of men; Grace is poured upon Your lips; Therefore God has blessed You forever.” The lips of the king or the saints who are blessed by God must be gracious. In other words, in order to glorify God with our lips, we must say things that are gracious to others. In order to do this, our hearts must be filled with God’s grace. If we, like Apostle Paul, know that we are who we are because of God’s grace (1 Cor. 15:10) and are living a life of faith that is filled with that grace, then we will let our speech always be with grace, “as though seasoned with salt (Col. 4:6). Therefore, we will bring grace to others by glorifying God with our lips.

Jesus said, “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’” (Mt. 15:11) and said, “he things that come out of the mouth come from the heart”

(v. 18). If our hearts aren't clean, then the things that come out of our mouths also cannot be clean. However, our hearts have already been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross. We are God's children who have been saved by God's grace. Therefore, as we get to know God's grace more and more deeply and broadly, the gracious words from our gracious hearts must come out through our lips. Also, as those who have tasted the goodness of God, we must speak good words through our lips in good hearts. I hope and pray that God's goodness and grace will be revealed through our tongues, which is the pen of the skillful writer.

I want to restrain my heart with the help of the Holy Spirit rather than my tongue,

James Kim

(Praying that I may be able to proclaim God's goodness and grace through my lips)

## **“Be still, and know that I am God”**

### **[Psalms 46]**

‘Persevering and waiting in expectation is the foundation of spiritual life’ (Weil). Henry Nowen, in his book “Out of Solitude,” says, ‘A mother of expectation is patience.’ And this is what he said about waiting patiently: ‘Waiting patiently means making our weeping and mourning a preparation for purification. According to it, we will finally enjoy the joy promised to us. ... When we believe that patience can grow our expectations, then only fate can turn into a calling, wounds into the call for deeper understanding, and sadness into the cradle of joy.’ What do you think of this statement? I remember the words of Job 23:10 – “‘But He knows the way I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” The difficult and fearful environments and situations in our lives are a furnace-like tool in training us. When we come out of that furnace, one of the things that we get from that training is “patience”. A man named Michael Molinos says: ‘The purification of the soul through suffering produces patience. In the midst of suffering, we can train the highest qualities like love and mercy. Suffering annihilates and purifies the self. It takes things from the world and transforms them into heavenly things. There is no time that brings us closer to God than when God leaves us in trouble

What should we do during suffering? What should we do when unexpected events strike ourselves, our homes, businesses, and churches like a storm in the sea? I want to answer these questions based on Psalms 46. I am going to meditate on two things, focusing on the words of Psalms 46. In the midst of doing so, I hope and pray that each of us has deep encounter with God even in the midst of storm with the grace that God gives us.

### **First, we must not fear.**

Look at Psalms 46:2-3: “Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Selah.” This refers to the most fearful phenomenon shaking up to the foundations of the world (Park). I wonder if there is such fearful phenomenon in our lives. What are some of the most fearful things that shake the foundations of our faith? The psychologists tell us that humans develop tremendous fears when a powerful challenge comes from outside. They said that humans are afraid when a challenge that is stronger than themselves comes upon them. However, humans have much greater fear than this, and that fear is not a challenge that comes from outside, but the challenge that arises from within. The challenge is nothing but loneliness. They feel alone. They are cut off from everyone, there



is no one to talk to, no sky, no earth, and they are left alone. They said that loneliness, the fact of being left alone, is the most fearful thing for a person. It is the highest peak of fear (Internet). It makes sense. It must be scary to feel alone. It is said that these subconscious fears in us can devastate our lives in four main ways (Internet): (1) Fear paralyzes our potential. We tie up our talents and make them hesitate, so we miss out on opportunities. (2) Fear destroys the relationships we have. It hinders us from being honest with others. When we are fearful, we tend to wear a mask and pretend to be someone different from who really we are and deny our real feelings. (3) Fear hinders the happiness we enjoy. We can't be both happy and afraid. (4) Fear hinders our success. We often prepare for failure by focusing on what we fear will happen rather than focus on what we want to happen. Fear causes fear to happen.

In Deuteronomy 1:29, this is what Moses said to the Israelites: "Then I said to you, 'Do not be shocked, nor fear them.'" Why shouldn't we fear? Deuteronomy 1:30-31 say two reasons:

(1) The first reason is because God will fight for us.

Look at Deuteronomy 1:30 – "The LORD your God who goes before you will Himself fight on your behalf, just as He did for you in Egypt before your eyes."

(2) The second reason is because God will lead us by carrying us.

Look at Deuteronomy 1:31 – "and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as a man carries his son, in all the way which you have walked until you came to this place."

We have already meditated on how the psalmist David did three things to overcome the fearful situation in Psalms 27:1-6. So, even in our lives, we challenged ourselves to apply these three things when we face fearful situation:

(1) We should be confident in our fearful situation.

We must be confident because we look to the Lord and hope in Him who is our power, our light, our salvation, and our life in our fearful situation. We must be bold while meditating on the grace of salvation (victory) in the past. Since we trust God completely, we must entrust our future to Him.

(2) We should seek God in our fearful situation.

Let's just ask one thing. Let's seek that we may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our lives and that we may behold the beauty of the Lord. As we seek His face, let's have peace in our hearts, His protection and the hope of victory.

(3) We should praise God in our fearful situation.

As victors, we must offer thanksgiving to God. Like Paul and Silas, we must pray and sing praises to God even in prison.

**Second and last, we must be still and know that He is God.**

Look at Psalms 46:10 – “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” We need to be still, as the psalmist did, even when we face the most fearful circumstances that shake up the foundation of our faith. Even though the mountains may shake, we need to be still before God. We must be silent before God. In silence, we must hear God's voice. In order to do that, we must not let our hearts be busy. After all, the silence of the heart is far more important than the silence of the mouth. Abba Poemen said, “When a person is silent, he can be considered silent. But if his heart is condemning others, he is constantly talking. But there may be another person who speaks from morning to evening, but he is truly silence” (Internet).

What is the voice of the Lord that we should hear in silence? In Psalms 46:10, the voice that we should hear is ‘Know that God is God.’ What kind of God that the psalmist talking about in Psalms 46? We can think about in four ways:

(1) God is “our refuge” and “our fortress”.

Look at Psalms 46:1, 7, 11: “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. ... The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah. ... The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah.” In the midst of the situation where the world was shaking, the psalmist wasn't afraid but took refuge in God. Why did he take refuge in Him? It was because he sought the grace of salvation. Look at verse 4: “There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.” Here “a river” symbolizes the revelation of God, the source of salvation. And “make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells” is the place where the grace of salvation is found that becomes a place of joy (Park). In other words, the reason the psalmist flees to the sanctuary of God, who was His refuge, was because it became a place of joy with the grace of salvation.

(2) God is Immanuel God who is with us.

Look at Psalms 46:7, 11: “The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah. ... The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah.” This is what Deuteronomy 1:42 says: “And the LORD said to me, ‘Say to them, “Do not go up nor fight, for I am not among you; otherwise you will be defeated before your enemies.’” This word is the truth that says that if God is with the Israelites, they will win the war, and if not, they will be defeated. The secret to victory is that God is with us.

(3) God is our strength.

Look at Psalms 46:1 – “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” This reminds us the word of Psalms 18:1 – “I love You, O LORD, my strength.” Dr. Yoon-sun Park said, ‘It is the strength who made it possible to defeat Goliath with a sling stone. The power of sin is strong, but the power stronger than sin is God’ (Park). When a big problem or difficulty like Goliath lies ahead of us, we feel weak or incompetent. In the midst of that, we look to and depend on God’s omnipotence.

(4) God is a very present help in trouble.

Look at Psalms 46:1, 5 – “God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. ... God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.” The original Hebrew word for “A very present help in trouble” is translated as “He is thoroughly as the helper in our trouble” (Park). Have we really experienced God’s help in trouble and hardship, and that God is truly God who helps us in trouble? Isn’t He the proven God, who helps us in trouble? We must remember that our God is “A very present help in trouble” (v. 1). Therefore, no matter how great the trouble may be, our God is our very present help. This God is the God who helps us “when morning dawns” (v. 5). The word that God helps us when morning dawns is opposite to the dark night symbolizes salvation and joy (Park). God is the God who helps us in trouble and saves us and gives us the joy of salvation as a gift. The word that this God helps us at morning dawns means that God will help us quickly (Park). For example, the fact that the Assyrian army in 2 Kings 19:35 was destroyed by God’s miracle was discovered early in the morning. God solves our problem without us knowing or thinking about it. He allows us to find the solution to our problem before we even start working on it (likely in the early morning) (Park).

A father eagle is said to start training his eaglet in time in a safe nest built on high place. It is said that the eagle first bites the thorn, puts it in its nest, and flaps its wings on it. The eaglet stabbed by thorns clutter up and popped out. And it flies, flapping its wings, following the father eagle. However, because the eaglet’s wings have

no power, it undoubtedly falls from a high place down. It is said that the father eagle spreads its wings to receive a baby and place it on its wings (Internet). How frightened would it be when the eaglet falls down from the high place with powerless wings? However, if the eaglet knows that the father eagle will receive the eaglet by spreading the wings, then would the eaglet rather be brave? Let's keep in mind that the eaglet can experience the salvation of the father eagle when it comes out from its nest and falls down from the height place. Therefore, let us not be afraid. How much more would our Heavenly Father save us if the father eagle saves the eaglet? He is our refuge, the God of Immanuel who is always with us, our strength, and the very present help in our trouble.

With the heart of wishing to be still before God and know that God is God,

James Kim

(After praying for brother and sisters in Christ who are in pains)

# Why should we praise God?

## [Psalms 47]

It is often said that praise speak of three powers: First, praise is ‘the power to go up’. Praise is the power to go up means that praise functions as bringing us closer to God by praising Him. The praise as the power to go up may be called ‘the guide of faith’. Second, praise is ‘the power to penetrate into our hearts’. The praise that brings us comfort, peace, repentance, joy, determination, and courage is the power to penetrate our hearts. The praise that comes to our hearts and gives us joy and courage is ‘the guide of hope’. Third and last, praise is ‘the power to go out’. The praise that arouses faith and hope has another important function. It is ‘the guide of love’, which is the power that goes out. The praise comforts our sad hearts, comforts our hearts when we are depressed, gives us thankful hearts, and organizes the messy thoughts. Those who sing praise vigorously during worship are those whose hearts are concentrated on God and who are moved by the worship. Therefore, if we want to overflow with grace, we have to praise God (Internet).

We are to give this powerful praise to God. What is the reason? Why should we praise God? I want to look for three reasons in Psalms chapter 47. I hope and pray that we will be able to praise God with right reasons.

### **First, we must praise God because God is the Lord Most High.**

Look at Psalms 47: 2, 9b – “For the LORD Most High is to be feared, A great King over all the earth. ... For the shields of the earth belong to God; He is highly exalted.” What does “the Lord Most High” mean? It means that God is the Most High God and the most precious God. We must not forget God’s “dignity” in praising the Most High God. It means that God is the object of our awe. In other words, we must be reverent in our hearts when we praise the Most High God. Despite this being natural, I think we are more liberal than being in awe in praising God. In other words, we forget our position in praising the Lord Most High and think that we can praise Him freely and comfortably. Let’s think about it. Isn’t it natural for the lowest being to have awe in praising the Lord Most High?

Is the praise given to the Lord Most High already exalted to the Most High, or is it to exalt ourselves? I remember the story of the Israelites during the Exodus time in which the Israelites made a golden calf, “the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play” (Exod. 32:6) and dancing (v. 19) when Moses was on Mount Sinai. I am concerned that maybe we are praising the Lord Most High by eating, drinking, singing, and dancing like the Israelites. We need to apply John 3:30 in praising the Lord Most High: “”He must increase, but I must decrease.” In other words, in praising the already Most High Lord, we must decrease. We must be lowered and smaller.

We must praise the Lord Most High humbly. I remember the chorus of the hymn “How Great Thou Art”:  
“Then sings my soul, My Savior God, to Thee How great Thou art, How great Thou art Then sings my soul, My  
Savior God, to Thee How great Thou art, How great Thou art.”

### **Second, we must praise God because He is the Lord who loves us the most.**

Look at Psalms 47:4 – “He chooses our inheritance for us, The glory of Jacob whom He loves. Selah.”  
God’s love was to choose the Israelites and give ‘the glory of Jacob’ that is an inheritance, the promised land of  
Canaan. This God’s choice is the ultimate love of God for the ones whom He chose (Park). That is why the Bible  
says in Ephesians 1:3-4: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every  
spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that  
we would be holy and blameless before Him In love.” We who are chosen by God and who are God’s most loved  
ones must praise God. The reason is because God chose us in Christ so that we would be to the praise of His glory  
(v. 12). In other words, we, who are the chosen, exist for the praise of God’s glory’ (Park). The ultimate purpose of  
our redemption is to praise God’s glory.

Therefore, we must praise God’s saving grace. We must praise Him with joyful heart, using the musical  
instrument to sing praises (Ps. 47:5). I remember the hymn “The Love of God is Greater Far” verse 1 and chorus:  
“The love of God is greater far Than tongue or pen can ever tell; It goes beyond the highest star, And reaches to the  
lowest hell; The guilty pair, bowed down with care, God gave His Son to win; His erring child He reconciled, And  
pardoned from His sin. Oh love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong! It shall forever more  
endure, The saints’ and an gels’ song.”

### **Third and last, we must praise God because God is the King who reigns over us.**

Look at Psalms 47:8 – “God reigns over the nations, God sits on His holy throne.” We must praise God  
because He who sit on the holy throne is “A great King” (v. 2), “the King of all the earth” (v. 7) who reigns over the  
nations (v. 8). The Bible exhorts us to: “Sing praises to God, sing praises; Sing praises to our King, sing praises” (v.  
6). The reason why we, who are Abraham God’s people, are gathered to praise God as King is because the Lord our  
God is protecting us. Look at verse 9: “The princes of the people have assembled themselves as the people of the  
God of Abraham, For the shields of the earth belong to God; He is highly exalted.”

We are to praise our King and our God with “a skillful psalm” (v. 7). This means that we should praise  
God with the heart of wisdom that knows God rightly. This is indeed important. The reason is because we aren’t  
praising God based on the right knowledge of God. There is danger of pleasing ourselves instead of God in  
emotional praise that isn’t based on the right knowledge of God. We must praise God, our King. I remember the  
gospel song “I bless You my God the King”: “I will exalt You, My God the King; I will praise Your Name for ever

and ever.”

As I was meditating on Psalms chapter 47, it reminded me the hymn “My Life Flows Rich in Love and Grace.” This hymn was wrote and composed by Robert Lowry (1826~1899). This is how the song goes: (v. 1) “My life flows on in endless song; above earth’s lamentation, I catch the sweet, though far off hymn that hails a new creation,” (v. 2) “Through all the tumult and the strife, I hear that music ringing. It finds an echo in my soul. How can I keep from singing?” (v. 3) “What though my joys and comforts die? I know my Savior liveth. What though the darkness gather round? Songs in the night he giveth,” (v. 4) “The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart, a fountain ever springing! All things are mine since I am his! How can I keep from singing?” and (Refrain) “No storm can shake my inmost calm while to that Rock I’m clinging. Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?” As I read the part of this song “My life flows on in endless song”, I thought that our praise and our lives cannot be cut off or be separated. So let’s praise the Lord Most High who loves us the most and who reigns over us as our King until we have the last breath in this earth.

Enjoying the grace in praising God,

Pastor James Kim

(Praying to be established as a wise worshiper who praises who our God is)

## God who will guide us until death

### [Psalms 48]

Looking back on the past, what crisis have you faced? Do you still remember deep in your heart the moment that you experienced God's guidance and the grace of salvation even in the middle of crisis? Today I went to a nursing home and met my church grandmother named Eul-soo Jang and spent time together. While having conversation with her, I told her about my first baby, Charis. It was because I wasn't able to stand in the Charis' position and thought my greed as her father had made the baby more troubled in her illness. As I shared about Charis with Grandma Jang, I shared that life is more about the process and the end of life than the beginning. When we remember God's grace in the midst of past crises, we can overcome the present crises with the grace of the Lord.

One of the hymns I often sing is "My Jesus, as Thou Wilt". The background of this hymn is this: "There was a pastor who prayed in tears when all of Germany was ruined by a 30-year religious war. He went to the homes of persecuted believers and delivered messages of comfort. To make matters worse, the Black Death spread across Germany, killing more than 10 million people. It was said that Germany was like a "giant grave". One day, this pastor and his wife visited the family who had a seriously ill believer, and when they returned home, they witnessed a disastrous sight. Their church and house were burned and turned into ashes. Their two beloved sons were dead hugging each other. It is said that these couples hugged their son's body and prayed silently in tears: ".My Jesus, as Thou wilt! O may Thy will be mine; Into Thy hand of love I would my all resign. Through sorrow, or thro' joy, Conduct me as Thine own; And help me still to say, My Lord, Thy will be done". The pastor's name is Benjamin Schmolck. It is true faith that he obeyed even in the midst of great pain and trial (Internet).

As I meditated on Psalms 48, I meditated on the text, especially focusing on verse 14: "For such is God, Our God forever and ever; He will guide us until death." With the title of "God who will guide us until death", I would like to think about this God in four ways and our four responsibilities.

### **First, God who will guide us until death is the great Lord.**

Look at Psalms 48:1 – "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, In the city of our God, His holy mountain." The God who will guide us until death is the great God. And the great God is the God who is "the great King" (v. 2). That is why the way our great God saves us is great (Park). But we tend to think too little of this great way of salvation of God. In other words, we don't see the big picture, so our hearts are filled with thoughts and



expectations about God's way of salvation in our own way. And if God doesn't deliver salvation according to our thoughts and expectations, we may complain or be discouraged. At the time of the Exodus, the Israelites did that. They blamed God and Moses. They didn't understand the will of the Lord in God's way of salvation, why God had made them walk in the wilderness for 40 years. The Lord's will was "that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end" (Deut. 8:16).

At some point, while meditating on Joseph, I was amazed at God's way of salvation. It is nothing other than God saved Joseph from one difficult situation to another, and eventually made him the ruler of Egypt when he was 30 years old. God saved Joseph in His way. When Joseph was about to get kill by his older brothers, God let him to be sold as a slave of Potiphar in Egypt. And at the house of Potiphar, God saved him from Potiphar's wife's temptation by letting Joseph to be imprisoned. God saved him from one suffering to another suffering. However, God eventually made Joseph the ruler of Egypt and saved the Israelites. In God's great plan, He wasn't trying to save only one man Joseph. His great plan was also to save the Israel and his whole family (which was the nation Israel) by allowing or leading him from one suffering to another suffering. How great was this God's way of salvation?

Let us keep in mind that our great God is the God who saves and guides us in His great way of salvation. Let's not forget that, when He leads us into the wilderness, into the valley of Achor, what He finally wants to give us is "blessing."

### **Second, God who will guide us until death is the God of fortress.**

Look at Psalms 48:3 – "God is in her citadels; he has shown himself to be her fortress." The God who guide us to death is the God who is our fortress. Just as the holy city of God is "beautiful in its loftiness" (v. 2), God who is our fortress is a stronghold (v. 3). And God, our stronghold and our fortress, protects us. So David also confessed: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (23:4). Even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will not fear because God, our fortress, protects us and comforts us.

This God declared Himself "a stronghold" (48:3). Our God is the God who appears as Savior every time and saves His people. Look at the work of salvation of the Israelites in the Old Testament. Did God save the Israelites once or twice? When we think about the name "Jesus", that is "God is salvation", our God is the God who is pleased to save us. This God is our fortress. Therefore, we must escape to God, who makes Himself known as a refuge. So David prayed like this: "Incline Your ear to me, rescue me quickly; Be to me a rock of strength, A stronghold to save me. For You are my rock and my fortress; For Your name's sake You will lead me and guide me"

(31:2-3).

### **Third, God who will guide us until death is the God who makes us triumph.**

Look at Psalms 48:4-5: “When the kings joined forces, when they advanced together, they saw her and were astounded; they fled in terror.” This means that foreign kings tried to invade and occupy Jerusalem, but it passed by like fog. At that time, the invaders saw the power of God and fled in terror (Park). In the end, just as God broke the ships of Tarshish with the east wind of those invaders, the Lord destroyed the power of the nations. Therefore, He gave Israel victory. Our God is the God who brings us victory by defeating our enemies for us. Look at Deuteronomy 20:4 – “for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.” That is why the psalmist didn’t rely on his own bow or sword, but on the Lord who saved him from his enemies (Ps. 44:6-7).

Personally, I remember the word of 1 Corinthians 10:13 while watching our church retired pastor’s mission in another country: “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.” When I hear the news that God delivers him from every dangerous moment in the mission field, I see that our God is truly the God of salvation and the God who makes us triumph.

Let us keep in mind that our God is the God who gives us victory. Therefore, we must live by faith with the assurance of victory.

### **Fourth and last, God who will guide us until death is the God who is filled with righteousness.**

Look at Psalms 48:10 – “Like your name, O God, your praise reaches to the ends of the earth; your right hand is filled with righteousness.” The word “your right hand is filled with righteousness” means that God will undoubtedly execute the justice of the punishment to the evil, and finally repay the true believer’s false charge (Park). When we tell our God our false charge, the God who is filled with righteousness is the God who repays our false charge.

The practical example is the case of Pastor G’s son. Two weeks ago, I heard about his accusation case. It seems like the other person hit his car while he was driving. But even though he did wrong, he actually sued the Pastor G’s son. And I think the other person was a powerful politician. That is why the police, who wrote the report

when the car accident happened, also lied in court and supported that politician. And it is said that the company where Pastor G's son works has made a statement against him. It is said that Pastor G and his wife prayed to God earnestly in this very difficult time. What's interesting in the midst of that is that Pastor G had a dream, in which a fire from heaven came down on the politician and the police and businessmen who made false reports about his son. In the end, about two weeks ago, the judge sided with Pastor G's son in court. After winning the trial, Pastor G's son's lawyer made two proposals: One was that Pastor G's son was unable to work while he was suffering in court, so the other party gave the money that he couldn't earn. And the other was to sue the other person and have them decide in court that they lied. However, Pastor G said his son didn't pursue it anymore. I see a wonderful faith here. Of course, as in Psalms 48, I experienced the truth that God, who is full of righteousness, repays our believers for our false accusation. But what's even more surprising is that Pastor G's son could sue the politician and the police who lied, but he didn't. What I felt is that we must leave our revenge to God, that is, we must stop and when we need to stop. What is the reason? The reason is that we must entrust revenge to the righteous God. God who is full of righteousness will do it for you. God, who is full of righteousness, will defeat our enemies. We must believe in this God and receive His guidance.

The God who will guide us until death is the great God, the God who is our fortress, the God who makes us triumph, and the God who is filled with righteousness. What should we do, who are guided by God? There are four things we can think of.

(1) We should praise God greatly.

Look at Psalms 48:1 – “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, In the city of our God, His holy mountain.” We should sing praises to God, sing praises to our King (47:6), who is the Lord Most High (v. 2), who loves us (v. 4) and who reigns over us (v. 8). We must experience the great salvation of the great God by praying and praising God with faith even in narrow prisons like Paul and Silas. Therefore, we must ascend to the holy temple of God and praise God, who is great.

(2) We should think about God's lovingkindness.

Look at Psalms 48:9 – “We have thought on Your lovingkindness, O God, In the midst of Your temple.” Here, the phrase “We have thought” in Hebrew is “dimminu” which means ‘long-awaited’. The psalmist took refuge in God and long-awaited His grace instead of being discouraged in the midst of trouble. As a result, the psalmist realized the greatness of the Lord (Park). We must not be discouraged during trouble but long-awaited the Lord's grace in His temple. In long-awaiting for His lovingkindness, we must realize the greatness of God.

(3) We should be glad and rejoice.

Look at Psalms 48:11 – “Let Mount Zion be glad, Let the daughters of Judah rejoice Because of Your judgments.” We can be glad and rejoice because of the righteous judgment of God who is full of righteousness. We should be glad and rejoice because He is the God who makes us triumph. Also, we can be glad and rejoice in His salvation because of God’s righteous judgement and because we experience His salvation.

(4) We should tell what God has done to the next generation.

Look at Psalms 48:13 – “Consider her ramparts; Go through her palaces, That you may tell it to the next generation.” The psalmist is telling us that since God is in Zion (Jerusalem), we should look closely at the safe and beautiful place and tell it to the next generation. One of the things that the first generation of Israel did at the time of the Exodus was that they didn’t teach the God’s work of salvation to the next generation. As a result, the next generation went into the land of Canaan and committed a sin of worshipping idols against God. Therefore, we must remember the words of Deuteronomy 6:6-7: “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. ‘You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.’”

The God who will guide us until death is the great God and our fortress. He is also the God who makes us triumph by opposing our enemies. He is just God who is filled with righteousness. Therefore, we must praise God greatly and long-await His lovingkindness in His temple. We also need to be glad and rejoice, believing that He will give us victory. In the midst of that, we must tell the next generation our God who will guide us until death.

As I look to the Lord who will guide us until death,

James Kim

(God who guides us and make us victorious!)

## **“God will redeem my soul”**

### **[Psalms 49]**

It is said that there are many things that beasts are better than humans. For example, a cheetah is faster than a human, and a giraffe is bigger than a human, and if you weigh it, seven people can't beat one elephant. In terms of the brightness of the eyes, hawks and eagles are ahead of human eyes, and dogs with smelling noses are 10,000 times more developed than the human. In terms of hearing, the human's ears are said to be less than rabbits. It is said that if we swim in the water, people cannot follow the seals. There are many things that humans cannot do as beasts. Nevertheless, there are reasons why man is better than beast. That is, Creator God gave the image of God only to the human. The first in the image of God is to have a heart that longs for eternity in our human hearts and the faith that fears the Creator God. The second is to give a good conscience. Conscience is the foundation of morality and ethics. The conscience is always on the side of God. That is why when we sin, our conscience is rebuked and anxious. Therefore, a person who is a really man or who is better than a beast is a person who has a good conscience and the mystery of faith in Christ' (Internet).

But what kind of person is worse than the beast? It is those who don't yearn for eternity in their hearts and have no faith in fear of Creator God. It can also be said that a person who is less than an animal is a person whose conscience is paralyzed, a person without a good conscience. If we look at Psalms 49:12 and 20, the Bible says that a man is “like the beasts”. Who is the perishing beast that the Bible is talking about in Psalms 49:12, 20? Why is he foolish? I want to think about what responsibilities I have. Like the psalmist, I would like to think about what kind of people and what responsibilities are another class of people who are convinced that “God will redeem my soul” (v. 15). In the midst of that, we want to learn from Psalms 49 what kind of person we should be and what kind of life we should live.

### **First, the person who is like beast perishes.**

What kind of man does the Bible say is like the beast that perishes? The Bible says that people who don't know God even though they enjoy wealth and glory in the world are like beasts that perish (vv. 12, 20). This beast-like person is proud of his abundance of riches by relying on his wealth rather than relying on God because he doesn't know God while enjoying the wealth in the world (v. 6). So this man who is like the beast takes ownership of the land in his own name, dreaming that he will live in this world forever (v. 11). In other words, the person is

striving to make a name on the ground (Park). It is foolish to think and strive for prosperity in this world. What is the reason? We can find three reasons in Psalms 49:

- (1) The first reason is found in Psalms 49:17 – “For when he dies he will carry nothing away; His glory will not descend after him.”

A life comes empty-handed and goes empty-handed. No matter how much riches we have, we cannot take it with us when we die. What a foolish life is to live with boasting and relying on our wealth? In a way, too many people idolize wealth (money), live a vain life, and die in vain, returning to dust.

- (2) The second reason is that the person who is like beast is foolish because his wealth is eventually given to others.

Look at Psalms 49:10 – “For he sees that even wise men die; The stupid and the senseless alike perish And leave their wealth to others.” In Psalms 39:6, we can see a similar word like this: “Surely every man walks about as a phantom; Surely they make an uproar for nothing; He amasses riches and does not know who will gather them.” In the end, as the Bible says, the wealth of the wicked will be taken by the righteous. So, what a vain life it is to live for wealth and to amass riches without knowing God and without knowing who will gather them? What a foolish life.

- (3) Another reason can be found in Psalms 49:7-9: “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 — That he should live on eternally, That he should not undergo decay.”

No matter how much riches we have, we cannot redeem ourselves from death. The redemption of our lives is so precious. It cannot be done with money. The reason why we can live in heaven forever without seeing corruption can never be done by great wealth. It is said that Queen Elizabeth of England said at the end of her death: ‘I will give you a million dollars if there is anyone who makes me live more’ (Park).

We should not be jealous of this kind of people who are like beasts who are perishing. The psalmist Asaph confesses in Psalms 73:22-23: “Then I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a beast before You. Nevertheless I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand.” When Asaph saw the prosperity of the wicked, he was envious of the arrogant (v. 3). But after he went into the sanctuary of God and perceived the end of the wicked

(v. 17), he confessed that he was senseless and ignorant and “I was like a beast before You” (v. 22). But since he was continually with the Lord and the Lord had taken hold of his right hand (v. 23), his steps didn’t slip. We never need to envy the prosperity of the wicked because the wicked will perish.

## **Second, the upright person will be redeemed.**

The beastlike people will perish but God will receive those who will be redeemed. Look at Psalms 49:15 – “But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, For He will receive me. Selah.” Here, the word that God will receive the upright person who will be redeemed refers to God taking the saints’ souls to His kingdom after their death (Park). Those who are like perishing beasts put their hope only in wealth and life in this world. But we the saints live with hope in that heaven, the world to come.

### (1) We shouldn’t fear people who are like beast.

Look at Psalms 49:5 – “Why should I fear in days of adversity, When the iniquity of my foes surrounds me.” Here, “the iniquity” doesn’t belong to the saint, but refers to the evil deeds and violence of those who persecute the saint (Park). The psalmist didn’t fear those who persecute him, even in the midst of the evil deeds and violence of the wicked who persecuted him. The reason is because even though the wicked cannot deliver them from death with the wealth or riches they believe in, the saints lived eternally under the redemption of God (Park).

### (2) We must walk the right path.

We must walk the path of righteousness. We must never walk the path of unrighteousness. Look at Psalms 49:14 – “As sheep they are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd; And the upright shall rule over them in the morning, And their form shall be for Sheol to consume So that they have no habitation.” Here, “the upright” refers to us, the saints. Therefore, we believers must not walk on the path of unrighteousness of pride, relying on the riches and the wealth of this world, without knowing God like those who are perishing beasts. Rather, we must faithfully walk the righteous path that the Lord walked while looking at the future heavenly life.

### (3) We must live with assurance that God will lead us to an eternal kingdom after death.

Look at Psalms 49:15 – “But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, For He will receive me. Selah.” Our God is the God who guides us until death (48:14). Even now, He is leading us to the eternal kingdom of God. Therefore, we can confess, “Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

When I visited my church beloved grandmother Eul-soo Jang this Tuesday at a nursing home, she was weaker physically. But she wasn't afraid of even death, and she prayed earnestly to see Jesus more and more. Grandmother Jang, who is justified and is God's precious daughter, is most grateful that Jesus washed away all her sins with His blood on the cross. God will redeem her soul, grandma Jang, who sang with me the hymn “Since Christ My Soul From Sin Set Free”: “Since Christ my soul from sin set free, This world has been a Heaven to me; And 'mid earth's sorrows and its woe, 'Tis heaven my Je-sus here to know. O hallelujah, yes, 'tis heaven 'Tis heaven to know my sins forgiven; On land or sea, what matters where? Where Jesus is, 'tis Heaven there” (v. 1 and chorus).

As I enjoy God's grace given to me as I am with beloved grandma Jang on her last journey in this earth,

James Kim

(Desire to walk the right path according to God's guidance)



## **Let us not trust in our wealth.**

**“Even those who trust in their wealth And boast in the abundance of their riches? 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-” (Psalms 49:6-8).**

Yesterday I read James Kennedy’s entire book, “Freedom from Financial Fear”. The reason I bought the book was not only because the title caught my attention, but also because it was written by Pastor James Kennedy. After I finished reading the book, I summarized some of the challenges that I got. One of them was, ‘Tithing to God is not a matter of finance, but a matter of faith.’ And the problem of faith is that we don’t believe the promise of Malachi 3:10 that God gave to us: “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.” As a result, not only do we not enjoy God’s blessing in fulfilling the word of promise, but also we cannot enjoy freedom from economic fear. Rather, we have no choice but to live in anxiety and worry due to economic problems. However, the more serious problem is that not only we don’t believe the word of God’s promise, but our wealth is being enriched even though we don’t offer tithing to God. The reason why this is a more serious problem is because our tendency is to rely on the abundance of our wealth. The big problem is not to make God our refuge (Ps. 52:7).

In Psalms 49, the psalmist is surrounded by his foes, and those foes are those who trust in their wealth and boast in the abundance of their riches (Ps. 49:5-6). These are foolish who don’t trust in God but in themselves (v. 13). They are foolish because they don’t realize that no matter how much money they have, they can’t redeem other people’s lives and that they can’t give to God a ransom for them (v. 7). They don’t realize that the redemption of their soul is so costly that they should cease trying forever (v. 8). They don’t realize that even if they have a lot of money and pay anything, they will not undergo decay and live on eternally (vv. 8-9). Also, the reason they are foolish is because they think that their houses are forever (v. 11). They don’t realize that when they die, they will carry nothing away (v. 17). They don’t realize that they leave their wealth to others (v. 10). They don’t realize that no matter how satisfy they are in this world and are praised by many for their success, they will eventually die like their ancestors and never see life again (vv. 18-19). No matter how much they enjoy living in this world, what will it do? (v. 20) No matter how much they enjoy their wealth, they can’t live forever (v. 12). Eventually, they are

destined to die, so they will all die, and their form will perish (v. 14). They don't realize that their graves will become their eternal home and will remain there endlessly (v. 11). Those who don't realize this are like beasts that perish (vv. 12, 20). But the psalmist realizes and knows all this. The reason is that he has wisdom and understanding (v. 3). And he knows that God will accept him and redeem his soul from the grave, the power of death (v. 15). Therefore, he is telling us all to hear and listen (vv. 1-2). This is what he says to us: "Do not be afraid when a man becomes rich, When the glory of his house is increased" (v. 16).

We are not to be fools who trust in our wealth. We must not be like beasts who don't realize it. We must realize that God paid too much price for our redemption, that is to save our souls from the power of death. What did He pay for our redemption? Jesus, the begotten Son of God, was cursed for us and redeemed us from the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13). God redeemed all our sins by the death of His begotten Son on the cross (Heb. 2:17, Ps. 130:8). We have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, in the Son of God (Col. 1:14). We have become freely justified by the grace of God through the redemption in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:24), and we have received the adoption as sons (Gal. 4:5). Thus we are redeemed without money (Isa. 52:3). God has redeemed us by the crucifixion of His only Son, Jesus, and has saved our souls from the power of death (Ps. 49:15). Therefore, we must trust in God. We must make God our stronghold and our power of salvation (52:7).

Not wanting to set my heart upon riches (62:10) but trust in God with all my heart,

James Kim

(As I seek God's wisdom and understanding)

## **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.

**Third and last, 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)

# Hypocrisy

## [Psalms 50]

Adrin Gostick & Dana Telford's book "The Integrity: Advantage & Works" reveals the 10 characteristics of a faithful person. The third of those 10 characteristics is that 'Honestly admit when I make a mistake.' Regarding this characteristic, the authors are saying these meaningful words: 'The mistake is not a gross fault. The really gross fault is the act of covering up that mistake' (Internet). But our nature is to try to cover up our mistakes. In other words, it is our sinful nature to hide our sins. That's why there seems to be word "hypocrisy". What is hypocrisy? The Hebrew meaning is 'concealing one's real character or motives' or 'the hypocrite'. In the New Testament, it was originally used to refer to an actor who wears a mask or a stage player. And later, the word 'hypokrites' was used, which means hypocrites and hypocrisy. This word refers to a false attitude that has the form of godliness, especially for religious people, but without the power of godliness. An appropriate expression of hypocrisy is a case of being a very godly Christian on the outside but full of lies and hypocrisy on the inside. The representative hypocrites in Jesus' day were the Pharisees. When I think about this hypocrisy, I think of David's sin that I meditated on during this Morning Prayer meeting. David tried to send Uriah to pregnant Bathsheba in order to cover up his sin. But when the faithful Uriah didn't go down to his house, David eventually sent Uriah to General Joab with his letter and eventually killed Uriah, a soldier loyal by the Gentiles' sword. So God sent Prophet Nathan to David who was covering up his sins and revealed his sins. And this was what God said to David: "Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun" (2 Sam. 12:12). We sin in secret, but the holy God is the God who reveals our sins before everybody.

In Psalms 50:5, God is saying, "Gather My godly ones to Me." Here, the psalmist Asaph teaches that the saints are those who have made a covenant with God through sacrifice. If we apply this word to us, we can refer to Christians who made a new covenant with God through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross as 'My saints,' that is, saints of God. Why did God tell the psalmist Asaph to gather His saints before Him? The reason was because of the hypocrisy of the Israelites, the saints of God (Park). I sincerely hope and pray that the hypocrites will gather before God and make it an opportunity to repent after listening to God's rebuke while meditating on three things what God wants to say to us.

**First, God is saying that He will judge our hypocrisy (Ps. 50:1-6).**

Look at Psalms 50:6 – “And the heavens declare His righteousness, For God Himself is judge. Selah.” The psalmist Asaph says that God, the chief Judge, judges the hypocrites in proclaiming His justice openly and universally. Asaph powerfully pointed out how great the sins of the hypocrites were:

- (1) Asaph said that all the people of the world should see the scene of God’s judgment against the hypocrites.

Look at Psalms 50:1 – “The Mighty One, God, the LORD, has spoken, And summoned the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.” This is the God’s word of terrifying judgment that even though hypocrites might sin in secret, God would reveal their sins, uncover them openly in front of all the people whom the psalmist invited. This word also can be applied to us. As children of light, holy God will expose our sins in front of all the people if we don’t expose the fruitless deeds of darkness but participate in the fruitless deeds of darkness (Eph. 5:11).

- (2) In judging the hypocrites of the Israelites, God would do so with His revealed Word, and it is feared like fire.

Look at Psalms 50:2-3: “From Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth. Our God comes and will not be silent; a fire devours before him, and around him a tempest rages.” It means that God judges according to the truth (light) of the true church. Jesus also said that “the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day” (Jn. 12:48). In Psalms 119:130, the Bible says, “The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.” We become foolish when we continue to sin in secret. Our hearts are also hardened. We don’t regard sin as a sin. To such foolish people like us, God makes His Word shine in our hearts to convict us of our sins.

- (3) God will judge the hypocrites first.

Look at Psalms 50:4 – “He summons the heavens above, and the earth, that he may judge his people.” Dr. Park Yoon-sun said: ‘The Church of God has received a peculiar blessing and has a heavy responsibility. Therefore, judgment is first carried out in the household of God (church) (1 Pet. 4:17).’

## **Second, God is wary of our hypocritical formalism (Ps. 50:7-15).**

Look at Psalms 50:7 - “Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you: I am

God, your God.” Here, God is saying that He will “testify” to Israel, and this is to warn against the hypocrisy of the Israelites, that is, formalism. That formalism is that the Jews thought that when they go up to the temple and offer sacrifices to God will satisfy God (Park). To the Israelites who were devoted solely to performing external ceremonies rather than worshipping God in spirit and truth, the psalmist Asaph teaches three lessons about worshipping God:

(1) Asaph said to sacrifice thank offerings to God.

Look at Psalms 50:14a – “Sacrifice thank offerings to God . . . .” Why should we offer sacrifices (worships) in thanksgiving to God? The reason is because it honors God (v. 23). And those who offer sacrifice of thanksgiving to God not only offer sacrifice of thanksgiving to God with their lips but also with their life. They don’t just offer thanksgiving worship to God with their lips, but also live life of worship.

(2) Asaph said to fulfill our vows to God.

Look at Psalms 50:14b – “. . . , fulfill your vows to the Most High.” One of the hallmarks of a faithful person is to keep promises. By the way, how many faithful people are around us these days who keep their promises well? We live in a world where it is difficult to find someone who is truly trustworthy. That’s why I think, ‘If a person can’t keep his promises well with other people, how can he keep his promises with God?’ Dr. Park Yoon-sun said: ‘Keeping a promise before God can be said to be an act of not stopping God’s grace’ (Park). Therefore, those who truly worship God must pay their vows to God so as not to stop His grace.

(3) Asaph said to call upon God in the day of trouble.

Look at Psalms 50:15 – “and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.” God demands prayer, an expression of our faith, from us rather than offering formal offerings to Him.

**Third and final, God points out our sins of hypocrisy (Ps. 50:16-22).**

What was the sin of hypocrisy of the Israelites? Their sin of hypocrisy was that their godliness was just words and they didn’t keep the commandments of God (Park). Look at Psalms 50:16 - “But to the wicked, God says: “What right have you to recite my laws or take my covenant on your lips?” This is the word rebuking the hypocrisy Israelites for specializing in God’s religion in words (Park). Look at verse 17: “You hate my instruction and cast my

words behind you.” What does it mean? The hypocrites Israelites hated God’s instruction and threw God’s word behind them. Isn’t this our hypocrisy and our sin? Although we receive the word of God when we go to the church on Sunday, aren’t we threw the word behind us and went to the world to sin again God? Why do we live in disrespect for God’s word by putting the word of God behind us? Calvin points out the cause: ‘The mark of hypocrisy religion is their lack of awe for the Word of God’ (Calvin). The lack of awe for God makes us to hate the word of God and commit the sin of throwing it back.

In Psalms 50, what was the reason the Israelites, who were hypocrites without fearing God, didn’t keep the commandments of God?

(1) The Israelites broke the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> commandments of the Ten Commandments.

Look at Psalms 50:18 – “When you see a thief, you join with him; you throw in your lot with adulterers.” Here, the word “When you see a thief, you joint with him” violates the eighth commandment, “You must not steal,” and the word “you throw in your lot with adulterers” is breaking the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment, “You must not commit adultery.”

(2) The Israelites broke the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment of the Ten Commandments.

Look at Psalms 50:19 – “You use your mouth for evil and harness your tongue to deceit.” The Israelites violated the ninth commandment, “You must not testify falsely against your neighbor.”

(3) It was a sin of not loving their brothers.

Look at Psalms 50:20 – “You speak continually against your brother and slander your own mother’s son.” This is a violation of the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment, “You must not murder.” This is because “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer” (1 Jn. 3:15).

God urged and warned the hypocrites Israelites to repent, but the Israelites misunderstood that God was indifferent to sin as they were (Ps. 50:21). In other words, they thought that God would not judge their sins. That was why the hypocrite Israelites continued to sin against God. When the hypocrites continued to commit sins, God was silent, so they thought God was like them. The Israelites were indifference to sin. However, God said that He would rebuke the Israelites and punished the Israelites by judging their sins one after another. And in Psalms 50:22, God warned them: “”Consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you to pieces, with none to rescue.” The Israelites who despised God’s word and committed sins were not only forgetting God’s word, but also they were



forgetting God. Therefore, God urged them to “Consider this.” This is to think about the fact that God would point out their sins and would judge them while guarding against their formalism. If not, there would be God’s wrath and discipline, and no one would deliver them.

Doesn’t the words of Psalms 50 spoken to the Israelites, the hypocrites, apply to us? God has gathered us today before Him and is giving us the same word. God is wary of our hypocrisy and points out our sins. And He is proclaiming that He will judge our hypocrisy. We must hear this word of God and repent our hypocrites. And because we are grateful, we must worship God. We must pay our vows and live a life of obedience to God’s commandments. We must live a life of true worship.

With an earnest desire to be raised up as a true worshiper, not a hypocrites, before God,

James Kim

(While being wary of formalism)

## **Righteous worship that pleases God**

### **[Psalms 51]**

In Pastor John Owen's book "Sin and Temptation," it is said that sin is against God in four ways: (1) Sin turns against God by stimulating the passions of our flesh (Gal. 5:17). Our hearts have secret tendency to do evil. Our hearts are habitually tempted to do evil. Satan encourages us to do evil by sympathizing with sin by the lust of our flesh. (2) Sin causes quarrel and strife to oppose God (Rom. 7:23; Jam. 4:1; 1 Pet. 2:11). The fight against sin consists of three elements: (a) The first is to reject grace, (2) the second is to attack the soul to take control, and (3) the third is to confuse emotions. (3) Sin is against God by capturing the soul (Rom. 7:23). The concept of being caught up in sin has four meanings: (1) The power of sin is so powerful that it binds us like slaves. (b) Sin captures us with repeated attempts and successes. (c) The state of bondage is a very miserable state. (d) The concept of being captured applies especially to the believers. (4) Sin opposes God by gradually causing madness (Eccl. 9:3). Satan ignites a small ember, creating violent flames. Satan uses our previous sinful career to induce another sin, even greater sin (Internet).

Why don't we feel the pain of our own sins even after our sins are exposed by the revelation of the God's Word? Why can't we feel the pain of sin? There are two causes: (1) The first reason is because our hearts are paralyzed because we love the world more than God. (2) The second reason is because we have psychology that says that we are righteous (Park). The psychology of self-righteousness is (a) false, (b) pride that is wiser than God, (c) a sin that denies the authority of God's Word, and (d) sin that blasphemes the blood of Christ.

In Psalms 51:19, the psalmist David confesses: "Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices, In burnt offering and whole burnt offering; Then young bulls will be offered on Your altar." In the words, "You will delight in righteous sacrifices," we are taught that we should have righteous worship that pleases God. In order to do so, what should we do? We need to know what God wants from us who worship God. So, I would like to receive couple of lessons by meditating on two things about what God wants from us in order for us to offer righteous worship that pleases God. In the midst of that, I sincerely hope and pray that all of us can be raised up as righteous worshipers who please God.

**First, what God wants from us is "truth in the inner most being".**

Look at Psalms 51:6 – "Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden part You will

make me know wisdom.” We thought about ‘Hypocrisy’ as we meditated on Psalms 50 last Wednesday. In the midst of that, we also thought for a moment about David’s hypocrisy. David tried to send Uriah to pregnant Bathsheba in order to cover up his sin. But when the faithful Uriah didn’t go down to his house, David eventually sent Uriah to General Joab with his letter and eventually killed Uriah, a soldier loyal by the Gentiles’ sword. So God sent Prophet Nathan to David who was covering up his sins and revealed his sins. And this was what God said to David: “Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun” (2 Sam. 12:12). We sin in secret, but the holy God is the God who reveals our sins before everybody.

What should we do when God reveals our secret sins? We must repent our sins with truth in the inner parts.

(1) We must confess our sins to God.

Look at Psalms 51:3-4: “For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, ....” Also, look at 2 Samuel 12:13a – “Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD. ...” David admitted and confessed his sins to the prophet Nathan, who pointed out his sins. He saw his sin from God’s point of view. At that time, his confession was “have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.’ In other words, David confessed, ‘Lord, I have done evil in Your eyes.’ When I think about whether this was easy, I think it would never have been. The reason is that it is somewhat more difficult to confess our sins to people than to confess our sins to God when God has exposed our sins. What was David’s sin? Of course, among the Ten Commandments we know, we can think that David’s sin was breaking the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment “You shall not murder”, 7<sup>th</sup> commandment “You shall not commit adultery”, 8<sup>th</sup> commandment “You shall not steal”, 9<sup>th</sup> commandment “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” and 10<sup>th</sup> commandment “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife ...” (Exod. 20:13-17). Prophet Nathan pointed out David’s sin in this way: “Why have you despised the word of the LORD by doing evil in His sight? ...” (2 Sam. 12:9). In a word, we can say that David’s sin was ‘Sin of despising God’ (v. 10). But David didn’t stop here and saw what his sins were. So in Psalms 51:5, David confessed, “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” David saw that from the very beginning of his existence he was stained with sin. He saw the deep-rooted content of his sin. This is also God’s grace. God gave David wisdom (v. 6) to see the truth in the deepest part of his heart (Park).

(2) We must seek God’s mercy and unfailing love.

Look at Psalms 51:1 – “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.” After committing sins, it is the Lord’s mercy and His unfailing love

that we must rely on as we confess our sins. The reason is because sins cannot be forgiven without God's mercy and unfailing love. Therefore, like David, we have no choice but to ask, 'God, have mercy on me.'

(3) We must cry out to God to cleanse us from our sins.

Look at Psalms 51:2, 7 – “Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. ... Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.” There are two types of repentance: legalistic repentance and evangelical repentance (Park). Legalistic repentance is a prayer of repentance offered to God by worrying about the punishment of sin rather than sin itself. However, evangelical repentance isn't a prayer of repentance by worrying about punishment of sin; rather, it is a prayer of repentance in worrying about concealing God's glory as result of sin and giving the enemies of God occasions to blaspheme (2 Sam. 12:14). David offered evangelical repentance to God. When we look at the terms that David used in his prayer of repentance including “blot out my transgressions” (Ps. 50:1), “Wash away all my iniquity”, “cleanse me from my sin” (v. 2), we see that David didn't pray for exemption from the punishment declared by Prophet Nathan (2 Sam. 12:11-14) but for God to cleanse the things that had become so dirty that he couldn't have fellowship with God (Park).

We must confess our sins to God with truth in the inner parts. And we must truly repent. This time, a pastor of a large church said that he confessed in tears to the members of the church like this (Internet): 'I have committed the seventh commandment before God by committing adultery. ... I spent last two months like the same time as my death.' He also confessed, 'Although my Lord forgave me as He forgave David for adultery and the woman caught in adultery, I couldn't bear when I thought about my church members who felt betrayal and their burdens.'

**Second, what God wants from us is “a broken spirit”.**

Look at Psalms 51:17 – “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” Here, what is the broken spirit? It is “a broken and contrite heart” (v. 17). It is the stiffness and pride of the heart that are changed, and the feeling that there is no one but God who can save us (Park). So David cried out to God with his broken spirit: “Save me from blood guilt, O God, the God who saves me, ...” (v. 14). It can be said that the possessor of the broken spirit is the act of a believer turning himself into something very desperate when he repents. He doesn't feel the importance of himself at all (Park). From now on, we can't find any hypocrisy in him. So David said: “You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings” (v. 16). He learned that God didn't want worship in a religious hypocrisy. He confessed that he didn't want worship that was routinely offered while hiding his sins without real repentance. David no longer relied

on himself and went to God, believing that only God could save him. What were the contents of David's prayer as he relied solely on God and humbly pleaded with Him?

(1) David asked the Creator God to create in him a pure heart and a steadfast spirit within him.

Look at Psalms 51:10 – “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” Since David wanted to stop sinning again and knew that there was only way to stop sinning again, that was for the Lord to create and renew his heart. In the midst of that, David asked God to renew “a steadfast spirit” within him. In other words, he asked God for the heart to believe in the Lord firmly (Park).

(2) David asked God for His presence.

Look at Psalms 51:11 – “Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.” David prayed that God and himself would not be separated (Park).

(3) David asked God for restoration.

Look at Psalms 51:12 – “Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.” What kind of restoration did he ask God for?

**(a) It was the restoration of the joy of his salvation.**

Look at Psalms 51:12 – “Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.” Sin takes pleasure or joy away from us. In other words, if we violate God's commandments and sin, we suffer from guilt and lose the true joy that God gives us. Therefore, after repenting, David asked God to restore the joy of the Lord's salvation.

**(b) It was the restoration of service.**

Look at Psalms 51:13 – “Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.” David repented, and after receiving God's grace, he vowed to lead others to God (Park).

**(c) It was the restoration of praise (worship).**

Look at Psalms 51:14-15: “Save me from blood guilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.” One of the

truly important restorations is, of course, the restoration of worship and praise.

In reading the article that dealt with the incident of the pastor of the large church violating the seventh commandment “You shall not commit adultery”, I read something like this: ‘What does God ask of us in this time? It isn’t a great church building, many sophisticated training programs, and big events and great talented people. What God asks of us is the broken and contrite spirit. God, who is neither slumber nor sleep, is waiting for the prodigal sons who have left their father’s bosom to repent and return (Internet). What God wants from us is for us to repent with the broken spirit.

In order to have righteous worship that pleases God, we need to know what God wants us from us, that is “truth in the inner parts” and “a broken spirit”. We must repent our sins with truth in the inner parts. Also, we must ask God with the broken spirit. We must ask God for renewal of a steadfast spirit within us. Also, we must ask for God’s presence and restoration. We must ask God for the restoration of the joy of salvation and of service and also for the restoration of praise (worship).

Desire to offer righteous worship that pleases God with truth in the inner parts and the broken spirit that God wants from me,

James Kim

(Wishing to be raised as a worshiper established by the Lord)

## **“I trust in God’s unfailing love for ever and ever”**

### **[Psalms 52]**

Psychologist Larry Crab said: ‘We long for relationships. And because we long for it, we get hurt.’ It is our human instinct to long for a relationship, but it is also our instinct to avoid the relationship if we get hurts in that relationship. And because of our hurts, even our wholesome longing for deep relationships can be extinguished. In other words, the hurts within us in the relationship can make us either not pursue an intimate relationship or hesitate that relationship.

How is your heart in this Suffering Week? Personally, as I start this Suffering Week, my heart is little bit painful. The cause of suffering in my heart is due to my imperfect love. In other words, my heart is heavy, painful, and distressed because of the love of human which fails and is bound to fail. But for some reason, this heaviness, pain, and distress make me to meditate on Psalms 52, making me more and more dependent on God’s unfailing love. I meditate on and hold onto the word of Psalms 63:3 that God gave to me before my first baby Charis died: “Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You.” As I meditate on Psalms 52 and as I show Charis’ pictures to my youngest daughter Karis, I also meditate on God’s eternal and unfailing love.

If we look at Psalms 52:8, this is what David confesses and determines: “But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God; I trust in God’s unfailing love for ever and ever.” I would like to receive the grace that is given by meditating on three things about the life of the believers who trust in God’s unfailing love for ever and ever.

### **First, those who trust in God’s unfailing love for ever and ever see and fear.**

Look at Psalms 52:6a – “The righteous will see and fear ....” What should the believers see and fear? We must fear God when we see God punishes sinners. However, we seem to lack such awe and fear toward God. What is the cause? I think it is because of the inability to distinguish between the forgiveness of sin and the consequence of sin. In other words, we tend to believe that if we repent, not only our sins are forgiven, but also the consequences for our sins as well. Pastor John Owen said in his book “Sin and Temptation”: ‘... It isn’t correct to think that even if we sin, we can always be forgiven by grace.’ We are abusing grace. We cannot say that it is the right attitude of faith to commit sin and not take it seriously. We believe and trust in God who forgives our sins rather than think that our God punishes our sins. That’s why there is lack of fearful heart even after we commit sins without fearing God.

I think the forgiveness of sins and the consequences of sin should be separated. I looked for an example in David. David confessed and repented his sins when he heard the prophet Nathan's rebuke. So his sins were forgiven. However, as the result of his sins he committed, David suffered the consequences of his sins such as his and Bathsheba's first baby died, rape and murder in his house, and coup. Another example can be seen in the relationship between David and Shimei. When David was running away from his own son Absalom, Shimei cursed David and threw stones at him (2 Sam. 16:5-6). At that time, one of David's generals Abishai went and tried to kill Shimei, but David stopped him from doing so (vv. 9-10). Later, when Absalom died and David was returning to Jerusalem, David forgave Shimei when he came to meet David. But before he died, David told his son Solomon, "do not let him go unpunished" (1 Kgs. 2:8-9). This shows that the forgiveness of sins and the consequences of sin are separate.

The sinner in Psalms 52 is a man named "Doeg." Doeg, the Edomite, was the man who saw priest Ahimelech helping David when he was running away from King Saul and reported to King Saul. As a result, at the order to King Saul, Doeg killed 85 priests (1 Sam. 22:9-18). As we consider the sins of Doeg in three ways, we must learn not to commit the same sins as Doeg did as we fear God.

(1) Doeg's sin was a sin of boasting himself. In other words, his sin was pride.

Look at Psalms 52:1 – "Why do you boast of evil, you mighty man? Why do you boast all day long, ..." If proudly boasting of good is evil, how evil is it to be proud of evil? (Park) It is truly sharp meditation. It means even if we proudly boast goodness, it is evil. But how evil is that when the wicked boast of their evil (or evil plan)? We must be on guard against the sin of pride. We must be far away from pride. And we must listen to Jeremiah 9:24 – "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 must boast of knowing God. Realizing that God is the one who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness, and boasting that God, we can also say that we are proud of our failure to exercise lovingkindness, justice and righteousness. So Apostle Paul said, "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:31). What should we boast in the Lord? Is it not our foolishness and weakness? Why should we boast our foolishness and weakness? The reason is "so that no one may boast before Him" (v. 29).

(2) Doeg's sin was a sin committed with his tongue.

Look at Psalms 52:2-4: "Your tongue plots destruction; it is like a sharpened razor, you who practice deceit. You love evil rather than good, falsehood rather than speaking the truth. Selah. You love every harmful word, O you deceitful tongue!" When David said that the sinner's tongue was "like a sharpened razor," what is "razor"? Unlike other knives, isn't razor very sharp that cuts fine things like hair? That is what the



evil tongue is. The evil tongue is to slash the other person's heart. The sinner lies with his tongue and pours out every hurtful word from his mouth. We have to be careful with our tongues. We must hear the words of James 3:9-10 and obey: "With it (tongue) we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way."

(3) Doeg's sin was murder.

As the Bible says in 1 Samuel 22:18, Doeg killed 85 priests. He killed God's servants, the priest, carelessly. Although we may not kill like Doeg, based on the word of 1 John 3:15, we can commit countless murders when we hate others. We must keep in mind that when we commit this kind of sin, God will discipline us. We must get rid of the illusion and justify ourselves that if we repent, we will be forgiven and will not be disciplined. Those who trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever fear God.

**Second, those who trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever make God their stronghold.**

Look at Psalms 52:7 – "Here now is the man who did not make God his stronghold but trusted in his great wealth and grew strong by destroying others!" Those who are violent and who love evil rather than good are those who trust in the abundance of their wealth rather than God and grow strong by destroying others. Why? It is because they believe that money is power. However, those who believe that money is power are truly foolish and poor people. The reason is because money will ruin them. Those who pursue money will perish with money, and those who follow God will live because of God. In Psalms 73, the psalmist Asaph saw the prosperity of the wicked and was envious of the arrogant in contrast to the suffering of the righteous and his temptations had almost slipped (Ps. 73:2-3). But when he went into the sanctuary of God, he perceived their end, that is, destruction in a moment (vv. 17-18). So he confessed "I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a beast before You" (v. 22). We need to know that trusting in money is like trusting on a spider's web (Job 8:14-15).

We desperately need to realize how powerless, helpless, and incompetent we are. Too much power is the problem. That's why there are countless times when we trust in our own strength to speak and act as we please. Self-standard, self-thought, self-stubbornness, self-assertion, etc., everything is so self-centered. Therefore, we must be weakened little bit even through adversity or suffering. Then we will trust in the power of God. So Apostle Paul boasted about his weaknesses "so that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (2 Cor. 12:9). It is because "power is perfected in weakness" (v. 9).

Only God is our stronghold and our strength. Those who trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever boast about knowing God. They trust in God because they know that He is their strength. So David confessed in

Psalms 18:1-2: “I love You, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” We must keep in mind that it is our strength to quietly trust in God who is our strength and our stronghold (Isa. 30:15).

**Third and last, those who trust in God’s unfailing love for ever and ever praise God forever.**

Look at Psalms 52:9 – “I will praise you forever for what you have done; in your name I will hope, for your name is good. I will praise you in the presence of your saints.” Why did David say that he would thank God forever? The reason is because what He had done (v. 9). In other words, David forever thanked the Lord in front of the Lord’s saints because the Lord punished the violent, the wicked man who boasted of evil and practiced deceit with his tongue that was like the sharpened razor.

God is just and holy God who punishes the wicked. Those who tried to kill David, either Doeg or Saul, were eventually punished by God. So David said, “Surely God will bring you down to everlasting ruin: He will snatch you up and tear you from your tent; he will uproot you from the land of the living. Selah” (v. 5). There are two things David said regarding God punishing the wicked:

- (1) The word “tear you from your tent” means that God makes the place where the wicked thought they were safe unsafe.

Here, the tent that the wicked considered safe can be “his great wealth” that the wicked trusted in. However, in punishing the sinner, God can destroy all of his wealth, making him unsafe. Look at Haggai 1:6 – “You have sown much, but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes.”

- (2) It is the word “he will uproot you from the land of the living”.

This means that God will perish entirely through His retribution for atrocities (Park). But the righteous, that is, those who trust in God forever, are “like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God” (v. 8). The saints who trust in God are like the olive tree, that is, evergreen trees, in the house of God that is steadfast and strong forever. As if evergreen trees remain green trees even in cold winter, we thank God in the house of God because we saints live in a taste of God’s unchanging goodness and unfailing love despite any adversity and persecution.

We experience the great unfailing love of God in the midst of extreme suffering. The greater and deeper the pain, the greater and deeper we experience God’s unfailing love. Speaking of extreme pain, we cannot help but think of Jesus, who came in human body and died on the cross. When we think of Jesus, who suffered the greatest

suffering as a human being on the cross, we realize the perfect love of God that was revealed to us through His death. Why did God the Father, who punished Jesus who is sinless, humble and meek, Heavenly Father crucify Him to death? It is for our salvation. How did Jesus, the Power, become the Powerless and hang on the tree of the curse? It is to forgive all our sins. In the end, God the Father saved us by judging the Son Jesus on the cross. So how can we not praise and thank God? We must thank and praise the Lord forever.

Earnestly praying for trusting in God's unfailing love for ever and ever,

James Kim

(Staring this Suffering Week with heavy heart due to my imperfect love, while trusting in God's unfailing love for ever and ever)

## “The fool”

### [Psalms 53]

What is “wisdom”? According to Ken Gire, wisdom is ‘living skill’ in Hebrew. And it is said that that skill can be learned by growing the habit of listening to God’s voice more sensitively in the heart. C. S. Lewis once said that ‘the greatest dignity of man as a creature lies in the reaction, not the initiative.’ When God speaks, we hear. When He sows, we receive. Sowing seeds is God’s attempt to restore Eden to the human heart that is like the wilderness. Receiving seeds is up to us to participate in the work (Internet). We need ‘wisdom of the wilderness,’ as Charles Swindoll said. The Hebrew word for “wilderness” is “midbar.” This word comes from ‘dabar’ which means ‘to talk’. In light of this root, it can be said that the wilderness is where God speaks, and where God gives us His most important message. Therefore, we must enter the wilderness ourselves and listen to God’s voice in a quiet place. And we must live a life of obeying the voice of the Lord. This is the life of the wise (Internet). But for some reason these days, God keeps revealing my own foolishness. In particular, through Dr. Emerson Esrich’s book “The Love She Most Desires; The Respect He Desperately Needs,” He is making me to realize how I am not building the biblical marital relationship. When I see my foolishness of not applying God’s Word in my life in my marital relationship, I realize that I am like a dog that returns to its vomit by repeating my folly (Prov. 26:11).

If we look at Psalms 53:1, “The fool” comes out. These fools are surrounded the psalmist David and persecuted him (v. 6). Of course, “The fool” mentioned in today’s text refer to the wicked who persecute and kill the righteous David. But I want to think about who the fools are, based on Psalms 53 and Psalms 14, and to try to find foolishness in us. I hope and pray that through the revelation of God’s Word, we can realize our foolishness. And through repentance to God, I hope and pray that we can experience God’s saving grace.

### **First, the fools say that “There is no God.”**

Look at Psalms 43:1a – “The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God, ...” The Hebrew word for “the fool” is “nabal.” “Nabal” is also the name of Abigail’s husband in David’s story. In 1 Samuel 25, when Nabal returned David evil for good (1 Sam. 21), Nabal’s wife Abigail, who was intelligent and beautiful in appearance (v. 3), went to David and fell on his feet and put her face on the ground and asked him to turn this blame on her (v. 24). And then she said about her husband like this: “May my lord pay no attention to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name—his name is Fool, and folly goes with him. ...” (v. 25). When we think of Nabal, the foolish man who returned David evil for good, we can think ourselves as “Nabal” before God. In other words, God is doing

good to us, but we are ‘Nabal’ before Him because we are paying God’s good for sin.

In his commentary, Dr. Yoon-sun Park referred to “the fool” as ‘a practical atheist.’ The practical atheist who isn’t a theoretical atheist is a person who acknowledges God in words but denies Him in actions. Although these fools know God, they don’t honor Him as God or give thanks to Him. But they become futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart is darkened (Rom. 1:21). The fools certainly know God. However, their thoughts become vain and their foolish hearts are darkened, and they live their lives denying God. They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him (Tit. 1:16). Titus refers to these people as “rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers” (v. 10). Titus’ admonition to these ones was “They must be silenced” (v. 11). The reason was because when the fools profess to know God but deny Him by their deeds, they are ruining whole church (v. 11).

### **Second, the fools are those who don’t do good.**

Look at Psalms 53:1b, 3 – “... They are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice; There is no one who does good. ... Every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.” The fools deny God’s goodness by not doing good even though they may praise God “God is so good” with their lips. Even though they have tasted the goodness of God (Ps. 34:8), they are the evil doers who don’t do good because they have already abandoned all good works. Their evil deeds are corrupted and abominable injustice (53:1). Here, corruption refers to moral corruption, that is, a heinous sinfulness that cannot be recovered by oneself (Park). Their abominable injustice is eventually called as corruption (v. 3).

The fools say that there is no God in their hearts. So they don’t do good nor they cannot do so. How can those who deny the existence of a good God do good? Apostle Paul said, “because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so” (Rom. 8:7). The fools not only don’t surrender to God’s command to do good, but they cannot do so. That is why they are committed to corruption and abominable injustice.

### **Third, the fools are those who don’t even try to know God.**

Look at Psalms 53:2 – “God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there is anyone who understands, Who seeks after God.” Here, the fools confess that they know God in words, but they don’t really know God and don’t even try to know Him. No, they don’t even feel the need. Despite God looking down from heaven and seeing, none of the fools try to know God. Not trying to know God means not seeking after God or calling upon Him (v. 4). Even if they have committed the sin of persecuting God’s people, they don’t cry out to God and repent their sin.

In Psalms 14:3, the Bible says that all fools have all turned aside. This means that the fools are derailed from the way to know God (Park). The fools are without even heart of seeking God, but seeking the worldly things than God. Also, they seek God without earnestness. They don't continue to seek Him, and not seeking Him according to His word. They don't repent when they need to do so (Park).

#### **Fourth and last, the fools are those who persecute the God's people.**

Look at Psalms 54:4 – “Have the workers of wickedness no knowledge, Who eat up My people as though they ate bread And have not called upon God?” David says that the fools are sinners and truly ignorant. They are those whose hearts are hardened by sins that they cannot learn and realize. Furthermore, David says, they “eat up My people as though they ate bread”, which means that the fools are eager to persecute God's people. Knowing that as usual, he says, “Will the evildoers never learn” (v. 4).

What does the Bible say about the consequences of these fools? God has despised them. Look at verse 5: “There they were, overwhelmed with dread, where there was nothing to dread. God scattered the bones of those who attacked you; you put them to shame, for God despised them.” They are put to shame because God has despised the fools. Also, the fools are overwhelmed with dread (v. 5). The reason is because God scatters the bones of the fools. Although the fools don't fear God, are corrupt and persecuted the God's people by being corrupted and committing abominable injustice, they will eventually fear God greatly through God's righteous judgment and punishment.

God abandons fools and saves his people. Look at Psalms 53:6 – “Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When God restores His captive people, Let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.” The Bible is encouraging us to rejoice and be glad because God will deliver salvation through abandoning the fools and save His people by restoring their captivity. Our sorrow is for a moment, but our joy is forever.

While boasting of my own foolishness and seeing His wisdom,

James Kim

[With the desire to live according to my name, “Jeewoun” (Meaning: number one in wisdom)]

## **“The Lord is the sustainer of my soul.”**

### **[Psalms 54]**

If we look at Henry Nowen’s book “The Living Reminder”, there is a chapter titled “Sustaining Reminder.” In this chapter, Nowen speaks about what sustains us, sustaining others and the sustainer. The key passage here is John 16:7, 13 – “... it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; ... But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth ....” The key point here is that Jesus’ departure made it possible for Jesus’ disciples to have a more intimate encounter with the Lord (through the Holy Spirit). In other words, because of Jesus’ absence, the disciples had more and more intimate encounters (communion) with the Lord. And that intimate encounter (communion) sustained the disciples in the midst of suffering and aroused hope and desire to meet Jesus again. How was this possible? It’s possible with ‘remembering’ (Nowen). In other words, by actualizing the past, the disciples endured and overcame because they hope for Jesus in the midst of suffering. The Holy Spirit, the Comforter who came after Jesus left, reminds the words that Jesus taught and His love, and thus sustained the disciples who were in persecution, adversity, and suffering.

What do you remember about Jesus? What memories of Jesus are holding (sustaining) you up despite the challenges and adversities you face today? Memories not only connect us with the past, but also give us the strength to continue living in the present (Nowen). The memories of salvation in the past give us strength amidst the adversity we are facing now and enable us to move forward.

In Psalms 54:4, David confesses, “Behold, God is my helper; The Lord is the sustainer of my soul.” Here, “the sustainer of my soul” means that the Lord is ‘the One who sustains my soul’. I would like to receive lessons by meditating on three things about the life of the soul that the Lord sustains under the title of “The Lord is the sustainer of my soul”.

### **First, the soul sustained by the Lord prays to God.**

Look at Psalms 54:2 – “Hear my prayer, O God; Give ear to the words of my mouth.” Psalms 54 is based on the case when David was persecuted by Saul and was running away from him, when the Ziphites reported to King Saul the hiding place of David (A more detailed story is given in 1 Samuel 23:19 and chapter 26). The background of the words of Psalms 53 is somewhat similar to Psalms 52. The background of Psalms 52, which we have already meditated on, is that when David was running away from King Saul who was persecuting him, Doeg the Edomite informed King Saul that David had come to the house of the priest of Ahimelech. Both Psalms 54 and

Psalms 52 are poems that David wrote while he was persecuted by King Saul and they were written when he was in danger because he was informed where he was hiding. In this situation of danger and crisis, David first looked to God and prayed to Him (v. 2). One of his concluding or key prayers is in verse 1: “. Save me, O God, by Your name, And vindicate me by Your power.” Even though David faced the dangerous situation, he looked to God and asked Him for His salvation before pondering the danger itself. What we shouldn’t forget here is that David relied on the name of the Lord as he cried out for God’s salvation in the dangerous situation. The Lord’s name is good (v. 6). To pray for God’s salvation by relying on that good name means to believe and pray that God will even use that dangerous situation to accomplish His good purpose.

This is what Henry Nowen said about prayer: ‘Prayer is a way to remain empty and helpless before God, proclaiming that all is His grace and that nothing has been obtained merely in return for our hard work.’ Therefore, we are asking God by relying on His power like David did (v. 1). Therefore, we, like David, must pray to God by relying on the Lord’s good name and His power. In dangerous circumstances and adversity, we must seek God’s salvation as we pray to the God of salvation. Such prayers will continue to sustain us. God sustains those who pray to Him.

### **Second, the soul sustained by the Lord set God before him.**

Look at Psalms 54:3 – “For strangers have risen against me And violent men have sought my life; They have not set God before them. Selah.” Here we can see why David prayed earnestly to God. The reason was because he was in the situation where “strangers,” that is, ungodly evildoers (wicked men), were seeking David’s life. More specifically, the strangers here refer to the Ziphites who reported David to King Saul. And the saying that “the violent men have sought my life” refers to King Saul’s attempt to capture David and harm him. In conclusion, David said that these wicked people didn’t fear God and did evil. The Ziphites who reported David to King Saul feared King Saul who they could see with their own physical eyes instead of fearing the Lord, the King of kings. That was why they helped King Saul by telling him where David was.

A believer who has been held by God lives the life of Coram Deo. The word “Coram Deo” is Latin for “Coram” (before) and “Deo” (God) combined, meaning “In the presence of God”. Being aware of the fact that the face of God is always in front of my eyes, the consciousness of God’s presence, will bring us real courage and sanctification (Internet). One of the Biblical figures who had a Coram Deo faith is Joseph. Joseph lived always being conscious of God who was before him every moment of his life. Look at Genesis 39:9 – “There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?” There was no one there. No one knew. No one has seen it. But Joseph saw God before him. ‘God is watching. God is listening. God knows. So how can I do this great evil?’ This was Joseph’s “Coram Deo” faith (Internet). We too must live the life of Coram Deo faith. We are living in this



world of many temptations. In order to overcome the temptations without being shaken by the constant temptations, we, like Joseph, must live with “Coram Deo” faith, that is, ‘I am living in the presence of God.’

### **Third and last, the soul sustained by the Lord is convinced of God’s help.**

Look at Psalms 54:4 – “Behold, God is my helper; The Lord is the sustainer of my soul.” How could David be convinced of God’s help and God’s sustaining of his soul? We can find the answer in verse 7: “For He has delivered me from all trouble, And my eye has looked with satisfaction upon my enemies.” David was convinced of God’s help by remembering his past experience of God delivering him from trouble in the current threat and crisis situation. And as he remembered the moments when he was satisfied with God retributing his enemies in the past, he was convinced that God would judge and repay his enemies, Saul or the Ziphites who were persecuting him. Look at verse 5: “He will recompense the evil to my foes; Destroy them in Your faithfulness.” The just God is a God who faithfully recompenses the evil to David’s foes. What was the reaction of David who has this conviction? He thanked God. Look at verse 6: “Willingly I will sacrifice to You; I will give thanks to Your name, O LORD, for it is good.” David willingly offered thanksgiving sacrifice to God because he was confident that he would experience God’s help in the present as he did so in the past.

This is what Henry Nowen said about memory: ‘Remembering is not just looking back at what happened in the past. More importantly, it is to bring events of the past to the present and celebrate them here and now’ (Nowen). When we bring past events of salvation to the present crisis situation and celebrate those events, we can be sure of God’s help, that is, God’s work to judge the wicked and save the righteous. Therefore, even in such a crisis situation, we can willingly worship God with thanksgiving.

We celebrate Jesus, who died on the cross on Mount Calvary about 2,000 years ago, during the communion. We celebrate Jesus as we partake the bread that symbolizes His flesh of the cross and the wine that symbolizes the blood He shed on the cross. In addition, the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, reminds us the words and love of Jesus so that we can overcome any adversity, pain, and suffering in our present life. In the work of the Holy Spirit who makes us to trust in the good Lord’s name and His power, we are convinced that He will be able to work together in all things to achieve good. Therefore, we must worship God with thanksgiving for His saving grace.

With gratitude for the grace of the Lord that sustains my soul,

James Kim

(Praying for God to sustain the souls of beloved brothers and sisters in Christ)

# “Cast your burden upon the Lord”

## [Psalms 55]

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

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

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

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

There are two things we can think of:

#### (1) David’s burden was “restless.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Look at Psalms 55:22 – “Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; ....” David also confessed in Psalms 54:4, “God is my helper; The Lord is the sustainer of my soul.” These two words tell us that David was convinced of God’s help in the present threat and crisis as he remembered the past experience of God’s help in his tribulation. As David remembered the past grace of salvation, he was convinced that if he cast all his heavy burdens to God then He would sustain him (55:22). What was the result? Look at Psalms 55:18 – “He will redeem my soul in peace from the battle which is against me, For they are many who strive with me.” As a result, David enjoyed the peace that God gave him. We, like David, cast all our heavy burdens to God in prayer. In doing so, God will sustain us and will keep us in peace in our hearts.

#### **(2) God never allows us to be shaken.**

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

One of the songs I like to sing is “I Must Tell Jesus”: “I must tell Jesus all of my trials, I can-not bear these burdens alone; In my distress He kindly will help me, ....” This hymn was written by Rev. Elisa Hoffman. One day one of his church member came to him and asked, ‘What should I do? What am I supposed to do with my heavy burdens?’ After listening to his complaint for a long time, Rev. Hoffman prayed earnestly for him to the Lord of

Consolation to work in his heart. After the prayer, he made a bright face and confessed: ‘Yes. I should tell my heavy burdens to Jesus, instead of bearing them alone.’ After he left, suddenly the inspirational Rev. Hoffman began to write a poetry of hymn: “I must tell Jesus all of my trials, I cannot bear these burdens alone; In my distress He kindly will help me.” This was how this hymn was born (Internet).

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

Living and experiencing the grace of salvation of my Lord Jesus Christ who carried the burden of all my sins and died on the cross,

James Kim

(Casting all my burdens to the Lord in prayer)

## **Put your trust in God!**

### **[Psalms 56]**

What must we do to trust in God alone? In the article ‘Closer to the heart of Jesus every day’, it summarized in four ways: (1) Consider your weaknesses, (2) Admit that even the smallest things cannot be accomplished without God’s help, (3) Ask God what only God can give, (4) Realize that we don’t have it, and that we have nowhere to go to get it. Kneel at the feet of the Lord and ask God to hear our requests (Internet).

If we look at Psalms 31:14, which we have already meditated on, David had “But as for me” faith: “But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD, I say, ‘You are my God.’” David had the faith that he would only trust in the Lord no matter what circumstances he faced. He trusted in the Lord even in distress and grief (v. 9), in sorrow and sigh (v. 10), in reproach (v. 11), when he was forgotten (v. 12), and in terror on every side (v. 13) .

In Psalms 56, the words ‘I will my trust in You’ three times: “When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You” (v. 3), “In God, whose word I praise, In God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid What can mere man do to me?” (v. 4), “In God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?” (v. 11) I want to receive few lessons that God wants us to give us as I meditate on Psalms 56 under the title “Put your trust in God!”.

### **First, when did David trust in God?**

David trusted in God when he was afraid. Look at Psalms 56:3 – “When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You.” Why was David afraid? The reason was because David’s foe (v. 2), the Philistines, oppressed him (v. 1) and tried to take David’s life (v. 6). Interestingly, the oppression and persecution of the David’s foe didn’t stop once or twice, but “all day” (vv. 1, 2, 5). What this tells us is that Satan’s work never ceases. Satan tries to tempt, oppress, and defeat us all day long. An example of Satan’s all-day temptation is Joseph in Genesis 39. In his story, the Bible tells us that Potiphar’s wife tempted Joseph, who was handsome in form and appearance (Gen. 39:6), to sleep with her “day after day” (v. 10). The Satan’s work in Psalms 56 was that the David’s foe, the Satan’s servants, constantly oppressed, persecuted, and tried to kill David. Why are these wicked servants of Satan constantly attacking, harassing, and oppressing us, the righteous? We can find the answer in verse 5 – “... All their thoughts are against me for evil.” The thoughts of Satan and his servants toward us are always wicked, so they constantly tempt us, attack us, knock us down, and try to make us fall. Therefore, we must trust in God every day, moment by moment. The fact that Satan’s work is constantly tempting and attacking us “all day long” teaches us that we too must trust in

God “all day long” or unceasingly. How can we keep on trusting in the Lord when Satan is constantly attacking us and trying to defeat us? Let us all hold onto the word of 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 Bible says that our Lord holds us with the right hand of His power. Our God will strengthen us. So let us trust in God no matter what fearful situation we may be in.

## **Second, how did David trust in God?**

### **(1) David trusted in God through prayer.**

When we look at David’s prayer, first of all, he asked God for His grace. Look at Psalms 56:1 – “Be merciful to me, O God, for men hotly pursue me; all day long they press their attack.” All we can ask for is God’s mercy because everything is God’s grace. The suffering we receive for the sake of the Lord is God’s grace, and the salvation we receive in the midst of crisis is God’s grace. Therefore, we have no choice but to seek God’s mercy like David. In Nehemiah 9:25-31, we can see that our God is God who is gracious and merciful (v. 31). When we enjoy the great goodness of the Lord (v. 25), we rather disobey Him, rebel against Him, and sin against the Lord by putting the God’s word behind our back (v. 26). Therefore, God strikes us with the discipline of love and allows us to suffer (v. 27). Then we cry out to God and the Lord hears our prayers and gives us great mercy and save us (v. 27). But as soon as we are at rest, we again do what is evil in God’s sight (v. 28). Then there is also the discipline of the Lord’s love, and we cry out to God, and the Lord listens to our prayers and gives us mercy many times and delivers us (v. 28). Our God is God who shows mercy many times. He is the God who has forgiven us for many years (v. 30). David pleaded with this merciful God, and so should we. Second, if we look at the content of David’s prayer, David asked for God’s help. Look at Psalms 56:9 – “Then my enemies will turn back when I call for help. By this I will know that God is for me.” When David asked God, he believed that God would answer his prayers and turn his enemies back. In other words, David was convinced that God would help him. With that confidence, David prayed with tears for God’s mercy and help (v. 8).

### **(2) David trusted in God through praise.**

Look at Psalms 56:4, 10 – “In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me? ... In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise.” What does it mean by praising the word of God? It means to praise God, knowing that the word of God’s promise will surely come true. This is possible only by faith. It is only through faith that we can praise God even in such a dangerous and painful circumstance with the assurance of answered prayers. That is why Paul and

Silas prayed and praised God even in prison (Acts 16:25).

Usually when we say that we trust in God, we know that we must pray to God. That's why we give praise like the hymn "I Must Tell Jesus" to God: "I must tell Jesus all of my trials, I cannot bear these burdens alone; In my distress He kindly will help me, He ever loves and cares for His own. I must tell Jesus! I must tell Jesus! I cannot bear my burdens alone; I must tell Jesus! I must tell Jesus! Jesus can help me, Jesus alone" (v. 1 and chorus). We cast all our burdens to God through prayers. But what is interesting is that David trusted in God through praise. When we ponder and meditate on what this means, we speak to God in prayer in the fearful situation, but in the process of praying, we eventually sing praises to God. The reason is because only when we meditate on the Lord Jesus Christ, we are compelled to praise Him. So in the hymn "The Trusting Heart to Jesus Clings", there is such a lyric: "The passing days bring many cares. 'Fear not,' I hear Him say; And when my fears are turned to prayers, The burdens slip away. Singing I go along life's road, Praising the Lord, praising the Lord; Singing I go along life's road, For Jesus has lifted my load" (v. 2). Like David, we pray to God and praise Him, so we must trust in God. I hope and pray that we pray and praise God like Apostles Paul and Silas, even in our fearful situation.

### **Third and last, what was the heart attitude of David who trusted in God?**

#### **(1) David had assurance of salvation.**

Look at Psalms 56:13 – "For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life." David trusted God completely through prayer and praise to God in his fearful situation of life-threatening amid the constant oppression and persecution of his enemies. At that time, since he had already experienced God's salvation in the past, David was convinced that God would save him even in the current crisis situation. Not only did God save David, but He didn't make David's fee from stumbling so that he might walk before God in the light of life. Our God is the God of salvation who keeps us from stumbling. He is the God who makes us walk in the light of life. We must overcome adversity and suffering with this assurance of God's salvation.

#### **(2) David determined to fulfill his vows to God.**

Look at Psalms 56:12 – "I am under vows to you, O God; I will present my thank offerings to you." David determined to take his responsibility before God. He determined to faithfully take the responsibility of fulfilling his vows that he made to God. He determined to pay back his vows to God with gratitude and praise. We who live by trusting in God must take responsibility for and fulfill the vows before God. We should never take our vows lightly. Our vows must be done carefully. And if we are determined to fulfill



the vows, we must do so.

We must trust in God through our prayers and praise, no matter what fearful situation we may be in. Let us all be raised as true worshipers who praise God with thanksgiving as we all plead with God with the assurance of salvation. And let us determine to fulfill our vows and put it into action. Last Sunday afternoon, after finishing the teacher's Bible study, I spoke on the phone with a brother in Christ. I didn't know what to say, so as I answered the phone I asked for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in my heart. At that time, the Holy Spirit reminded me the words that I proclaimed during the Sunday English service, and I shared those words with that beloved brother in Christ: 'Let's make the right choices based on the Word of God, according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Let us trust solely in God and make the right choice.' At that time, the brother confessed that his failure to trust in God was his problem. So I prayed for him over the phone. At that time, I heard him crying in tears and that broke my heart. However, I have entrusted him to God in prayer, so I believe that God will hold him and deliver him. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, let us trust in God completely. God will save us. Victory!

With heart of gratitude for God's grace in making me to trust in the Lord,

James Kim

(Leaving all my fears to God through prayer and praise)

## Let us praise the word of God.

**“In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me? ... In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise” (Psalms 56:4, 10).**

While meditating on the word of God last week, I thought that I should receive two lessons and put them into practice. Those two lessons were: (1) Do not complain (Ps. 37:1, 7, 8), and (2) Be thankful for the little things. When I reconsider these two lessons, I get a glimpse of myself complaining about small things while not being grateful for small things. For example, I woke up this morning and didn't thank God. Of course, there are times when I wake up and go to the bathroom and say, 'Thank You for giving me a new day'. But I didn't appreciate the fact that I woke up. It seems to be because I thought it was natural to wake up. Yet, I often complain when my family members don't put things away. Even last week I tried not to complain after being taught 'Don't complain' (vv. 1, 7, 8), but eventually I went home and saw myself complaining to my children. Like this, I am not faithful to small things. In the midst of that, while meditating on the words of Psalms 56:4, 10 during the early morning prayer meeting, this thought came to my mind: 'I should trust in God for small things.' To some extent, when I faced a great deal that I couldn't handle, I thought that I shouldn't live by the instinct to seek God and pray to God by saying that I should depend on Him. Rather, I should become a person who can be faithful in small things since the Lord praised those who are faithful in small things (Mt. 25:21). So, day by day and moment by moment, even small things, I should live by praying with my heart as an expression of dependence on God and trusting in Him. I believe that God will make me praise Him in the end when I live by trusting in God even in such small things.

In Psalms 56:4, 10, we can see that the psalmist David trusted in God and praised His word. The situation in which he trusted in God was when he was captured by the Philistines. The Philistines not only oppressed David by pursuing him "all day long" (vv. 1, 2) but also twisted his words all day long (v. 5). Also, many of the David's enemies gathered together to attack David in their pride (v. 2) and watched his steps to take his life (v. 6). In such fearful situation, David trusted in God (v. 3). He cried out to God in tears (v. 8). And he was determined not to be afraid because he trusted in God (vv. 4, 11). He knew that mortal man couldn't do anything to him because he trusted in God (vv. 4, 11). Further, David was confident that the Lord would deliver him from death (v. 13). Therefore, he presented his thank offerings to God (v. 12) and praised His word (v. 4).

I remember the lyrics of the hymn "Simply Trusting Every day": "Simply trusting ev'ry day, Trusting

through a stormy way; Even when my faith is small, Trusting Jesus, that is all. Trusting as the moments fly, Trusting as the days go by; Trusting Him whate'er befall, Trusting Jesus, that is all" (v. 1 and chorus). I like this lyrics because I realize that I have little faith when I face with difficult things in my life. So I can't help but agree with this lyrics. And the part of the lyrics that resonates more and more is that I will trust in God more and more as I realize how little faith I have. Therefore, I have no choice but to seek the Lord more and more. And I have no choice but to hold onto the word of His promise that the Lord gave to me. Personally, I hold onto the promises words of God, John 6:1-15 for me, and Matthew 16:18 for the church and pray to God as I trust in Him and His promised words. As I do so, the grace that God gives me is to acknowledge with faith that God is God. In other words, God makes me confess that He is true and faithful. In the midst of that, the faithful Lord makes me trust in the word of His promises given to me and to the church where I am serving. In doing so, I receive peace of mind, comfort, and strength from the indwelling Holy Spirit. Therefore, in the end, the Holy Spirit makes me praise the Lord. He makes me to praise the word of the Lord with thanksgiving.

This is the praise ("Lord, I Offer My Life") that I enjoy singing when I think about the Lord's promised word of John 6:1-15 to me:

1. Lord, I offer my life to You/ Everything I've been through/ Use it for Your glory  
Lord I offer my days to You/ Lifting my praise to You/ As a pleasing sacrifice  
Lord I offer You my life
2. Things in the past/ Things yet unseen/ Wishes and dreams that are yet to come true  
All of my hopes/ And all of my plans/ My heart and my hands are lifted to You

This is the hymn ("I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord") that I enjoy singing when I think about the Lord's promised word of Matthew 16:18 to my church.

1. I love Thy Kingdom, Lord, The house of Thine abode,  
The Church our blest Redeemer saved With His own precious blood.
2. I love Thy Church, O God; Her walls before Thee stand,  
Dear as the apple of Thine eye, And graven on Thy hand.
3. For her my tears shall fall, For her my prayers ascend;  
To her my cares and toils be given, Till toils and cares shall end.
4. Beyond my highest joy I prize her heavenly ways,  
Her sweet communion, solemn vows, Her hymns of love and praise.
5. Sure as Thy truth shall last, To Zion shall be given  
The brightest glories earth can yield, And brighter bliss of heaven. A-men.

Wanting to praise God's promised words more and more,

James Kim

(While wishing to live a life of trusting in the Lord in small things as well as in difficult times)

## **“Put my tears in Your bottle”**

### **“... Put my tears in Your bottle ...” (Psalms 56:8).**

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

I have been thinking of tears in my heart as I have been living my faith. However, when I was reading the Bible yesterday night for today's Morning Prayer, my gaze stopped at Psalm 56:8 because the Bible says “... Put my tears in Your bottle ....” Obviously I would have read this Bible passage many times before, but I just passed that Bible passage until yesterday night. Then, during today's Morning Prayer, as I was preaching the word of God based on Psalms 56:4, I got more interested in verse 8. So as I am writing down this I am meditating the verse 8

again. Now my interest is to focus on the tears of the beloved who are in the Lord's bottle, rather than the tears that are in the bottle of my heart. I believe that the tears of the beloved in my heart bottle are already in the Lord's heart bottle. And I firmly believe that the Lord loves them much more than I am. So I am offering all those tears to the Lord who knows their tears best. How can I understand the meaning of the tears that my first baby shed, the tears that my wife shed and the tears my grandfather and grandmother shed. But since my omniscient God knows and fully understands the meaning of all of their tears that they shed, I hope and pray that the Lord receive all of their tears from the bottle of my heart. Also, I hope and pray that the Lord receives my three tears that I shed during our church college retreat in May 1987 because of the work of the Holy Spirit in my heart: tears of repentance, tears of devotion and tears of gratitude. I wish I could continue to shed these three tears in my life until I die. Therefore, I want to fill the bottle of the Lord with these tears.

## “My heart is steadfast, O God”

### [Psalms 57]

This Monday morning I was at home with my youngest daughter Karis, and we watched a cartoon called “Cailou”. While watching the cartoon, we saw a child named Cailou planted a tree with his father and worried about the tree because the wind was blowing. At that time, Cailou's father came to help Cailou by bringing a stick and tied it with the tree so that the planted tree wouldn't be shaken. That scene came into my mind during the Mother's day morning prayer meeting. As I thought about the scene, I thought of becoming the stick that was tied together next to the tree to my children at home. In other words, I prayed to God that I should be strong support for my children like that stick so that they will not be shaken.

After reading the book ‘Who is the Father?’(by Jong Yoon Kim), there were these two writings among the readers' reviews: ‘I know the preciousness of my father but I overlook. Although I hate him, I think him as a precious person who gives me strong support so I placed him in my heart. ... It was a good book that reminded me of the preciousness and gratitude of my father which I didn't think about.’ ‘The support of life, the father (Gunjong Jo): The father is the one who was not close in my life but protected me with great support’ (Internet). As I read this reader's reviews, I felt that despite hating or not close to many fathers' relationships with their sons (or daughters), the fathers were precious people and strong support to their children. Therefore, we must be strong support for our children, just as our fathers of faith are strong support for us. What must we do to do that? Our hearts must be steadfast. If we look at Psalms 57:7, we can see the psalmist David determined like this: “My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises!” Here, the word “steadfast” means ‘to settle the mind, has a steadfast, fixed, (belief, etc.), and immovable. In other words, it wasn't simply determined, it was confirmed. He decided and determined that there was nothing else. This means that this is only hope and only way.

‘The life of the person who made up his mind is happy. The difference between a shaking life and a fixed life is big like the difference between happiness and unhappiness. Fear comes to those who can't make up their mind. There is no fear for those who made up their mind. It is because there is no regret. It is a fixed heart that there is no regret. ... Our minds must be fixed and focused in one place. If a believer's heart is fluctuating, he cannot please God. The faith of the saints must be fixed on God. When my faith in God is shaken, then I cannot live a life full of grace’ (Internet).

I would like to receive three lessons that the believers whose hearts have been steadfast do when they are in crisis

and adversity, under the headline “My heart is steadfast, O God”, based on Psalms 57:7.

**First, the believers whose hearts are steadfast take refuge in crisis and adversity.**

Look at Psalms 57:1 – “Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me, For my soul takes refuge in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge Until destruction passes by.” The psalmist David took refuge in the Lord because of the destruction that came upon him. What was that destruction? It was Saul's persecution. As the title says, Psalms 57 is a poem that David wrote when he was in a cave. David was running away from King Saul because of Saul's persecution. Interestingly, the word “Al-taschith” on the title means “Do not destroy.” In verse 4, David described his situation like this: “My soul is among lions; I must lie among those who breathe forth fire, Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows And their tongue a sharp sword.” The reason why David described his enemies, that were Saul and his people, as “lions” was because they tried to harm David with such cruelty (Park). They prepared a net for David's steps (v. 6). So David poured out his heart by saying “My soul is bowed down” (v. 6). Eventually, he took refuge in the Lord when he was at the crossroads of life and death to the point of being destroyed by Saul, the disaster that came upon him. David took refuge in Him until disaster passed by (v. 1).

So where did David take refuge? He took refuge in the shadow of the Lord's wings. The word ‘taking refuge in the shadow of the Lord's wings’ is a metaphor, meaning that God's protection for the saints is like the wings that a hen embraces and protects its chick (Park). This parable appears in several places in the Bible, and among them is Deuteronomy 32:11-12. This is what God said to Moses: “Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, That hovers over its young, He spread His wings and caught them, He carried them on His pinions. The LORD alone guided him, And there was no foreign god with him.” Just as an eagle shakes its nest, drops its eaglet, flutters over its eaglet, spreads its wings to receive the eaglet, and carries it on its wings, sometime when we are so comfortable in our home, God shakes our homes, dropping us like a mother eagle pushing her eaglet from the high nest on a sheer cliff. At that time, we struggle to get out of that crisis as if the eaglet's instinct is to lift its head up and to try to fly with its' wings in order not to fall to the ground. However, in spite of such desperate struggles, there are times when we see ourselves keep on falling, just as the eaglet falling helplessly toward the ground. Just like the moment just before hitting the ground, the mother eagle flew toward the eaglet, carrying the eaglet on its wings and flying back to the nest, our God saves us and guides us.

**Second, the believers whose hearts are steadfast cry out to God in crisis and adversity.**

Look at Psalms 57:2 – “I will cry to God Most High, To God who accomplishes all things for me.” David made God his refuge in the midst of disaster and took refuge in Him and cried out to God. In David's prayer as he



trusted in Him, we need to think about the object of his prayer, that is God.

(1) The God David trusted in his prayer was “God Most High”.

Look at Psalms 57:2 again – “I will cry to God Most High, To God who accomplishes all things for me.” In one way or another, it can be said that David looked to God Most High and cried out to Him when he was in the lowest place. Just as the eaglet falls from its nest and sees its mother eagle before hitting the ground and screams 'help me', the deeper we fall into the pit of calamity, the more we cry out, looking at God Most High, knowing that we have no hope but only the Lord. An example is Prophet Jonah. In the book of Jonah, Jonah went down to Tarshish by boat, and went further down to the deep sea in a great fish, But he prayed that he decided to look again toward the temple of the Lord (Jon.2:4).

(2) The God David trusted in his prayer was “God who accomplishes all things for me”.

Look at Psalms 57:2 again – “I will cry to God Most High, To God who accomplishes all things for me.” God Most High is the God who accomplishes His will for us. David cried out to this God. Look at Isaiah 14:24, 27 – “The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand, ... For the LORD of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?” What is the Lord's will for us? What are His thought? What is His plan? It is our “salvation”.

(3) The God David trusted in his prayer was ‘God who is loving and true God’.

Look at Psalms 57:3 – “He will send from heaven and save me; He reproaches him who tramples upon me Selah God will send forth His lovingkindness and His truth.” David cried out to God Most High, the Lord who fulfills His will for David, with assurance of salvation. How did David convinced that the Lord would save him? He was convinced that God would send forth “His lovingkindness and His truth” from heaven and save him from the slander that would devour him. What does it mean? This is a poetic expression that personifies and speaks of God's loving and truthful act of salvation (Park). Our Lord is loving and faithful, and in fulfilling His will that is our salvation, He faithfully fulfills His will only with His love. We have no merit. Only by His lovingkindness and truth, we are saved.

**Third and last, the believers whose hearts are steadfast glorify God in crisis and adversity.**

Look at Psalms 57:5, 11 – “Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth. ... Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.” How did David glorify God? David

glorified God by praising Him. Look at verses 7b-9: "... I will sing and make music. Awake, my soul! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn. I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples." How was David able to glorify God by praising God at the crossroads of life and death? That was because David's heart was steadfast (v. 7). What is steadfast heart? Dr. Park said three things: (1) Those with steadfast heart are determined to die. David was determined to die and prepared his heart for it. (2) Those with steadfast heart are prepared to do all good. The peculiarity of a fool is a person without preparation. He is always unrest without a certain goal. But the saints move with their prepared mind. (3) Those with steadfast heart trust in the Lord and courageous. We must always look to the Lord, wait, pray, and accept Him in our hearts. What does it mean to accept the Lord in our hearts? That is, as promised in the Bible, that God will walk with the believers. Those believers who have steadfast heart are assured of God's salvation under any circumstances and earnestly want the glory of God to be exalted over the world. Even though we are getting smaller and we may be in an situation of hardship and adversity, I earnestly hope and pray that the glory of God will be covered all over the world as water covers the sea. David praised Him because he was grateful to the Lord, even though the disaster was upon him (v. 8). What was the reason? It was because he experienced His great lovingkindness and truth that was sent by God (v. 3). Therefore, I hope and pray that we, like David, can confess, "For Your lovingkindness is great to the heavens And Your truth to the clouds" (v. 10).

On Sunday afternoon, I visited the nursing home to see Grandma Eul-soo Jang of our church. I told Grandma Jang, 'Grandma, you are beautiful'. The reason I said that to her was because I saw little Jesus in her. I saw little Christ in her when she showed me an example of faith by praising the Lord with thanksgiving and by memorizing Psalms 23, the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed. I thought she was beautiful woman in God's perspective when I saw her crying out to God earnestly and glorifying Him by praising Him with steadfast heart toward the Savior Jesus who was her only hope at the crossroads of life and death. Following her example, I also want to praise God with thanksgiving with steadfast heart until I die.

Praying that my heart will be steadfast toward the Lord, and that I will be raised as a reliable support for my children and fellow brothers and sisters in Christ,

James Kim

(After praising the gospel songs "Thee O Lord among the people" and "As The Waters Cover The Sea" to God during Wednesday night prayer meeting)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Look at Psalms 57:2 – “I will cry to God Most High, To God who accomplishes all things for me.” David cried out to God who accomplished all things for him when he was in the cave, fleeing from King Saul. How could David cry out to God like that? If David had been looking at his situation with his own physical eyes, David would never have professed faith that God is God who accomplishes all things for him. If David had looked only at the situation he was in, in a cave imprisoned, he couldn’t have sought God’s will in his misery. But because David looked to God Most High in faith, he was able to seek God’s will and not his own will. And he believed that God would accomplish His good will no matter what. We must have this faith too. I remember Paul and Silas in Acts 16. They prayed and sang hymns of praise to God in the inner prison (Acts 16:24). It is understandable that they prayed to God. But I wonder how they could praise God in such circumstances. I think those who believe that God’s will be done even in whatever circumstance they are in, they can praise God even in prison. It’s because they trust and rely on God that they praise Him in faith. Their praise is not based on the circumstance but based on who God is. We must know that our God is worthy to receive praise from us no matter what circumstances we are in. Therefore, we must praise the Lord’s greatness in whatever circumstances we may be in. We must cry out to God Most High with the faith that God will accomplish His will for us, even in the calamities we have encountered.

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

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

so that we were able to praise God in the greatest crisis of our married life. Therefore, I believe that crisis is a good opportunity to experience God's love and God's truth.

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

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

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

Look at Psalms 57:5 and 11: “Be exalted above the heavens, O God; Let Your glory be above all the earth. ... Be exalted above the heavens, O God; Let Your glory be above all the earth.” It is interesting that David, who was hiding in the cave against King Saul, exalted God above the heavens and asked God's glory to rise above all the earth. In particular, it challenged me that David gave thanks to God among the peoples, sang praises to Him among the nations (v. 9) and exalted Him above the heavens and asked God's glory to rise above all the earth (vv. 5, 11) in the midst of running away from King Saul and of going through the disasters. When I think about how David could have done that, I think it was possible because he had experienced God's lovingkindness and truth (v. 3). Look at verse 10: “For Your lovingkindness is great to the heavens And Your truth to the clouds.” David was able to confess this because he had experienced God's lovingkindness and His truth when he cried out for God's grace and God's will to be done in the midst of disasters that he was going through and when his soul was bowed down. As a result, he was able to ask God, " Be exalted above the heavens, O God; Let Your glory be above all the earth" (v. 11).

I have an unforgettable memory in my heart regarding my third uncle. I recall the moment when I was praising God “O, Lord my God! When I in Awesome Wonder” during his view service. In particular, I cannot forget the experience of the indwelling Holy Spirit worked in my heart to praise “Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee How great Thou art, how great Thou art!” I also remember the time when my third uncle was alive, we

went down to Tijuana, Mexico and he praised chorus of “O, Lord my God! When I in Awesome” in Spanish in front of the disabled people. And I remember he praised the same hymn during the New Year whole family worship even though he was suffering from cancer. How could a cancer patient suffering from illness praise God's greatness? How could we sing God's greatness at our beloved family member's funeral service? I got challenge by David who had been hiding in the cave from King Saul, but was able pray for God's exaltation and His glory to be manifested above all the earth. It was because he didn't focus on the catastrophic situation, but looked up to the God of salvation, God who sent His lovingkindness and His truth to David. I also realized that the scope of my prayers was so limited, focusing on my situation and ministry. Now I would like to pray that the whole world will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14). I pray that God will enlarge the scope of my prayer so that the world will be filled with the greatness of the Lord and His glory.

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

## “a God who judges” (1)

### [Psalms 58]

I stopped by this afternoon at a nursing home and turned on the radio on the way to the church. And I came across the news of a pastor from a large church in Los Angeles assaulting his wife on a Korean radio broadcast. In the news, I heard the reporter say: ‘Some pointed out that we should look back at the current church members who are only looking at the position of pastor and seeking unconditional follow-up. ... It is argued that the members themselves need judgment.’ I was little bit surprised when I heard this news. I also thought that through this thing, the glory of God would be hidden and evangelism would be blocked. In the meantime, I sympathized with the claim that, as the news said, ‘the members themselves need judgment.’ The reason is because I think we Christians are losing judgment. When I think about what the cause us, I think it is because the famine of hearing God's word has already come (Am 8:11). Since we cannot hear the word of God, even though there are countless sermon broadcasts and numerous Bible books, our judgment is inevitably blurred. Many of us Christians seem to know God's word very well in our minds, but we don't seem to know His word in our hearts. Therefore, rather than being led by the word of God, we are drawn to things like circumstances and emotions. In the end, our judgment was blurred by the famine of hearing His word.

Pastor John Han says in his book ‘Leader, Have the Heart of a Lion’: ‘... Don't interpret God's will based only on visible circumstances. Rather, we must interpret the situation with the will of God. Don't judge God, let God judge you. Don't keep speaking before God, but listen quietly to what God says to you’ (Internet). We must interpret the situation we face with God's will. And in order for God to judge us, we must remain silent before Him and hear His voice. At the Wednesday night prayer meeting last week, the voice that God gave us through the words of Psalms 57 was “My heart is steadfast, O God.” Especially as we meditated on the David's saying “My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises!” (v. 7), we learned that our hearts also must be steadfast. Even in the midst of the disaster he faced (v. 1), David's heart was steadfast and praised God. However, it would not have been so easy for David to come to this place of praise. In other words, David's heart wasn't very comfortable until his heart was steadfast. How do we know this? We know this when David confessed his feelings, “My soul is bowed down” (v. 6) while running away from Saul. What if we were in the unfair and distress situation like David? As Psalms 58:11 says, we must look to God who judges. In other words, we must trust in God's righteous judgment. I hope that this will be an opportunity to listen to the voice of the Lord by meditating on one thing today and thinking about the other two next week to see what kind of God is the God who judges under the title of “a God who judges”.

## **First, “a God who judges” is the God who rebukes the wicked (Ps. 58:1-5).**

In Psalms 58:1-5, we can see that a just and judge God rebuking David's enemy, the wicked. As we think about His rebuke in four ways, I hope that we can use it as an opportunity for self-reflection to see if God is rebuking us or not.

### **(1) God’s rebuke is ‘Don’t be silent!’**

Look at Psalms 58:1 – “Do you indeed speak righteousness, O gods? Do you judge uprightly, O sons of men?” Although “Speech is silver; Silence is gold” makes sense, but among the silences there are cowardly silences, and even evil silences. What is evil silence? It refers to the silence that doesn’t say the right thing that we suppose to say (Park). To be silent when we see injustice, to remain silent without having to speak righteousness is evil silence. In Isaiah 56:10, prophet Isaiah said that Israel’s watchmen, that is, the shepherds, were “mute dogs” who couldn’t bark. The dog's responsibility was to bark when “beasts” (v. 9) come. Nevertheless, the Israeli shepherds didn’t. They didn’t take on the role of watchmen. Therefore, the God’s flock was caught by wolves and was eaten and was wandered in the fields and mountains (Ezek. 34). What was the cause? The cause was greed. The Israeli shepherds were in greed, "Each one to his unjust gain" (Isa. 56:11). While they were feeding themselves with fat, they didn’t feed the flock properly with the word of God. The Israeli shepherds who didn’t take on the role of the watchmen but rather coveted themselves were the "mute dogs." Their silence was 'evil silence'.

When I apply this God's rebuke to myself, my conscience was stricken by the word “mute dogs” in Isaiah 56:10. When I was in seminary, an elderly pastor, a well-known from immigrant churches, came and talked about the sermons. And I remember hearing him saying to us ‘Preach the sermons of comfort.’ In addition to that pastor, I also remember hearing a few other pastors advising me to preach the sermons that can comfort the church members. ‘Healing sermons’ seem to be popular these days. I feel that way even more when I see other pastors keeping of talking about ‘healing, healing’. However, I wonder if I and other preachers, as God's servants, are preaching the word of God faithfully. For example, even though there is a word in the Bible that rebukes our sins, when we think about whether we the preachers are preaching that word of rebuke as it is, as we all know to some extent, it’s hard to hear that word of rebuke anymore. If this is true, aren’t we the pastors the “mute dogs” as prophet Isaiah said? When a wolf comes, the dog that guards the flock must bark. But what if the dog eats only its own food and doesn’t take full responsibility as dog, then the dog is a mute dog and useless. Further, the dog is the one which kills God's flock. Therefore, we must not be silent. We must judge uprightly and speak righteousness (Ps. 58:1).



(2) God's rebuke is 'Don't work unrighteousness in your heart!'

Look at Psalms 58:2 – “No, in heart you work unrighteousness; On earth you weigh out the violence of your hands.” The wicked Israeli officials and leaders worked unrighteousness even though they said they judged uprightly with their speech that was smoother than butter (55:21) (Park). In short, they were hypocrites. Jesus said in Matthew 7:5 – “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.” The hypocrites must face their own false heart, the heart that does evil. Then the hypocrite has to take “the speck” out of their own eye.

We need courage. We need the courage to face our own “speck”. With the eyes of God's word, we must face the innermost part of our hearts. The reason is because God desires truth in the innermost being (Ps.51:6). We must never be believers whose words and hearts are inconsistent. We must not become so used to religious rituals that we forget ourselves and misunderstand and pretend to live a life of faith. We must repent our innermost sin to God with a broken spirit as we let the word of righteous God to judge our hearts. Therefore, we must become people after God's own heart like David. We should never be hypocrites. In front of God who sees our hearts, we must live a life of right faith, right heart, and right conduct.

(3) God's rebuke is 'Don't lie!'

Look at Psalms 58:3 – “The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth.” The wicked accumulate evil deeds from childhood and don't repent in the end, so they are full of sins (Park). Among those sins, the wicked commit habitual sin of lying. Therefore, they are used to go to a side path. We must not lie. And we must not go side path by lying.

(4) God's rebuke is 'Hear the voice!'.

Look at Psalms 58:5 – “So that it does not hear the voice of charmers, Or a skillful caster of spells.” Like the poison of a snake, like a viper that harms human life, the wicked are trying to harm our lives. These wicked men, says David, are like “a viper which doesn't hear the voice of charmers. There are sorcerers in Arabia and India who lure snakes with instruments that are like tungso and drums. And when they play the instruments and make sounds, the snakes hear the sound and move. David says that the wicked men are like a cobra that doesn't hear the sound. In a word, the wicked are like the “deaf cobra” (v. 4).

As I meditate on the words of God rebuking the wicked, I ask myself the question whether I am a “mute dog,” whether I work unrighteousness in my heart, whether I lie, and whether I am listening to God’s voice or not. In the meantime, I ask myself whether I am not boldly proclaiming the word of God like ‘the mute dog’ because I cannot hear God’s voice like ‘the deaf cobra’. I hope and pray that I will become a watchman-like shepherd who listens to the word of truth and boldly proclaims it while pursuing truthfulness at the innermost being.

Longing to listen to God's rebuke,

James Kim

(With the hope that God may open my heart and ear so that I may hear His voice and speak His truth boldly)

## **“a God who judges” (2)**

### **[Psalms 58]**

Last Sunday, while listening to the testimony of a young man even through praise at our church's English service, I reaffirmed that God really loves him very much. As I sang together the praise that the brother sang while weeping on the previous Friday evening, I learned the lesson that we should praise God's holiness, no matter how dark our lives may be. Meanwhile, yesterday evening, while reading Psalms chapters 21 to 23, the words to be read during today's Wednesday morning prayer meeting, my gaze stopped at Psalms 22:1-3 and thought about the words. The psalmist David saw that there was no answer when he cried out to God day and night in groaning, and he felt that he had been abandoned by God and that God was far from helping him. Nevertheless, David confessed “Yet You are holy, O You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel” (22:3). As I meditated on this word again during the early Morning Prayer meeting, I remembered that beloved brother. I remembered how that brother praised our holy God like David. Praising our holy God is a wonderful blessing from Him. Therefore, experiencing God's holy presence is a wonderful blessing from God.

That holy God is also a just God. He is the God who judges justly. Therefore, when we are faced with an unfair situation like David, we must look to “a God who judges” (Ps. 58:11). In other words, when we are in the unfair situation, we must trust in God's righteous judgment. The God who judges is the God who rebukes the wicked (vv. 1-5). The just God who rebukes the wicked is rebuking us not to be silent. In other words, the God who judges is rebuking us not to be silent (v. 1). A pastor who is silent even when he sees injustice is a “mute dog” (Isa. 56:10). God is rebuking the evil silencer, who is not ‘barking’ even though he has to, because the God's sheep are being caught and eaten by the beasts. Also, the just God who judges and rebukes the wicked is rebuking us not to work unrighteousness in our hearts (v. 2). God is rebuking us not to live a life of hypocrites with inconsistency between words and deeds. The God who judges is rebuking us for lying. God is rebuking us for going side paths by lying. And the God who judges is rebuking us for not listening to God's voice. Like a deaf cobra, God is rebuking us because we are not listening when God speaks (v. 5). I hope that this will be an opportunity to listen to the voice of the Lord by meditating on two things in order to see what kind of God is the God who judges under the title of “a God who judges (2)”.

**Second, “a God who judges” makes us to pray (Ps. 58:6-9).**

The psalmist David prayed to God in the midst of the persecution of the wicked. He asked God, who judges, to deal with the wicked. David's prayer can be thought in three ways:

(1) David asked God to destroy those who do evil.

Look at Psalms 58:6 – “O God, shatter their teeth in their mouth; Break out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD.” David said that the wicked who persecuted him was inhuman and cruel like a lion. They tried to attack and defeat the righteous through evil means, just as the lion eats its prey with its mouth. That was why David asked God to destroy those who do evil

(2) David asked God for the disappearance of the wicked and to overcome their intended plans.

Look at Psalms 58:7, 9 – “Let them flow away like water that runs off; When he aims his arrows, let them be as headless shafts. ... Before your pots can feel the fire of thorns He will sweep them away with a whirlwind, the green and the burning alike.” Verse 7 says that after rain, the wicked will disappear like a stream on a slope that flows and rolls down (Park). And the word “When he aims his arrows, let them be as headless shafts” means that as an arrow that is directed at an object doesn’t fulfill its purpose but is broken, the wicked plan will not work and ends (Park). Verse 9 is similar. Like a traveler traveling in the desert is hungry, so on the way he hangs a kiln and cooks rice with thorns as fuel, and then suddenly a strong whirlwind blows and blows away the fuel, the wicked man’s plan is to fail without accomplishing its purpose (Park). An example of God defeating the plan of the wicked can be found in the story of David. In other words, when David was running away from Absalom, God frustrated the good advice of Ahithophel (2 Sam. 17:14) through David's friend Hushai (16:16). The reason is recorded in the Bible like this: “... For the LORD had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom” (17:14).

(3) David asked God to make the wicked to be as a snail.

Look at Psalms 58:8 – “Let them be as a snail which melts away as it goes along, Like the miscarriages of a woman which never see the sun.” Why did David pray like that? The reason is because whenever the snail pushes itself on the ground, it consumes and wears out its body. David prayed to God to destroy the wicked even more whenever the wicked did their evil actions (Park).

**Third and last, “a God who judges” blesses us (Ps. 58:10-11).**

We can think about his blessing in two ways:

(1) The first blessing is “rejoice”.

Look at Psalms 58:10 – “The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; He will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.” Our God is a just God. He is a God who judges justly. That God destroys the wicked. Why did David the righteous rejoice at that time? The reason was never to rejoice over the destruction of the wicked. He rejoiced only because he saw the glory of God. In other words, he rejoiced because he saw God's righteousness and his righteous judgment.

(2) The second blessing is ‘conviction’.

Look at Psalms 58:11 – “And men will say, “Surely there is a reward for the righteous; Surely there is a God who judges on earth!” God not only convinces us that there is a God who judges, but He also gives it to others.

When we let God judge us rather than we judge God, we need to be rebuked by God as our sins are being exposed. In the midst of that, we must ask God to blot out our sins. In the midst of that, I hope and pray that we may be able to enjoy the blessings that God provides.

By the grace of just God who judges me,

James Kim

(On the birthday of my father-in-law)

## **Let us sing of God's strength.**

### **[Psalms 59]**

Today I had a time to meditate on Job. As I meditated on the story of Job again, I thought about how Job felt when Satan and the mighty struck Job under God's sovereignty. Although when I think about Job who suffered severe pains such as, losing all things, all children died, I can't imagine what he went through. But when I think about Job's friends, I can identify with them. That is, Job's friends tried to comfort Job, but in the end, as Job said, they were "Sorry comforters" (Job 16:2). When I see myself, I think about how many times have I been a sorry comforter to those suffering people whom I have tried to comfort with good intention. I thought about what Job himself was like. Job's friends were friends who knew nothing about what Job was going through. So instead of comforting Job, they even added more suffering to Job. Job, who was in such affliction, couldn't even himself realize everything that was happening to him under God's sovereignty. He was also suffering excruciatingly in many ways in the midst of ignorance. I wonder what I could do for Job if I had been a friend of Job. I think about what I can do as I look at my brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering from the extreme dangers of life due to the dark forces of Satan. Things that are happening in God's sovereignty, we have no choice but to ask God to save them and deliver them, as we look only to God and seek His mercy. In particular, I confess that I have no choice but to rely on God's power as I feel and see that human incompetence continues to come through due to extreme pain. In the midst of that, I remembered that in the prayer topic that our church prayed at the beginning of this year, based on the book of Acts, we had been praying for four powers: the power of prayer, the power of the Holy Spirit, the power of the Word, and the power of love. As I pray for these four powers, I would like to unite these powers together and call them the Power of the Holy Spirit. So, what is the power of the Holy Spirit? There are three ways to think about it: (1) The principle of the power of the Holy Spirit is the Power of the Word of God, (2) The pattern of the power of the Holy Spirit is the love of Jesus, and (3) The power of the Holy Spirit is the Power of Prayer.

In Psalms 59:16, 17, the psalmist David said in determination, "I shall sing of Your strength ... " (v. 16) and "O my strength, I will sing praise to You ..." (v. 17). What is the power of the Lord, so David determined to sing the power of the Lord? I would like to meditate on four things under the heading "Let us sing of God's strength." Therefore, as we experience the power of the Lord in our lives, I hope and pray that we, like David, will be able to sing (praise) the power of the Lord even in any difficult and painful situation.

**First, God's strength is power of protection.**

Look at Psalms 59:9, 16b, 17 – “Because of his strength I will watch for You, For God is my stronghold. ... For You have been my stronghold And a refuge in the day of my distress. O my strength, I will sing praises to You; For God is my stronghold, the God who shows me lovingkindness.” What I feel more and more these days is that we humans are very fragile. We are truly fragile vessels that cannot live day by day and moment by moment without God's grace. In particular, without God's protection, we are easily perverted, quickly fall down and become discouraged, and are inevitable to quickly leave God (the word of God) and betray Him. For example, if God doesn't protect our hearts, it is too easy for us to commit the sin of disobedience due to the disbelief of our hearts because we are pushed and lost by Satan's power in the spiritual battle. Especially when we are faced with a difficult or fearful situation, if God doesn't protect our thoughts, feelings, and will, we are controlled by that situation and are bound to suffer in fear. What was the situation in which David was facing in Psalms 59? He was being pursued by King Saul's people. King Saul's people were David's enemies, evildoers, and men of bloodshed (vv. 1-2). They ran to David (v. 4) and howled like a dog and went around the city (vv. 6, 14). David repeatedly described enemies following him as howling like dogs and going around the city. Just imagine. What do we do when we think that (bloody) hungry dogs howling around us and eventually discovering and following us? Won't we run away? Won't we escape to save our lives from those hungry dogs? David was pursued like the dog and ran away from King Saul's people and ran to God who was his stronghold.

Dr. Yoon-sun Park said: ‘Looking at the Lord is the only way to live. If we look everywhere, we will only be confused by the temptations and threats of this world, and if we look at ourselves, we will only be discouraged. But when we look to the Lord, we are glad and happy. The reason is because He is like a “stronghold” and is our refuge, and He gives salvation to those who look to Him’ (Park). I think it's a really reasonable view. If we look all around us, it can be distracting. And when we look at ourselves, we may even experience spiritual depression amid discouragement. However, we pray to the God of salvation with the assurance of salvation as we long for the protection of the Lord, who is our stronghold, and flee to Him.

Therefore, we will experience the Lord's protective power. Then we will be able to sing this hymn to God: “Throu' days of toil when heart doth fail, God will take care of you; When dangers fierce your path assail, God will take care of you. God will take care of you, Through ev'ry day, O'er all the way; He will take care of you, God will take care of you” (Hymn “Be not Dismayed Whate'er Betide”, verse 2 and chorus).

## **Second, God's strength is the power of love.**

Look at Psalms 59:10 – “My God in His lovingkindness will meet me; God will let me look triumphantly upon my foes.” We are those who live by the power of God's love. In particular, it is us the believers who endure more and more with God's lovingkindness in difficult situations, and overcome them. As I meditated on God's love,

I remembered prophet Jonah. Although he went down into the deep sea while being in the great fish because he disobeyed God's command, yet he looked at the temple of God again. Likewise, we look to God again in the midst of deep pains and sufferings. By doing so, we the believers experience God's lovingkindness deeply. We are the believers who experience God's love in our deep pains and sufferings. One of the gospel songs that I sang from time to time is the song "Power of Love". The lyrics of verse 1 is like this: "Lord I come to You/ Let my heart be changed, renewed/ Flowing from the grace/ That I've found in You/ Lord I've come to know/ The weaknesses I see in me/ Will be stripped away/ By the power of Your love." Looking at this lyric, when I think about when I usually experience God's great love, I admit that I experience God's great love when I realize how weak I am. I confess that I am strong when I am weak. In Psalms 59:10, David was convinced that God would accept him with His lovingkindness. Look at verse 10: "My God in His lovingkindness will meet me; God will let me look triumphantly upon my foes." Here, 'God will meet me' means 'He will come for me in time' (Park). In other words, David took refuge in God, who is the God of salvation and the stronghold, protecting David in the day of trouble, because he was convinced that the Lord would come to him and help him in God's perfect time. In other words, David assured that the Lord would come to him and help him in the time of God when he took refuge in Him, the God of salvation and his stronghold who had been protecting him in the day of trouble. In this assurance, David endured in all adversity and suffering, as if in the valley of the shadow of death. I think this is the perseverance of the saints. However, even the perseverance of the saints is due to the lovingkindness of God. The reason is because God's endurance and heartache in coming to us is greater and more desperate than our endurance in going to God in all adversity and suffering. Those who know this love of God wait for the Lord's help as they endure in pain and adversity with the power of God's love. What's interesting is the contrast between verses 15 and 16. In these two verses, while David's enemies were wandering about for food and growling if they weren't satisfied (v. 15), David determined to sing of the Lord's strength and to praise His lovingkindness in the morning (v. 16). Here we can learn two lessons: (1) The first lesson is that while the wicked wander for food, but in the end they aren't satisfied, the righteous are satisfied with the Lord's strength. (2) The second lesson, while the wicked stay up all night because they can't get full, the righteous sleep at night even in the situation of persecution and death, and sing of His lovingkindness in the morning. What is the reason? The reason is because David was able to fall asleep because of the Lord's loving kindness, and was able to face the new morning with the Lord.

As we experience the power of God's love, we will be able to sing the rest of the second verse and the chorus of the gospel song, "The Power of Your Love": "Lord unveil my eyes/ Let me see You face to face/ The knowledge of Your love/ As You live in me/ Lord renew my mind/ As Your will unfolds in my life/ In living every day/ By the power of Your love/ Hold me close/ Let Your love surround me/ Bring me near/ Draw me to Your side/ And as I wait/ I'll rise up like the eagle/ And I will soar with You/ Your Spirit leads me on/ In the power of Your love."



### **Third, God's strength is the power of justice.**

Look at Psalms 59:11 – “Do not slay them, or my people will forget; Scatter them by Your power, and bring them down, O Lord, our shield.” David asked God not to kill his enemies quickly but to make them suffer for the price of their sins, so that the people would remember that sinners must be punished (Park). However, for some reason, they seem to forget that the wicked must be punished. What is the reason? I looked for the answer in Psalms 50:21 – “These things you have done and I kept silence; You thought that I was just like you; ....” Even after sinning, the wicked continue to commit even greater sins without fear because God is silent and nothing happens to them. In other words, the wicked don't know that God is just God. They are mistaken in thinking that God does injustice with them. But God is just God. He is God who has the power to scatter and humble our enemies. David asked that God, “Awake to punish all the nations; Do not be gracious to any who are treacherous in iniquity” (59:5). Obviously, our just God made David see “triumphantly” upon his foes (v. 10). And he prayed to God like this: “Destroy them in wrath, destroy them that they may be no more; That men may know that God rules in Jacob To the ends of the earth” (v. 13).

### **Fourth and last, God's strength is the power of salvation.**

Look at Psalms 59:1-2: “Deliver me from my enemies, O my God ... Deliver me from those who do iniquity And save me from men of bloodshed.” As I meditate on the psalms, I feel that David the psalmist prayed to God with assurance of salvation. In other words, David believed that God would deliver him at the crossroads of life and death due to his enemies who threaten his life, whether his enemies was Saul or Absalom, while he had not yet experienced God's salvation, and cried out to God for His gracious salvation. That was why David decided to sing the power of the Lord (of salvation). How can we determine to sing to the Lord in such a crisis situation? How could Paul and Silas praise God, knowing that they would be executed the next day in prison? (Acts 16) This is different from the argument of Pastor Sung-Geon Hong, who serves at Youth With Mission. Pastor Hong says that praise means praising what God has done to us. In the case of Apostle Paul and Silas in Acts 16, and David in Psalms 59, they praised God even though they had not yet experienced God's salvation. How can we explain this? We can try two explanations: (1) Paul and Silas, or David praised God because they experienced with faith that God's work of salvation had already begun, or (2) As worshipers, they knew and believed in the truth that God is God (for example, the God of salvation), so they could praise God even when they were not delivered. I think David's situation in Psalms 59 was a bit more valid for the second explanation.

If David had focused on his resentment, he would not have been able to praise God's saving power in faith. David's enemies had set an ambush for David's life and launched an attack against him, not because of his transgression or his sin (v. 3). In fact, David had no transgressions, but his enemies ran to David and prepared to attack him (v. 4). Even in this unfair situation, David longed for and prayed for God's saving grace. He hoped for

God's help and asked for the Lord to arise Himself and see (v. 4). Therefore, we should focus on God rather than on our unfair situation. And we must believe that our God is the God of salvation who delivers us from that unfair situation. We must ask the God of salvation with assurance of salvation. Then we will be able to sing the chorus of the hymn "My Soul in Sad Exile": "I've anchored my soul in the 'Haven of Rest,' I'll sail the wide seas no more; The tempest may sweep o'er the wild stormy deep; In Jesus I'm safe evermore."

The more I live in this world, the more I feel that this world is a world of sorrows and hardships, sins and deaths. That's why I like to sing that hymn "My Soul in Sad Exile". And when I sing that hymn, I meditate on the saving grace of the Lord. I also pray with my heart for the protection of the Lord. As we live in this world, how can we live in anxiety without the protection of the Lord? We must enjoy the blessing of experiencing God's deep love even in the midst of deep despair and suffering. We must endure in this sinful world while believing in the power of God's justice. In the midst of that, we should be grateful and praise the Lord's saving grace. Let us praise the God's strength of protection, of love, love justice and of salvation until our last breath in this earth.

With prayerful heart that wanting to give glory to God through praise, being raised as a true worshiper before God through His strength,

James Kim

(While listening to the Korean gospel song "The Lord's Forest" at dawn on Thursday)

## **“O, restore us”**

### **[Psalms 60]**

When I think about the word “restoration”, I remember visiting a couple's family with my church deacon one or two years ago. At that time, when I saw the sister in Christ who was sick, I prayed for restoration to God. But after I prayed for her, I remember her saying that ‘How come pastors are praying for restoration?’ At that time, when I came back to church after visiting the couple, I thought, "Why couldn't I urge the couple to repent?" I believe that we cannot enjoy the grace of true restoration when the problem of sin is not resolved in the Lord. I still remember proclaiming the words of 5 R's at the New Year Even worship two years ago: Repentance, Reconciliation, Restoration, Reformation, Revival. For true restoration, we must first repent and be reconciled to God.

When we look at the second half of Psalms 60:1, the psalmist David said, “... O, restore us”. Based on this verse, under the headlines “O, restore us”, I want to think about why David prayed for restoration, how he prayed for restoration, and how his attitude was after he prayed for restoration. May God teach us the lessons so that we may be able to apply in our lives.

#### **First, why did David pray for restoration?**

The reason is because David was temporarily defeated in war due to God's discipline (vv. 1-3) (Park). David describes the cause of the temporary defeat in war like this: “O God, You have rejected us You have broken us; You have been angry; ...” (v. 1), “You have made the land quake, You have split it open; ...” (v. 2), “You have made Your people experience hardship; You have given us wine to drink that makes us stagger” (v. 3). Here, “wine” (v. 3) is a parable that refers to God's wrath (Park). In other words, David suffered the temporary defeat due to the invasion of Edom. David knew that the cause was God's wrath. In the end, David (and the people of Judah) suffered from God's wrath (v. 3). That was why David prayed “O, restore us” (v.1) and “Heal its breaches, for it totters” (v. 2). Because the Lord made the land quake and split it open, of course there was a breach. David asked God to heal its breaches. This prayer is a prayer for restoration.

If God is angry and abandons us, we have no choice but to lose the spiritual battle. If God doesn't hold us, we will fall and fail. No matter how strong our faith may seem, and our homes, our business, or our churches may seem solid, the Lord shakes the earth and splits it (v. 2). How can we not be shaken if God is angry and shakes the foundation of the church, of our homes, and of our businesses? When we are shaken because of many breaches in our lives due to God's wrath, we must remember that there are sins in us that might have offend God, repent our sins

to God, and seek His mercy. The reason is because there is no true restoration without genuine repentance.

## **Second, how did David pray for restoration?**

David prayed to God for restoration with two convictions:

### (1) David prayed to God for restoration with assurance of salvation.

Look at Psalms 60:5 – “That Your beloved may be delivered, Save with Your right hand, and answer us!” Here we see David praying to God, relying on His love. David was convinced that God would not turn away from His people, whom God loves more than anyone else, and their cry out but would answer them and save them with His powerful right hand. This reminds me the Korean gospel song “Vision”: (1) At the throne of our God we gather/ And join to praise His holy name/ Because of His great love/ God gave His only son/ Jesus Christ has redeemed us from our sins. (2) On the cross, God poured out His love so freely/ A stream that flows forevermore/ to every tribe and tongue/ All nations join the song/ Endless praise to salvation’s one true Lord. (3) To the Lord of all, who’s seated on the throne/ And to the Lamb of God/ This saving grace belongs/ To the Lord of all, who’s seated on the throne/ And to the Lamb of God / We cry aloud forevermore.

### (2) David prayed to God for restoration with assurance of victory.

Look at Psalms 60:4 – “You have given a banner to those who fear You, That it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah.” The Bible says that God gives “a banner” to those who fear God. Why did God give “a banner” to David? The reason is to let him know that God would be with David and give him victory. In a word, the banner here is the flag of victory. What was the cause of that victory? It wasn’t because David’s army was strong, the number of soldiers was large, and the weapons were strong, but because God was with David. Because God was with David, David was convinced that he would win the battles against Moab, Edom and Philistine (v. 8). That was why he confessed “I will exult” (v. 6). David, who was delighted to see victory in the war, how could he have assurance in this victory? It was because “God has spoken in His holiness” (v. 6). Since the holy God promised to be with David, David rejoiced with assurance of victory. This is the hymn “There’s Royal Banner” verse 4 and chorus: “When the glory dawns 'tis drawing very near/ It is hast'ning day by day/ Then before our King the foe shall disappear/ And the cross the world shall sway!/ Marching on, marching on/ For Christ count everything but loss!/ And to crown Him King, Toil and sing/ 'Neath the banner of the cross!”

## **Third and last, how was David’s attitude after he prayed for restoration?**

In a word, David trusted in God and acted courageously. Look at Psalms 60:12 – “Through God we shall do valiantly, And it is He who will tread down our adversaries.” Here, what does it mean to trust in God?

(1) Trusting in God is the belief that only God leads and guide us.

Look at Psalms 60:9 – “Who will bring me into the besieged city? Who will lead me to Edom?” Here, “the besieged city” refers to very difficult city to attack, which was the capital of Edom “Petra” (Park). David believed that only God could destroy the city of Edom that was like strong as a rock and could lead him and the Israelites into that city.

(2) Trusting in God is Immanuel faith.

That is, the belief that God is with us. Look at verse 10: “Have not You Yourself, O God, rejected us? And will You not go forth with our armies, O God?” David trusted in God that He would be with him and his army as he prayed and remembered that God in the past caused David and his army to be temporarily defeated in the midst of his wrath. This was because David knew that no matter how many armies he had, it would be useless if God didn’t go to war with him and his army. In other words, he prayed to God, knowing that the victory in war depends on whether God was with him or not.

(3) Trusting in God is to admit that man’s salvation is in vain.

Look at Psalms 60:11 – “O give us help against the adversary, For deliverance by man is in vain.” Trusting in God means not to trust in people. David's faith was faith that didn’t depend on man, but only God. Like David, we must trust in God completely and act bravely. We don't have to fear our enemies. We must boldly take the banner of the cross army and fight against sin, the world, and Satan and be victorious.

David, who was temporarily defeated in the war against Edom because of God's wrath, prayed for restoration to God with the assurance of salvation and victory. And he determined to trust in God and act courageously. Like David, we too should ask God, “O, restore us”. We must pray in faith for restoration with assurance of salvation and victory. And we must act bravely while trusting in God.

“O, restore us”

James Kim

(With longing for the grace of restoration)

## **‘When my heart is faint’**

### **[Psalms 61]**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When David’s heart was faint, he cried out to God and took refuge in Him. Then he remembered the God’s



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

After praising "Nearer My God to Thee" to God,

James Kim

(Praying to make my despair as an opportunity to seek God more)

## **Let us wait in silence for God only.**

### **[Psalms 62]**

We must learn to be silent before God. Henry Nowen said like this about silence in his book “The Way of Heart”: ‘In directing all the organizational activities of the church, the question that should be of greatest concern is not how to keep people busy, but how to keep them not to be busy so that they can hear the voice of God speaking in silence’ (Nowen). We are living so busy. Especially, our hearts are too busy. To what extent are our hearts busy? Our hearts are so busy with other things that we cannot afford to hear God’s voice silently before Him. We must hear what prophet Isaiah said: “... In quietness and trust is your strength ...” (Isa. 30:15). We must hear that it is our strength to trust in God quietly.

Look at Psalms 62:1, 5 – “My soul waits in silence for God only ...” (v. 1) and “My soul, wait in silence for God only ...” (v. 5). I want to listen to God's voice by staying quietly before God under the headline “Let us wait in silence for God only.”

### **First, what does it mean to wait in silence for God only?**

The phrase “My soul, wait in silence for God only” means that a person completely trusts in God without any desire or movement to do something on his own (Park). Look at Psalms 62:8 – “Trust in Him at all times, O people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah.” David urged the people who were loyal to him to always trust in God completely. And he urged the people to pour out their hearts before God. This word means to devote their hearts to God like pouring water (Park). Dr. Park Yoon-sun says that there are two things to think about when we dedicate our hearts to God: (1) To receive God's love, we must love God with our whole hearts. (2) Pouring out our hearts before God means telling God about all our difficulties, trusting in Him completely, and live without fear.

We must wait in silence for God only. We must rely solely on Him at all time. We must offer our whole hearts to God who looks at the heart. And we must go quietly to God and pour out our hearts to Him in prayer. Look at the chorus of the hymn “Go, Carry they Burden to Jesus”: “O, steal away softly to Jesus, To Him let thy heart be outpoured; Thy Father, who seeth in secret, Shall give thee a gracious reward.” We must go quietly before God and pour out our hearts to Him.

## **Second, when should we wait in silence for God only?**

David waited in silence for God only when his enemies, Absalom's people, rebelled against him and persecuted him. Look at Psalms 62:3-4: “How long will you assail a man, That you may murder him, all of you, Like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence? They have counseled only to thrust him down from his high position; They delight in falsehood; They bless with their mouth, But inwardly they curse. Selah.” David's rebels somehow tried to take King David, whom God had established, from his throne. Their tricks was to bless King David with their mouths, but cursed him inwardly. Those who enjoyed lying tried to kill David all at once. At that time, David trusted in God completely. Interestingly, he described the people of Absalom who rebelled against him as “a leaning wall” and “a tottering fence” (v. 3). Although Absalom and his people seemed strong to many people when David was running away from Absalom, David, who waited in silence for God only, saw them “like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence” (v. 3). The lesson this fact teaches us is that the perspective of a person who waits in silence for God only in a crisis is different from that of a person who doesn't wait in silence for God. In other words, the average person who doesn't wait in silence for God only in the midst of crisis, that is, he who doesn't trust in God solely, see a group such as those of Absalom, who rebelled against David, as strong and powerful people. However, the perspective of the person who waits in silence for God only, like David's, sees such group as people like the leaning wall and like the tottering fence. What is our perspective now? Do we see the adversities and difficulties that we encounter as “like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence” like David, who waited in silence for God only?

## **Third, why should we wait in silence for God only?**

The reason is because “my salvation” and “my hope” come from God. Look at Psalms 62:1, 5 – “My soul waits in silence for God only; From Him is my salvation. ... My soul, wait in silence for God only, For my hope is from Him.” The reason why David waited in silence for God only even in the dangerous situation due to Absalom's rebellion was because he knew and believed that only God was his salvation and his hope. That was why he confessed like this: “My soul waits in silence for God only” (vv.1, 5) and “He only is my rock and my salvation, My stronghold” (vv. 2, 6).

What is our problem? The problem is ‘God + Alpha’, that is, the tendency to rely on someone or something other than God. In order to solve this problem, God cuts off everything else we depend on other than God. Therefore, He makes us to confess as in the lyrics of the verse 3 and the chorus of the hymn “My Hope of Built on Nothing Less”: “His oath, His covenant, His blood, Support me in the whelming flood; When all around my soul gives way He then is all my hope and stay. On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand, All other ground is sinking sand.” One of the things that is still unforgettable is the memory that my grandfather asked me to sing the hymn “O Thou, in Whose Presence”. Whenever I sing that hymn, verses 1 comes to my heart: “O

Thou, in whose presence my soul takes delight, On whom in affliction I call, My comfort by day, and my song in the night, My hope, my salvation, my all!”

#### **Fourth and last, what must we do in order to wait in silence for God only?**

##### (1) We must know who our God is.

We must know that our God is “my rock,” “my salvation” and “My stronghold”. Look at Psalms 62:2, 6 – “He only is my rock and my salvation, My stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken” (2x). Those who know God, that He is “my rock,” “my salvation” and “My stronghold” wait in silence for God only and thus they aren’t shaken. In other words, those who know God are strong. Those who know God and trust in Him solely aren’t shaken. But those who don’t know God and those who don’t make His their rock and salvation and stronghold are “Like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence” (v. 3).

##### (2) We must not trust anyone or anything other than God.

###### (a) **We must not trust people.**

Look at Psalms 62:9 – “Men of low degree are only vanity and men of rank are a lie; In the balances they go up; They are together lighter than breath.” People cannot be trusted. So David confessed in Psalms 60:11 – “... For deliverance by man is in vain.” He trusted in God only and acted courageously (v. 12).

###### (b) **We must not trust power or riches.**

Look at Psalms 62:10 – “Do not trust in extortion or take pride in stolen goods; though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them.” Our human nature tends to depend on power or wealth as power or wealth increase. Therefore, David advises not to trust in extortion or take pride in stolen good or riches. We must completely trust in God only.

##### (3) We must trust in God’s power and lovingkindness.

Look at Psalms 62:11-12: “Once God has spoken; Twice I have heard this: That power belongs to God; And lovingkindness is Yours, O Lord, For You recompense a man according to his work.” The word of God that David heard is that “That power belongs to God” (v. 11). The battle belongs to God, and the

victory in that battle belongs to God. God is the God who recompenses a man according to his work (v. 12). God saved David who waits in silence for God only and who trusted in Him only. But Absalom and his people who tried to kill David were destroyed by God.

Let's wait in silence for God only! Let's trust in Him who is our rock, our salvation and stronghold completely. And let us all go quietly before God and pour out our hearts to Him. Let's not trust in people, power or increasing riches. When we do so, no matter how difficult the problems are in people's eyes, we who wait in silence for God only will see them like the leaning wall and the tottering fence. Let us all wait in silence for God who is our rock, our salvation, our stronghold!

“My soul waits in silence for God only”

James Kim

(Trusting in God who is my salvation and my hope)

## **When my heart shakes**

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

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

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

Look at Psalms 62:8a – "Trust in him at all times, O people ...." When our hearts are shaken by the attack of Satan, we must realize two truths at the same time: (1) that we should not depend on the riches even if increase (v. 10) but (2) that we should depend on God only (vv. 1, 2, 5, 6). Satan attacks us many times, especially with the temptation of money. Especially when we are in material poverty, Satan diligently tempts us with money. Satan tempts us even to increase our wealth, and in the end Satan is trying to make us to serve both the Lord and the riches. This temptation of Satan can shake our hearts enough. But as the Bible says, we should not depend on wealth even though it increases (v. 10). Rather, we must rely solely on God, as David did (v. 8). When our hearts are shaken, we should look to Lord quietly (vv. 1, 5). We should only look to the Lord silently (vv. 2, 6). How is this possible? How can we only look to God when our hearts are shaken? The Scripture Psalms 42:5, 11 and 43:5 came to my mind: "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God." I often pray to God like this. Especially when I am depressed and insecure in my

mind, I will pray to God as I declare to my own soul: 'James, why are you downcast and why are you so disturbed within me?' When I do that, I experience God's help. I experienced God restoring my downcast and disturbed soul with His promise Word and raise me up. Likewise, when my heart shakes, I want to proclaim to my own soul and to go to God in prayer, like the psalmist David, "Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him." Why should we quietly look only to God? This is because "my salvation" and "my hope" come from the Lord (vv. 1, 5). The reason is that only the Lord is "my rock" and "my fortress" (vv. 2, 6). Therefore, we will not be shaken as we quietly trust God and gaze Him quietly (vv.2, 6). Rather, we will gain strength (Isa. 30:15).

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

Look at Psalms 62:8 – "Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. Selah." Many members in the church are unable to share their concerns and struggles. The reason they cannot do this is because they know that when they share their concerns and struggles, what they have shared can become a rumor in the church and eventually hurts them. That's why without sharing their hearts they just live day by day with their own struggles and troubles. The church needs to be a community of sharing, and it seems that there is not a church culture that can deeply share each other's struggles and troubles. It is a sad reality. But in this reality, we are not frustrated because we can go to God and pour out our hearts to Him. That's why I like the hymn "Go, carry thy burden to Jesus". This is what the chorus says: "O, steal away softly to Jesus, To Him let thy heart be outpoured; Thy Father, who seeth in secret, Shall give thee a gracious reward." How grateful we are that we can quietly go to Him and pour out our hearts. It is a privilege and a blessing for us to be able to cry out in prayer to our Lord who loves us the most and knows us best. The psalmist David has always encouraged the Israelites to trust in God and to pour out his heart before God because God is their refuge (v. 8). He was able to exhort them to pour out their hearts to God (v.7) because he trusted God who was his power and rock and refuge in the midst of his enemies attacking him (vv. 3-4). When he did so, David heard the word of God. The words that he heard were two: That power belongs to God (v. 11) and (2) Lovingkindness is God's (v. 12). When our hearts is shaken, we must pour out hearts to God as we trust Him. As we do so, we will be able to experience God's power and God's lovingkindness (Ps. 63:3).

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

## **“O God, You are my God”**

### **[Psalms 63]**

At this Morning Prayer meeting, I meditated on Proverbs 12:3 – “A man will not be established by wickedness, But the root of the righteous will not be moved.” As I meditated on the solid root of the immovable righteous, I thought about how to have such deep-rooted faith. I think Proverbs 12:1 gives the answer: “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, ....” The solid, deep-rooted faith of the immovable righteous man is based on a knowledge of God. But, as Pastor Lloyd Jones says in his book, "The Christian Warfare," one of Satan's works is to keep us from growing up in the knowledge of God. Eventually, like the prophecy of Amos, now there is a famine for hearing the words of the Lord (Am. 8:11). Therefore, I think that the people of God are perishing because they don't have knowledge of God according to the prophecy of Hosea (Hos. 4:6). We must grow in the knowledge of God. As Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 4:13, we must all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. Then we will be strong. A wise man is strong, and a man of knowledgeable increases power (Prov. 24:5).

In Psalms 63:1, the psalmist David experiences God's presence in the wilderness of Judah, so he confesses to know God more deeply and broadly in the wilderness of Judea rather than in the royal palace: “O God, You are my God ...” (Ps. 63:1). As we meditate on the David's poem, confessing that God is God, I would like to receive lessons by thinking about the heart of believers who make such a confession.

**First, the soul of David, who confessed “O God, You are my God,” earnestly sought God.**

Look at Psalms 63:1 – “O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water.” The wilderness is, as David said, "a dry land and weary land where there is no water." As David flees from Absalom, he seeks God as if he was thirst for water in the wilderness. In other words, he had desire to seek God. However, the question arises, "Did David really desire to seek God even when he was in the royal palace?" In his book "Leap Over a Wall" Pastor Eugene Peterson said David's most inexcusable and most costly sin of his life was the sin of not truly forgiving his son Absalom. Then he said of this David's sin in the royal palace: “Adultery with Bathsheba was an extramarital affair committed by not overcoming a momentary lust, and the sin committed as king to cover it up killed Uriah. But rejection of Absalom



was sin of persistently determined refusal to impart to his son what he had so abundantly received from God' (Peterson). Pastor Peterson speculated that even after David brought Absalom to the royal palace, David's interest in God would have declined and his prayer life would have decreased while he treated Absalom with heartlessness. In other words, the more he distanced himself from Absalom without truly forgiving him, the farther he was from God. So, of course, David couldn't have prayed earnestly to God. I think this is what we are. I think we are no different from David. In God-given abundance, we don't earnestly pray to God. But when we are in "a dry and weary land" where there is nothing around us because God disciplines us for our sins in our abundance and leads us into the wilderness. This is certainly God's grace and blessing. It is God's grace and blessing that God leads us into the wilderness. Look at Hosea 2:14 – "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Bring her into the wilderness And speak kindly to her." In the days of Hosea, the Israelites lived a syncretistic life of faith while serving God and Baal together. But the wonderful grace and blessing is that in the wilderness, God spoke kindly to Israel.

God is the God who takes us into the wilderness through loving discipline because we keep away from God in abundance. What is God's true heart? There, in the wilderness, God wants us to restore our desire to seek God. How was David's earnestness restored in the wilderness? In the dry and weary wilderness where there is no water, David didn't have longing for a woman like Bathsheba. In other words, David once longed for the lust of his flesh, the lust of his eyes, and the boastful pride of life (1 Jn. 2:16) in the royal palace. But now in the wilderness, his soul and body have longed for only the Lord. Therefore, David could confess, "O God, You are my God" (Ps. 63:1).

## **Second, the soul of David, who confessed "O God, You are my God", remembered God on his bed.**

Look at Psalms 63:6 – "When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches." The first hour of the day is good time to meditate on the Lord and His word in the morning, and it is good time to meditate on the Lord even at the end of the day, at night. We need time to sit alone in quiet times and meditate on the Lord, looking back and reflecting on what He has done in our lives today. In the midst of that, I think it will be of great benefit to our faith growth if we take the habit of thinking about God we met today and meditating on the God spoken in the Bible with faith. This is what Dr. Yoon-sun Parr said: 'When a person is in the 'bed', his mind is once removed from all external affairs. I think that is a good opportunity to have godly heart' (Park).

What does it mean that David said that his soul remembered the Lord in the middle of the night in the wilderness of Judea? That means that David recalled the fact that the Lord helped him in the past. So he said, "For You have been my help, And in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy" (v. 7). David knew that God had not only helped in the past, but was able to escape into the wilderness through God's grace even in the situation currently pursued by Absalom. So while meditating on God's help in the middle of the night, David praised God in the

shadow of His wings, the Lord who had been his help.

The Lord is “my help”. The Lord protects us by guiding us into the shadow of His wings when we are in danger. We must meditate on this Lord. Especially, like David, we should take the time to think of the Lord in bed at night. And we should remember the Lord's help. We must reflect on the Lord's saving grace

### **Third, the soul of David, who confessed “O God, You are my God”, was satisfied.**

Look at Psalms 63:5 – “My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, ....” Obviously, David fled from Absalom and was in the wilderness of Judah, so he couldn't have eaten marrow and fatness as he did in the royal palace. In other words, David would not have been physically satisfied in the waterless and dry wilderness of Judah. But he was satisfied spiritually in the wilderness. How was he able to be spiritually satisfied, like eating marrow and fatness in the wilderness? The reason is that David experienced God's lovingkindness in the wilderness. He experienced that the Lord's lovingkindness was better than life, so that his soul was able to be satisfied through the eternal love of God (v. 3).

Are your souls satisfied now? You maybe satisfied physically, like David, as you live in your royal palace and as you eat something “marrow and fatness”. But aren't you spiritually hungry? David was betrayed by Absalom because of God's discipline after the sin of committing Bathsheba for his physical satisfaction at the royal palace and killing Uriah to cover it up. In the midst of God's discipline, even though David was hungry and destitute physically in the wilderness of Judea, spiritually he made the wilderness a sanctuary, longing for the power and glory of God, and eventually was satisfied.

There is a gospel song called “There is None Like You”. The lyrics of the song are like this: “There is none like You/ No one else can touch my heart like You do/ And I can search for all eternity, Lord/ And find, there is none like You/ Your mercy flows like a river so wide/ And healing comes from Your hand/ Suffering children are safe in Your arms/ There is none like You.” In the end, we must seek the Lord earnestly, believing that only God will satisfy our longing souls, feeling solitude in the midst of the crowd. Then our souls can be satisfied.

### **Fourth, the soul of David, who confessed “O God, You are my God”, praised the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 63:3 – “Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You.” Why did David praise God in the wilderness? The reason was because we experienced God's lovingkindness in the

wilderness. In other words, David made this confession of faith because he experienced the presence of a loving God when he earnestly sought God in the Judean wilderness: 'God is loving.'

If you look at Pastor Seong-Geon Hong's book 'The Person God is Looking for', there is a chapter entitled 'The Power of Praising the Lord who Comes to us in Praise'. In that chapter he said this about the power of praise: 'Where is the power of praise? It isn't in the praise itself, but when the content of the praise is a confession of faith, God is giving power in that faith. Praise is a confession of faith. ... When you 'I will praise You' it means that I choose and sing willingly. It mean that I choose to praise God even though my environment is so frustrating that I cannot sing' (Hong). An example is Paul and Silas in Acts 16. Paul and Silas prayed to God in prison, determined to praise Him in faith. David, in Psalms 63, decided to praise God because God's eternal love is better than his life. He came to feel God's eternal love for him in the wilderness. He certainly would not have experienced God's eternal love like this while in the royal palace. Had he experienced God's eternal love in the royal palace, he would not have committed the sin of truly unforgiving his son Absalom who killed his another Son Amnon while keeping his distance from Absalom even though he brought him back to the palace. Eventually, David was thrown out of the royal palace and was fleeing from Absalom, and he experienced God's love in the wilderness of Judea, where God protected him in the shadow of His wings from the Absalom's people who wanted to kill him (v. 7). David deeply experienced gracious hands of the Lord who helped David in the wilderness in his time of need more than in the royal palace. Because David realized that God was more eager for him than he was eager for God in the wilderness, he was compelled to praise God because of His wonderful love

### **Fifth, the soul of David, who confessed "O God, You are my God", clung to the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 63:8 – "My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me." What does it mean to cling to the Lord? If we look at Deuteronomy 4:4, we can see the answer: "But you who held fast to the LORD your God are alive today, every one of you." In other words, to cling to the Lord means to hold fast to the Lord and not leave. This refers to David's unflinching commitment to his Lord. In a word, David made recommitment to the Lord in the Judean wilderness. When he was in the royal palace, he left the Lord for a while and sinned against God. But when David was driven out of the royal palace and was in the wilderness, he didn't leave God and followed the Lord closely. David, who was not held fast to the Lord in the royal palace, didn't leave the Lord in the wilderness but held fast to Him. In other words, he made an unchanging commitment to God in the wilderness than in the royal palace. Isn't it interesting to see that David's devotion to the Lord changed in the royal place but in the wilderness it was unchanging commitment to Him? David experienced that the Lord's right hand was holding him in the wilderness. He made the wilderness "the sanctuary" to see the Lord's power and glory (Ps. 63:2). So God answered his prayer and held David fast with His powerful right hand. That was why David clung to the Lord and didn't leave Him.

We must cling to the Lord. When we do so, the Lord will hold us fast with His powerful right hand. In other words, we will experience the power of God in our weakest and most difficult times in the wilderness. Not only that God will hold us fast with His powerful right hand, God will destroy those who seek David's soul to destroy him.

**Sixth and last, the soul of David, who confessed “O God, You are my God,” rejoice in God.**

Look at Psalms 63:11 – “But the king will rejoice in God; Everyone who swears by Him will glory, For the mouths of those who speak lies will be stopped.” David experienced joy in the wilderness. The joy was something completely different from the worldly pleasures that he enjoyed for a while in the royal palace. The joy he experienced in the wilderness was joy that the world could not understand or give. He rejoiced because he experienced the eternal love of the Lord in the wilderness. David rejoiced because he experienced the satisfaction of his soul in the wilderness. David, who had been helped by the Lord and held fast by the right hand of the Lord's power, couldn't help but rejoice in the Lord.

Enjoying God is not necessarily based on circumstances. Look at David. He rejoiced in God in the wilderness, not in the royal palace. David rejoiced because of the Lord only. He was glad and rejoiced with the Lord alone. Therefore, like David, we must be glad and rejoice with the Lord alone.

This Monday evening I unexpectedly got a call from a brother in my church English ministry community. While sharing the grace received during last Sunday's English service, he wanted to meet me because he wanted to share with me about the “revelation” that the Lord gave to him. So we met the next Tuesday and had conversation as we had lunch together. His conviction was that the Lord wanted him to serve the church. So he asked me how to serve the church, even in the smallest matters. So I advised him to give God a regular worship service every Sunday. The reason I told him that was because I believed that doing (serving) must come out from being. That was I advised to become a true worshiper whom God seeks. The brother who heard my advise seemed to agree with me. While having a meal and having heart-to-heart conversation with that brother in the Lord, I was grateful and happy to see the brother's firm faith, that is, faith in the existence of God.

Prophet Hosea exhorts us like this: “So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD ...” (Hos. 6:3). I hope and pray that we may be able to confess, “O God, You are my God” (Ps. 63:1) as we press on to know Him. I hope and pray that as we live in this wilderness-like world, we may be able to experience the work of God that satisfies our souls even in the midst of adversity, hardship, persecution, and suffering like David as our souls long for God and remember Him in the middle of the night. Let us praise our God under the shadow of His wings as we

experience God's eternal love, His power and glory. And let's recommit ourselves before God. Then, like David, we will be able to enjoy God alone.

“O God, You are my God”,

James Kim

[“I never want anything in my life/ to take your place/ I never want to live by any other grace/ My longing and my heart's desire is to see your face/ O Lord and become a friend of God/ I love you day and night/ I love you all of life, I love you Lord heart and soul/ I long to be a friend of God” (Gospel song “Heart and Soul”)]

## **The song of James: Praising in the wilderness**

**“Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You”  
(Psalms 63:3).**

I sincerely welcome all of you to this praise night. I am very happy that our church Korean Ministry (KM) praise team has prepared a praise night so that we can have the time to praise God with our heart. When I think of my dear brothers and sisters in Christ who prepared this praise night, I want to say that this praise night is “Praising in the wilderness.” Of course, when we look at them with our own physical eyes, they are not living in the wilderness. Actually they live in the middle of the city. But when I think about their hearts, wanting to praise God out of love for Jesus Christ who is the oasis in the wilderness, I want to say that their praise in praising in the wilderness. Praising in the wilderness is like King David in Psalm 63:3, who made the wilderness the sanctuary (v. 2) and praised God for His lovingkindness in the midst of persecution and suffering, our church KM praise team has prepared the songs to praise God because of His lovingkindness. I personally spent time reflecting on my own life thinking about this praise night. And I divided my life into six praises:

I was born a Christian. I was born in a Christian family. My father is a pastor so I am sure I went to church even when I was in my mother’s womb. I still remember my childhood in a place called Sang-hyun church in Sang-gye-dong, South Korea. When I look back at that time when I used to go to that church that my father served as a senior pastor, I still remember I used to sing a Korean gospel song ‘With money, we can’t go to Heaven.’ Although they are three verses of lyrics, I can only remember the verse 1 and the chorus: (v. 1) With money, we can’t go to Heaven. With power, we can’t go to Heaven. (chorus) If we are born again, we can go to Heaven. If we have faith, we can go to Heaven.’ If I think about it now, why I still remember this song among the many songs I sang when I was little, maybe it is because the word “money” that comes out in the very beginning of the verse 1. Haha.

And when I was 12 years old in Korea, I graduated from elementary school and immigrated to the United States with my parents and lived in Los Angeles Korea town. At that time, I didn’t even know the alphabet. But when I went back to elementary school again, I had to take a test and I had to memorize 20 vocabularies. When I came to the United States, I had a hard time adapting to American life because of cultural and language differences. Maybe that was why I enjoyed hanging out with only my Korean friends. Then I went into high school and I wandered around with my friends. At that time, I didn’t miss Sunday’s service because I was a pastor’s kid. And the books that I encountered at that time were the books written by Kim Hyung-seok and Kim Dong-gil, former

professors of the well-known universities in Korea. As I read their books, I became a little philosopher and asked myself such questions like 'What is the purpose of life?', 'How can I enjoy happiness?' numerous times and sought to find the answers in this world. At that time, it was the dark age of my life so if I look back now, I can't remember the praise that I sang at that time.

Then, when I entered a college, I attended the college retreat at this church as a freshman. At that time, I attended the retreat reluctantly because I was a pastor's son. But on the second or last evening of the retreat meeting, an incredible thing happened to me when I heard the miracle of Jesus feeding 5,000 men with two fish and five loaves of bread in John 6. When the guest speaker challenged us to come forward if we wanted to offer our lives to the Lord like a boy who offered his two fish and five loaves of bread to Jesus, I was walking forward toward the pulpit. And I remember kneeling down and crying and wailing. I'm not sure why so many tears came out. I think it was because I met Jesus and encountered the presence of my Lord Jesus whom I knew with only my head. As I remembered all the sins I had intentionally committed, I just wanted to ask God for forgiveness (Tears of Repentance). And I was very thankful. I just thanked Him for calling me who was and still is like just two fish and five loaves of bread (Tears of Thanksgiving). And the Holy Spirit worked in my heart to offer my life to the Lord (Tears of Commitment). At that time, I was determined to be a pastor and prepared to go to seminary. Until that time, my purpose of study was money, but after that night of the college retreat, my purpose became Jesus and the glory of God. From that time on, my favorite song of praise is "I Offer My Life":

“Lord, I offer my life to You Everything I've been through Use it for Your glory  
Lord I offer my days to You Lifting my praise to You As a pleasing sacrifice  
Lord I offer You my life  
Things in the past Things yet unseen Wishes and dreams that are yet to come true  
All of my hopes And all of my planes My heart and my hands are lifted to You  
Lord, I offer my life to You Everything I've been through Use it for Your glory  
Lord I offer my days to You Lifting my praise to You As a pleasing sacrifice  
Lord I offer You my life.”

From that time on until now and until I die, this is the praise of my heart that has been written deeply on the tablet of my heart. Around that time, I learned to play the guitar by myself. The reason was because I used to come to Los Angeles every weekend and met my friends but after I met Jesus and offered my life to Him, I could no longer hang out with my friends, drinking, smoking, partying, and hang out. Although in the past, I had ignored my conscience and continued to wander in guilt, but I no longer wanted to do so. So every weekend before I put a sleeping bag on the church meal table in order to sleep, I went outside of the church and looked at the night sky and thought about where my friends would be at the moment. I was lonely so I began to learn how to play guitar by just looking at the back of the Korean gospel song book where there was the guitar cords. So I started learning how to

play D code, G code, A code, etc. And the first song that I was able to play guitar was "God is so Good" because it was the song with the simplest guitar chords. Haha. "God is so good, God is so good. God is so good, He so good to me."

And since I believed in Jesus, God gave me a desire to serve in the Christian club in my college life. So I had an opportunity to serve as a personal manager and served my brothers and sisters in Christ. Personal manager is not a special thing, but when they contacted me through my beeper, I picked them and gave them ride and so on since they didn't have car. Haha. If they wanted to go to market, I picked them up from their dormitories or apartments and gave them ride to the market. And if they wanted to go to a church to pray, I gave them ride to the church as well. It is just fun memories. Haha. At that time, it was very difficult to take care of the couple of sisters in Christ because I felt love toward them so I had to suppress and repress my feeling. Haha. At that time, the words that I learned deeply in my heart while studying psychology were the words "suppression," "repression" and "rejection." Haha. At that time, I learned English praise as I was rejected by couple of sisters. It was the song by Benny Hester "Nobody knows my like You." I still remember I sang that song louder as I was driving toward the beach near the college after I was rejected by a sister in Christ whom I confessed my feeling towards her. Hahaha. At that time, the chorus of the song was especially comforting to me:

"Nobody knows me like You Put Your arms around me You bring me through  
And there's many times I don't know what to do Though some know me well  
Still nobody knows me like You  
All of my secrets to You I tell You saw each time that I slipped and fell  
And all of my faults yes, You know them well  
But You've never turned me away, no, no, no"

After I graduated from college and after I graduated from a seminary, I met my wife now. When I met her I was about to get License to preach in my church denomination. I still remember the hymn that we sang together during our wedding ceremonial worship. It was "Thou, My Everlasting Portion":

(v. 1) Thou, my everlasting portion, More than friend or life to me;  
All a long my pilgrim journey, Savior, let me walk with Thee.  
(v. 2) Not for ease or worldly pleasure, Nor for fame my prayer shall be;  
Gladly will I toil and suffer, Only let me walk with Thee.  
(v. 3) Lead me thro' the vale of shadows, Bear me o'er life's fitful sea;  
Then the gate of life eternal May I enter, Lord, with Thee.  
(chorus)  
Close to Thee, close to Thee, Close to Thee, close to Thee;  
All a long my pilgrim journey, Savior, let me walk with Thee. A-men.



At that time, I and my wife couldn't help but shed tears of thanksgiving.

And the song that my wife and I can't forget is the song that the Holy Spirit enabled me to sing to God after our first baby Charis died and after spreading her ashes into the water. The song is "My Savior's love for me":

- (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!

I believe in the power of praise. For example, the power of praise is when Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God in prison, suddenly there came a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened (Acts 16:25-26). Likewise, I hope and pray that when our church praise team sing song of praise to God, may God open our hearts widely so that all our chains of this world may be removed so that we may be free in the Lord. Furthermore, when the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped (v. 27). But eventually, the jailer and all his family believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and were saved and rejoiced greatly (vv. 31-34). Likewise, I hope and pray that there is amazing and marvelous work of salvation tonight through the praises of the wilderness tonight.

Wanting to praise God until my last breathe in this earth,

Pastor James Kim

## Let us ponder what God has done.

### [Psalms 64]

While reading the Bible this Monday evening, I meditated on Ecclesiastes 3:18 – “I said to myself concerning the sons of men, "God has surely tested them in order for them to see that they are but beasts.” When I faced this word, my first reaction was a little puzzled because God's purpose of testing man is to make us realize that we are no different than beasts. What do you think about this word? As I meditated on this word a little more, I remembered Psalms 73:22 – “Then I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a beast before You.” The psalmist Asaph, who was jealous of the prosperity of the wicked for a moment, confessed that he was like a beast before the Lord when he realized the end of the wicked, and knew how foolish and ignorant he was. He who is beast before the Lord is ignorant of the consequences of the wicked. In other words, he who is like a beast before the Lord is a person who doesn't see the end of the future wicked and lives envious of the present prosperity of the wicked. Such person is the person who doesn't think deeply about the works of God (64:9). In other words, the person like a beast before the Lord lives without knowing how God punishes the wicked. Therefore, I would like to meditate on two things under the heading “Let us ponder what God has done” based on Psalms 64, especially verse 9: (1) The first thing I want to think about is to grasp the cunning of David's enemy. (2) Then I want to ponder what God did to David's enemy and how He did it. As we do so, may God pour out His grace to all of us.

### **First, we must grasp the cunning of our enemy, the Devil.**

Look at Psalms 64:6 – “They plot injustice and say, "We have devised a perfect plan!" Surely the mind and heart of man are cunning.” Here “They” refer to either Saul or Absalom and his people, David's enemy (v. 1). As they thought about how do they get rid of David and conceived iniquity, they eventually came up with the trick, a perfect plan. David, who knew about their perfect plan, said that ‘a man's inner will and heart are cunning’ (v. 6). Then, I hope that we can use it as an opportunity to understand the cunning of our enemy, the devil, by grasping four ways how the cunning heart of David's enemy was expressed.

#### (1) David's enemies had “the conspiracy” to harm David.

Look at Psalms 64:2 – “Hide me from the conspiracy of the wicked, from that noisy crowd of evildoers.” This means that David's enemies were aiming for David's life (v. 1), and they made a lot of snare to harm

David's life. And the wicked, David's enemies, believed that their plan was "a perfect plan" (v. 6). When we fall into this perfect plan of the wicked, we cannot escape with our own strength. Only Almighty God is the One who can make us to escape from the perfect plan of the wicked (Park). That was why David cried out to God "Hide me from the conspiracy of the wicked, from that noisy crowd of evildoers" (v. 2). In Psalms 2:1-2, the devil opposes God and the Messiah (Jesus Christ), the anointed One of God, by gathering all his servants, 'the nations and the people' (v. 1), 'the kings of the earth and the rulers' (v. 2) and making them to be in an uproar and to devise a vain thing (v. 1), and to take counsel together (v. 2) against God and His anointed One, Jesus. How much more will the devil not be against us, the children and people of God? The devil always has a "conspiracy". He always has schemes to destroy us. Therefore, we need to be little aware of how to live a life of faith.

(2) David's enemy encouraged each other "in evil plans", and talked about "hiding their snares."

Look at Psalms 64:5 – "They encourage each other in evil plans, they talk about hiding their snares; they say, "Who will see them?" Here, of course, the evil plans are to hurt David's life. So, to achieve that purpose, David's enemies secretly snares David. Do you know about "snares"? Have you ever seen people put traps or snares to catch rabbits or birds? The true skill of dealing with the traps or snares is, of course, hiding the traps or snares. When placing the snare, it is completely disguised and covered (Jones). When David's enemies were completely disguised, and secretly laid the snares, the snares they put in secret was perfect in their eyes, so that they said, "Who will see them?" (v. 5) How can we see if David couldn't see the snares, the secret snares that only God and the devil know? We must recognize the dangers of the snares that the devil puts secretly in our lives. And we must learn how to avoid those snares. The devil is aiming for our lives. The "life" is thought to be "eternal life" rather than the physical life. This is the evil purpose of the devil. He secretly puts snares in our lives so that we cannot get our eternal life in any way. So we have no choice but to ask God like David: "... O God, ... protect my life from the threat of the enemy" (v. 1).

(3) David's enemies were aiming at David with vicious words.

Look at Psalms 64:3 – "They sharpen their tongues like swords and aim their words like deadly arrows." This refers to the viciousness of the lips. Those vicious words shoot and kill others like arrows. In other words, the vicious words defame others and bury them (Park). David's enemies tried to stab and shoot David with violent words by exploiting their sharp, poisonous tongue like swords and arrows. Truly the tongue can be used so evil way. So Apostle James said about the tongue like this: "But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison" (Jam. 3:8). The tongue of the wicked is full of

deadly poison. The tongue of the wicked is evil that never ceases. No one can tame it. David's enemies were secretly pointing at David with their vicious tongues like swords and arrows while discussing to put the snares on David.

(4) David's enemies were suddenly attacking from ambush.

Look at Psalms 64:4 – “They shoot from ambush at the innocent man; they shoot at him suddenly, without fear.” David's enemies kept everything secret so they hid themselves. But eventually they suddenly attacked David without fear in order to harm him. David's enemies suddenly attacked innocent David, who had done nothing wrong, from hiding. Watching the news of the Iraq War these days, I come across the news that snipers are shooting and killing American soldiers in hiding. Bombs are also secretly hidden in the streets and detonated, killing American soldiers. We shouldn't put the guard down. The reason is because when we are defenseless, the devil attacks us.

Pastor Lloyd Jones says in his book “The Christian Welfare”, ‘Cunning is a great quality of the devil’ (Ref. Gen. 3:1). In Psalms 64, we have considered the cunning heart of David's enemies in four ways. They made evil plans and talked about hiding their snares, and aimed at him with vicious words, and eventually attacked David suddenly in hiding. Now that we have grasped the devil's cunning heart, what should we do? Like David, we must pray to God. What should we pray to God?

(1) We must lay down our complaint to God.

Look at Psalms 64:1a – “Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint ....” We must lay down our confused heart like a thorn in front of the Lord in prayer (Park).

(2) We must ask God to preserve our lives.

Look at Psalms 64:1b – “... Preserve my life from dread of the enemy.” We cannot overcome the devil's cunning. Without God's help, we cannot overcome. Therefore, like David, we must ask God to preserve our lives. Also, we must ask God to hide us (v. 2). The God who hid David, David's enemies did everything secretly, including “secret counsel” (v. 2) and laid snares secretly (v. 5). Interestingly, in the midst of the evil actions of David's enemies who laid snares secretly like this, David asked the Lord, “Hide me from the secret counsel of evildoers and secret snares (vv. 2, 5).

**Second, after we grasp the cunning of our enemy, the devil, what we need to do more and more is to think deeply about the work of God.**

Look at Psalms 64:9 – “All mankind will fear; they will proclaim the works of God and ponder what he has done.” God's work that we need to think about is God's work in punishing our enemies. This is what Psalms 64:7-8 say about God's work: “But God will shoot them with arrows; suddenly they will be struck down. He will turn their own tongues against them and bring them to ruin; all who see them will shake their heads in scorn.” Here, it is stated how God punishes the wicked. It's a way for the wicked to fall into the snare they've hid (Park). For example, even though David's enemies aimed their words like deadly arrows in hiding to hurt David (v. 3), God aimed at David's enemies. Therefore, suddenly David's enemies were struck down (v. 7) and brought them to ruin (v. 8). Also, while David's enemies aimed at David with their vicious tongue like swords and arrows, God didn't let them hurt David with their vicious tongue, but rather hurt them.

What was the result of God punishing David's enemies?

(1) The crowd who saw that God punished the wicked became aware of God's existence (Park).

Look at Psalms 64:8b-9: “... all who see them will shake their heads in scorn. All mankind will fear; they will proclaim the works of God and ponder what he has done.” Everyone will fear God, proclaim God and think deeply about God's work.

(2) The righteous enjoy God even more.

Look at Psalms 64:10 – “Let the righteous rejoice in the LORD and take refuge in him; let all the upright in heart praise him!” This is what Dr. Yoon-sun Park said: ‘Although it was good for the righteous that God had avenged their enemies, but God Himself was better for them than that. Therefore, they accept God closer and rejoice in Him who repay their enemies’ (Park).

The devil is truly cunning and crafty. The devil is still working to harm us by secretly devising a conspiracy, secretly putting a snare, attacking us with a vicious tongue, and suddenly attacking us in hiding. Who can truly escape the devil's snare with his own power? Without the help of Almighty God, we cannot escape from the devil's snare. Therefore, we must ask God. When we do so, God will rescue us by punishing the devil and his servants. Anyone who doesn't know this is a beast before the Lord. We must never sin against God in senseless and ignorant. We must faithfully endure the spiritual battle that exists within us in faith as we contemplate the fact that God

punishes our enemies.

While in spiritual welfare,

James Kim

(While believing that I will be victorious with God's grace)

## **“We will be satisfied with the goodness of Your house”**

### **[Psalms 65]**

The book “When Is Enough, Enough?” (authors: Laurie Ashner and Mitch Meyerson) is a psychological analysis about those who captivated themselves with the obsession that they were always unsatisfied and anxious about something even when they achieved something, and that they weren't happy when something good happened. The authors who have been in psychological counseling for over 10 years refer to this condition as ‘chronic dissatisfaction syndrome’, and analyze the seven psychological symptoms associated with it and talk about how to cure it. The authors point out that these symptoms of dissatisfaction were more severe for those who achieved what they wanted and got what they wanted rather than those who had suffered many failures. Looking at people who feel rather depressed when they should be happy, the authors emphasize that satisfaction is never a matter of achievement or possession, and that dissatisfaction that builds up little by little and binds oneself is a bigger problem. People with Chronic Dissatisfaction Syndrome are said to have the following psychological characteristics (Internet):

- Even if they succeed, they don't feel joy. Rather, they wonder if they can do it again when they need to be happy.
- Even if they think they are special and talented, they even doubt themselves.
- They feel upset because others don't recognize their efforts, but it is uncomfortable to receive praise.
- Rather than taking the lead, they are always satisfied with the role of helping someone. They feel bitter when they see a person whom they thought was less capable and insignificant than themselves is doing well.
- Just that kind of success isn't enough. Being mediocre is like failing.
- They think they shouldn't rely on others. If they have problems with the opposite sex, family, or work, they always blame themselves.
- They should always prove themselves.
- Unconsciously repeating situations that feel frustrated.
- They hate reaching out to others.
- They always struggle.

Are you satisfied with your life? If you aren't satisfied, how will you be satisfied? Will you be satisfied if you had a lot of material and an abundant income? This is what Solomon confessed in Ecclesiastes 5:10 – “He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity.” Will you be satisfied if you enjoy everything your eyes want and what your heart enjoys? Solomon also confesses

to this: “All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor.” I wonder where there a person in this world who has enjoyed everything like King Solomon did. When we think about the confession that King Solomon has made in the end “Vanity of vanities! All is vanity” (1:2) after he enjoyed all things, we cannot but confess that in the end nothing can satisfy our souls.

However, in Psalms 65:4, the psalmist David confesses: “How blessed is the one whom You choose and bring near to You To dwell in Your courts We will be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, Your holy temple.” Here, “Your house, Your holy temple” symbolizes the church, and “We will be satisfied with the goodness” means that we are satisfied with “spiritual grace” (Park). So, under the heading “We will be satisfied with the goodness of Your house,” I would like to receive three lessons about how our church should be satisfied with His spiritual grace.

### **First, we must be satisfied with God's answer to our prayers (Ps. 65:1-4).**

Look at Psalms 65:2 – “O You who hear prayer, To You all men come.” What we can see here is that our Lord is the hearer of prayer. However, there are times when the Lord will not answer our prayers. In other words, there are three great obstacles in answered prayer.

#### (1) Our sins.

Look at Isaiah 59:1-2: “Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.”

#### (2) Our refusal to listen to the word of God.

Look at Proverbs 28:9 – “He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, Even his prayer is an abomination.”

#### (3) Our pride.

Look at James 4:6 – “But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” When we are proud, God does not answer our prayers.

Then what kind of prayer does our Lord hear?

#### (1) Our Lord hears to the prayer of praise.

Look at Psalms 65:1 – “There will be silence before You, and praise in Zion, O God, And to You the vow will be performed.” As we learned in the June Bible study “The Power of Prayer,” there are many types of



prayer: praise, thanksgiving, confession, intercession, and supplication. Among these, the prayer of praise is a prayer that first knows and acknowledges God is God in prayer. As a good example, I remember Psalms 18:1-2: "I love You, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold." The psalmist David stayed quietly ("silence") in front of the Lord, anxiously looking forward to praise God (Park). In particular, he wanted to praise "God of our salvation" (v. 5).

(2) Our Lord hears to our thanksgiving prayer.

Look at Psalms 65:2 – "O You who hear prayer, To You all men come." The God of David, and our God is the Lord who hears our prayers. Therefore, we are giving thanks to God. Furthermore, as David said, "all men," Jews and Gentiles, both nobles and lowly, come to pray to God (Park).

(3) Our Lord hears the prayer of confession (repentance).

Look at Psalms 65:3 – "Iniquities prevail against me; As for our transgressions, You forgive them." If we look at 1 John 1:9, the assurance of forgiveness verse, the Bible promises this: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The church is a house of prayer. We are people who pray. Therefore, we must go up to the Lord's house and pray to Him. We must offer a prayer of praise, a prayer of thanksgiving, and a prayer of repentance to God. In doing so, we must be satisfied with God who answers our prayers.

**Second, we must be satisfied with God's giving victory of war to us (Ps. 65:5-8).**

In Psalms 65:5-8, David gave thanks to God for the grace that He gave to him, the victory of the war, that he was saved from Absalom's revolt (Park). In the midst of Absalom's persecution and dilemma, David relied entirely on God. So when he offered the prayer of praise, the prayer of thanksgiving, and the prayer of repentance to God, God heard the prayer and answered it. That is, God saved David from Absalom and his people. So David confessed: "By awesome deeds You answer us in righteousness, O God of our salvation, You who are the trust of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest sea" (v. 5). Here, the word that God answered David's prayer "in righteousness" was David's conviction that God who saved David in the past would save him even now through wonderful things, supernatural works" (Park). David prayed to the God of salvation and believed that He would hear his prayers and answer him. Within that faith, it was the strength of the Lord that David relied on and believed in (v. 6). When David became weak and chased by Absalom and his men, David trusted in Almighty God, who established the mountains by His strengthen and being girded with might. The Almighty God he trusted in was the God who calmed down the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the tumult of the peoples (v. 7). David, who trusted in that God, had joy. On the contrary, fear came to Absalom and his people, who opposed God's

servant David (v. 8).

This is what 2 Samuel 8:6 says, "... And the LORD helped David wherever he went." The Lord made David win the war wherever he went. Therefore, David trusted in God and with God he gained the victory (Ps. 60:12). The triumphant God was with David, and in David's combative life, he entered the battle with confidence of victory, and he was satisfied and thankful because the Lord made him triumph. Like David, we must act courageously, trusting in God completely. Of course, continuing spiritual warfare can cause our souls to suffer, torment, anxiety, and disappointment. However, like David, we must completely trust in the God of salvation in our spiritual warfare. In particular, we must fight this spiritual battle by relying on the power of the God of salvation. In this spiritual fight, we must trust in the victorious Lord. He is with us and will make us victorious in our spiritual warfare. With this assurance of this victory, we must live a militant life. In the meantime, we must satisfy our souls through the victory that the Lord gives us. Furthermore, we must be satisfied with the victorious Lord.

### **Third and last, we must be satisfied with good harvest (Ps. 65:9-13).**

Look at Psalms 65:9 – "You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it." The God who created the heavens and the earth is a God who provides grain to his people and provides them with abundance. He is the God who makes the land very rich because of the opening of the heavenly gate and giving rain and moistening the earth with water. He is the God who "drench its furrows and level its ridges; you soften it with showers and bless its crops" (v. 10). God blessed David with the good harvest. This can be evidence that God had heard David's prayer of repentance. In other words, God is the God who makes us needy like the prodigal son when we don't repent after committing a sin, so that we long for the abundant house of God and turn to God and repent. In the end, when David was driven away by Absalom for the sin he committed in the royal palace, God made David to repent in the wilderness. After that, God brought David back to the royal palace, thereby enriching David.

Even when we are in need like the prodigal son, we should be grateful because all of the material things we depended on are lost, which gives us an opportunity to look to God and rely on God again. If we can thank God when we are in need, how can we not be grateful for the abundance that God gives us? We are those who have received every spiritual blessings in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:4). We have been chosen by our Heavenly Father, who predestined us, and have become His children (v. 5). In addition, we have been forgiven (redemption) of our sins and have become "the glory of His grace" (v. 6). All of these are spiritual blessings given to us in Christ Jesus by our Heavenly Father. We are those who have already received abundant grace from God. Therefore, we must live with satisfaction with His abundant grace. Like Apostle Paul, we must learn the secret of self-sufficiency (Phil. 4:11-12). What is the secret to that self-sufficiency? It is to be satisfied with the Lord alone. Look at Philippians 4:11-13: "I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I

know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” No matter how rich we are, if we are not satisfied with the Lord alone, it will be a curse on us. However, even if we are in need, if we can be satisfied with the Lord alone, our need will be a blessing to us.

Wanting to live with satisfaction with the Lord alone,

James Kim

(In the spiritual grace of the Lord who answers my prayer, who gives me victory, and who shows me abundant grace)

## “Come and see the works of God”

### [Psalms 66]

How is your spiritual life these days? I often ask the brothers and sisters in Christ whom I meet, “How is your spiritual life?” Of course, there are people who are little bit embarrassed to my question. But the most answer is, ‘I am serving this or that in the church, attending prayer meetings, and attending Bible studies.’ Just my personal thought is that listening to their answers is that they are more focused on "doing" rather than "being" in their life of faith. In other words, when anyone is asked ‘How is your spiritual life?’, we mainly say about our own deeds like, ‘I am doing this and that for God's and for my life of faith’. But I don't usually hear the answer, ‘I am becoming more like Jesus and growing my faith through the gracious work of God.’ It can be said that we are living our Christian life by focusing on our actions toward God rather than God's actions toward us, what and how God works in our lives. Of course, that doesn't mean our actions aren't important. Since living faith is faith with works, our works are also very important. But before that, it is God's actions, not our actions, that we should consider our priority.

If we look at Psalms 66:5, the psalmist says “Come and see the works of God, Who is awesome in His deeds toward the sons of men.” I would like to humbly receive the grace of God given by thinking about two things under the heading “Come and see the works of God” based on Psalms 66.

#### **First, we need to think about God's works.**

##### (1) The psalmist says that God's works in our lives are awesome.

Look at Psalms 66:5 – “Come and see the works of God, Who is awesome in His deeds toward the sons of men.” Among the great and wonderful things that God did to the Israelites, the one thing that cannot be left out is that at the time of the Exodus, God divided the sea of the Red Sea and made it into dry land, so the Israelites walked through the river on foot (v. 6). This is God's supernatural work. That is why the psalmist is also confessing that God's deeds toward the sons of men are awesome (v. 5). In other words, he is saying that the supernatural works of God are “Great and marvelous” (Rev. 15:3). This supernatural, great and marvelous works of God were God's work that showed God's power and how He loved and cared for His people (MacArthur). When the later Israelites remembered the power and love (care) of God, they rejoiced in the Lord (Ps. 66:6). Another great and marvelous thing that God did, the psalmist writes: “He rules by His might forever; His eyes keep watch on the nations; Let not the rebellious exalt themselves.

Selah” (v. 7). This speaks of God’s providence in the sovereignty of God, who rules and governs the world forever by His power (Park). Almighty God, who rules and governs the world, is also observes the nations (Cf. 11:4-5). Therefore, the psalmist urges, “Let not the rebellious exalt themselves” (66:7). How can we comprehend great and marvelous will of God who rules over us, observes us and cares for us in His power. That is why we are praising like this: “I know not why God’s wondrous grace/ To me He hath made Known,/ Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love/ Redeemed me for His own” (Hymn “I Know not Why God’s Wondrous Grace”, verse 1).

(2) The psalmist says that God doesn’t allow our feet to slip.

Look at Psalms 66:9 – “Who keeps us in life And does not allow our feet to slip.” In the midst of ruling and reigning over the world with His power, God spared the lives of His people, the Israelites, and preserved them and saved them alive. Therefore, God didn’t let the feet of the Israelites to slip. How did God keep the Israelites’ feet from slipping? The Lord tried the Israelites as if they were for silver, so that their feet would not slip (v. 10). How did the Lord try them? Look at Psalms 66:11-12: “You brought us into the net; You laid an oppressive burden upon our loins. You made men ride over our heads; We went through fire and through water, Yet You brought us out into a place of abundance.” The Lord tried the Israelites by bringing them into the net and by laying an oppressive burden upon their loins. Why did the Lord allow these sufferings to the Israelites? This was because the Lord wanted to mold His people, the Israelites, by showing Himself (11:4–5, 7b) (WBC). After training the Israelites, God brought them out to suffering and brought them out into the place of abundance (66:12). Our Lord is God who trains us through suffering, but makes us more like Jesus like a potter. Although He allows us to suffer for a while, it is good for us that we are afflicted (119:71). That is, the Lord reveals Himself through suffering and also shapes our character.

**Second, we need to think about the works we must do.**

(1) We must glorify and praise God.

Look at Psalms 66:1-2, 8: “Shout joyfully to God, all the earth; Sing the glory of His name; Make His praise glorious. ... Bless our God, O peoples, And sound His praise abroad.” Here, “make His praise glorious” (v. 2) means to ‘make thy glory by praising God (Park, Aben Ezra, Calvin). As the psalmist meditated on the mighty work that God did to the Israelites and the power of God in governing and ruling the world, the psalmist said, “Shout joyfully to God, all the earth” and made it his glory to praise God. The psalmist exhorts us to praise God and say to Him: “Say to God, ‘How awesome are Your works! Because of the greatness of Your power Your enemies will give feigned obedience to You. All the earth will worship You, And will sing praises to You; They will sing praises to Your name.’ Selah” (vv. 3-4).

(2) We must worship God.

Look at Psalms 66:13 – “I shall come into Your house with burnt offerings; I shall pay You my vows.” When the psalmist thought about God's grace, he decided to go into the temple of the Lord and paid his vow by offering burnt offerings to God. When did the psalmist make this determination? It was “when I was in distress” (v. 14). Why did the psalmist try to offer burnt offerings while singing glorious praise to God? It was because human thanksgiving and praise were defiled because of his sin and couldn't be accepted by God (Park). So the psalmist decided to offer burnt offerings of fat beasts to God, with the smoke of rams, an offering of bulls with make goats and put it into action (v. 15). We must also give thanks and praise to God by believing in the ransom death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Just as David offered bulls and goats to God for livelihood, we must offer all our bodies and hearts, which are precious gifts to God.

(3) We must proclaim God's work for our souls.

Look at Psalms 66:16 – “Come and hear, all who fear God, And I will tell of what He has done for my soul.” The psalmist, contemplating God's saved grace, admonished God-fearing ones, “Come and hear,” and testified to all the things God had done for them. Dr. Park Yoon-sun said the following words: ‘It is more precious than anything else to receive the grace of God. It is not because of the grace received, but because of the close relationship with God through such grace. Therefore he cannot and must not be silent’ (Park). The psalmist David also said in Psalms 39:2 – “I was mute and silent, I refrained even from good, And my sorrow grew worse.” We must proclaim the work of God. We must proclaim to all what He has done to us and the grace He has bestowed upon us.

(4) We must pray to God.

Look at Psalms 66:17 – “I cried to Him with my mouth, And He was extolled with my tongue.” The psalmist prayed and praised God. Just as Paul and Silas in Acts 16 prayed and praised God, the psalmist prayed and praised God while meditating on what God had done. There was no sin in his prayerful heart. If so, the psalmist knew that the Lord would not listen to his prayers (Ps. 66:18). This was his confession: “But certainly God has heard; He has given heed to the voice of my prayer” (v. 19). God didn't reject his prayers and didn't turn away His mercy on him (v. 20).

Let us all meditate on the great and wonderful things that God did on the cross on Mount Calvary some 2,000 years ago. Let us remember the great and marvelous things He did on the cross for our eternal life (salvation). And let's immerse ourselves in His grace by reigning, observing, and caring for us who saved us under the sovereignty of God. He is the God who doesn't allow our feet to slip. He tries us through suffering, revealing

Himself in the midst of it, and also making us like Jesus. Furthermore, we must meditate with faith on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the great and wonderful things He will come and do. When He comes back we will suddenly transform and put on glorious spiritual body. And He will lead us to eternal heaven. We will attend the wedding feast of the Lamb, and we will praise and worship before the glorious God forever. Therefore, we must glorify God more and more. And we must worship God in spirit and truth with all our hearts and souls. We must also proclaim to all what God has done for us. And we must pray, but like Apostle John, we must pray “Maranatha” and ‘Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

“When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!...” (Hymn “O, Lord my God! When I in Awesome Wonder” verse 4),

James Kim

(Praying for me to live a God-centered Christian life)

## **‘Let all the peoples praise You, O God!’**

### **[Psalms 67]**

Today we hear the sad news. It is news that Pastor Hyung-gyu Bae, who was held hostage by the Afghan Telebans, was murdered. When I looked at CNN's Internet news, I saw a picture of Pastor Bae's body that was covered in cloth or something like a scroll and was on a truck. When I watched the internet Yahoo news, I read that there was an article under the headline ‘Pastor Hyung-gyu Bae was murdered, tragic death on his birthday’: ‘Pastor Hyung-gyu Bae, 42, who was murdered by the Afghan armed group, the Taliban, has been confirmed to have suffered a terrible death on his birthday. Pastor Bae's birthdate is July 25, 1965. On the day he was forty-two, he was killed by the armed forces in a foreign country by 10 shots on the head, chest, and stomach. Pastor Bae, who is also the senior pastor of the Youth Saemmul Church in Bundang, South Korea, is also an associate pastor of the church’ (Internet). What a sad new. May God comfort his wife, his daughter, and his whole family, relatives, members of the Saemmul Church and friends. As I heard the news of Pastor Bae's death this time, I also remembered the words that Paul and Silas in Acts 16, who prayed and praised God in the situation where they might die the next day in prison. In fact, it seems that the 22 remaining Koreans, brothers and sisters in the Lord who are now held by the Taliban, are actually at the crossroads of life and death like Paul and Silas. Imagine that they can sympathize with Paul and Silas more realistically than us. If I were held hostage like them right now, I wonder if I could pray to God and especially praise God in the midst of life and death situation.

This is what C. S. Lewis said about praise: ‘The most humble, well-rounded, capable people always sang, while the most complaining people sang the least’ (Lewis). I think it makes sense. If there is complaint in the heart, the hymn cannot come out. However, if we have humble and balanced spirit before God, you have no choice but to praise God. Why should we sing? There are many reasons, but we can think three reasons: (1) Because God is worthy to be praised (Ps. 18:3; 96:4). (2) Because praise is the purpose of creation (Isa. 43:21; Eph. 1:13-14). (3) Because praise is something that pleases God (Ps. 69:30-31; 147:11).

If we look at the same words of Psalms 67:3, 5, the psalmist is praying to God like this: “Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.” I would like to find out in the text three reasons why we all should praise the Lord under the heading ‘Let all the people praises You, O God’ based on Psalms 67:3, 5. In the midst of that, I hope and pray that our lives will be built as worshipers who praise the Lord.

**First, we must praise the Lord because of His grace.**



Look at Psalms 67:1 – “God be gracious to us and bless us, And cause His face to shine upon us-- Selah.” The psalmist asked God for the people of Israel (“us”), and the first prayer topic was for God's grace to come to the Israelites (Park). What was the reason? Why did the psalmist ask God for the grace of God to come upon the Israelites? The reason was none other than the salvation of the Israelites. In other words, the reason the psalmist asked God for grace was because he wanted the Israelites to be saved through God's grace. Furthermore, he prayed for God's grace because he wanted all nations to be saved through the nation of Israel. So he prayed to God like this: “That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations” (v. 2).

Salvation is totally God's grace. Yesterday, while meditating on the words of Isaiah 59 during the Morning Prayer meeting, I once again affirmed that salvation is completely grace of God. Prophet Isaiah says in Isaiah 59:1-2 the reason why God doesn't listen to our prayers is “your iniquities”. The list of that iniquities starts from Isaiah 59:3. I thought about three iniquities of that list: “They trust in confusion” (v. 4), “Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity” (v. 7), and “They have made their paths crooked” (v. 8). In this way, from the list of sins listed from Isaiah 59:3, even if we think about it, it is true that human sins are such great sins that our human strength cannot solve it and we are compelled to admit once again the weakness of man. We are weak humans who cannot save ourselves. But if we look at Isaiah 59:16, the Bible says this: “And He saw that there was no man, And was astonished that there was no one to intercede; Then His own arm brought salvation to Him, And His righteousness upheld Him.” God is a God who knows that we humans cannot save ourselves from sin. So His own arm brought salvation to Him. Therefore, we were saved by God's grace alone, never by our own works or merits (Eph. 2:8-9). We who have received this grace of God must praise the Lord: “I know not why God's wondrous grace/ To me He hath made Known/ Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love/ Redeemed me for His own” (Hymn “I Know not Why God's Wondrous Grace”, verse 1).

## **Second, we must praise the Lord because of His upright judge.**

Look at Psalms 67:4 – “Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; For You will judge the peoples with uprightness And guide the nations on the earth. Selah.” The psalmist said that the reason why all nations (v. 2) should be glad and sing for joy in praising the Lord is because they were saved by God's grace (v. 1) and because He judges the nations with uprightness and guides them (v. 4). This is what Dr. Park said: ‘If God doesn't do the work of rewarding the good people and of punishing the evil people, the lives of the righteous (saints) who follow the good will be meaningless and not enjoyable. But since God does it fairly and reigns, their lives are enjoyable.’ The just God rewards the good people and punishes the evil people with His upright judgment. So in the end, He saves the righteous (saints) who follow the good.

The world we live in is a world with so many unfair things. In this truly sinful world, there seem to be people who are accused of unfair judgment in court and are imprisoned, while there are more people who are

released without punishment after committing evil sins. It seems that not only the judges in the courts but also the leaders of the country and the leaders of the church are losing their impartial judgment. When we think about the cause, the distinction between good and evil in this world in which we live is becoming increasingly blurred. The reason is, of course, because people deny the existence of absolute truth. 'Justice' means 'according to the will of God' in Greek (Internet).

We live in a world in which we cannot discern the will of God. And we are living in faith without discerning the will of God in the midst of ignorance due to the lack of knowledge of the absolute truth, which is the word of God. As a result, there are too many times when we cannot live in harmony with God's will. But our God is a just God. Even though we cannot make upright judgments, our God is a just God who makes upright judgments. He is a God who rewards the good and punishes the evil with upright judgment. This is what the psalmist says in Psalms 96:13 – “Before the LORD, for He is coming, For He is coming to judge the earth He will judge the world in righteousness And the peoples in His faithfulness.” The Bible says that God is the God who pays back to the proud what they deserve (94:2), and reward the righteous (58:11). Therefore, we believers (the righteous) must praise the Lord because of God's upright judgment.

### **Third and last, we must praise the Lord because our God blesses us.**

Look at Psalms 67:6 – “The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us.” This is the word that refers to the blessing of abundance in Israel. Here, the word “produce” may mean “increase/enhance/enlarge”. This word was primarily used for the productivity of agriculture. Perhaps this word has the concept that the earth produces fruit because of the blessing of God (WBC). In other words, God blessed the lands where the Israelites lived to produce fruit, and thus gave the blessing of abundance. Of course, before this blessing of abundance, we shouldn't forget that God gave the Israelites by grace the greatest blessing, the blessing of salvation. He saved His people by judging the wicked with His upright judgment. Therefore, the psalmist prayed, “Let the people praise You, O God” (vv. 3, 5). We must praise God in fear of Him (v. 7). Our God is the God who wants to bless us. Blessings can be divided into three categories: God's blessing, human blessing, and material blessing. Priority is important in these three blessings. First, we must receive God's blessing. In other words, we must seek spiritual blessings first. In the midst of that (or after that) we must ask for the blessing of people. We must pray that God will send to us faithful workers. But what we must not forget is that the greatest blessing our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the source of blessing.

If we look at Ephesians 1:3, the Bible says we have already received every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. We have been loved by God, chosen by Him, He predestined us, became the children of God (adoption) and have already been redeemed (the forgiveness of our trespasses) (vv. 4-7). Therefore, we must praise God.

Thinking of the late Pastor Hyung-Kyu Bae, I want to see with you the death of Jesus Christ on the cross this evening. Let's remember the love and grace of Jesus, who had heavy suffering on the cross and died for us and for our salvation. Therefore, we confess "His precious blood He Shed to free, From sin and all its stinging, Death destin'd sinners such as we! How can I keep from singing?" (Hymn "My Life Flows Rich in Love and Grace", verse 1). Let's praise the Lord no matter what circumstances we may be in since we have received God's saving grace. As a result, I hope and pray that all nations may praise the Lord through us.

Wanting to be nearer to the Lord as I praise Him until my last breath,

James Kim

(Only by God's grace)

## **Let the righteous be glad and rejoice.**

### **[Psalms 68:1-18]**

This morning I saw brother in Christ “Sung-min Shim’s father mourning the death of his son on the Internet news. The picture that I saw was the picture of Shim Jin-pyo, the father of Shim Sung-min, who sent his son first, crying while looking at his portrait. This is what the father said: ‘Sung-min, please go to a good place. Go well and help a lot of difficult and poor people. Your father, mother, and younger siblings will live well.’ Father Shim Jin-pyo (62 years old), who arrived with his bereaved family in the morgue of the Seoul National University Bundang Hospital, swept away his son’s portrait, as if he couldn’t believe his son’s death. He cried for almost 10 minutes and it made other people to be in tears as well (Internet). Truly, this world is full of anxieties, of miseries, and of sins. Truly, this world is full of deaths. All that this world can give us is pain, suffering, sorrow, and tears. However, it is because of the saving grace of the Lord Jesus that we Christians can praise God, saying, ‘It is very glad and joyful, while living in this world. We, who enjoy the saving grace of the Lord Jesus forever, can have peace even in this world where there is no peace.

Our God is the God who turns our sorrows into dancing in joy. Look at Psalms 30:11 – “You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness.” In Psalms 68:3, the psalmist David says, “But let the righteous be glad; let them exult before God; Yes, let them rejoice with gladness.” I hope and pray that this will serve as an opportunity for us to be glad and rejoice as we meditate on the five reasons why the righteous should be glad and rejoice.

**First, the reason why the righteous is glad and rejoice is because God destroys the wicked.**

Look at Psalms 68:1-2: “Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered, And let those who hate Him flee before Him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away; As wax melts before the fire, So let the wicked perish before God.” Our God is the God who scatters, drives out, and eventually destroys our enemies, “those who hate Him.” He scatters, drives away, and destroys our enemies just as smoke is driven away in an instant by the wind, so the wicked who hate the Lord are perished in the wrath of God. “As wax melts before the fire,” the wicked perish before God. Therefore, the righteous is glad and rejoices because the just God punishes the wicked and destroys them. That is, the righteous is glad and rejoices because he experiences the righteousness of God.

Today's early Morning Prayer meeting, I prayed for the brothers and sisters in Christ who were held hostage in Afghanistan and asked God for His righteousness. We prayed that God would judge the wicked and save the righteous. Therefore, I prayed that the glory of God would appear, so that those who criticized Christianity would be silent, and the gospel of Christ would be proclaimed more and more through those who were saved. Although I am not accustomed to praying like this that I want God's people to be saved by God destroying the wicked, I prayed that way because, as I continued to meditate on the book of Psalms, the psalmist prayed like that. Surely our righteous God will rise up and scatter and drive out those who hate Him, and eventually destroy them. Since God is a God who cannot deny Himself, we can be sure by faith when we consider His righteousness. That's why we can be glad and rejoice.

**Second, the reason why the righteous is glad and rejoices is because God makes the righteous prosper.**

Look at Psalms 68:6 – “God makes a home for the lonely; He leads out the prisoners into prosperity, Only the rebellious dwell in a parched land.” Our God is “A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows” (v. 5). That God is the God who leads the lonely people who are without their families to a place like a warm and sweet home (Park). The God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked and destroys the wicked and makes “the rebellious” or the apostates (the rebels) into “a parched land” (Park). But God brings prosperity to the righteous whom He loves, the souls struggling in solitude, especially those in prison. The lonely who enjoys that prosperity is glad and rejoices because of God's warm love of salvation.

If we look at Jeremiah 22:21, the passage that I meditated on this morning prayer meeting, the Bible says, “I spoke to you in your prosperity; But you said, 'I will not listen!' This has been your practice from your youth, That you have not obeyed My voice.” As I meditated on this word, I thought of my own wrong habit, a sinful habit of not obeying the voice of God. Especially when I think about when I don't listen to God's voice well, it is time when I am “in your prosperity”. That is, when I am prospering, I don't listen to the God's words. I think the important lesson is the spiritual attitude that our ears always want to hear the voice of the Lord, whether we are in prosperity or not. Then, as David says in Psalms 68, we will experience the work of God's salvation in the “wilderness” (Ps. 68:4), and the God's blessing that makes us prosper (v. 6). Then, we can be glad and rejoice in Him.

**Third, the reason why the righteous is glad and rejoices is because God refreshes our weary.**

Look at Psalms 68:9 – “You gave abundant showers, O God; you refreshed your weary inheritance.” Our

God is the God who makes the Lord's inheritance, that is, the land of Canaan, to be refreshed by sending enough rains when the crops and fruit trees are droughty and cannot live. In other words, He is the God who makes the land of Canaan better again. David reminded the Israelites the power of God that was revealed in the time of the Exodus and in the wilderness in order to lead them to God and gain faith (Park). That power of God gave the Lord's benefits, the Lord's goodness, in the land of Canaan for the people of God (v. 10). He is a God who reveals His goodness even when He is weary. The psalmist who experienced that goodness (34:8) was glad and rejoiced before of God.

Even when we are weary, we must look to the very good God who works for the good of those who love Him (Rom. 8:28). Without God's grace, we cannot do it, but when God shows us grace, we can praise the gospel song "God is so Good" with faith even when we are weary. Therefore, we must hope that God will turn away our poverty and enrich it. Of course, it can be easy for us to praise "God is so Good" when we prosper. However, even when we are weary, we must experience that God turns our sorrows into joy because we praise the good God with faith. God's goodness and lovingkindness toward us is eternal. We must become God's people who are glad and rejoice because we taste the eternal lovingkindness and goodness of God not only when we prosper but also when we are weary.

#### **Fourth, the reason why the righteous is glad and rejoices is because God makes us victorious.**

Look at Psalms 68:14 – "When the Almighty scattered the kings in the land, it was like snow fallen on Zalmon." In Psalms 68:11-14, David described the Israel's conquest of Canaan. God gave the word of His power, the word of the promise of victory, in relation to the work of the exodus and the conquest of the land of Canaan. Therefore, the Israelites believed the word and marched, and their women sang (v. 11) (Park). In particular, looking at the work of the conquest of the land of Canaan, "Kings and armies flee in haste" (v. 12). God defeated all the kings of Canaan with His power. Therefore, even the weak women were able to drive out the enemy soldiers and share the spoils (Park). Although when the Israelites were in Egypt or in the wilderness were like being in a dirty place (like a sheepfold), through such suffering life, their spiritual life was shining like silver or gold (Park). Almighty God gave the Israelites victory by scattering the kings of Canaan. Therefore, the Israelites were glad and rejoiced.

We are often lost in the fight against ourselves, against the world, against sin, against Satan, against death, and are fallen, and are often faced with discouragement, guilt, and suffering. However, the reason we can be glad and rejoice even in the midst of them is none other than because of Jesus' victory on the cross. When we look to the risen Jesus who overcame death, we can dwell in the hope of victory. Furthermore, we rise up again with the conviction of victory and engage in our spiritual battles. Therefore, we are thanking God "who gives us victory

through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57). With that gratitude, we can be glad and rejoice over Jesus' victory.

**Fifth and last, the reason why the righteous is glad and rejoices is because God is with us.**

Look at Psalms 68:18 – “When you ascended on high, you led captives in your train; you received gifts from men, even from the rebellious-- that you, O LORD God, might dwell there.” David stated in verses 15-18 that after God made Israel to conquer the land of Canaan, He set Jerusalem as the place of the temple and gave them grace (Park). With that grace, the reason why David was glad and rejoiced was because God was with the Israelites. In particular, God who dwelt in Sinai (v. 17), that was like “The mountains of Bashan” (v. 15), “rugged mountains” (v. 16), that is, the God who is in the high place (v. 18), was with David who dwelt in low place, David was glad and rejoiced.

When I think of these words, I think of Habakkuk 3:17-18: “Though the fig tree should not blossom And there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold And there be no cattle in the stalls, Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.” The reason why we are glad and rejoice is because of God. We are glad and rejoice because of God, not based on what God gives us or doesn't give us. This reminds me the hymn “O Thou, in Whose Presence”: “O Thou, in whose presence my soul takes delight/ On whom in affliction I call/ My comfort by day, and my song in the night/ My hope, my salvation, my all!” (v. 1).

I remember Zephaniah 3:17 – “The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.” We can be glad and rejoice even in a sad world based on the fact that God takes great delight in us. That God is the God who destroys the wicked and makes the righteous prosper. He is also the God who strengthens us when we are weary. He is the God who makes us victorious and is always with us. The reason is because God is glad and rejoices with us, the righteous.

Living with great joy that God gives in the midst of the great sorrow that this world gives,

James Kim(Trusting in God who turns our mourning into dancing)

## God who gives power and strength to us (1)

### [Psalms 68:19-35]

Now in the US state of Huntington, Utah, many people are trying to rescue six miners trapped in 1,500 feet of a mine. 4 out of 10 people escaped and survived, but the remaining 6 people are still unknown. But the rescue mission is still ongoing to save these miners who may be alive. It is said that if these six miners are alive and if the mission to rescue them from the outside isn't going well and thus save them, then there are in a situation where they cannot get out of there by themselves at all. I wonder how much they are in the unimaginable fear and the fear of death. How long are they waiting for someone to save them as soon as possible. I remember Prophet Jonah in the Bible. If we go to the book of Jonah chapter 2, we see Jonah in the belly of a great fish, praying to God deep in the sea. I remember a Jonah's confession in such an extreme crisis: "... Salvation is from the Lord" (Jonah 2:9).

We need to thoroughly realize our own helplessness and incompetence in order to make our spiritual life right. Then we become more and more completely dependent on God who is our strength. Personally, I feel a lot of helplessness and incompetence in my fights with myself. Looking at myself not doing what I know I suppose to do, I realize a little bit of my helplessness and incompetence that cannot be changed without God's help. Therefore, I cannot help but rely on the power of God. That's why I have no choice but to pray to God. In prayer, I experience God's strength and power in my helplessness and incompetence.

In Psalms 68:35, the psalmist David says, "You are awesome, O God, in your sanctuary; the God of Israel gives power and strength to his people. Praise be to God!" I pray that we can enjoy the grace of God that He gives us while meditating on what kind of God who gives us strength and power under the heading "God who gives power and strength to us" based on Psalms 68:19-35.

### **First, God who gives power and strength to us daily bears our burdens.**

Look at Psalms 68:19 – "Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens. Selah" What is the "our burden" referred to by the psalmist David here? We can think of it in four ways:

- (1) Our burden refers to the burden given to God's people because of "enemies" (v. 1) or "the wicked" (v. 2).



Of course, there must have been pain and suffering from persecution. The specific description of that pain and suffering refers to imprisonment (v. 6). I think we have this kind of burden too. In other words, there are many times when our hearts are heavy due to affliction and weary in the midst of attacks and temptations that are caused by our enemy, Satan. How many times has Satan attacked our hearts, causing us to be imprisoned in our hearts, especially as the enemies of the Israelites imprisoned them? For example, Satan is putting us into prison by making us to disobey the Lord's command, forgive each other. So how heavy is this to us?

(2) Our burden refers to the loneliness of God's people (v. 6).

When the Israelites were persecuted by their enemies or by the wicked, the Israelites felt lonely in suffering and pain. That was why David said that God is "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows" (v. 5). I think there were actually many orphans and widows among the Israelites. This was because certain number of Israeli men died in the wilderness and especially in conquering the land of Canaan. However, in addition to the actual meaning, I think the use of the expressions "fatherless" and "widows" for the Israelites also has a spiritual meaning. That means feeling lonely in suffering because of the enemies (the wicked) of the Israelites. Like the Israelites, we too feel lonely. Especially when we are in pain, when we feel that God is too far away, we often feel lonely even in the midst of many people.

(3) Our burden refers to the weary inheritance of God's people (v. 9).

This refers to the poverty of the land of Canaan where the Israelites entered from the wilderness in Exodus. In other words, it refers to a time when the land of Canaan was dry and the grains and fruits were in drought (Park). This industrial poverty was a heavy burden on the Israelites. Especially if they were in sinful thoughts of longing for life in Egypt due to poverty in the land of Canaan, which they believed to be an affluent land, the burden would have been even heavier. We, Korean-Americans living in this affluent country, America, will be able to relate to the Israelites. How much would it be heavy burden in our hearts if we left Korea, our home country, and came to the United States, a country of prosperity, and were in poverty like the Israelites? As if the land of Canaan is poor and farming is not possible, how much will it be heavy burden on our hearts if we come to United States to try to do our business but it isn't doing well?

(4) Our burden is the poverty of God's people (v. 10).

Look at Psalms 68:10 – "... O God, you provided for the poor." Even after entering the land of Canaan, it seems that there were times when the Israelites became poor when the land was droughty and the grains

and fruits were unable to live. How ironic is this to see poverty in a land of plenty? But this can be our reality, that is poverty in America that is like affluent Canaan. Of course, we are thinking about poverty materially here. But if we think more deeply, how many spirits are becoming spiritually poor in this land of abundance? I wonder how many Christians become spiritually poor by being tempted by Satan as they become economically rich. This is heavy burden.

God took the burdens of the Israelites instead of them. How did He take their burdens? There are four things we can think of:

- (1) God took the Israelites' burdens by giving prosperity the Israelites who were imprisoned by their enemies or the wicked (v. 6).
- (2) God took the Israelites' burden of loneliness by leading them to the warm family like place as the father to the fatherless and the defender of widows (vv. 5-6, Park).
- (3) God took the Israelites' burden by refreshing the weary land of Canaan by giving abundant showers (v. 9, Park).
- (4) God took the Israelites' burden by providing for the poor (v. 10).

The Bible exhorts us like this: "Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken" (55:22). Whatever heavy burdens we may have, let us cast all of them to God through prayer. God will give us the strength and ability to carry those burdens.

Thanking God for carrying my burden every day,

James Kim

(As I long for God's grace that lightens my heavy burden)

## **God who gives power and strength to us (2)**

### **[Psalms 68:19-35]**

In order for us to live our Christian life rightly, we must get to know ourselves properly. In other words, we must deeply realize that we are sinners. In Ezekiel 16:14-15, 26, 28-29 that I meditated during this morning prayer meeting, God is pointing out the sins of the Israelites through the prophet Ezekiel: "... for it was perfect because of My splendor which I bestowed on you, ... But you trusted in your beauty and played the harlot because of your fame ... you were not satisfied ... you played the harlot with them and still were not satisfied ... yet even with this you were not satisfied." The Israelites trusted in their beauty and played the harlot because of their fame but they were not satisfied by committing harlotry with the Egyptians (v. 26), the Philistines (v. 27), the Assyrians (v. 28), and the Chaldeans (v.29). They committed the sin of spiritual adultery by abusing God's blessings (beauty and fame) and didn't glorify God. Just as the Israelites in Hosea's day committed spiritual adultery while receiving the rich blessings from God and offered them to Baal, the Israelites in Ezekiel's day also committed spiritual adultery. The prophet Ezekiel compared the Israelites to the prostitutes women, and said that they were the opposite of others in their prostitution in a way that they gave payment and none was give to them (v. 34). Isn't there such sinful appearance of the Israelites in us? I think we are no different. Both the Israelites and we are just mere human. Our sinful natures, like the Israelites, commit spiritual adultery, and we can never be satisfied. The reason is because God has set eternity in our hearts (Eccl. 3:11). Therefore, as new creations in Jesus, we can be satisfied only when we seek eternal things. No matter how much we pursue sinful momentary worldly things, we cannot be satisfied like the Israelites.

I want to be more disappointed with myself, even in despair as I see myself in the image of the Israelites in Ezekiel 16. The reason is because only when I am in despair I will desire God and hope only in Him. Even today, I feel helpless and incompetent in the fight against myself, so I rely on God's strength and power. As we continue to meditate on the remaining two points about what kind of God is God who gives us strength and power, I hope and pray that we experience God's grace.

### **Second, God who gives power and strength to us is the God who saves.**

Look at Psalms 68:20 – "Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign LORD comes escape from death." The Lord who daily bears our burdens is also the God who saves (vv. 19, 20). That God of salvation

delivers us from our enemies. David teaches us few things about these enemies:

(1) It is a fact that our enemy is also the enemy of the Lord.

Look at Psalms 68:21a – “Surely God will crush the heads of his enemies ....” Here David is speaking of “his enemies”. That means our enemies are the enemies of the Lord.

(2) It is the fact that our enemies are those who go on in their sins.

Look at Psalms 68:21 – “Surely God will crush the heads of his enemies, the hairy crowns of those who go on in their sins.”

(3) It is the fact that the purpose of our enemies is our death.

Look at Psalms 68:20 – “Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign LORD comes escape from death.” As David says here, the purpose of our enemies is “death”. David is saying that God who gives us strength and power saves us from these enemies.

Our God is the God who delivers us from death and leads us to life (v. 20). And He is the God who crushes our enemies (v. 21). The God who saves us finds and punishes our enemies even if they hide in the mountains and under the sea (v. 22, Park). God is promising the Israelites to destroy His enemies (v. 23). Therefore, David prophesied that he would see the procession of his God, his King, into the sanctuary (v. 24) when the Lord destroys His enemies, He triumphs and saves the Israelites.

Therefore, David said that what all the Israelites should do is to bless God: “Bless God in the congregations, Even the LORD, you who are of the fountain of Israel” (v. 26). Because of God's destruction of his enemies, David exhorted the Israelites: “But let the righteous be glad; let them exult before God; Yes, let them rejoice with gladness. Sing to God, sing praises to His name; Lift up a song for Him who rides through the deserts, Whose name is the LORD, and exult before Him” (vv. 3-4). This is what Nehemiah 8:10 says, “... for the joy of the LORD is your strength.” We must rejoice in the God of salvation. And we must restore the joy of salvation that He gave us. Through that joy of salvation, God gives us strength and power.

**Third and last, God who gives power and strength to us is the God of power.**

Look at Psalms 68:34 – “Proclaim the power of God, whose majesty is over Israel, whose power is in the

skies.” God is the God who daily bears our burdens and the God who saves us (vv. 19, 20). And He is the God who controls all our enemies by giving us strength and power with the joy of salvation. What is the power that God gives us?

(1) It is the power of grace.

We can see that David relied on God's grace when he prayed that God would strengthen the grace that God had already given to the Israelites in the past (v. 28). Like David, we must fight against ourselves, the world, sin, and Satan, our enemies, by the grace of God. We must endure spiritual battles with the power of God's grace.

(2) It is the power of dedication.

Look at Psalms 68:29 – “Because of your temple at Jerusalem kings will bring you gifts.” We must dedicate ourselves to the Lord as we are and engage in spiritual battles.

(3) It is the power of assurance of victory.

Look at Psalms 68:30 – “Rebuke the beast among the reeds, the herd of bulls among the calves of the nations. Humbled, may it bring bars of silver. Scatter the nations who delight in war.” We must engage in spiritual battles with the assurance that the battles belong to God and that He will triumph.

(4) It is the power of praise.

Look at Psalms 68:32 – “Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth, sing praise to the Lord, Selah.” We already know the work that appears in Acts 16 where Paul and Silas prayed and praised in prison.

This is what Apostle Paul said to his spiritual son Timothy, “For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline” (1 Tim. 1:7). We aren't people who live in fear. The reason is because what God has given us is power, love, and discipline. Therefore, we must overcome ourselves, sin, the world, and Satan with the power that God gives us. Then we must proclaim the power to God (v. 34).

I sometimes share QT with several brothers and sisters in Christ via e-mail. In the midst of sharing this week, a deacon also sent an e-mail to share with me the grace he received during his trip to China. The core of that content is, in my opinion, ‘relaxation’. It is like a person who can't swim, who desperately needs someone to save

him, relax and stay still when another person comes to save him. The deacon learned relaxation through his trip to China. Yes. We need to relax a little. We have to feel our helplessness and incompetence. Then we can experience the power and strength of God. Our God, who gives us strength and power, is the Lord who daily bears our burdens, the God of salvation, and the God of power. Because of this God, we can live with His strength and power today

Living by the grace of God who gives us strength and power,

James Kim

(With heart of praising God who is my strength)

## **Those who please the Lord better**

### **[Psalms 69]**

Last Sunday morning, I was in my church office, and my youngest daughter Karis sat in a chair in front of me. I guessed she was thinking on her own. Then suddenly she turned to me and asked me a question: “Do you know I feel?” I answered her, “I don't know, but how are you feeling right now?” in order for her to elicit her feeling and for me to sympathize with her. Then Karis said, “Happy”. So I asked her, ‘Why are you happy?’ Of course, when I asked this question to her, I had an expectation. I thought she would say “I am glad dad is back from Mongolia because I left home for 13 days and went to Korea and Mongolia and came back home. But I heard unexpected answer from my daughter Karis. That word was none other than ‘a perm’. Hahaha. The day when I returned home from Mongolia, Karis did her perm and when she went to church, her grandmother, aunt and other church people complimented her. That was why Karis was happy. Haha. I was also happy to hear the unexpected answer from her and laughed a lot inside, because my beloved daughter was happy.

From the standpoint of our parents, if our children are happy, we are also happy. But I wonder our children are happy if we are happy. When I was in college, I told a sister in Christ to enjoy studying when she was worried her report card. Then her answer was, ‘Why don't you tell that to my parents.’ She showed a glimpse of trying to please her parents by studying hard and receiving a good report card. But for some reason she didn't seem to be happy. The spiritual lesson we want to learn here is that pleasing our Heavenly Father should be our joy as God's children. Just like pleasing her parents was burden to my college sister in Christ, so pleasing our Heavenly Father shouldn't be burden to us. Rather, it should be our joy to make our Father God happy. So how can we please God? Although I can say to this question, of course, that obeying God's word is pleasing to God, I want to focus on our being, what kind of God's children we should be, rather than our actions.

In Psalms 69:31, the psalmist David says, “And it will please the LORD better than an ox Or a young bull with horns and hoofs.” David knew how to please God better. Rather than offering the ox, or the young bull with horns and hoofs, it was to praise the name of God with song and magnify Him with thanksgiving (v. 30). I want to receive lessons from God the Holy Spirit by meditating on four things about those who please God better under the title of “Those who please the Lord better”.

**First, those who please the Lord better seek the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 69:6 – “May those who wait for You not be ashamed through me, O Lord GOD of hosts; May those who seek You not be dishonored through me, O God of Israel.” Here, 'the ones who seek the Lord' and 'the ones who wait for the Lord' are the same words. Those who wait for the Lord, that is, those who hope in the Lord, seek Him. Why did David hope in the Lord and earnestly sought him? The reason is because the psalmist David sunk in deep mire and there was no foothold (v. 2). And the reason why David sunk in deep mire was because there were people, more than the hairs of his head, who hated him without a cause (v. 4). In other words, the reason David sunk in deep mire was because powerful enemies who hated him without the cause tried to destroy him. Another reason he sunk in deep mire is written in verse 8: “I have become estranged from my brothers And an alien to my mother's sons.” What made him worse when he was in extreme distress was that even his brothers turned away from David. So David was lonely. David looked for sympathy and comforters but he found none (v. 20). When we face an unfair situation like David, we look for someone who can sympathy with us and comforts us. This is our human nature. However, it seems that there are times when God doesn't allow someone to sympathize with us and comfort us. Even the friends who come to comfort us may be “Sorry comforters” like Job's friends (Job 16:2). God's intention is to make us seek only the Lord who sympathizes with us and who is our true comforter.

David, who sunk in deep mire where there was no place to stand, was turned away from his brothers, and couldn't find anyone who could sympathize with him or a comforter. So he eventually sought God and prayed to Him (Ps. 69:13). In other words, when David was in a deep pit, he looked to the Lord and sought Him earnestly. His final prayer topic was “Save me, O God” (v. 1). As he prayed for His salvation, David prayed like this: “I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched; My eyes fail while I wait for my God” (v. 3). As he cried earnestly to God for His salvation, he was weary and his throat was parched and his eyes failed while he waited for his God. He confessed his sins to God as he was longing for the saving grace of God: “O God, it is You who knows my folly, And my wrongs are not hidden from You” (v. 5). David admitted that he could never be said to be innocent in the presence of God, not in the presence of men, even in the midst of his sufferings by his enemies without cause. Therefore, David's suffering was good for him. The reason was because he confessed his sins to God through suffering. After confessing his sins, David sought God's great lovingkindness and His saving truth (v. 13). This prayer is also mentioned in Psalms 57:3 – “He will send from heaven and save me; He reproaches him who tramples upon me Selah God will send forth His lovingkindness and His truth.” This is a poetic expression that personifies God's lovingkindness and His saving truth (Park). He cried out to God, relying on God's great lovingkindness and truth that led him to salvation. In the situation where there were more powerful enemies who hated him than the hairs of his head, David prayed to God, relying on His great lovingkindness and the saving truth.

There are times when we too need to cry out to God. That is a time when we suffer unjustly like David. At that time, we shouldn't be disappointed, but it is a good opportunity for experiencing God's help. Therefore, we must cry out to God in hope. We must earnestly hope for God's answers to our prayers (vv. 16, 17).



## **Second, those who please the Lord better are humble.**

Look at Psalms 69:32 – “The humble have seen it and are glad; You who seek God, let your heart revive.” Here, “The humble” is “anavim” in original Hebrew and it means “afflicted” (Park). In other words, those who please God are those who suffer because of their faith. And those who suffer because of their faith are those who become more humble before God through that suffering. Those who become humble are those who seek God. In other words, those who become humble through suffering look to God and pray to Him because they depend entirely on Him. So David is saying: “When I wept in my soul with fasting, It became my reproach” (v. 10). This is only spiritually and quietly, ‘warning’ himself, humbling himself, praying and ‘fasting,’ and making sackcloth his clothing (Park). In other words, it is an external expression of praying to God while humbling himself with spiritual sorrow. The reason why these humble ones rejoice in the midst of suffering is because they have faith or confidence in the salvation that God will give them. As they pray with the assurance of salvation, the hearts of the humble are revived (v. 32; cf. 138:7) by praising God (69:29-30). Like the psalmist, even in tribulation, we must experience the work of the Lord reviving our hearts as we humbly praying to Him. We must experience the work of God strengthening our hearts while humbly praying to God (10:17).

The humble, those who suffer because of their faith, and those who become more humble through those sufferings are those who please God. Those who are humble in heart are those who please God. Therefore, we are responding to Jesus' invitation: “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Mt. 11:29).

## **Third, those who please the Lord better are the needy.**

Look at Psalms 69:33 – “For the LORD hears the needy And does not despise His who are prisoners.” David was afflicted and in pain (v. 29). This doesn't mean that David was in a miserable position only externally. But it means especially because his heart had been humbled so that he had trusted only the Lord (Park). He was in need because of great suffering. In other words, David sunk in deep mire where he had no place to stand, and his heart became poor. That was why David cried out to God like this: “Oh draw near to my soul and redeem it ...” (v. 18). David, whose heart was poor through great suffering, asked God to draw close to him. The reason was because “the nearness of God is my good” (73:28).

This is what Jesus said: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:3). Here, “the poor in spirit” are those who endure in a poor state, and these spiritual recipients are: (1) Those who know that they cannot help themselves and that only God can help them. (2) Because they live in opposition to the arrogant before God, they are persecuted by the arrogant. (3) They are heartbroken and repentant for sin. These spiritual

sufferers are blessed because the kingdom of heaven is theirs, that is, because they receive the God's spiritual reign (Park).

The needy, the poor in spirit are those who please God. Those who are in need make only God as the One who sympathizes with them and as the comforter (Ps. 69:20). Therefore, they enjoy the blessing of being close to God through God's spiritual reign.

**Fourth and last, those who please the Lord better are those who love the Lord's name.**

Look at Psalms 69:36 – “The descendants of His servants will inherit it, And those who love His name will dwell in it.” Those who love His name praise the name of God (v. 30). And they magnify Him with thanksgiving (v. 30). David was convinced that God would save him from the hardships and dangers he faced, so in the assurance of salvation he praised God's name and magnified Him with thanksgiving. So David said, “Let heaven and earth praise Him, The seas and everything that moves in them. For God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah, That they may dwell there and possess it” (vv. 34-35). After God saved the Israelites and built the cities of Judah, those who love the Lord's name would dwell there forever.

Our holy God is a God who concerns His holy name that is profaned among the nations (Ezek. 36:21). Therefore, God will show the holiness of His great name, which has been profaned among the nations (v. 23). We must concern the great holy name of the Lord. We must love the Lord's holy name. Those who love His holy name are those who please the Lord.

It should be our joy to please Father God. We must make God more pleasing with our being before we please God with our actions. What kind of people pleases God better? Those who seek the Lord, the humble, the needy, and those who love the name of the Lord are those who please God better. I sincerely hope and pray that we become such people who please God better.

To be Pleasing You

1. Lord, I want to live my life to please You/ I bring my heart before You to remold  
Make me a vessel fit for honor/ That I might shine for You as sparkling gold.
2. Lord, I lift my heart in full surrender/ All that I hold dear I give to You  
Purify my heart and make me holy/ That I might walk the way that's pleasing You

{Chorus}

To be pleasing You, pleasing You/ This is all I really want to do  
To be pleasing You, pleasing You/ This is all I really want to do

Wanting to be please the Lord,

James Kim

(While pursuing a life of faith that focuses on being rather than doing)

## **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.

- (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!

Praising for the love of my Savior,

James Kim

[The Lord's eternal love is better than my beloved Charis' life, my lips shall praise You (Cf. Ps. 63:3)]

## **“O God, hasten to deliver me”**

### **[Psalms 70]**

As we meditated on Psalms 13, we once thought of the phrase “How long?”: “How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?” (Ps. 13:1), “How long shall I take counsel in my soul, Having sorrow in my heart all the day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?” (v. 2) When God’s answer of our prayers is slow, we are anxious and afraid. In the midst of that, we can pray as the psalmist David prayed: “But You, O LORD, be not far off; O You my help, hasten to my assistance” (22:19). As God’s answer of our prayer is slow, we feel that God is too far away from us. Also, when God’s answer of our prayer is slow, we are bound to lose strength. Then we look for the Lord who is our strength. Like David, we pray to the Lord, “O Lord, hasten to my help!” (70:1)

In Psalms 70:1, the psalmist David prayed to God like this: “O God, hasten to deliver me; O LORD, hasten to my help!” In Psalms 70, when David prayed to God, he used the word "hasten" twice in verse 1 and once in verse 5. And in the second half of verse 5, he prayed “O Lord, do not delay.” I hope and pray that we may be able to receive the grace that God gives to each of us while thinking of two things under the heading “O God, hasten to deliver me.”

### **First, why did David need God’s help?**

The reason was because David was needy. Look at Psalms 70:5 – “But I am afflicted and needy; Hasten to me, O God! ....” This word indicates that David was under the persecution by the evil people in particular, rather than was poor in matters (Park). Then who were the people who persecuted David? How does the Bible describe them?

#### **(1) They were those who sought David’s life.**

Look at Psalms 70:2a – “Let those be ashamed and humiliated Who seek my life ....” David’s persecutors sought David’s life. Therefore, they continued to attack and persecute him.

#### **(2) They were those who delighted in David’s hurt.**



Look at Psalms 70:2b – “Let those be turned back and dishonored Who delight in my hurt.” David's enemies wanted to see David perish. So they rejoiced that David was hurt.

(3) They were those who said “Aha, aha!”

Look at Psalms 70:3 – “Let those be turned back because of their shame Who say, "Aha, aha!" Here, those who said “Aha, aha!” were David's enemies who despised David. David described himself as being poor and needy because he was being persecuted by those who despised him.

In such situation, what was David forced to do? Look at Psalms 109:4 – “In return for my love they act as my accusers; But I am in prayer.” David had no choice but to pray to God because of those who opposed him, those who sought his life, those who rejoiced in his hurt, and those who said "Aha, aha!" toward David. That is, his enemies searched for David's soul, but David sought God at that time.

## **Second, what kind of help did David ask God?**

(1) David prayed to God to deliver him from those who persecuted him.

Look at Psalms 70:1 – “O God, hasten to deliver me; O LORD, hasten to my help!” From this verse, it seems that David had been suffering from his persecutors for a long time (Park). So he looked forward to God's salvation for a long time. Therefore, David wanted God's “hasten” (2x) help and his deliverance. He cried out to God “Hasten to me, O God!” (v. 5) David, who had been waiting for God's salvation for a long time, desperately wanted God's deliverance (salvation).

(2) David prayed to God that those who persecuted him would be turned back and humiliated.

Look at Psalms 70:2-3: “Let those be ashamed and humiliated Who seek my life; Let those be turned back and dishonored Who delight in my hurt. Let those be turned back because of their shame Who say, ‘Aha, aha!’” Those who persecuted David were those who tried to insult God as well as David. So David pleaded with God to shame them and to turn them back and be humiliated. The reason was because if they were shamed, they and others could realize the existence and power of God, and the faith of the saints could be strengthened (Park). So David prayed for the failure of his enemies.

(3) David prayed to God for those who sought the Lord or those who longed for His salvation to

rejoice and be glad.

Look at Psalms 70:4 – “Let all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; And let those who love Your salvation say continually, ‘Let God be magnified.’” Here, “Let God be magnified” means that God generously gives grace to believers (Park). God is the God who never disappoints those who seek Him, that is, those who long for His salvation. God generously shows favor to those who seek him.

After a long time rereading Professor Jay Adams’ “Christian Counseling”, I read about crisis counseling. Looking there, some scholars are said that 'crisis' in Chinese contains two characteristics. One means 'risk' and the other means 'opportunity'. Crisis provides a great opportunity for us to change and grow, and to develop better ways to overcome the crisis. It is said that this happened during World War II. When Nazi German troops invaded Britain, then Prime Minister Winston Churchill asked Rev. William Temple to pray for the national salvation. Pastor Temple is said to have announced the following message to the public: ‘The British Empire is now the time to kneel to God. War is a big deal. But worshiping God is a bigger thing. If we people believe that God is with us by worshiping God at this time, war is not a big deal. We will surely triumph with the help of God, the worshiper’ (Internet). At that time, all the British people, who were moved by his speech, came to the church and knelt down before God and worshiped and cried out to Him. Thus, the war ended with the victory of the British and the Allies.

For what purpose should we ask God, “O God, hasten to deliver me”? What is your most urgent prayer topic? I hope and pray for the Lord's work of salvation. Let’s keep in mind. Our God will make those who seek the Lord and those who long for His salvation rejoice and be glad in Him.

Thinking of our church grandma Eul-soo Jang, who earnestly prayed for the Lord to call her quickly to heaven,

James Kim

[With the heart of urgent prayer to God like the prophet Habakkuk, ‘Please revive our church in the midst of the years’ (Hab. 3:2) and like the apostle John, “Amen Come, Lord Jesus (Rev. 22:20)]

## Urgent prayer

**“O God, hasten to deliver me; O LORD, hasten to my help! ... But I am afflicted and needy; Hasten to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay” (Psalms 70:1, 5).**

On TV news this Thursday, I heard of the death of a famous American singer Michael Jackson. When I heard the news that he died in his 50's, I was wondering how he died so suddenly. So when I read the news, I saw that it was reported that he had died of “cardiac arrest” (heart attack). According to an internet article, this cardiac arrest is mysterious and the public killer disease kills 200,000 to 300,000 people every year in the United States. According to the news from one cardiologist, if you have this cardiac arrest, you will die if you don't apply an electric shock to the heart within 10 minutes. However, it will usually take 10 more minutes for the ambulance to arrive by calling 911 after seeing the symptoms of this heart attack. Therefore, it is said that there is not much chance of living with this disease. What a terrible disease. When I heard this news, I remembered my friend's father. The story I heard from my friend was that his father suffered from a heart attack in his wife's arms, and an ambulance came, but it was late. While listening to that story from my friend even indirectly through my friend's mouth, I think about how desperate and impatient my heart would be if I was in such an urgent situation. With such an urgent heart, I ask myself whether there is a prayer topic that is urgent to me.

In Psalms 70:1, 5, the word “hasten” appears three times. We can see that the psalmist David made an urgent request to God. He prayed earnestly to God three times over and over again. David offered a very urgent prayer that he couldn't wait any longer to God. So, what was David's urgent prayer topic? His urgent prayer topics was “hasten to deliver me”, “hasten to my help” (v. 1), “Hasten to me” (v. 5). Why did David say this urgent prayer to God? The reason was those who sought David's life (v. 2). They were those who delighted in David's hurt (v. 2). David suffered from them and was also needy (v. 5). So he made an urgent prayer to God. He prayed urgently to God with faith, knowing that God is “my help and my deliverer” (v. 5). With this faith, David ended his prayer, “O Lord, do not delay,” while longing for God's help and deliverance (v. 5).

Like David, we must pray urgently to God in an urgent situation, longing for God's help and deliverance (salvation). We need to feel little deeper the need for urgent prayer. To pray leisurely and in relax in spite of an urgent situation is to commit the sin of negligence before God (Jer. 48:10). Realizing that there is not much time left to love, I want to offer an urgent prayer to God, ‘Help me to love others with Your love.’ Realizing the importance

or urgency of saving souls, I want to give an urgent prayer to God. I pray that God will use us day by day to provide comfort and help those who are in urgent situations.

I want to ask God who quickly helps me as I feel the need for urgent prayer,

James Kim

(As I see myself praying so passively and lazy)

## **“I will always have hope”**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(1) He had taken refuge in the Lord.

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

(2) He prayed to his God.

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

(3) He always praised God.

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

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

Wishing to be established as a worshiper who praises the Lord by hoping in Him in the midst of despair,

James Kim

(Thanking the Lord for giving me hope by restoring my heart through the Wednesday night prayer meeting)



## **A beautiful old man**

**“Do not cast me off in the time of old age; Do not forsake me when my strength fails” (Psalms 71:9).**

Personally, I don't like young people like me to call the old people in Korean “노인네”(old man). Nevertheless, after meditating on Psalms 71:9 and titled “Beautiful old man”, I am still not sure in my short Korean language whether it is okay to call grandparents and grandmothers “노인네”(old man). My intention is to meditate on the Word by simply translating the word “in the time of old age” in the Bible. I hope that the word “old man” will not hurt the hearts of the elderly people. I would like to think about the beauty of the old man, that is who is the beautiful old man in God's eyes, focusing on Psalms 71:9. Meanwhile, I also want to become beautiful old man when I become old.

### **Frist, the beautiful old man puts his confidence in the Lord who is his hope.**

Look at Psalms 71:5 – “For You are my hope; O Lord GOD, You are my confidence from my youth.” The psalmist grew up receiving instruction from the Lord from his youth (v. 17). Therefore, he was able to live in putting confidence in the Lord from his youth. And he relied on the Lord more and more as the years passed. The Lord was a strong refuge for him (v. 7). When the psalmist's enemies, who waited to kill the psalmist, conspired together (v. 10) and said, “God has forsaken him; pursue him and seize him, for no one will rescue him” (v. 11), the psalmist cried out to God, “Be not far from me, O God; come quickly, O my God, to help me” (v. 12). Those who put confidence in the Lord who is their hope pray to God.

What a beautiful image of the psalmist? We must imitate the life of the psalmist who always lived in the hope of the Lord from his youth to old age until his hair is gray. Like the psalmist, when we face many and bitter troubles (v. 20), we must rely on the more and more in God and put our confidence in Him. Then God will deliver us from that trouble. And the Lord will restore our lives again and will again bring us up from the depths of the earth (v. 20). As the years pass by, an old man who grows older while putting confidence in the Lord is beautiful old man in God's sight.

### **Second, the beautiful old man declares the Lord's power to the next generation.**

Look at Psalms 71:18 – “Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power

to the next generation, your might to all who are to come.” The psalmist wanted to convey the strength and power of the Lord to all people in his future generations. He said, “I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, O Sovereign LORD; I will proclaim your righteousness, yours alone” (v. 16). His tongue told of His righteous acts all day long (v. 24). The reason was because the unmeasurable righteousness and salvation of the Lord (v. 15), that He gave to the psalmist who relied on the Lord and put confidence in Him from his youth to old age until his hair became gray. The psalmist couldn’t endure the Lord’s unmeasurable grace of salvation without proclaiming to all future generations. Therefore, he prayed to God that he would not forsake him even when he was old and gray until he had done that.

The old man who passes on the heritage of faith to his children and descendants is beautiful. The old man is wise, declaring to his children and descendants the grace of God he received while relying on and putting confidence in the Lord who is his hope from youth to old and gray. The old man who testifies of the great things God has done in his life, rather than talking about what he has done in his life for Him, is entitled to confess that “... by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor. 15:10).

### **Third, the beautiful old man praises the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 71:14 – “But as for me, I will hope continually, And will praise You yet more and more.” The psalmist, who relied on the Lord as the years passed, not only shared God’s wonderful works in his life, but also praised the Lord. He praised the Lord more and more as the years passed by (v. 14) and always praised Him (v. 6). The psalmist’s mouth filled with His praise and with His glory all day long (v. 8). He praised the Lord with a harp even His truth (v. 22). He praised the holy Lord of Israel with harp (v. 22). When he praised the Lord, his lips shouted for joy, and his redeemed soul rejoiced (v. 23).

We always have hope and praise the Lord: “My life flows rich in love and grace/ By Christ in mercy offer’d,/ Who anguish bore, and took my place/ When on the cross He suffer’d/ His precious blood He Shed to free/ From sin and all its stinging/ Death destin’d sinners such as we!/ How can I keep from singing? (Hymn “My Life Flows Rich in Love and Grace”, verse 1). Our souls also praise the greatness of the Lord (Hymn “How Great Thou Art”, chorus). I hope and pray that when we die, we are able to go to the Lord as we sing praises to Him.

Thinking about my church old men and women in Christ who are beautiful in His sight,

James Kim (After visiting an old woman of the church in the hospital)

## **“May You increase my greatness”**

### **[Psalms 71:15-24]**

One of the things I felt when I attended the presbytery couple of weeks ago was the idea that the end of a pastor should be beautiful. In order to do that, I thought that I should become more and more like Jesus as time passes by and be faithful from the beginning to the end of the ministry. Then, the end of the pastor will be more beautiful and I will be able to earn respect from younger pastors. Although the beginning of the ministry is important, the end is more important. And in order for the end to be beautiful, I came to think that I had to walk faithfully and humbly from the beginning to the end, with a growing heart that imitates the heart of the Lord even more.

When we think about our life's journey, I think of Job 8:7 – “Though your beginning was insignificant, Yet your end will increase greatly.” Although our beginning is insignificant, we pray that end will increase greatly. In Psalms 71:21, we see the psalmist praying to God, saying, “May You increase my greatness.” I would like to receive the lessons God gives us by meditating on three responsibilities that we have while asking God to increase our greatness.

**First, we must receive God's instruction from our youth in order for our greatness to be increased.**

Look at Psalms 71:17 – “O God, You have taught me from my youth, And I still declare Your wondrous deeds.” Since youth, the psalmist put confidence in the Lord (v. 5). The reason he was able to resolve from the Lord, ‘I will always have hope,’ even in a situation where it seemed hopeless, was because he was guided and delivered from his youth to the age of writing this poem under God's protection. So he confessed that ‘I have been sustained from my birth’ (v. 6). The psalmist, who had been sustained by the Lord, was confident that God would protect and deliver him even in the midst of the pain, crisis, and despair he faced.

Gene A. Getz emphasizes three points in raising children: ‘parents' example’, ‘direct teaching’, and ‘encouragement’. However, in raising children as parent, what can cause anxiety and instability in our children is ‘parent’s over protection, over-tolerance, over-restraint and over-discretion’. Therefore, we parents must teach our children the word of God from an early age. We must teach them to love the Lord their God with all their heart and

with all their soul and with all their strength (v. 5), put those commandments upon their hearts (v. 6) and impress them on our children (v. 7). Those who have loved God from their youth, have made the Lord their confidence, and have been sustained by Him will increase their greatness.

**Second, we must grow in the immeasurable righteousness and salvation of God despite many and severe sufferings in order for our greatness to be increased.**

Look at Psalms 71:15 – “My mouth will tell of your righteousness, of your salvation all day long, though I know not its measure.” Those who receive instruction from God and trust in the Lord from a young age need trial to grow in the Lord even more. Through that trial, he experiences God's grace deeper, wider, and more. In Psalms 71:20, the psalmist also said that when he looked back on his life as he grew old, God had made him to see troubles, many and bitter to train him. In the midst of such great troubles in the past, he experienced the Lord restoring his life again and brought him up again from the depth of the earth (v. 20), and was convinced that the same Lord would deliver him in the face of despair. Therefore, the psalmist experienced God's immeasurable righteousness and salvation, so he opened his mouth and determined to speak His immeasurable righteousness and salvation all day long (vv. 15, 24). Also, he determined like this: “I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, O Sovereign LORD; I will proclaim your righteousness, yours alone” (v. 16).

We may dwell in disappointment and despair because of severe suffering. But we can always have hope in that disappointment and despair (v. 14). It is because the Lord is our hope (v. 5). In particular, our Lord who is our hope is the God of salvation who restore our lives “again” and “again” brings us up when we are in despair (v. 20). He is the God who comforts us (v. 21). Like the psalmist, we are compelled to praise God when we fully experience the grace of God who restores us, lifts us up, and comforts us. Those who grow in God's immeasurable grace will increase their greatness.

**Third and last, we must declare the Lord's power to the next generation in order for our greatness to be increased.**

Look at Psalms 71:18 – “Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come.” Looking at these words, it turns out that the psalmist is certainly an old man (Park). In addition, in verse 9, we can see that he is an old man when he prays, “Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone.” He prayed to God, “Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me” (v. 18). Why did he pray like that? The reason was because he wanted to declare the power of the Lord to the next generation (v. 18). This shows that the psalmist had strong desire to witness and

evangelize the Lord even when his strength was weak because he was old (Park).

What an image of the beautiful old man. Although he was physically weakened more and more, the psalmist committed to spreading the power of the Lord. What an image of the beautiful old man. As the psalmist looked back on his life as an old man, the last part of his life, he remembered the immeasurable grace that God had given him, he couldn't endure without declaring that God had done great things (v. 19). Our God is the God who does His great things faithfully in our lives (v. 22). Also, because God reveals His greatness through us who are very small, He is the God who makes us to praise God in the end: "I will praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing praise to you with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel. My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to you-- I, whom you have redeemed" (vv. 22-23).

At the early morning prayer meeting today, I prayed for my eldest son Dillon, who celebrated his birthday. I wanted to write a birthday card to my beloved son. So after the prayer meeting, I wrote a short letter with my heart on the card. And I brought Dillon home from school in the afternoon and handed him that birthday card in the car. Dillon's reaction in receiving the birthday card was 'thank you.' Then he read it alone, covering the card from his younger sister, Yeri, because the card was personal. At that time, Yeri's reaction was, 'How did Dad draw the shape of the heart on the card and give it to Dillon?' Also, the youngest daughter Karis asked me, 'Where is my brother's birthday gift?' In congratulations on Dillon's birthday, I wrote on his birthday card, 'To my beloved son Dillon, God loves you.' And I said, 'I thank God for the love of restoration and healing that God has given us through you.' And I wrote to him that we are praying for him according to his name "Dillon" which means 'faithfulness and truthful.' May Dillon be sustained by God, as he loves the Lord and put his confidence in Him from his childhood. Also I pray that he will grow in the immeasurable grace of God despite many difficulties and hardships in the future. And even when he gets old, I pray that he will be a person who declares the power of the Lord to the next generation. I pray that even though his beginnings may be insignificant, in the end, God will increase his greatness.

'Lord, may You increase our greatness'

James Kim

(As I sincerely congratulate my beloved son Dillon's birthday)

## An ideal king

### [Psalms 72]

It is said that there are six types of presidents: ‘classical scholar type’, ‘manager type’, ‘CEO type’, ‘politician type’, ‘gambler type’ and ‘event type’. Among them, the ideal image of the president is ‘classical scholar type’, ‘manager type’, ‘CEO type’, and in reality, the president’s image is ‘politician type’, ‘gambler type’ and ‘event type.’ Looking at the representative figures and representative images of the each type, Jeong Do-jeon, Kim Goo, and Lincoln (textbook, model, school student, worthy of imitation, burdensome) for the “classical scholar type”, and Kun Go and Hwang-hoi (the prime minister type, ability, and administrator) for the “manager type”, solving the given task well, minister in Chosun dynasty), Dae-Je Jin, Kook-Hyun Moon, Hak-Gyu Sohn, Myung-Bak Lee (femininity, head of local government, democratic, 2% shortage, reasonable boss) for "CEO type", "politician type": Daewon-gun, Park Jeong-hee, Hitler (realistic, poison if you are close to, unconditional follower, incitement, dictatorship), for “gambler type”, Kim Young-sam, Roh Moo-hyun (a scammer, squadron, no content, light), and “event type” ( They are Lee Myung-bak, seen by Uri Party supporters, and Roh Moo-hyun (as seen by Gangnam people) (easy to be shorthanded, multi-level sales, delusions, noisy, push out). ‘Paradoxically, the most ideal president is the most realistic president recognized by the people themselves’ (Internet).

Today, I would like to receive the grace given by meditating on two things about what the ideal king is like under the title of “An ideal king,” based on Psalms 72. Especially, as the presidential elections are nearing in the United States and Korea, I hope that you and I will be able to choose the ideal president with the lessons taught in the Bible today.

### **First, the ideal king judges by the judgment of the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 72:1 – “Give the king Your judgments, O God, And Your righteousness to the king's son.” The psalmist King Solomon prayed to God for the Lord's judgment and the Lord's righteousness. The reason was to judge the Lord's people with righteousness (v. 2). Here, ‘the Lord’s righteousness’ refers to the right conduct that meets God's standards (Park). In other words, King Solomon prayed that he would judge the Lord's people righteously in accordance with the God's standard (v. 2). Why did he do that? The reason is because he knew that God would give them peace when he judged the Lord's people righteously according to the God's standard (v. 3). In modern terms, the ideal president gives peace to citizens by practicing righteous politics in accordance with the standard of the Word of God. The citizens can't enjoy peace in their country because their presidents (and other

leaders) don't have righteous politics that meets the standard of the word of God. This is what Dr. Park said: 'The politics that bring true peace and order is that of God-oriented. In other words, it is a politics based on the God-given truth' (Park).

How, then, does it mean to judge the Lord's people righteously according to the God's standard? We can find the answer in Psalms 72:4 – “May he vindicate the afflicted of the people, Save the children of the needy And crush the oppressor.”

- (1) The ideal king, who judges the Lord's people righteously according to the God's standard, vindicates the afflicted and saves the children of the needy.

In Psalms 72:12-14, King Solomon explains in more detail: “For he will deliver the needy when he cries for help, The afflicted also, and him who has no helper. He will have compassion on the poor and needy, And the lives of the needy he will save. He will rescue their life from oppression and violence, And their blood will be precious in his sight.” The ideal king, who judges the Lord's people righteously with the Lord's judgment, not only compassionate to the afflicted and the needy with his heart, but also save them (Park). Therefore, he gives freedom and peace to the Lord's people. However, evil kings or evil leaders practice evil politics and eventually deprive human freedom. Stalin did it, and so did Hitler.

- (2) The ideal king, who judges the Lord's people righteously according to the God's standard, crushes those who oppress the Lord's people.

Look at Psalms 72:4 – “May he vindicate the afflicted of the people, Save the children of the needy And crush the oppressor.” The ideal king saves the Lord's people who are needy and helpless poor people by judging those who oppress them. Therefore, in the end, even the enemies of the Lord's people humbly express their homage to the ideal king chosen by the Lord (v. 9).

**Second, the ideal king satisfies the Lord's people because he judges with the Lord's righteous judgment.**

What kind of satisfaction does it bring?

- (1) The ideal king is satisfied by giving the grace of salvation to the Lord's people.

Look at Psalms 72:4 – “May he vindicate the afflicted of the people, Save the children of the needy And crush the oppressor.” The Lord's righteous judgment judges the enemies of the Lord's people, and in the end, the people of God are satisfied with the ideal king who saves them. Why does the ideal king save the Lord's people from their enemies? The reason is because the people of the Lord are very precious to the

ideal king. Look at verse 14: “He will rescue their life from oppression and violence, And their blood will be precious in his sight.”

(2) The ideal king is satisfied by giving peace to the Lord’s people.

Look at Psalms 72:3, 7 – “Let the mountains bring peace to the people, And the hills, in righteousness. ... In his days may the righteous flourish, And abundance of peace till the moon is no more.” Here, the word “peace” has two original Hebrew meanings: “peace” and “prosperity” (Calvin). In the end, God’s people are blessed with peace and prosperity because of the ideal king. In other words, because of the ideal king, God’s people enjoy peace and “abundance” and “flourish” (v. 16).

How do the Lord’s people who enjoy this abundance respond to the ideal king?

(1) The Lord’s people fear God.

Look at Psalms 72:5 – “Let them fear You while the sun endures, And as long as the moon, throughout all generations.” Since the ideal king fears God, the Lord’s people who are ruled over by the Lord’s righteous judgment also fear God.

(2) The Lord’s people serve the ideal king.

Look at Psalms 72:11 – “And let all kings bow down before him, All nations serve him.” Of course, it isn’t only the Lord’s people who serve the ideal king. Because God is with the ideal king who judges with the Lord’s righteousness and rules the world (v. 8), all the nations will serve the ideal king. Those kings who are ruled by the ideal king give presents to the ideal king (v. 10).

(3) The Lord’s people always pray for the ideal king.

Look at Psalms 72:15 – “So may he live, and may the gold of Sheba be given to him; And let them pray for him continually; Let them bless him all day long.” The Lord’s people always prayed to God that God would continue to bless their ideal king. In particular, they prayed to God for his longevity (“So may he live”) and for the blessing of peace and prosperity. Then the Lord’s people can continue to enjoy peace. Also, the Lord’s people praise the ideal king all day long. In other words, they continued to bless the ideal king.

(4) The Lord’s people eventually bless God.

Look at Psalms 72:18-19: “Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, Who alone works wonders. And blessed be His glorious name forever; And may the whole earth be filled with His glory Amen, and Amen.”



In the end, the people of the Lord don't end with praising the ideal king, but finally give praise to God who established and blesses the ideal king.

What does the Bible say about the people who have an ideal king who judges and rules the Lord's people with the Lord's righteous judgment? Look at verse 17: "May his name endure forever; May his name increase as long as the sun shines; And let men bless themselves by him; Let all nations call him blessed." The people who serve the ideal king are blessed by him. And all the nations say that the ideal king is blessed. The ideal King is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. Only Jesus, the King of Kings, is our ideal King. Because He judges with His righteous judgment, He save us by judging the wicked. Because He rules us, we enjoy peace and the blessings of prosperity. Only He can satisfy us. Therefore, we worship Him, serve Him, pray to Him, and praise Him forever.

Longing for the second coming of Jesus Christ, King of kings, and the kingdom of God,

James Kim

(Praying for the ideal president)

## Those who are pure in heart (1)

### [Psalms 73]

I bought a new car in last year October and told my kids not to eat in the back seat to keep the care clean. So, for a year, I was able to keep the car clean and well maintained without any problems. But about three weeks ago, my first son vomited in the back seat of my car. From the night before that day, my son couldn't sleep because he was feeling sick, and eventually vomited in my car. At that time, my first daughter said that the smell was terrible, and she closed her nose with her hand. And the youngest daughter also spoke her unpleasant feelings. Haha. Thankfully there was a gas station nearby, so I went there and cleaned up all the smelly food from my son's stomach and wiped it with wet towels. After this, I had conversation with my children to teach them the word of Jesus that I remembered: "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'" (Mt. 15:18-20). It taught them that when food enters us, the food itself is not dirty, but what comes out of the inside smells like this and is dirty. Therefore, I tried to teach my children what to protect our hearts from bad thoughts, lies, jealousy and envy, and sinful things.

We must guard our hearts, which is the wellspring of life (Prov. 4:23). We must guard our hearts from the sinful things of this world. There are so many sinful things around us that are trying to pollute our hearts. There are so many sinful things around us that we see, hear, smell and so on that try to deceive and defile our hearts. Living in this sinful world, we must strive to keep our hearts pure. Jesus said in Matthew 5:8 – "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." We must be blessed people with pure heart that sees God.

In Psalms 73, the psalmist Asaph says that God does good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart (Ps. 73:1). However, Asaph confesses that his feet came close to stumbling (v. 2). Why did he almost stumble? In other words, during the test that comes to us who try to keep the purity of our hearts, what is the factor that stumbles us? There are three things we can think of.

### **First, Asaph almost stumbled because he saw the prosperity of the wicked.**

Look at Psalms 73:3 – "For I was envious of the arrogant As I saw the prosperity of the wicked." The psalmist Asaph was envious of the arrogant when he saw the prosperity of the wicked. I think we can understand Asaph's envy. One day somebody asked me this question: 'Why are those who believe in Jesus poor and have to

live a hard life, and those who don't believe in Jesus have a lot of money and are living well without suffering?' Perhaps the old saint who asked me this question was having a lot of thought about his. However, I think that not only this old saint has this kind of thought but also many of us often think of this too. Then Satan creates jealousy or envy in our hearts. Then, what is "the prosperity of the wicked" here? It is that the wicked have no trouble and no pains unlike the righteous (v. 5). Also, the wicked are in good health (vv. 4-5). And the wicked are always at peace and increase in wealth (v. 12). How much do we not envy the wicked? Surely we can ask ourselves the question, 'Why is my body declining as I always go through such hard pains and hardships, even though those who don't believe in Jesus are living well and healthy without pains and suffering?'

## **Second, Asaph almost stumbled because of the pride of the wicked.**

Look at Psalms 73:6a – "Therefore pride is their necklace ...." Asaph not only saw the prosperity of the wicked, but also witnessed their pride. Their pride can be thought of in three ways.

### (1) It is the pride of action.

This refers to the violence of the wicked. In verse 6b, Asaph said, "... The garment of violence covers them." This means that all their actions and expressions are violence only that oppresses and exploits others (Park).

### (2) It is the pride of heart.

This indicates that the eyes of the wicked are bulged from fatness. Look at verse 7: "Their eye bulges from fatness; The imaginations of their heart run riot." What happens when we are full? The eyes are bound to be lifted up. In other words, there is no limit to the imagination in the heart, so they accumulate wealth in the midst of greed. Therefore, they will also generate more income than their budget because they take away other people's wealth (Park).

### (3) It is the pride of lips.

This refers to the sin of the mouth. Look at Psalms 73:8-9: "They mock and wickedly speak of oppression; They speak from on high. They have set their mouth against the heavens, And their tongue parades through the earth." What does it mean? Here, the phrase "They have set their mouth against the heavens" refers to self-esteem as high as heaven. And the phrase "And their tongue parades through the earth" refers to actions that revolve around evil wherever they go.

## **Third, Asaph almost stumbled because of the people who followed the wicked.**

Look at Psalms 73:10-11: “Therefore his people return to this place, And waters of abundance are drunk by them. They say, ‘How does God know? And is there knowledge with the Most High?’” Asaph’s feet came close to stumbling when he saw that the crowd of people who imitated the thoughts of the wicked and follow the wicked increased. Those who imitate the wicked apostate, doubting the providential rule of God they believed in, and thought that God was indifferent to the world. What a tough challenge for Asaph? When he saw God’s apostate people following the wicked, Asaph must have shaken his heart a little. At this time, this was Asaph’s conclusion about the wicked: “Behold, these are the wicked; And always at ease, they have increased in wealth” (v. 12).

How will you react when you see this wicked prosperity, that is, always at ease and increase in wealth? Will you lose strength? Will you be angry? Will you curse them? How did Asaph react when he saw the prosperity of the wicked?

(1) He thought that it was surely in vain that he had kept his heart pure.

Look at Psalms 73:13 – “Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure And washed my hands in innocence.”

(2) He lamented his hard life.

Look at Psalms 73:14 – “For I have been stricken all day long And chastened every morning.”

In the end, the factor that caused complaints in the heart of the righteous was that the wicked were prospered, while the righteous themselves were in trouble (Park). How did Asaph, who saw this thought, ‘the prosperity of the wicked’ and ‘the suffering of the righteous’? First he tried to understand this. In other words, he tried to solve the ‘complexity of God’s providence’ with his short knowledge (Park). However, these efforts eventually made Asaph’s heart very troublesome (v. 16).

## Those who are pure in heart (2)

### [Psalms 73]

What did Asaph do in the midst of these difficulties? He came into the sanctuary of God (Ps. 73:17). Then he realized three things:

#### **First, Asaph realized the end of the wicked.**

Look at Psalms 73:17 – “Until I came into the sanctuary of God; Then I perceived their end.” What is the end of the wicked? It is “ruin” (v. 18), ‘destruction’ (v. 19), “completely swept away” (v. 19) and “despise” (v. 20). Look at verse 18-20: “Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors! As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O Lord, you will despise them as fantasies.” The past prosperity of the wicked is brief. They aren’t far away from being cast down to ruin (v. 18). God endures their evil deeds for a long time as if He is sleeping, and when the time comes, He will punish them as a dream when one awakes (v. 20).

#### **Second, Asaph realized the end of the righteous.**

What’s the end of the righteous? Look at Psalms 73:24 – “You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.” In the end of the righteous, the Lord will take the righteous into glory. So the apostle Paul is telling us this message of hope: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom. 8:18).

#### **Third, Asaph realized that he was senseless and ignorant.**

Look at Psalms 73:22 – “I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you.” Asaph, who envied the wicked when he saw their prosperity in the past, had his heart grieved and his spirit embittered (v. 21). But when he entered the sanctuary of God (v. 17), he understood how foolish he was, like a brute beast before God (v. 22), and repented his sins.

Asaph, who became aware of the end of the wicked and of who he is before God by entering the sanctuary of God, made three beautiful confessions in verses 23-28:

#### **The first confession was “you hold me by my right hand.”**

Look at Psalms 73:23 – “Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand.” Seeing the prosperity and pride of the wicked, and the people who followed the wicked, Asaph almost stumbled. But in the midst of that, because the Lord held his right hand, he didn’t stumble, but was guided by the Lord’s instruction (v. 24). We can see that the Lord gave Asaph not only the end of the wicked in the sanctuary, but the end of the righteous, that is, the glory in the life to come (v. 24).

### **The second confession was “But as for me, it is good to be near God.”**

Look at Psalms 73:28 – “But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.” Asaph pledged to trust God forever, the strength of his portion forever (v. 26), no matter what suffering his body and heart faced.

### **The third confession was “And earth has nothing I desire besides you.”**

Look at Psalms 73:25 – “Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.” The pure-hearted believer who encountered God isn’t envious of the prosperity of the wicked in this earth, commits sin in pride, covets wealth, avoids suffering and pain, and doesn’t fill his stomach in greed. Rather, this saint knows the end of the wicked and the end of the righteous, and he doesn’t want anything in this world, and he lives by longing for the Lord only. This reminds me the hymn “I’d Rather Have Jesus”:

1. I’d rather have Jesus than silver or gold; I’d rather be His than have riches untold;  
I’d rather have Jesus than houses or lands. I’d rather be led by His nail pierced hand
- Chorus:
- Than to be the king of a vast domain Or be held in sin’s dread sway.  
I’d rather have Jesus than anything This world affords today.
2. I’d rather have Jesus than men’s applause; I’d rather be faithful to His dear cause;  
I’d rather have Jesus than worldwide fame. I’d rather be true to His holy name.
  3. He’s fairer than lilies of rarest bloom; He’s sweeter than honey from out the comb;  
He’s all that my hungering spirit needs. I’d rather have Jesus and let Him lead.

Just as the pure-hearted Asaph almost stumbled, Satan is striving to make us stumble through the people who follow the wicked who are prosperous and arrogant. Then we must enter the sanctuary of God like Asaph. There we must realize the end of the wicked and the end of the righteous. And like Asaph, we must realize our foolishness and ignorance. Then, like Asaph, we will also be able to make beautiful confessions like “you hold me by my right right hand,” “But as for me, it is good to be near God” and “And earth has nothing I desire besides you.”

Wanting to have pure heart,

James Kim

(Confessing that Asaph's confession is my confession)

## **“Remember this, O Lord”**

### **[Psalms 74]**

Eran Katz from Jerusalem, who holds the world Guinness Record (1998) in memory by listening to and remembering the 500-digit number once, is an expert in developing brain skills and the world-renowned by conducting nearly 1000 workshops in Motorola, IBM, Microsoft, Coca-Cola, and other famous multinational corporations and institutions. In his book “Jerome Becomes a Genius”, Katz talks about two major characteristic of the Jewish brain development method as he has studied the brain development method that has been passed down to the Jews. It is called ‘imagination’ and ‘inconvenient’. Here, imagination makes sense. It makes sense in common sense that when we keep on imagining it keeps the brain from rusting and can prevent memory decline and can have good memory. However, I don’t understand ‘inconvenient’ that Katz is talking about. His argument is that when we study or work, we can do better if we put ourselves in an uncomfortable position. Rather, it is said that when we get used to a comfortable state, we don’t use our brains. In his words, one of the techniques Jews enjoy is to study while they stand up or moving the body back and forth. ‘When we shake our body, oxygen is supplied to our brain, and movements stimulate the brain, like a better idea comes up while we are walking.’ There is a saying in the Talmud: ‘If you can’t stand the pain of learning, you will suffer the pain of ignorance.’ Eventually, as Katz said, people contend that Jews are smart, but it wasn’t because of heredity or pedigree, but because the Jews had their own brain-developing techniques to survive the sad history of the Holocaust. Then we can say that discomfort or pain is helpful for our memory (Internet).

In Psalms 74, the psalmist and the Israelites were suffering because of their enemies and the Lord’s enemies. The psalmist and the Israelites became poor and needy because they were oppressed (v. 21). In the midst of that, we see him groaning to God, “O God, why have You rejected us forever?” (v. 1) while crying out to Him, ‘Remember O Lord’ (vv. 2, 18, 20). I would like to meditate on three prayer topics that the psalmist asked God under the heading “Remember this, O Lord.” In the midst of that, I pray that God’s memory will become our memory in pain.

### **The first prayer topic was “Remember Your congregation”.**

Look at Psalms 74:2 – “Remember Your congregation, which You have purchased of old, Which You have redeemed to be the tribe of Your inheritance; And this Mount Zion, where You have dwelt.” The psalmist cried out to the Lord, the Shepherd, “O God, why have You rejected us forever? Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?” because there was no work of God’s salvation for the Israelites, His sheep, who were



suffering for a long time (v. 1). In the midst of that, he cried out to God to remember the suffering Israelites, the Lord's congregation (v. 2). Was God forgetting his people, the Israelites? So, did He simply leave them unattended despite their long suffering? Look at Isaiah 49:15 – “Can a woman forget her nursing child And have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.” God never forgot the Israelites. We know this because our God promised, "I will not forget you," like the words spoken through the prophet Isaiah (v. 15). Then why does God remember His people, not forgetting them? In Psalms 74:1-2, two reasons are given:

(1) The first reason is because God is our shepherd and we are his sheep.

Look at Psalms 74:1 – “O God, why have You rejected us forever? Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?” The shepherd cannot forget the sheep. Our Lord, the Shepherd, remembers us forever. Look at John 10:27 – “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

(2) The second reason is because God redeemed us and made us His own.

Look at Psalms 74:2 – “Remember Your congregation, which You have purchased of old, Which You have redeemed to be the tribe of Your inheritance; And this Mount Zion, where You have dwelt.” How can God, who redeemed us with the blood of Jesus Christ, and made us children of God, forget us? The Lord remembers us. Even though we may question whether the Lord forgot us because His salvation is slow in the midst of prolonged suffering and adversity, but our God remembers us forever. Look at Psalms 139:17-18: “How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand When I awake, I am still with You.” How can God who loves us and always thinks of us countless times forget us?

**The second prayer topic was ‘Remember Your enemy’.**

Look at Psalms 74:18 – “Remember this, O LORD, that the enemy has reviled, And a foolish people has spurned Your name.” Not only did the psalmist ask God to remember His people, the Israelites, but he also pleaded with Him to remember His enemy who persecuted the Israelites and slandered His name (vv. 18, 22). In other words, the psalmist prayed for the Lord to remember the enemy of the Israelites and the Lord's enemy and to judge them. This is a pattern we see mainly as we meditate on the words of the psalms: The psalmist prayed for God's love and mercy to save the Israelites and to judge their enemy with God's holiness and justice. The enemy of the Israelites and the enemy of the Lord “has damaged everything within the sanctuary” (v. 3). The enemy of the Lord, those who oppose the Lord, had roared in the midst of the Lord's meeting place (v. 4, Park) and damaged the temple (v. 3). Furthermore, the enemy of the Lord brutally destroyed God's temple as if they were smashing the forest with an ax (vv. 5-6, Park). They even burned God's sanctuary and defiled the Lord's temple (v. 7). Look at verse 8:

“They said in their heart, “Let us completely subdue them.” They have burned all the meeting places of God in the land.” The enemy of the Lord wanted to annihilate God's people. So they burned all places of worship in the land where the Israelites lived. How cruel is our enemies and the Lord's enemies? They are against the Lord and against the Lord's people, the Israelites, and against us. What should we do at this time?

- (1) Just as the apostle Paul was angry at seeing many idols in the city of Athens, we need to be angry as we look at our churches now.

How defiled is God's temple? How sinful is there? Do you see that God's holy temple is being devastated? Holy anger must rise up in us like a fire.

- (2) We must have the heart of crying man (Park).

We must cry as we look at the church now. We must shed tears of repentance as we see little bit with God's holy eyes as the temple of God's Holy Spirit is being defiled and desolate.

- (3) We need to know how to feel spiritual solitude in the face of the desolation of the church (Park).

The psalmist saw the ruins of Jerusalem and of the temple, and felt solitude as if God had gone far away (v. 3, Park). Therefore, he prayed earnestly to God: “We do not see our signs; There is no longer any prophet, Nor is there any among us who knows how long. How long, O God, will the adversary revile, And the enemy spurn Your name forever? Why do You withdraw Your hand, even Your right hand? From within Your bosom, destroy them!” In this age of spiritual darkness without signs or prophets, along with the desolation of God's sanctuary due to the enemy of the Lord, who insulted the name of the Lord and destroyed the temple of the Lord, the psalmist prayed earnestly for God's judgment because he knew that the Lord was looking at what the enemy was doing and was wondering when He would judge them with the Lord's right hand. He also prayed to God like this: “Do not forget the voice of Your adversaries, The uproar of those who rise against You which ascends continually” (v. 23). We must not forget. Our holy and just God is the God who clearly judges our enemies, the enemies of the Lord. He is a holy and just God who will surely judge our enemies and the Lord's enemies in His time, even though His judgment may seem slow to us now. Look at Isaiah 13:11 – “Thus I will punish the world for its evil And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.”

### **The third prayer topic was ‘Remember Your covenant’.**

Look at Psalms 74:20 – “Consider the covenant; For the dark places of the land are full of the habitations of

violence.” If we look at verses 12-17, the psalmist remembers God's grace given to the Israelites in the past, and we can see the psalmist praying for His faithfulness. In other words, the psalmist prayed for God's salvation and helped while remembering the faithful grace of God in the past amidst the suffering and darkness of the present. What he held on was the covenant God made with the Israelites. Just as the faithful God didn't forget the covenant He made with them when the Israelites lived in the days of darkness, and faithfully gave them the grace of salvation, the psalmist remembered His covenant even in the present darkness and asked for the salvation of the Israelites whom God loved and chose. Therefore, he asked God for the afflicted and needy Israelites to praise the name of the Lord (v. 21).

Our God is a faithful God who keeps the covenant that He made with us. Look at Psalms 89:28 – “My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever, And My covenant shall be confirmed to him.” God loves us, and He is a God who faithfully keeps the covenant made with us with His unchanging love. No matter what sufferings and unexpected adversities in our lives make us feel in darkness, we must hold onto God's faithful word of promise. No matter how hopeless we may appear and the future may not be visible, we must remember God's covenant. I personally hold onto Numbers 23:19. And because of that word, I am strengthened and have hope: “God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?” I also hold onto Isaiah 55:11 – “So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.”

God never forgets us whom He loved, chose, and made His possessions. Also, He remembers our enemies without forgetting them. Therefore, He is the God who judges them in His time. And our God is the God who remembers the covenant made with us. We must remember this God. And we must not forget the covenant He made with us in Jesus Christ. We must hold on to the word of promise that God has given us and ask God with faith. Therefore, because the Lord judges the wicked, we must enjoy the grace of salvation that delivers us.

Remembering God who promised, ‘I will not forget you’,

James Kim

(Wishing God's memory to become my memory in pains)

# God is the Judge

## [Psalms 75]

Yesterday morning, when I watched CNN Internet news, I saw a fireman confessing to this Southern California wildfire that it was like seeing the end of the world. To what extent the fire was so severe that the firefighter would have said that. As of today, there are 16 fires, and about 1 million people are told to leave their homes. And looking at the news this morning, it is said that only San Diego has suffered a loss of about 1 billion dollars so far. Yesterday, we had a meeting of presbytery pastors in our church, so we met few pastors. One of them lives in Santa Clarita, and he said he was evacuating from his home and going to an in-laws house. Another presbytery pastor's congregation was evacuating from the house and went to see what happened to his house later. And he said that the house was not burned because the firefighters turned off the fire almost in front of the house. My wife, cousin, and younger brother also fled from San Diego and are in the house of my sister-in-law. Yesterday I watched the NBC news, and I saw how intensely the fire burned, where a piece of steel in a car in front of a house melted down. And later, after the fire had passed, the molten iron dried up and turned into a shape of a very flat knife. Looking at these things, I thought about the end of the world like that one firefighter said. As one fireman said, I started thinking about what "the end of the world" will look like. Look at what Luke 17:29-30 says: "but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed." Clearly, the Bible foretells the destruction of the world and fire judgment.

I thought about this judgment based on the words of Acts 17:31. The fact is that God raised Jesus from the dead and made Him the Judge of the whole world. God made this Jesus to fix a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness. This fact gives us two lessons: (1) 'Repent!' and (2) 'Believe in Jesus and be saved!' In Psalms 75:7, the psalmist says about God as the Judge: "But God is the Judge; He puts down one and exalts another." Our just God is a God who judges with equity at an appointed time (v. 2). Today, while meditating on two things about God, the just Judge, I would like to learn the lessons God gives us.

### **First, God is the Judge who humbles.**

Who does God, the Judge, humble? The Bible says that the boastful and the wicked are. Look at Psalms 75:4 – "I said to the boastful, 'Do not boast,' And to the wicked, 'Do not lift up the horn.'" In another word, these arrogant and evildoers are proud. So the psalmist is telling these proud people: "Do not lift up your horn on high, Do not speak with insolent pride." The problem with these proud ones is to exalt themselves (v. 6). The apostle

Paul said that people are “boastful” in the last days when difficult times come (2 Tim. 3:2). In the last days, people boast of themselves rather than boast of God, and glorify themselves rather than God (Jer. 9:23-24). And they think more highly of themselves than they ought to think (Rom. 12:3), praise themselves with their mouths (Prov. 27:2) and exalt themselves.

What is God's attitude toward these pride ones? Look at Proverbs 8:13 – “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverted mouth, I hate.” The Bible says that God hates pride. Therefore, God pours out His wrath on arrogant, proud, and evil sinners. About this fact, the psalmist said: “For a cup is in the hand of the LORD, and the wine foams; It is well mixed, and He pours out of this; Surely all the wicked of the earth must drain and drink down its dregs” (Ps. 75:8). God pours out all the cup of His wrath on the proud wicked, and also melts (vs. 3) by cutting off “all the horns of the wicked”, that is all the power of the wicked (v. 10).

### **Second, God is the Judge who exalts.**

Who does God, the Judge, exalt? He is a God who exalts those who humble himself, the humble before the Lord. That is why the apostle James also said: “Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you” (Jam. 4:10). Look at James 4:6 – “But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” So, what do those who humble before the Lord and those who are humble do?

#### **(1) Those who are humble give thanks to the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 75:1a – “We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks, For Your name is near....” The reason the psalmist and the Israelites thanked God was because “the name of the Lord is near” (v. 1). In other words, the psalmist and the Israelites thanked God because they experienced the presence of the Lord. For them, God's presence means salvation, so they thanked God. The fact that God, who is the just Judge, is present is ultimately destroying the wicked and salvation for the righteous. So the psalmist humbly thanked God with the Israelites.

#### **(2) Those who are humble sing praises to the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 75:9 – “But as for me, I will declare it forever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.” The psalmist made his determination and dedication to praise God in faith because he was convinced that God, the just Judge, would destroy the proud and wicked and save the humble righteous.

#### **(3) Those who are humble declare the Lord's wondrous works.**

Look at Psalms 75:1b – “... Men declare Your wondrous works.” The psalmist tells us that God's people will declare the Lord's wonderful work, in which God pours out His wrath on the proud and judges them

and saves His humble people through His presence

How does God exalt the humble ones who thank and praise the Lord and declare His wondrous works? The Lord firmly sets them. Look at Psalms 75:3b – “... It is I who have firmly set its pillars. Selah.” The Lord sets the humble. The proud will be destroyed by the Lord, but the humble will be set firmly by the Lord. Therefore, even when the Day of Judgment comes in the presence of the Judge, God will not make His humble people to be shaken.

Our God, the Judge exalted Jesus who emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men, and humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross: “but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:7-8). Therefore, we, as disciples of Jesus, must imitate Jesus by emptying ourselves and humbling ourselves. And we must humbly submit to God like Jesus. When the time comes, God will exalt us as He exalted Jesus.

Wanting to imitate the humility of Jesus, who humbled himself and obeyed God to the point of death on the cross for such proud sinner like me,

James Kim

(Thanking the Lord, praising the Lord, and wishing to preach His wonderful story)

## God who reveals Himself to us

### [Psalms 76]

What is revelation? Revelation means to reveal what is hidden (as if you open a curtain). The word revelation is generally used exclusively to “divine revelation”, and in particular the “self-revelation” character of God who is truth is emphasized. God intentionally reveals Himself to us. So, Augustine said, ‘We believe to know (Credo ut intelligam).’ There are two types of revelation. There are “general revelation” and “special revelation”. General revelation is also called “natural revelation” because it means revelation that is universally transmitted to all mankind through nature. The natural world created by God reflects God's existence and principles. Special revelation is also called “super-natural revelation” because it refers to revelation that is communicated to limited people through a supernatural way. Special revelation is more direct and clear than natural revelation and complements or emphasizes revelation and interprets it correctly. For the salvation of sinners, God's grace through special revelation is essential. This is because, according to the principle of general revelation, sinners can only have judgment and destruction (Internet).

If we look at Galatians 1:11-12 among the words I read during today's morning prayer meeting, we can find these words: “For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.” The apostle Paul wrote to the members of the Galatians, saying that the “gospel of Christ” (v. 7) he preached to those who followed the “other gospel” (v. 6) was not according to man (v. 11). In other words, he said that the gospel of Christ was neither received it from man, nor was he taught it, but "I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (v. 12).

Our God is the God who reveals Himself. In other words, our God wants to reveal Himself to us. In Psalms 76:1, the psalmist says that “God is known in Judah”. The most great and majesty God revealed Himself to His little people of Israel. As we meditate on the revealed God in four ways, I hope and pray that we will learn more about our God.

### **First, the God who reveals Himself to us is God who is angry.**

Look at Psalms 76:7 – “You, even You, are to be feared; And who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry?” God is angry with the enemies of the Israelites, the enemies of the Lord. Therefore, He breaks the flaming arrows, the shield and the sword and the weapons of war (v. 3). In other words, the angry God defeats and

destroys the enemies of the Israelites. The psalmist says: “At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob, Both rider and horse were cast into a dead sleep” (v. 6). Jesus who rebukes the storm and calms it down, God set the Day of Judgment for the whole world and made Jesus the Judge. He is angry with the judgment of the wicked, and the wicked will be punished forever.

The psalmist says that this angry God restrains man's wrath (v. 10). The meaning of this word is that God puts man's wrath on His waist (Park). The saying that God has man's wrath on His waist means that God also uses human anger to reveal His glory. The wrath of this man that God permits is the wrath of the enemies of the Israelites, and God allows the wrath of the wicked to be used and eventually to destroy them. By doing so, God makes His people to praise Him when they see the destruction of the wicked. In the end, God uses the wrath of the wicked as well, so He uses it as an opportunity to pour out His holy wrath. Therefore, by destroying the wicked, He reveals His holiness and righteousness to the people of God. The Israelites who experience God's presence cannot but praise God (v. 10). He is a God who pours out His wrath on the wicked by using even the wrath of the wicked, and therefore reveals His glory.

When we think of this God of wrath, we must realize that we must fear God. Our God is God who alone to be feared (v. 7). The psalmist speaks of God as “the One to be feared” (v. 11). He is God who is “feared by the kings of the earth” (v. 12). We must not forget that the God we ought to fear is the God who rebukes our sins. Look at Psalms 39:11 – “With reproofs You chasten a man for iniquity; You consume as a moth what is precious to him; Surely every man is a mere breath. Selah.” Therefore, we must fear that God rebukes us in the midst of wrath: “O LORD, rebuke me not in Your wrath, And chasten me not in Your burning anger” (38:1).

### **Second, the God who reveals Himself to us is God who saves.**

Look at Psalms 76:9 – “when you, O God, rose up to judge, to save all the afflicted of the land. Selah.” God, the Judge, who pronounced judgment from heaven (v. 8), poured out wrath on the wicked and destroyed them and saved His people. He is the God who saves the afflicted. In other words, God is the God who saves the humble. Who are these humble ones? The word “the afflicted” refers to the believers who had become humble in their hearts under tribulation and persecution (Park). The humble believers who became humble in this way turned to God alone. We can think of four things as what kind of people are these humble believers in Psalms 76: (1) They know God (v. 1). (2) They dwell in His dwelling place (v. 2). In other words, those are the ones who dwell in the presence of the Lord or those who walk with the Lord. (3) They fear God (v. 7). (4) They praise God (v. 10). God saves these humble people. God saves His humble people by defeating and destroying the proud people who oppose and persecute the humble, namely, “Valiant men” (v. 5).

God is a God who exalts the humble (Ps. 75). This is what the apostle James said: “But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (Jam. 4:6). God is the



God who defeats the proud and shows grace to the humble. The grace that is given to the humble is salvation. Regarding God's saving zeal for the humble, John Calvin said: 'It is impossible for God to leave one who is innocently oppressed, as it is impossible for Him to deny Himself' (Calvin).

### **Third, the God who reveals Himself to us is God who is majestic.**

Look at Psalms 76:4 – “You are resplendent with light, more majestic than mountains rich with game.” Here, the original Hebrew word for “majestic” means ‘became surrounded by light. This symbolizes the manifestation of power that humans cannot invade (Dan. 2:22; 1 Tim. 6:16) (Park). This resplendent God appears honorably in front of His chosen people because He defeats the nations who are looting in order to save His people and to gain victory (Park). Before this triumphant and majestic God, the stouthearted or the warriors cannot use any power (v. 5).

Therefore, the psalmist exhorted the Israelites to make vow to this majestic God: “Make vows to the LORD your God and fulfill them; Let all who are around Him bring gifts to Him who is to be feared.” God's people who have been favored of the salvation of God, who saved the Israelites, must make vows to God and fulfill them. And the psalmist is telling us that all our neighbors on all sides should also offer gifts to God. We must give honor and glory to God, thinking about His saving grace. We must repay our vows, and we must offer our gifts to God sincerely. When we consider the fact that the majestic God pours out the wrath on His only Son Jesus, that should be poured out on such sinners like us, and gives us the grace of salvation and honors us, we offer ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice. We must dedicate ourselves to the Lord as we are.

### **Fourth and last, the God who reveals Himself to us is great.**

Look at Psalms 76:1 – “God is known in Judah; His name is great in Israel.” God poured out His wrath on the enemies of the Israelites and destroyed them to save the Israelites. The reason He revealed His glory and honor was to make the Israelites know God. The psalmist who knew this God confessed, “His name is great Israel” (v. 1). God, who loved and chose the fewest Israelites among the nations (Deut. 7:6-8), redeemed the Israelites from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt with His mighty hand in the time of the Exodus and revealed his glory. Likewise, He destroyed the foreign nations (Assyria) and revealed His great name to the nations. The greatest God concerned the fewest Israelites with His great love, and gave them the grace of salvation, also loves us, the least people, with His great love and is saving us. How should we respond to this great love of God? First we must praise the Lord (v. 10). Second, we must fear the Lord (vv. 7, 11, 12). Third, we must humble ourselves before the Lord (v. 9). Fourth, we must serve the Lord with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength (v. 11).

Today my youngest daughter Karis said she wanted to see a church grandmother at a nursing home. So when I asked her ‘Why do you want to go to the nursing home and to see only one church grandmother even though

there were two church grandmothers. Karis said that since other grandmother couldn't say anything and couldn't recognize us, she wanted to go see only the grandmother who knew how to talk. So I replied to Karis: 'Then, the grandmother who cannot speak will be sad. And even though she doesn't recognize us, God knows everything when we meet with that grandma.' I am sure that even though grandma Park has dementia, I believe that God doesn't forget His beloved daughter, grandma Park.

I am holding onto the words of 1 Corinthians 8:3 even though we don't know when God reveals Himself: "but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him." Our hope is "now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known" (13:12). With this hope, I hope and pray that we grow up in the knowledge of God every day.

He who is known by God,

James Kim

(While wanting to work hard to know God and know myself)

## **“My voice rises to God, and I will cry aloud”**

### **[Psalms 77]**

As I prepared for the New Year, I decided the New Year's motto, "Let's devote ourselves to prayer!" This motto is based on Acts 1:14 – “These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.” We want to gather together like the members of the early church, hold on to the word of promise, and pray with our hearts.

John Calvin gave these five presuppositions for prayer: (1) First, it is God's tender invitation. God is in the lead when it comes to prayer. He gave us the word of promise and also commanded us to pray. (2) The second presupposition is Jesus, the Mediator. All prayer is possible through the work of reconciliation and intercession of Christ. The prayer that is worthy in the eyes of God and that He is pleased with must be the prayer that Jesus, the Mediator, sanctifies. (3) The third presupposition is the indispensable word of God. Our prayers must be based on the Word of God, molded, and guided by His Word. Prayer takes hold of the word of promise God has given us and calls out to God by relying on it. 'It is to pretend to pray the person who prays without believing the word of the promise.' (4) The fourth presupposition is the role of the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures in Romans 8:26 explain this premise: “In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.” (5) The fifth and final presupposition is the importance of faith. Faith is the foundation and necessary condition of true prayer. 'Faith is strengthened by prayer, and prayer is influenced by faith' (Internet).

If we look at Psalms 77:1, the psalmist says: “My voice rises to God, and I will cry aloud; My voice rises to God, and He will hear me.” I would like to receive lessons given by meditating on the psalmist's prayer in two ways under the heading “My voice rises to God and I will cry aloud” based on Psalms 77.

The first thing I want to meditate on is when the psalmist cried out to God with his voice. We can think of it as two:

**First, the psalmist cried out to God with his voice when his soul refused to be comforted.**

Look at Psalms 77:2 – “In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; In the night my hand was stretched out

without weariness; My soul refused to be comforted.” When the psalmist was in deep agony during the day of tribulation facing Israel nationally, he didn’t let go of his prayers and prayed until God answered his prayers. The psalmist who prayed so earnestly confesses that his soul refused to be comforted until God answered his prayers. In other words, the psalmist is saying that only when God answers his prayers can his soul be comforted. How was the soul of the psalmist who refused to be comforted?

(1) The spirit of the psalmist grows faint.

Look at Psalms 77:3 – “When I remember God, then I am disturbed; When I sigh, then my spirit grows faint. Selah.” To say that his spirit grows faint means that the psalmist’s soul was anxious and distressed. Why, then, was the psalmist’s soul anxious and distressed? The reason was because he thought of God. In other words, the psalmist’s spirit grew faint with anxiety and distress because it was not the same as what God had done to him in the past, but because he thought He was covering His face or as if He was angry (Park).

(2) The spirit of the psalmist was so troubled.

Look at Psalms 77:4 – “You have held my eyelids open; I am so troubled that I cannot speak.” The psalmist was so distressed that he couldn’t speak. He couldn’t sleep while suffering and meditating because he didn’t know why the suffering he suffered was not over (Park). It may be a good opportunity to hear the voice of the Lord speaking to us when we can’t speak because we are struggling in unending suffering and unable to sleep. Like the psalmist, there will be times when our spirits are troubled and so painful that we refuse to receive comfort. At such times, we cannot be comforted by anyone’s words or actions. That’s why we are even refused to be comforted by our loved ones around us. At time like this, only God can comfort us. That’s why we cry out to God. Psalms 119:50 comes to my heart: “This is my comfort in my affliction, That Your word has revived me.” Let’s hold onto this word of God’s promise and cry out to God.

**Second, the psalmist cried out to God with his voice when he was in grief.**

Look at Psalms 77:10 – “Then I said, “It is my grief, That the right hand of the Most High has changed.” The psalmist’s weakness was manifested in his thoughts: “Will the Lord reject forever? And will He never be favorable again? Has His lovingkindness ceased forever? Has His promise come to an end forever? Has God forgotten to be gracious, Or has He in anger withdrawn His compassion? Selah.” Because the psalmist became weak in suffering and pain, eventually in his thoughts, he doubted about God with many questions. These questions were not religious: “Will the Lord reject forever? And will He never be favorable again? Has His lovingkindness ceased forever? ...” (vv. 7-8) Can God’s lovingkindness toward him and toward us cease as the psalmist thought? Can He ever forget to be gracious to him and us? Can the Lord truly reject us forever? As we know, all these

questions are against God's divinity. God never and cannot abandon us. Our God can never forget to be gracious to us. He is the God who is still gracious to us. Our God is the God who loves us, even to the point of giving His begotten Son Jesus. His love is endless.

We are no different from the psalmist. In other words, as the pain and suffering get longer, we also become weaker in spirit and body, so we can have weak thoughts like the psalmist: 'Will God deliver me from this suffering and pain? How long will He keep looking at me like this? I am sure He isn't abandoning me. etc.' At these times, do we cry out to God with our own voice like the psalmist? My personal opinion is that sometimes we cannot open our mouths and pray to God with our voices when we are too weak in mind and body in the midst of suffering and pain. At that time, the Gospel song that I often sang was "Someone is praying for you": "When it seems that you prayed till your strength is all gone/ And your tears fall like raindrops All the day long/ Jesus cares and He knows just how much you can bear/ He'll speak your name to someone in prayer/ Someone is praying for you Someone is praying for you/ And when it seems you're all alone And your heart would break in two/ Remember someone is praying for you." Another gospel song that I get comforted is "Yearning for God's love": "When you've been longing for God's unfailing love/ When you've been yearning for God's perfect peace/ God, our Lord, the Creator of heaven and earth, we know,/Is the One who loves you so/ Our God keeps His eyes upon you/ He's always watching over you, His children/ God shed His blood to redeem you and me/ Day and night, He inclines His ear to us/ He has shone the light in the darkness/ He has heard your faintest moaning, then/ Wherever you are, lift your eyes to the Lord/ Look up to the Lord, to the Lord alone."

The last thing I want to meditate on is how the psalmist could cry out to God with his own voice.

**It was because he remembered the deeds of the Lord in the past.**

Look at Psalms 77:11 – "I shall remember the deeds of the LORD; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old." The psalmist did this when his soul refused to be comforted and when he was weak: "I have considered the days of old, The years of long ago. I will remember my song in the night; I will meditate with my heart, And my spirit ponders" (vv. 5-6). He recalled the grace of God in the past when his soul refused to be comforted and when he was weak. Therefore, he wanted to find comfort. And he tried to have a hope for the future. In the meantime, the psalmist was satisfied with the wonders of God, that was, the works of God He had done, and was satisfied with them, and left the future work to God (v. 11, Park). He meditated on all the things of the Lord, and because he pondered the Lord's actions (v. 12), he was able to cry out to God in his own voice (vv. 13-20). The God he meditated on is the holy and great God (v. 13) and the God who reveals His power (v. 14), who redeemed the Israelites (v. 15). He meditated on the miracle of God that delivered the Israelites from Egypt and made them cross the Red Sea (vv. 16-20). Therefore, he could cry out to God in his own voice.

Like the psalmist, when our souls refuse to be comforted in a broken heart and affliction, we must commit

all our anxieties to the Lord in prayer while deeply meditating on the saving grace of God in our past lives. Our Lord is clearly a God who listens to our prayers (v. 1). And in His time He will answer our prayers according to His will.

I would like to sing the gospel song “You are my son” with you:

“When I wept in pain, Disappointed with myself and enfeebled,  
He said to me, wiping away my tears With His nailed hands.

You are my son, I formed you today.

You are my son, my beloved song.”

With thanksgiving heart to God who comes quietly to me when I am weeping in pain and disappointed with myself and speaks to my heart tenderly,

James Kim

(As my soul is refusing to be comforted until God will fulfill His promise words in my life)

## **My weakness**

**“And I say: `My weakness is, ...” (Psalms 77:10) (Young’s Literal Translation).**

As the years pass by, we become more aware of how weak a person is. Particularly in the face of adversity and suffering, we feel our weaknesses. In particular, we feel more helpless in front of greater adversity and suffering that we cannot bear them any longer. What should we do then?

In Psalms 77:10, the psalmist Asaph admits to his weakness. He expressed his weaknesses in four ways (vv. 1-9):

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

Look at Psalms 77:3a – “When I remember God, then I am disturbed ....” There is a lot of trouble and hardship in this world. There are also many things that make us anxious and disturb. Why are we disturbed? One of the reasons is that we are abandoned by our loved one(s). In particular, we Christians are disturbed when we feel abandoned by our beloved God (43:2). In Psalms 77, Asaph looked for the Lord in the day of his trouble (77:2). But he was disturbed because God's answer of his prayer was slow. A heart that is disturbed and filled with anxiety is weak heart.

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

Look at Psalms 77:3b – “... When I sigh, then my spirit grows faint. Selah.” On the day of trouble, Asaph’s spirit grew faint when he was disturbed and anxious. So he couldn't sleep, and was so troubled that he couldn't speak (v. 4). When we are too distressed, we cannot sleep or speak. I still remember that I couldn't sleep for three weeks when I was having a hard time pastoring. I remember experiencing extreme stress that I couldn't eat even though the food was in front of me. Many people are so difficult and distressed that they cannot sleep and eat properly. If we tell someone we love, ‘I’m in pain these days,’ it may not still be that painful. Some suffering is so painful that nothing can truly be said. Such anguish makes us silent. It makes us silent not only in front of people but in front of God. Suffering hurts our hearts. And a broken heart is a weak heart

### **Third, Asaph’s soul refused to be comforted.**

Look at Psalms 77:2b – “... My soul refused to be comforted.” Asaph was in distress enough to refuse to be comforted. He, who was asleep amidst anxiety and in unspeakable distress, was so injured in his heart that he refused to receive comfort. I remember the book of Job. When Job was in the midst of excruciating pain and distress, his friends came to comfort him. But Job referred to them as “Sorry comforters” (Job 16:2). When a person is so distressed and in extreme pain, he doesn’t want to be comforted by anyone. The reason is because he knows that no one can comfort him. That's not always the case in our lives. We refuse to receive comfort from anyone because we believe that only God can comfort us. Those who refuse to receive comfort in this way are those who are in the midst of weakness.

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

Look at Psalms 77:7-9: “Will the Lord reject forever? And will He never be favorable again? Has His lovingkindness ceased forever? Has His promise come to an end forever? Has God forgotten to be gracious, Or has He in anger withdrawn His compassion? Selah.” Asaph cried out to God in the midst of trouble, but there was no answer. So his heart and spirit became weak. As a result, Asaph began to doubt about God's salvation in the midst of such weakness. In other words, Asaph's assurance of salvation was shaken. This uncertainty shows that his heart was weak. The weakened heart has two hearts. One heart seems to believe in God, and the other heart has distrust in God. Eventually, disbelief can only sprout in anxiety, distress, a broken heart, and a heart that refuses to receive comfort.

#### What should we do when we are so weak?

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

Look at Psalms 77:11a – “I shall remember the deeds of the LORD ....” When it's too hard and the heart is afflicted, we must remind ourselves of the saving grace God has given us in the past in our weakness. Personally when I am in difficult and hardship, I often think about Charis, my first baby who died in my arms in the past. The reason is because it has never been as painful for me as then. But there is no more pain in the heart. However, only the grace and love that God has given to me remains in my heart. That's why I remember and I celebrate. When I remember and commemorate God's grace and love that He gave me in my present distressing and difficult situation, I experience God’s work of reviving my weakened heart and spirit. I get strength again. When I remember and celebrate, God's strength will be manifested in my weakness.

#### **Second, we must declare what God has done for us.**

Look at Psalms 77:11b, 12b – “... Surely I will remember thy wonders of old. ... and talk of thy doings” (KJV). We must not only remember what God has done in the past, but also declare it. Sometimes my church



elderly people said to me why I'm still talking about my deceased first baby Joo-young (Charis). Nevertheless, I sometimes tell her story even during sermons. The reason is because I cannot help but to share the grace and love that God gave me through Joo-young. It is because I want to boast the Lord. It is because I saw the glory of the Lord as the name of "Joo-young" means. It is because if the Lord was not with me and my wife, neither of us could overcome. When we remember and share what God has done in the past, we experience the work of God that strengthens our weak hearts.

### **Third and last, we must meditate of all God's work.**

Look at Psalms 77:12 – "I will meditate on all Your work And muse on Your deeds." Asaph, not only remembered God's wonders in the past day of trouble in his weakness and declared what He had done, he also meditated on God who was working not only in the past but also in the present trouble more comprehensively. In fact, if we focus on the painful circumstances we face in our weakness, we will not be able to see what God is doing. However, when we focus on what God had done in the past, we believe that the same God is working in the present, and we will see the Lord's works through that faith. However, Asaph didn't stop there but meditated on what God would do in the future. These meditations are deep meditations that cannot be done without faith in the Lord. It is meditation that is possible only through faith. This is the secret to overcoming our weaknesses. When we deeply meditate on all things that God did for us, we can overcome our weaknesses.

It seems that there are many times when we suffer from anxiety and distress that our bodies become weaker as the years pass. In the meantime, sleepless nights increase, and we suffer from unspeakable suffering. Although our broken hearts earnestly seek God, we doubt about God and refused to be comforted us when we think that God's answer to our earnest prayers is slow. In that time, we must think of God's past wonders. As we meditate on what He had done, we must also declare it. I hope and pray that we can overcome our weakness as we deeply meditate on all that God has done for us.

Enjoying the abundant grace and love of God who gives me strength when I am weak,

James Kim

(As I want to realize my incompetence and helplessness more and more thoroughly)

## When I am weak ...

**“And I say: `My weakness is, The changes of the right hand of the Most High.’  
I mention the doings of Jah, For I remember of old Thy wonders, And I have  
meditated on all Thy working, And I talk concerning Thy doings.” (Psalms  
77:10-12) (Young’s Literal Translation)**

In this world where it seems that only strong can survive, everyone seems to be striving to become strong in many ways. It seems that we are trying not only to be strong physically, but also to be strong intellectually and socially. Therefore, it seems that we don’t easily admit our weaknesses in front of others. However, we are forced to realize more and more how fragile human beings are due to the storm-like adversity and hardships of our lives in this world. No matter how strong the young people are, what can they do in front of their own deaths if they were sentenced to terminal cancer by their doctor. We are truly weak and weak beings.

When we look at Psalms 77:10, the psalmist Asaph confessed “My weakness”. Asaph, who admits to his weaknesses, says that in the end, because of his weaknesses, he began to think weakly. What were his weak thoughts? Look at Psalms 77:7-9: “Will the Lord reject forever? And will He never be favorable again? Has His lovingkindness ceased forever? Has His promise come to an end forever? Has God forgotten to be gracious, Or has He in anger withdrawn His compassion? Selah.” God never reject His people forever, but Asaph in his weakness thought, “Will the Lord reject forever?” Although God is a gracious God who is pleased to be gracious and show favor to His people, Asaph thought that “And will He never be favorable again?” Although He is the God of love who loves us forever without end, Asaph even thought, “Has His lovingkindness ceased forever?” Although He is the God who faithfully fulfills the words of His promise, Asaph even doubted that God's promises would be over forever [“Has His promise come to an end forever?” (v. 8)]. Asaph was so weak that he couldn’t even feel God's compassion. These were the thoughts the man Asaph had in his weakness.

Why did Asaph, who doubted God's love, grace, and compassion in his own weakness, come to acknowledge his weakness in this way? The reason was because of the trouble that struck him (v. 2). Asaph earnestly sought God in the day of his trouble and refused to be comforted without God's answer to his prayers (v. 2). We can have weak thought that God has rejected us when our prayers are not being answered even though we cry out to God earnestly in the midst of trouble. David had this kind of weak thought. In particular, in Psalms 22:1–2, when David prayed to God in the words of his groaning day and night, but there was no answer from God. So he

cried out to God, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” (22:1) David and Asaph even felt that God had forsaken them in great pain during the day of trouble. But, as we know, God doesn’t forsake us forever. No matter how much Asaph cried out to God in so much pain, it seemed that there was no answer to his prayer. That was why he thought that God rejected him forever (77:7). Also, he was disturbed and his spirit grew faint (v. 3). And he was very distressed because he couldn’t sleep (v. 4). He was in great weakness spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally because of the trouble that came upon him. What did Asaph do when he was in such deep weakness? He decided to remember the deeds of the Lord of old: “I shall remember the deeds of the LORD; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will meditate on all Your work And muse on Your deeds” (vv. 11-12). He tried to overcome the present challenges by remembering and pondering all the things the Lord had done in the past. He made a right decision in his extreme pain. Why did Asaph want to remember all that God had done in the past? The reason was because he tried to meditate deeply on God's being through all that He had done. Therefore, in Psalms 78:34-35, when the Israelites were being disciplined by God for their sins, the Israelites turned back and sought God earnestly, and they remembered that God was their rock and the Most High God their Redeemer. Asaph meditated deeply who God was by remembering His deeds. Like Asaph, when we are in pain and adversity, we must deeply realize our weaknesses and remember and meditate deeply on all the things God has done in our lives. Therefore, we must deeply meditate on God's being through all that He has done. By doing so, we can overcome our weaknesses. In the midst of that, we will become stronger in the Lord through our weaknesses that we have realized through trouble. Let's not forget that remembering the Lord is our strength.

Remembering what the Lord had done through my church college retreat about 33 years ago,

James Kim

(With the heart of meditating on John 6:1-15, the two fish and five loaves of bread miracle)

## Tell to the generation to come

### [Psalms 78:1-22]

‘The secret of the 3D gifted education for the Jewish people: Raise a child like a dove with a heart and a snake with a head’ says that in order to win in this competitive society, we must have a good heart (EQ) and a smart head (IQ). Jesus also told His 12 disciples this way: “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves” (Mt. 10:16). This is what the Jews believe that ‘the heart (EQ) is pure, but the head (IQ) must surpass the wisdom of the world.’ That is why the Jews say that when their children are three years old, they continue to teach difficult laws. It’s because when they learn the laws, they get picky about everything and don’t just skip things. This is the secret that the Jews became the No. 1 nation. The author of this article said, ‘How is the Jewish education different from ours? The Koreans are as obsessed with the education of their children as Jews. Why aren’t so many excellent talents produced?’ Interestingly, if we look at the three stages of Jewish education for the gifted, First-Dimensional Gifted Education: Knowledge-oriented intelligence development, including IQ education in general school education; Second-Dimension Gifted Education: developing shrewd, smart, and intelligence; Third-Dimension Gifted Education: Wisdom Development. If we organize these three levels of gifted education from low to high, it is in the order of knowledge, shrewd, and wisdom. The goal of education is, of course, to raise it to the level of wisdom in the third dimension, but the reality of Korea always revolves around in the first dimension. On the other hand, the gifted education of the Jews teaches the highest 3D wisdom, then the shrewd education, and finally the knowledge in the school. In other words, in the process of making personality education with the Bible, wisdom and shrewd are developed (Internet).

It’s an interesting Jewish three-dimensional gifted education. In particular, it is interesting that Jews don’t prioritize knowledge-oriented intelligence development, which is the first-dimensional gifted education, in their children’s gifted education, but first prioritize the development of wisdom, which is the third-dimensional gifted education. That is why Jews are said to receive wisdom education through religious life from an early age and apply it to real life. They believe that wisdom is a gift from God, and the foundation of wisdom is the fear of God. It means that we must live keeping in mind that God gives wisdom to the humble. Jewish wisdom is concentrated in the Old Testament Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job and some sort of Jewish literature such as the Talmud, the Law and etc.. They structure these content and forms into their lives so that wisdom penetrates broadly and deeply into their unique vertical culture. Here, the vertical culture is the culture based on history, philosophy, thought, tradition, classics, and religion that make up the inner spiritual world of man. In contrast, the horizontal culture refers to the material, power, honor, fashion, and modern study and modern science human external metaphysics. If

the vertical culture is a value for an unchanging soul, the horizontal culture is for a constantly changing body. While the vertical culture is a deep culture that seeks the meaning of life, the horizontal culture is a surface culture that seeks the fun of life. The vertical culture strengthens the human spirit world and makes it a vessel that fosters inner self-confidence. If the vertical culture is computer hardware, modern study or science is software. When wisdom is great, knowledge can be properly used in it (Internet).

In Psalms 78:4-5, the psalmist is determined to “tell to the generation to come” (v. 4) and exhorts “That they should teach them to their children” (v. 5). So, I would like to take three lessons from Psalms 78 about what we should tell our children under the heading “Tell to the generation to come.”

### **First, we must tell to the generation to come the works of God.**

Look at Psalms 78:4, 7 – “We will not conceal them from their children, But tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, And His strength and His wondrous works that He has done. ... That they should put their confidence in God And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments.” God’s works that the psalmist made known to the Israelites was the thing that happened starting from the Red Sea to all things that happened in the wilderness” (vv. 12-22) (Park). From verse 12 and on, the psalmist says that in ancient times, in the land of Egypt, God did “wonders” before the ancestors of the Israelites. What were those wonders? It was the work of dividing the Red Sea and causing the Israelites to pass through (v. 13), the work of God leading the Israelites in the wilderness with the cloud by day and all the night with a light of fire (v. 14), the work of splitting the rocks in the wilderness and gave them abundant drink like the ocean depths (vv. 15-16, 20), the work of opening the doors of heaven and raining down manna upon the Israelites to eat (vv. 23ff) and so on. But what was the problem? If we look at verse 11, we can see the answer: “They forgot His deeds And His miracles that He had shown them.” God did many miracles to the Israelites, but the Israelites forgot all the wonders He had done. The Israelites easily forgot all the wonders God had done for them. But it doesn’t seem to be the only problem for the Israelites. We too easily forget what God has done in our past lives and the grace that He has given us. So, just as the psalmist made up his mind and put it into action (77:11), we too must decide to remember God’s wonders of old, the things He did in our lives, and determine to put it into action.

### **Second, we must tell to the generation to come the commandments of God.**

Look at Psalms 78:5, 7 – “For He established a testimony in Jacob And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers That they should teach them to their children, ... That they should put their confidence in God And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments.” God appointed a law in His covenant people, the Israelites, and commanded them to teach them to their children (v. 5). And God commanded their children to teach their children to keep the commandments of God (v. 7). Here, it can be said that the narrow interpretation of God’s “law” refers to the Ten Commandments that Moses received at Mount Sinai at the time of the

Exodus of Israel, and that the broader interpretation of it refers to all the commandments of God. In addition to the word “a law”, the psalmist uses the word “a testimony” in verse 5a. Its meaning is a testimony in the sense of proving that God has revealed Himself to His people from generation to generation (Park). One of those self-revelations is found in Deuteronomy 6:4 –“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!” However, the problem is recorded in Psalms 78:10 – “They did not keep the covenant of God And refused to walk in His law.” The background of this word is that despite the fact that the Ephraim descendants were good at fighting (Gen. 49:24), they were defeated during the conquest of Canaan (Jdg. 1:29) (Park). The reason why the Ephraim descendants were defeated was because of their disbelief and disobedience, not keeping the commandments of God. This is what the psalmist said in Psalms 78:17 and on about the sins of disobedience and unbelief of the ancestors of Israel: The Israelites still continued to sin against God and rebelled against the Most High in the desert (v. 17), in their greedy heart they put God to the test (v. 18), and doubted the power of God. (vv. 19-20). Not only that, the Israelites spoke against God: “Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? Behold, He struck the rock so that waters gushed out, And streams were overflowing; Can He give bread also? Will He provide meat for His people?” (vv. 19-20). One God is commanding the ancestors of Israel and also to us: “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deut. 6:6-9). God is not only commanding the Israelites to keep God's commandments in their hearts and diligently teach their children but also to us.

### **Third, we must tell to the generation to come to put their confidence in God.**

Look at Psalms 78:7 – “That they should put their confidence in God ....” The psalmist tells about the history of the Israelites’ sins in order to guard the Israelites of his time and their children (Park). The intention was to make the Israelites, like their ancestors, not to sin by forgetting God's wonders and disobeying His commandments. In some ways, the psalmist's conclusion is faith, not unbelief. In other words, the psalmist's conclusion is to believe in God, not to doubt God. In order to do this, the Israelites and we must remember God's wonders and obey His commandments. Another way to think about it is to believe in God so that we can remember God's wonders and obey His commandments (Park). The prophet Isaiah exhorts us: “Trust in the LORD forever, For in GOD the LORD, we have an everlasting Rock” (Isa. 26:4). Only God is the subject of our eternal trust. We must put our hope on the Lord who is our eternal Rock. And we must show that life to our children.

This is the story of my uncle, Pastor Andrew Kim, who was hospitalized for cancer. When I visited him on Monday morning, I laughed a lot while talking with him. During that conversation, of course, we also talked about his wife and his two children. During the conversation, the pastor in particular gave the names of his two son’s children. When the eldest son gives birth to a son, he thinks of “Seung-gyeom” and when he has a daughter, he

thinks of “Yeson”. In the case of the second son, if he marries and gives birth to children, he said the son’s name is “Seung-yae” and if it is a daughter “Yae-bang.” Why did the pastor name the descendants like these? I think there were two reasons: The first is “humility” and the second is “prevention”. When the pastor said he was proud, he seemed to have named his eldest son’s son with the heart of wishing that his grandson would be “humble”. And for the second son's son, he gave the name “Yae-bang” because he thought that “prevention” should be taken. When I thought of the names that Pastor Andrew made in his mind for his children’s children, I thought that the wise are the humble and the preventer. The reason is that a wise person fears God and cannot be proud before God. Rather, the wise man humbly obeys God's commandments, remembering God's works in his life. And the wise never puts hope in himself or in the world. He only hopes in the Lord. I hope and pray that we will be able to teach our children and their children not only with our lips but also with our lives what God has done, God's commandments, and only hope in God until the day the Lord calls us to heaven. .

As I think about God’s precious gifts of my three children,

James Kim

(With a heart that wishes my dedication to teach my children God's works, God's commandments, and to put their hope in God)

## **Our hearts that aren't steadfast toward God**

### **[Psalms 78:23-41]**

I went to the hospital with my mother this Monday. My mother did MRI and CT scans. When she took MRI, I was able to see her on the monitor for a moment because the door, in which a doctor and a technician to took MRI were, was little bit open. The doctor said we have to wait for the result. When I think about my mother who took MRI and CT scans to diagnose whether her body is healthy or has some disease, I thought about how we can diagnose our hearts. Then I thought that we could diagnose our hearts with the words of God.

When we look at James 1:7-8, this is what the apostle James says: "For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." He teaches that an unhealthy heart has "a double-minded" and is unstable. The double-minded is divided hearts, and is unstable so it is bound to fluctuate. This heart is full of things that are not true, creating constant whims and unpredictable situations. Since this kind of heart isn't whole or healthy, it gets hurt, frustrated, and broken easily. This kind of heart is weak and can't cope with all the stresses of life. And it makes us fall into meaningless and helpless life rather than a healthy and energetic life. It is a sick heart. That's why the Bible Proverbs 4:23 says, "Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life."

If we look at Psalms 78:37, the psalmist says about a heart that isn't steadfast: "For their heart was not steadfast toward Him, Nor were they faithful in His covenant." What does it mean to say that the hearts of the Israelites aren't steadfast? That means that their hearts weren't loyal to God (v. 8). In other words, the heart that isn't steadfast refers to an unfaithful heart. And this unfaithful heart is neither faithful nor can it be faithful to God's covenant (v. 37). I want to meditate on this heart that isn't steadfast toward God in three ways, and want to use it as an opportunity to diagnose our hearts. Therefore, I hope and pray that we will be able to lay down our diagnosed hearts to Heavenly Father so that there is God's work of our hearts being purified and transformed into pure hearts in repentance.

### **First, our hearts that aren't steadfast follows greed.**

Look at Psalms 78:30 – "Before they had satisfied their desire, While their food was in their mouths." The psalmist warns the Israelites not to commit sin by using their ancestors as a mirror. In the midst of that, he speaks of greed among the sins of their ancestors like this: "And in their heart they put God to the test By asking food according to their desire" (v. 18). How did the ancestors of the Israelites test God in greed at the time of the Exodus?



Look at Psalms 78:19-20: “Then they spoke against God; They said, “Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? Behold, He struck the rock so that waters gushed out, And streams were overflowing; Can He give bread also? Will He provide meat for His people?” The ancestors of Israel doubted the power of God. At that time, God was fiercely angry with the ancestors of Israel. Yet God commanded the clouds above and opened the doors of heaven and He rained down manna upon them to eat and gave them food from heaven (vv. 23-24). If this is not God's grace, what is? To the ancestors of Israel who were to be punished in the midst of wrath, God opened the door of heaven and rained down manna. God sent the Israelites food in abundance (v. 25). He rained meat upon them like the dust (v. 27) in His power (v. 26) so that the Israelites ate and were well filled (v. 29). God gave manna according to their desires (v. 29). Nevertheless, the Israelites didn't turn away from their greed (v. 30). They sinned when they had nothing to eat, and even when they had something to eat. So God punished them this time because they had no alternative (Num. 11:33-35, Ps.78:31) (Park).

The Bible James 1:15 says, “Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.” Greed eventually leads to death. Nevertheless, human greed seems to be endless. It is a person's greed that cannot be satisfied. Last week, I went to a Christian bookstore and saw a book titled ‘The Hope of Hee Dae’. Since the book was about cancer, I bought it and read it. The author himself was a cancer doctor and was suffering from his own cancer. But he was healed and wrote that book. So I bought and read the book with more interest. Reading the author's book, who experienced the fifth stage of life prepared by God in the fourth stage of cancer, made me interested in his book on cancer cells. According to the author, a cancer cell is a cell that never dies but grows constantly due to a mutation in the gene of the cell that has to repeat growth and death. The scary thing about cancer cells is the fact that they take up the nutrients of other cells by themselves in order to grow constantly. Cancer cells are said to grow by steadily moving from place to place, grabbing high-calorie nutrients, and eating alone. In a word, according to the author, the essence of cancer cells is greed. We must abandon greed. As we live in this world that arouses our greed, we must lay down in front of the cross every day, moment by moment, that it is greed constantly wriggling within us. Like Jesus, we must constantly empty our hearts. We must put it down again and again. And we must have the heart of Jesus in our hearts. We must learn the secret of contentment with Jesus alone. We must be grateful in all things for eternal life (Rom 6:23) and the inseparable love of God (Rom. 8:38-39), which was given as a gift in Christ Jesus. Therefore, we must let greed that's like cancer cells to make claim in our hearts.

## **Second, our hearts that aren't steadfast don't believe in God.**

Look at Psalms 73:32 – “In spite of all this they still sinned And did not believe in His wonderful works.” God opened the gates of heaven to the Israelites in the time of the Exodus and gave manna abundantly by grace. But the greed of the Israelites was not satisfied. Despite the endless greed and punishment in the wrath of God (v. 31), the Israelites rather sinned and didn't believe God's wonderful works (v. 32). Eventually, they sinned against God

in greed. When greed is conceived, it gives birth to sin. That sin is “unbelief.” The psalmist identified the sins of the Israelites at the time of the Exodus like this: “Because they did not believe in God And did not trust in His salvation” (v. 22). God was fiercely angry with the Israelites because they didn’t believe in God and didn’t rely on God’s salvation even though God performed various miracles from the Red Sea to the wilderness (v. 21). As a result, God bought their days to an end in futility and their years in sudden terror (v. 33). Only then they sought God earnestly and remembered that God was their Rock and the Most High was their Redeemer (vv. 34-35).

In John 21:30-31, the apostle John said that Jesus did a lot of sign beside the ones that are recorded in the Gospel of John and the purpose is “so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.” Jesus said that if the people don’t believe in Him, “believe the work” (10:38, 14:11). The words of Luke 24:25 that the resurrected Jesus spoke to the two disciples going to Emmaus are correct. It also applies to us: “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!” Indeed, we are foolish and slow to believe in God’s Word. But Paul speaks clearly about our slow faith: “... whatever is not from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). Therefore, we must listen diligently to the words of Christ for the progress of our faith (10:17). As a result, we should no longer come to need milk and not solid food (Heb. 5:12). We should no longer be those who aren’t accustomed to the word of righteousness (v. 13). Rather, we must become mature ones and become those who are trained and discern good and evil because we use our senses (v. 14).

### **Third, our hearts that aren’t steadfast lie.**

Look at Psalms 78:36 – “But they deceived Him with their mouth And lied to Him with their tongue.” Because the Israelites didn’t believe in God, when they sinned against God, God was angry with the Israelites. At that time, the Bible says that the Israelites turned to God and sought God earnestly (v. 34), but it was repentance of flattery. In other words, for the Israelites, fruitless repentance was flattering before God. The reasons why their repentance became flattering to God was two: Firstly, because the Israelites’ repentance was not God-centered but for their own benefit. Secondly, they were only trying to please God externally, and their repentance wasn’t from their hearts (Park). Regarding this tendency of the Israelites, the prophet Isaiah said: “Then the Lord said, “Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote” (Isa. 29:13). Eventually, the Israelites looked like the Lord in their lips, but their hearts were far from the Lord. In the end, the hearts of the Israelites that weren’t steadfast were not faithful to the covenant of God (Ps. 78:37). But the surprising fact is God’s sincere grace toward the Israelites who weren’t faithful to the covenant of God. Look at Psalms 78:38-39: “But He, being compassionate, forgave their iniquity and did not destroy them; And often He restrained His anger And did not arouse all His wrath. Thus He remembered that they were but flesh, A wind that passes and does not return.” Knowing that the Israelites who lied and sinned were only flesh, “A wind that passes and does not return”, God turned away His wrath, forgave their iniquity and didn’t destroy them in His mercy. Nevertheless, the Israelites committed these sins against God:

“How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness And grieved Him in the desert! Again and again they tempted God, And pained the Holy One of Israel” (vv. 40-41). They have forgotten God's grace and mercy, and have tried and grieved God countless times.

I meditated on the words of Revelation 14:5 during the morning prayer meeting yesterday: “And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.” This means that the redeemed ones of God and the Lamb, the symbolic number of 144,000 children of God, have no lies in their mouths. Here, the words that there are no lies in the mouths of those who are redeemed refer to honest words and actions (Park). In Proverbs 6:16-17 of the Bible, one of the things God hates is “a lying tongue.” Therefore, we must abandon the lying tongue. Those of us who are redeemed must be free from lies. In other words, we must have sincere heart and tongue.

Although God often restrained His anger (Ps. 78:38), the Israelites grieved Him in the desert often (v. 40) and were greedy and sinned against God. In other words, while God restrained His wrath, the Israelites at the time of the Exodus didn't restrain their greed. “Yet” (v. 23) God showed mercy and compassionate to the Israelites. In spite of all this they “still” sinned and didn't believe in His wonderful works (v. 32). Although the Israelites were not faithful to God's covenant (v. 37), God was faithful to His covenant. The Israelites had no steadfast heart toward God, but God loved His people, Israel, with His steadfast heart. We can see God's faithful covenant love in following the Israelites who were following sins. The heart that experiences that faithful God's love will serve with a more steadfast heart toward God. Instead of greed, we will be content with only Jesus, believe in God's wonderful works, rely on His salvation, and live a life that glorifies God with a sincere heart and tongue.

The one whose heart isn't steadfast toward the Lord,

James Kim

(With gratitude for God's love for faithfully giving His grace to such sinner like me)

## According to the integrity of His heart

### [Psalms 78:42-72]

Last week, we meditated on three things about our hearts that aren't steadfast based on Psalms 78:23-41. We have learned that our hearts that aren't steadfast, that is, our unfaithful hearts, first they follow greed, secondly, they don't believe in God, distrusts and doubts, and thirdly, they speak lies. We have opportunity to examine our hearts as we meditated on the ancestors of Israel whose repentance was flattering, in which their lips seemed to resemble the Lord but their hearts were far from Him. The word that comes to my mind in the midst of this is Jeremiah 17:9 – "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?" This corrupt heart was washed away by Jesus' blood from the cross. Therefore, we now have a new heart. But still we see our hearts that aren't steadfast. How can we protect and train our hearts?

This Morning Prayer meeting, I meditated on Psalms 26:2 – "Examine me, O LORD, and try me; Test my mind and my heart." I thought three things about how we can train our hearts centered on this word. First, I thought that in order to train our hearts in terms of intelligence, we should strive to know the truth of the Lord (v. 3). Second, in order to train our hearts emotionally, I thought that love for the Lord (v. 8) should motivate our hearts. Third, I thought that in order to train our hearts in terms of will, we must walk in our integrity like psalmist David (v. 11).

In Psalms 78:72, the psalmist confesses to God: "So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, And guided them with his skillful hands." I want to receive the grace given to us while meditating on three things about what kind of grace our Lord, who is truly Shepherd, gives us according to the integrity of His heart with the sincerity of his heart.

### **First, our Lord, the Shepherd, chose us in love.**

Look at Psalms 78:68, 70 – "But chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved. ... He also chose David His servant And took him from the sheepfolds." God's sovereign choice is clear. It is clear whom He chose and whom He didn't choose. The verse 68 starts with "But" and its purpose is to contrast with verse 67: "He also rejected the tent of Joseph, And did not choose the tribe of Ephraim." The psalmist clearly states that God didn't choose Joseph's second son, the tribe of Ephraim. Although the psalmist says that God didn't choose the tribe of Ephraim, but He chose David (v. 70). It is clear that God chose and didn't choose.

The apostle Paul is speaking of God's sovereign choice and not choice clearly: "Just as it is written: "Jacob

I loved, but Esau I hated” (Rom. 9:13). Romans 9 speaks specifically of God's sovereignty. Especially from verse 20, the famous pottery parable comes out. The apostle Paul, who said that the potter has the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use (v.21), this is what he said in verse 20: “But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’” The lesson that these words give us and teaches us is that creation cannot dare to challenge the Creator's sovereignty. Therefore, when we consider the words that God chose Jacob in His sovereignty and not Esau, we must humbly listen to Psalms 78:67-68 that God chose David and not the tribe of Ephraim.

In Ephesians 1:4, the Bible we know well, the apostle Paul says: “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him In love.” God chose us in Christ before creation. This God's choice is never a choice because we have something to be chosen by God. Before creation, God unconditionally chose us. Our God, the Shepherd, loved us and chose us as His sheep.

### **Second, our Lord, the Shepherd, who chose us redeemed us.**

Look at Psalms 78:42 – “They did not remember His power, The day when He redeemed them from the adversary.” The ancestors of Israel were unfaithful and didn’t remember the power of God who redeemed them from their enemies. But God remembered the covenant made with Abraham and redeemed the Israelites according to the integrity of His heart. The psalmist speaks of the redemption of the Israelites from their enemies starting from verse 43. Looking at the explanation of the incident, God brought 10 plagues to Egypt when the ancestors of Israel were in slavery in Egypt (vv. 43-41) and eventually redeemed them from Egypt (v. 52). Here, what does it mean by ‘redemption’? Redemption means to buy at a price. Redemption means that God pays a high price in order to buy sinners from the devil's market, and takes them to God's house, just like paying for the slave at a slave market. In the end, the word redemption means that God and Jesus paid the price of blood and bought us in the devil's slave market. At the time of the Exodus, before the tenth plague, the Israelites had the blood of sheep aright on the doorposts, and the blood of the sheep refers to the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

When we think about this redemption, we can understand the words of Isaiah 43:4 – “Since you are precious in My sight, Since you are honored and I love you, I will give other men in your place and other peoples in exchange for your life.” Why are we so precious and honored in the sight of God? The reason is because we are the ones who have been paid and bought with the precious blood of Jesus. Because our Jesus died on the cross for our lives, we have become precious and honored in the sight of God.

**Third, our Lord, the Shepherd, shepherds us and guides us according to the integrity of His heart.**

Look at Psalms 78:72 – “So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, And guided them with his skillful hands.” The psalmist says that “He led forth His own people like sheep And guided them in the wilderness like a flock” (v. 52). God led and guided the Israelites safely, so that they didn’t fear (v. 53). In the end, God led the Israelites to Canaan, the Promised Land, “His holy land, To this hill country which His right hand had gained” (v. 54). He drove out the nations before them and apportioned them for an inheritance by measurement, and made the tribes of Israel dwell in their tents (v. 55). But what was the reaction of the ancestors of Israel? Look at verses 56-58: “Yet they tempted and rebelled against the Most High God And did not keep His testimonies, But turned back and acted treacherously like their fathers; They turned aside like a treacherous bow. For they provoked Him with their high places And aroused His jealousy with their graven images.” Although God shepherded and guided the Israelites according to the integrity of His heart (v. 72), yet they tempted and rebelled against God (v. 56). They turned aside like a treacherous bow and provoked God with their high places and arouse His jealousy with their graven images (vv. 57-58). In the end, God was filled with wrath and greatly abhorred Israel (v. 59), abandoned the tent which He had pitched among men (v. 60), gave up His glory, the Israel, into the hand of the adversary and the sword (vv. 61-62). In the meantime, God chose David (v. 70) and shepherded and guided him according to the integrity of His heart (vv. 71-72).

As we meditated on in Psalms 78:23-41, even though the Israelites at the time of the exodus tested God's power in greed (vv. 18-20), God opened the doors of heaven and rained down manna upon them to eat (vv. 23-24). In other words, when the Israelites committed sins, yet God showed them grace. This cannot but be God’s faithful grace and love. Yet God shepherded and guided the Israelites whose hearts weren’t steadfast according to the integrity of His heart. In this way, the heart of God and the hearts of the Israelites were different. God’s heart was the heart of integrity whereas the Israelites’ hearts weren’t steadfast.

Although our hearts aren’t steadfast, God’s heart is the heart of integrity. With His heart of integrity, God the Father chose us before the creation of the world, Jesus the Son redeemed us, and God the Holy Spirit is guiding and leading us. How can we not praise God with all our hearts since our Triune God chose us, redeems us, and guides us whose hearts aren’t steadfast, unfaithful hearts with the integrity of His heart.

“I praise You Lord, with all of my heart/ I will tell all the world Your wonderful works/  
I praise You Lord, with all of my heart/ I praise Your name/ I rejoice in You Lord, Hallelujah  
I exalt Your name high above all the world, Hallelujah.”

With gratitude for the Triune God’s heart of integrity,

James Kim (Praising God with an unfaithful heart)

## **“God of our salvation”**

### **[Psalms 79]**

I meditated on Psalms 34, centering on Psalms 34:8 – “O taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!” What is God's goodness, or blessing, that those who take refuge in God taste? In a word, it is salvation of the spirit and the body. It is ‘deliverance’ physically [(v. 4) “... And delivered me from all my fears”, (v. 6) “... And saved him out of all his troubles”, (v. 7) “... And rescues them”, “(v. 17) “... And delivers them out of all their troubles”, (v. 18) “... And saves those who are crushed in spirit”, (v. 19) “... delivers him out of them all”]. Spiritually, the blessing God gives to those who take refuge in Him is redemption [(v. 22) “The LORD redeems the soul of His servants, And none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned”].

If we look at Psalms 79, we see a psalmist who takes refuge in God and cries out to Him. Among the things he prayed to God, especially verse 9 came to my heart: “Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name; And deliver us and forgive our sins for Your name's sake.” I would like to receive the lessons and grace given by meditating on the three prayer topics the psalmist asked for the God of salvation under the heading “O God of our salvation”.

### **The first prayer topic is “Help us, O God of salvation”.**

Look at Psalms 79:9 – “Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name ....” Why did the psalmist pray to the God of salvation for help? The reason was because Jerusalem was destroyed by the persecutors against Israel, the people of the Lord, and was in a miserable situation in suffering. If we look at verses 1 to 4, we can see this fact: “O God, the nations have invaded Your inheritance; They have defiled Your holy temple; They have laid Jerusalem in ruins. They have given the dead bodies of Your servants for food to the birds of the heavens, The flesh of Your godly ones to the beasts of the earth. They have poured out their blood like water round about Jerusalem; And there was no one to bury them. We have become a reproach to our neighbors, A scoffing and derision to those around us.” The enemies of Israel defiled the temple in Jerusalem, “Your holy temple,” and had laid Jerusalem in ruins (v. 1). And they killed and buried the Lord's servants and His saints in the city of Jerusalem (v. 2). As a result, their blood was poured out like water round about Jerusalem (v. 3). And the Israelites became a reproach to their neighbors (v. 4). At this time, the psalmist asked the God of salvation for help. He asked God for help for the glory of the name of the Lord (v. 9). This was because they knew that they had no righteousness, but they wanted the Lord to save them for the holy dignity that He had chosen them (Park). The psalmist earnestly prayed to God for help, not for his name or his glory, but for the glory of God or His name. He prayed that only

God's would be done.

When we feel helplessness in the midst of trouble and persecution, we must seek God's help. There seems to be a lot of things that seem like we can do with our own strength, but we are truly weak people who can't even manage our own hearts. In a way, a life of faith is a deeper realization of our weakness and helplessness as we progress, while acknowledging and confessing that we cannot live without God's help. Take Job for example. Job confessed in his suffering: "Is it that my help is not within me, ..." (Job 6:13). Job realized his helplessness in the midst of extreme suffering and thus he acknowledged that he couldn't help himself. Therefore, we must confess and pray as the psalmist confessed in Psalms 46:1 – "God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble." Our God will be of great help to us when we pray to God, who is a great help in the day of trouble, for help in our helplessness.

### **The second prayer topic was 'Deliver us, O God of salvation'.**

Look at Psalms 79:9 – "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name; And deliver us ...." The psalmist, who prayed to God for help for the helpless Israelites in the midst of trouble due to the destruction of Jerusalem, the death of the Lord's saints, and for God's glory asked God in verse 5: "How long, O LORD? Will You be angry forever? Will Your jealousy burn like fire?" Here, regarding the psalmist's prayer "How long?" we have already meditated on in Psalms 13:1-2: "How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, Having sorrow in my heart all the day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?" These prayers are prayers for God's prompt deliverance in the midst of trouble and persecution. In Psalms 79, the psalmist had no choice but to ask God for His prompt deliverance: "For they have devoured Jacob And laid waste his habitation" (v. 7). In this crisis of destruction, the psalmist asked God to take away the Lord's wrath against the Israelites and pour His wrath on the nations, the Israelites' enemies, who didn't call on the name of the Lord (v. 6). Why did the psalmist pray like this? We can find the answer in verse 10: "Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?" Let there be known among the nations in our sight, Vengeance for the blood of Your servants which has been shed." The psalmist asked God to bring wrath to the nations because the Gentiles who didn't believe in God were not only defiling the Jerusalem temple (v. 1), but were also defiling the name of God by saying where the God of the Israelites was. The more specific reason was because he wanted the nations to know that God would avenge the blood of His servants. Indeed, in verse 12, we can see that the nations who persecuted the Israelites had reproached the Lord. The psalmist asked God to pour out His wrath on the nations who were killing the Israelites, and that the Lord would hear the voices of the groaning of those who were taken captive and imprisoned by them, and preserve those who were doomed to die according to the greatness of His power (v. 11).

What a wonderful prayer? The psalmist prayed to God to deliver those who were doomed to die according



to the greatness of His power as well as to preserve the Israelites. He was more concerned for God than for the salvation of God's people (Park). Although he longed for God's salvation and cried out to God to “deliver us” (v. 9), he couldn't stand the unbelievers looking at the suffering Israelites and slandered and said, ”Where is their God?” (v. 10) With this attitude of heart, we must pray to God, ‘Deliver us.’ In other words, we must offer our prayer topics to God with earnest desire for the glory of God.

### **The third and last prayer topic was ‘Forgive our sins, O God of salvation’.**

Look at Psalms 79:9 – “Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name; And deliver us and forgive our sins for Your name's sake.” Knowing that the tribulation and plague that came upon Jerusalem and the Israelites because of God's wrath was the result of their sins, the psalmist asked God to “forgive our sins” (v. 9). He asked God for forgiveness of sins for the sake of the Lord's name. Then he asked God, “Do not remember the iniquities of our forefathers against us; Let Your compassion come quickly to meet us, For we are brought very low” (v. 8). Exodus 20:5 says, “... punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.” This means that the Lord would punish when the descendants of their ancestors continue to commit sins, such as those committed by their ancestors, without repentance (Park). Therefore, the psalmist asked for the Lord's mercy. In a very lowly situation, he humbly sought God's mercy. And in His mercy, he prayed that God would quickly receive him and the Israelites. In the end, God's help and deliverance (salvation) that the psalmist needed was connected to the problem of sins. In other words, what he desperately needed was forgiveness of sins in the mercy of the Lord. He knew that all troubles and calamities had come upon the Israelites because of this sin problem,. So he acknowledged that help and deliverance in troubles and calamities had little meaning unless the fundamental problem of sin was resolved before the Lord. The lesson this teaches us is that we must first settle our sin problems before the Lord. In other words, when we go through trouble, suffering, and crisis of life like the psalmist and the Israelites, of course, like the psalmist, we should seek God's help and His deliverance. But we must not forget that if we trouble, suffering and crisis because of our sins, then we must cry out to God, like the psalmist, “forgive our sins” (v. 9).

The psalmist told God these three prayer topics, saying what he would do if God answered his and the Israelites' prayers: “So we Your people and the sheep of Your pasture Will give thanks to You forever; To all generations we will tell of Your praise” (v. 13). This instructs us that what the saints who receive the help of God and receive salvation and forgiveness of their sins should do to God is thanksgiving and praise. I hope that these three prayer topics of the psalmist will become our prayer topics and receive the answers of our prayers from God.

Rejoicing and grateful for the God of my salvation,

James Kim

(With gratitude for the saving grace of God, who is my help, who delivers me and forgives my sins)

## Come to save us!

### [Psalms 80]

I think you all know the news about the election of (formal) President Lee Myung-bak. In the Korean media, while delivering the news of his election, I saw how President-elect Lee Myung-bak came from the past to the present. Interestingly, President-elect Lee Myung-bak's birthday is December 19<sup>th</sup>, the same as my wife. It is also said that December 19<sup>th</sup> is the wedding anniversary of President-elect Lee Myung-bak. The reason why he got married on his birthday is not to forget his wedding anniversary. My wife and I got engaged on my wife's birthday, December 19<sup>th</sup>. The reason I got engaged on my wife's birthday is so that I didn't have to give two gifts to my wife (birthday gift and engagement gift), but just one gift. Haha. After receiving the news that Mr. Lee Myung-bak was elected president, I received 'Go Down's Letter' by e-mail, and the title was 'True Leadership'. This is what the parts of the post said:

'What is true leadership? Leaders are not just those who do things efficiently. Leaders are people who do 'the right thing'. Leaders are not people who can choose between means and methods to achieve their goals, but people who move according to the right values. Leaders are people who know their strengths and weaknesses and try to overcome their weaknesses.'

[Gary McIntosh, in Samuel Lima's 'Shadow of Leadership']

'A leader is a person who walks on the tip of a sword of light and shade. He always looks at himself with his sharp eyes to see if he is walking the right path. There are two ways to do that. One is the way of self-reflection, another way is to see himself through other people. If the leader doesn't walk the right path, he will cast big shadow before the people and history.'

Probably this article came to me by e-mail knowing that Congressman Lee Myung-bak was elected as a president.

When I heard President-elect Lee Myung-bak's words through the news, it seemed like he promised three things: (1) Saving economy, (2) Reconciling divided society, and (3) Humbly serving the people. It is now the responsibility of President-elect Lee Myung-bak to keep these promises faithfully. I wonder if he can save the Korean economy or reconcile a society that has been divided for a long time. We, Korean Christians, should pray for the new president-elect when he leads the Korea. And also we must keep praying for our home country, Korea.

I would like to receive three lessons from Psalms 80 on what we should prayer for.

### **The first prayer topic is ‘O God, may Your face shine upon us’.**

Look at Psalms 80:1, 3, 7, 19 – “Oh, give ear, Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who are enthroned above the cherubim, shine forth! ... O God, restore us And cause Your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved. ... O God of hosts, restore us And cause Your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved. ... O LORD God of hosts, restore us; Cause Your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved.” The reason why the psalmist prayed to God four times “shine forth” (v. 1), “shine upon us” (vv. 3, 7 19) was because it was a dark time for the psalmist and the Israelites. In other words, the dark time refers to a situation in which they were in an extremely miserable situation (Park). To what does the extremely miserable situation refer? That situation refers to the situation in which strong nations in Israel's neighbors compete to eat Israel each other (v. 6) because of God's wrath (v. 4). In a word, it refers to the situation in which at the God's rebuke, His people perished (v. 16). Why did the Israelites get to the point where they were rebuked by God and perished? It was because of their sin. The text Psalms 80 doesn't say what those sins were, but it is certain that they bought God's wrath for their sins and were disciplined by God (Park). Therefore, in such dark time, the psalmist felt that God was hiding His face because of the sins of the Israelites. So he prayed to God, ‘O God, may Your face shine upon us’.

This Monday, there was a Westminster Seminary Alumni Association meeting. So I went to a one of the alumni's church and received another pastor's sermon CD as a gift. So when I was coming back home, I listened to his sermon in the car. And I received God's grace and I want to share with you. That grace is that the pastor said in his sermon ‘Christian religion is what God seeks for us, and our life of faith is what we seek for God’. One example that the pastor gave during his sermon was ‘hide and seek’. It is said that if parents play hide and seek with their younger children, they hide so that children can find them to some extent. If they hide so tightly that their children can't find them at all, the parents are a little weird. Hahaha. Usually parents hide for their children to find or give hints when they can't find them. When God hides His face because of our unrepentant sins, our God is never a God who hides from us so that we cannot find Him. He is the God who wants to reveal Himself to us. Therefore, when we are subject to God's discipline for our sins, when everything feels so dark, like the psalmist, we should ask, ‘O God, may Your face shine upon us’.

In this Christmas season that celebrates and rejoices in the birth of Jesus, we look forward to the Second Coming of Jesus, especially new Jerusalem and new earth. In Revelation 21:23, this is what the apostle John said about the new Jerusalem and new earth: “And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.” There is never darkness in heaven that we are heading for. There is no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it. It is because the glory of God, Jesus is the Lamb, has illumined it. I hope and pray that with this hope, even if we are in a dark situation while living in this earth, we

don't lose hope and pray, 'O God, may Your face shine upon us'.

### **The second prayer topic is 'O God, restore us'.**

Look at Psalms 80:3a, 7a, 19a: "O God, restore us ... O God of hosts, restore us ... O LORD God of hosts, restore us ..." The psalmist prayed, 'O God, restore us'. This prayer seems to be a prayer that the psalmist wished to bring the Israelites from another country back to their home country (Park). What this tells us is that because of the Israelites' sins, God's wrath came upon the Israelites, and they were greatly shamed by the strong nations of their neighbors, and in the end, Israel was destroyed and taken captive by one of those countries. Therefore, the psalmist asked God, 'O God, restore us', that is, the Israelites would be released from captivity and restored to their homeland by God (v. 3). In particular, as the psalmist recalled the fact that at the time of the exodus the Israelites were rescued from Egypt and moved to Canaan, the promised land, and the golden age of Israel during the days of David and Solomon, he prayed to God for the grace of restoration (Park) (vv. 8-11). Here in verses 8-9, the psalmist compares the Israelites as "a vine" and tells that the Lord took this vine from Egypt and planted it in the land of Canaan. And verses 10-11 speak of the golden age of Israel, when God increased the population of the Israelites and enlarged the land, especially in the days of David and Solomon. We see that the psalmist tells the fact that the Israelites, who were blessed with the grace and power of God, have declined in verses 12-13, and he acknowledges that this has been done by God's intervention. The psalmist is saying this with a heart of self-confidence and repentance, with the heart of believing in the sovereignty of God (Park). Why was Israel so declined? It was because of the Israelites' sins. So, in the wrath of God, the Israelites were disciplined.

When we apply these words to ourselves, it is a lesson that we must first repent of our sins to God before we pray to God, 'O God, restore us'. About two or three years ago, at the New Year Eve worship, I preached 5 "R's": Repentance, Restoration, Reconciliation, Reformation, and Revival. There can be no true restoration without the prayer of repentance offered by a broken heart and a contrite spirit before God. If we want real revival, we have to start with repentance. Then there can be true restoration, reconciliation, reform, and revival. What must we do to repent? We must not take God's rebuke lightly (v. 16). In other words, when we receive God's rebuke, we must watch and fall down before the Lord and repent our sins. And we must also pray to God, saying, 'Make us strong for Yourself, O Lord' (v. 17). As the psalmist asked God, we should also pray to Him, "... Revive us..." (v. 18).

### **The third and the last prayer topic is 'O God, come to save us!'**

Look at Psalms 80:2, 3, 7, 19 – "... stir up Your power And come to save us! ... and we will be saved (3x)." For the Israelites who were in a very dark situation that was extremely miserable, the psalmist asked God, 'Cause Your face to shine upon us', 'Restore us', and his final prayer topic was 'O God, save us.' In offering this prayer, the psalmist relied on the power of God: "... stir up Your power And come to save us!" (v. 2) Why did the psalmist rely on the power of God? The reason was because the psalmist and the Israelites lost their strength in the

very dark situation that was extremely miserable (Park). In the very dark situation that was extremely miserable, they were gradually realizing that they couldn't save themselves by their own strength. So they eagerly longed for the grace of God's salvation by relying on His power more and more. As the psalmist prayed to God for salvation of the Israelites, he recalled the golden age of the dying Israelites and once again asked God to strengthen His people for Himself (v. 15). When God's people experience God's saving power in answer to this prayer of the psalmist, they experienced God's strength.

We need to be little weak. In other words, we need to realize deeper and deeper how weak and helpless we are. As we do so, we must rely on the power of God and live our life of faith with the strength He gives us. Otherwise, if we try to live our faith with our own strength, we will hide the glory of God in our pride. Therefore, even in the adversity and suffering given to us in God's sovereign providence, or because we are disciplined by God's love for our sins, like the Israelites, we need training to cut or loose our strength and rely on the power of the Lord. And further, we must pray to God, relying on God and earnestly longing for His saving grace.

'O Lord, save us',

James Kim

(On my wife's birthday)

## What God wants from us

### [Psalms 81]

Yesterday before we had a family worship on New Year's night, all of five members of the family sat down against the wall on our bed and read a book. While sitting down, my wife and my first son were reading the Bible, Yeri was reading a princess book to her younger sister Karis. After reading for a while, I told them 'Let's have worship now'. Karis seemed she wanted Yeri to read her the princess book little more. After having to put down the princess book, Yeri read the first chapter of Dillon's Bible. Then I briefly exhorted the Bible verse that was emphasized within that chapter. And I tried to have prayer time with them. But Karis didn't listen well. So when I asked her if she would pray together, she quietly answered "No". So I said to her, 'Then, you can go to your room with the book you were reading.' She was happy, so she smiled brightly and went to her room with the princess book. Hahaha. Actually, before we all gathered to read the book, Karis secretly took the Dillon's book from his bookshelf, sat alone on my and my wife's bed, and said something about 'God'. Karis wanted to read more of the princess book she was reading. But when she was asked for family worship, I think she was little uncomfortable. When I talked to my wife this morning, I learned that when Dillon and Yeri were still asleep, Karis got up early and was reading the book again. Hahaha. She really wanted to read it again. Haha. From our point of view as parents, we wanted Karis to have the family worship together with us. But what she wanted was to read more of the princess's book. Although I wasn't comfortable with it, I let Karis do what she wanted to do and the rest of us have prayer meeting. Although I deliberately delayed the service time and held home worship because Karis liked her sister Yeri to read the book for her, I think Karis needed more time to read the princess book. Haha.

As I thought of this one event, I thought that in our relationship with Heavenly Father, we may have different needs. There must be something that God wants from us, but I think there are many times we may act the way we want. In the end, I think mature faith is a life that lives according to what the Heavenly Father wants as if the mature children understand their parents' hearts and obey the parents' will. I would like to meditate on what God wants from us in three ways under the heading "What God wants from us" based on Psalms 81. I hope and pray that we will learn three things that God wants from us and live according to the Heavenly Father's will.

### **First, what God wants from us is "praise".**

Look at Psalms 81:1 – "Sing for joy to God our strength; Shout joyfully to the God of Jacob." The psalmist wrote a poem about the observance of a certain feast in Judah and told the Israelites to praise God (vv. 1-4, Park).

The object of the praise is of course God, and the psalmist referred to that God as “God our strength” (v. 1). The God who is our strength is Almighty God. And our Almighty God gives us power. One of the ways to receive that power is to praise God with joy. Dr. Park said: ‘Because a man truly praises God and glorifies Him, it empowers him in his own spiritual life’ (Park). I agree. Praising God with joyful heart not only glorifies God, but also empowers our spiritual life. How should we praise God? We must praise God with joy. The reason is that Nehemiah 8:10 says, “... for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.” It is our strength to please God, so we sing praises to God with joy.

The purpose of the praise is for the unity of faith and thought, public confession of godliness, and maturity of spiritual life for those who worship God (Calvin, Park). (1) The first purpose of our praise to God is the union of faith and thoughts with one another of the saints. This is to reaffirm each other that we have one faith as we praise God together. (2) Second, the purpose of praising God is to make public confession of godliness. In other words, as we sing praises to God together, we publicly confess, ‘I love God.’ (3) The third purpose is ‘spiritual growth’. As we publically confess together ‘I love God’ in our shared faith during our praise, we grow spiritually by giving publicly confessed praise to God. But what is the problem? The purpose of our Christian praise is to please ourselves rather than to please God. If the purpose of praise is to please ourselves and to please the ears of our listeners, this ‘I-centered praise’ can never publicly confess that we are one body of the Lord with one faith in the Lord, and that it doesn’t bring our spiritual growth. Therefore, we must offer the praise that God wants from us, just as the psalmist is teaching us. We must sing with joy (v. 1), with musical instruments (v. 2), and shout joyfully to God our strength (v. 1) in the Lord’s Day (v. 3). This is “a statute” that we must observe, and it is God’s ordinance (v. 4).

## **Second, what God wants from us is “prayer”.**

Look at Psalms 81:7 – “You called in trouble and I rescued you; I answered you in the hiding place of thunder; I proved you at the waters of Meribah. Selah.” This is an important word that applies especially to those of us who want to devote ourselves to prayer. The psalmist recalls the events at the time of the Exodus in the past, reminding the Israelites that at the time of the Exodus the Israelites cried out to God during their hardships and that God answered their prayers. Why is the psalmist reminding the Israelites of his day, recalling that God heard the prayers of the Israelites at the time of the Exodus? The reason was because he wanted the Israelites to pray to God. In other words, the psalmist was exhorting the Israelites to cry out to God, just as the Israelites cried out to God during their hardships in Exodus. The concrete word of that exhortation was this: “... Open your mouth wide and I will fill it” (v. 10). The meaning of this word is to long for God’s grace and salvation (Park).

We must also long for God’s grace and salvation. Just as the Israelites cried out to God in suffering, so we must cry out to Him as well. We must cry out to Him for His grace and salvation. And when we cry out to God, we



must pray with assurance of God answering our prayers. In the Bible Psalms 81:10, God promised to us, “Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.” As we hold onto this promised word, we must cry out to God. Our God is the God who fills it. But in order to be filled, our responsibility is to empty it. What should be emptied? It’s our sin. What kind of sin? Look at verse 11: ““But My people did not listen to My voice, And Israel did not obey Me” (v. 11). What was God's voice (word) that the Israelites didn’t hear? Look at verse 9: ““Let there be no strange god among you; Nor shall you worship any foreign god.” However, the Israelites violated this word and committed the sin of idolatry. When we repent of this sin and cry out to God with determination and dedication to listen to His word, God will hear our prayers and will give us His grace and salvation. Our God is the God who hears our prayers. The surprising fact is that despite countless times when we don’t listen to God and don’t want Him (v. 11), our God is the God who still wants us and wants to hear our prayers. To this God, who is rich in grace, we must devote ourselves to pray to Him more and more.

### **Third and last, what God wants from us is “obedience”.**

Look at Psalms 81:8, 13 – “Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you; O Israel, if you would listen to Me! ... Oh that My people would listen to Me, That Israel would walk in My ways!” What God wants from us is that He wants us to hear His voice and obey Him. But at the time of Exodus, the Israelites didn’t want to hear God. They disobeyed God's voice. What was the result? Look at verse 12: “So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart, To walk in their own devices.” There are two ways in which God punishes a sinner: “One is to leave the sinner to continue their sins, and the second is to actively cause the sinner to suffer or to be destroyed (Park). Of these two ways, I personally think the first is scarier. The reason is because if God leaves us to our harden hearts, we will endlessly violate God's word and live a life of disobedience. In the end, God disciplined the disobedient Israelites and let them be subdued to their enemies (v. 14). But God promised that if the Israelites repent and return to God, He would also bless them. The psalmist speaks two promises: (1) The first promise was that God would quickly subdue the enemies of the Israelites (v. 14). God's disciplinary hand that was toward the guilty Israelites would turn toward their enemies when the Israelites repent. (2) God’s second promise is written in verse 16: “But I would feed you with the finest of the wheat, And with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.” This promise refers to material blessings (Park). Although the Israelites broke the word of God and committed the sin of worshiping foreign gods when they were living in abundance in the land of Canaan, it is God’s promise that if they repent of their sin and return to God, God would make it more abundant in that abundant land.

I hope and pray that we will hold on to this promise word of God and pray. Let’s hold on to the Lord’s promise of Matthew 16:18, “I ... will build My church ...” and cry out to God. Not only that, just as the 120 members of the early church gathered and prayed earnestly together as they held onto the promise of Acts 1:8, let us do the same. In doing so, if we refuse to listen to God's word, disobey and sin against God, we must hold onto the promise of Psalms 81:14, 16 and repent our sins and return to Him. Then our God will forgive our sins and turn the

hand of punishment that has been on us to our enemies, and will be with us with abundant blessings.

Yesterday, on New Year's Day, all the family members gathered at my older brother's house to have a family worship. The word of God that was proclaimed through a pastor (a husband of my aunt) was 1 Thessalonians 5:18. I wanted to make an effort to be the year of being grateful in all circumstances. Although my third uncle, Pastor Andrew Kim, was suffering from cancer, we all decided to thank God and prayed for him after worship. And we decided to do family fasting prayer relay and began to put it into practice. Later, before we all departed, Pastor Andrew Kim, who was lying on the bed in a room, came out to the living room and praised God in front of all the family members. He sang the hymn that he loves, which is "How Great Thou Art", just verse 1 and chorus. Although he was in pain, we prayed together for him and praised God and committed ourselves to obey the message that we heard which was "give thanks in all circumstances." When I saw this, I feel that this is what our God wants from our family members.

As I desire "Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven,"

James Kim

(After New Year's first Wednesday morning prayer)

## **“Arise, O God, judge the earth!”**

### **[Psalms 82]**

Yesterday, over Tuesday dinner, I talked about American politics with my wife. The conversation started with my wife's thoughts on the current US Immigration Law, but in addition to the immigration policies of the candidates who have now declared and entered the election, we have abortions, same-sex marriage and others that are of interest to the current US evangelical Christians. In particular, even though we don't know who will be the next President of the United States, when we heard the news yesterday that Senator Hillary won 2% of Senator Obama in the Democratic Party in the New Hampshire Primary election, it was the time to reaffirm my wish that someone who is a Christian with biblical values and standards would become President and govern this United States well. Then, this morning, I read an article titled 'What the Korean church wants from the new president' in 'America Gospel Newspaper' (December 23, 2007). I can see that the Korean church is hoping that President-elect Lee Myung-bak to be a God-fearing leader. I think the Hope Church, where President-elect Lee Myung-bak attended on December 19, the day of voting, held Wednesday worship at 7:30 pm and held a thanksgiving worship and prayer time for Lee Myung-bak from 8:30 pm. As I watched the article on 'The expression of the Wednesday worship after the voting deadline of each church', the phrase 'Let him govern with God's justice' came to my mind, especially in relation to Psalms 82. Truly, I pray that President-elect Lee Myung-bak can rule Korea with God's justice. I don't know who will be elected here in the United State in the future. But I pray that a leader who fears God and who can rule the United States well with God's justice will become the next President.

In this regard, in Psalms 82:8, we see the psalmist praying, “Arise, O God, judge the earth!” I hope that this psalmist's prayer will be our prayer topic. I would like to think about the two things that God gives us or the prayer topics by hearing the voice that God gives to the judges and the rulers of Israel through the psalmist.

### **First, the judges and the rulers must not judge unjustly.**

Look at Psalms 82:2 – “How long will you judge unjustly And show partiality to the wicked? Selah.” There seems to be lot of unfair and unjust things in the world we live in. An example is the fire accident at a frozen warehouse in Incheon, Gyeonggi-do, South Korea 2-3 days ago. Looking at the Yahoo internet news, once, the frozen logistics warehouse in Incheon, Gyeonggi-do, was subscribed to 15.3 billion won in corporate comprehensive insurance under the corporate name of Korea 2000, the operating company. It was reported that they could receive 100 million won, but it was the news that 40 people who died and other victims received "0" won. I can't imagine what the feelings of the bereaved families of the deceased would be. Another example is the news that I hear from

the United States in recent years where people who were unjustly accused of living in prison for several years were released after a DNA test proves that they weren't guilty. However, the people who were released from this prison were not just released as innocent after living in prison for 1-2 years. But they lived in prison for more than 10 to 20 years and were released. I am sure they would feel very unfair and unjust. In Psalms 82, the truth the psalmist is clearly telling us is that God judges those judges who judge unjustly (v. 1). Why did the psalmist say that God would judge the judges of the Israelites? The reason was because they bent the righteous administration by showing partiality to the wicked (v. 2, Park). This is what the psalmist said about the Israeli judges who showed partiality to the wicked and judged unjustly: "They do not know nor do they understand; They walk about in darkness; All the foundations of the earth are shaken" (v. 5). The ignorant and insensible evil judges, the reason they judge unfairly, was because they "walk about in darkness" (v. 5). This is what the Bible says: "You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous" (Deut. 16:19). It isn't just the Old Testament time that the judges take bribes and judge unjustly. Even in our days, I am sure there are many of this sin are being committed. Just as the saying that bribery blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous, we must not bend judgment by losing discernment by bribery.

There is a Chinese word 'Tam-gwan-ori'(貪官污吏) which means 'corrupt official'. The dictionary meaning is 'an official who covets people's wealth and extorts it and who has poor conduct.' The Korean historical meaning is 'There was Baek Nak-sin, a soldier of the Gyeongsang-Udo, the cause of the Jinju Civil War, and Cho Byung-gap, a high-ranking military commander who provided an opportunity for the Donghak Revolution, was the representative the corrupt official. Tam-gwan-ori(corrupt official), who sucks the blood of the people and indulges them in pain, was a regular guest in historical novels. This was the case in a story of Lim Keok-jeong (A feature novel by Hong Myung-hee. This is a historical novel that depicts the activities of Lim Keok-jeong, an enemy of the Joseon Dynasty, and his troops. Lim Keok-jeong, who was born very low slave called 'Baek-jeong', gathered some people in the aread around Hwang-hae-do and Gyeon-gi-do, and killed the corrupt officials and stole their wealth and gave to the poor), of the Jeon Woo-chi (A novel from the Joseon Dynasty that talks about the main character Jeon Woo-chi, who existed in Damyang and who learned martial arts, tormented the corrupt officials and rescued the poor), and the Chun-hyang-jeon (A novel from the Joseon Dynasty. It's the love story based on Seong Chun-hyang and Lee Mong-ryong. The story accused the prerogative of the socially privileged class at the time and praised Chun-hyang's fidelity, and expressed the desire to raise the status of the lowest class of people). Among them, Byeon-sato, who comes out of the story of Chun-hyang-jeon, was the most well-known corrupt official. In order to be wary of these corrupt officials, Dasan Jeong Yak-yong presented the living principles that the leader (Mokmin-gwan) should follow in the section of Mok-min-sim-seo (An enlightenment book created by Jeong Yak-yong during the Joseon Dynasty. In order to eliminate the harmful effects of local officials and to renew the local administration, he explained the principle of governing the people by taking the wrong cases of old local officials): The first is to keep your body clean, the second is to keep your mindset always innocent, and the third is that you must not accept requests from other people, the fourth is not to be extravagant, but to keep your life modest, and the

fifth is to take good care of the house. When you leave the country, you should not take your family with you, and when a brother or relative visits you, you should avoid staying long. And sixth, saving all supplies and giving to the people is also an important virtue for the leader to keep. Even in the modern world, the corrupt official is common. The corrupt officials don't hesitate to do all kinds of wrongdoing in order to pay for promotion, to receive compensation from below, and to receive nominated offerings to obtain an elected office. In addition, in order to obtain their own profit, they carry money to many apple boxes and offered them to higher rank officials, such as corrupt politicians. In order to make up for this, they receive all kinds of bribes and payments and abused their power to secure private interests (Internet). This is what Dr. Park said: 'When the corrupt officials rule, the social order becomes disorderly and disturbed. Therefore, the basic element for establishing order in human society is justice, the product of right religion' (Park). There are cases in which unfair people go to jail because of the unjust judgment of the US court system due to many corrupt officials, and the social order is disturbed and disrupted by them. God will not just look at this. Our just God will surely judge unjust judges. Look at Psalms 82:6-7: "I said, 'You are gods, And all of you are sons of the Most High. Nevertheless you will die like men And fall like any one of the princes.'" Here, the words "gods" or "sons of the Most High" refer to the judges of Israel. The reason the psalmist called them that way was because the position of the ruler represents God's work (Park). When they didn't judge according to God's will and judged them unjustly, then God would judge them.

### **Second and last, the judges and the rulers must use fair judgment.**

Look at Psalms 82:3 – "Vindicate the weak and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and destitute." The psalmist said, 'Judges of Israel, do justice' (v.3) because the just God would judge in the midst of the rulers (v. 1). How should they show justice?

#### **(1) They must judge for the weak and fatherless.**

In other words, the judges of Israel must show justice to the weak and the fatherless (v. 3). The judges of Israel must show justice to those who are unjustly oppressed: the weak, the orphan, the needy, and the poor. This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father: "Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (Jam. 1:27).

#### **(2) They must save the weak and needy.**

In other words, the weak and needy must be delivered from the hand of the wicked (v. 4). When the weak, the poor and the needy are persecuted by the wicked and the adversity, the just judge has the responsibility to deliver them from the hand of the wicked. It is the responsibility of the just judge to protect the weak.

Look at Proverbs 31:9 – "Open your mouth, judge righteously, And defend the rights of the afflicted and

needy.” This is exactly what the Israel judges should do. They must judge with justice and defend the weak. Then the judges of Israel will do their work faithfully as agents of God who is the true judge. Then the glory of God will be revealed.

‘Just life and governance are built on the Word of God. God expects His people to be just and honest. Justice and integrity are God’s character. Just and truthful life is the right image of those who have God as their Father’ (Internet).

Let us ask God as the psalmist asked Him. Let us pray, “Arise, O God, judge the earth!” Let us pray for God’s justice to appear in this world. Surely God will judge this world by His justice. Therefore, the judges that God’s agents believe in should judge justly. They must defend the poor, the orphan, the needy, the weak, and deliver them from the hands of the wicked. Therefore, I hope and pray that they will be used as God’s tools of salvation.

“Arise, O God, judge the earth!”

James Kim

(Praying for the judgment of God, the Righteous Judge)

## **Let them know that the Lord alone is the Most High over all the earth**

### **[Psalms 83]**

Yesterday, on Tuesday morning prayer meeting, I meditated on Exodus 3:7-8: “The LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.” I thought about God's work of salvation for us, centering on the six verbs in these two verses: “seen,” “heard,” “concerned,” “come down,” “deliver” and “bring them up.” I applied these verbs to my church grandmother Mrs. Jang who passed away: God saw her pain, heard her cry out, ‘God, take me to heaven,’ knew her pain, came down and delivered her from the pain and led her to the land of promise, heaven. When we consider the work of this God, we cannot but confess that our God is truly a good God. He is the God who wants to show us His goodness like this. In other words, our God is the God who reveals Himself.

If we look at Psalms 83:18, the psalmist is asking God like this: “Let them know that you, whose name is the LORD-- that you alone are the Most High over all the earth.” Based on this word, I want to meditate on the prayer of the psalmist who wanted only the Lord to be known as the Most High over all the earth. I would like to receive two lessons that God gives by meditating on how only the Lord is known as the Most High over all the earth. .

**First, the Lord is known as the Most High over all the earth by protecting us, His people.**

Last year, at the New Year Eve worship, I blessed all the members of my church with three things with Aaron's benediction words of Deuteronomy 6:22-26. Among them, the first blessing was the blessing of God's protection. I had been praying for God to protect us from sin, from evil, and from Satan. At the same time, I encouraged my church members to hold onto the words of Psalms 121:3-8: “He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun will not smite you by day, Nor the moon by night. The LORD will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul. The LORD will guard your going out and your

coming in From this time forth and forever.” Why is God guarding us and protecting us without sleeping or slumbering? The answer can be found in Psalms 83:3: “With cunning they conspire against your people; they plot against those you cherish.” The reason why God guards us and protects us is because we are His people and His cherish ones. Here “those you cherish” means that we are the ones whom the Lord cherishes in His heart (the ones whom He has in His heart). We are the ones God has in His heart. That’s why we are under His protection. We are God’s treasured possession: “For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession” (Deut. 7:6).

The reason why God guards us and protects us, neither slumber nor sleeps, is because we not only His cherish ones but also His sheep. Look at Psalms 83:12 – “who said, "Let us take possession of the pasturelands of God.” Here, “the pasturelands of God” refers to the land of Canaan (Park). The wicked tried to invade the land of Canaan, where the Israelites, the flock of God, lived and tried to make it their own. Pointing to the land of Canaan where the Israelites reside as God's pasturelands implies that God is thinking of the Israelites as His sheep. The Lord, who is the Shepherd, is the Lord who loves us enough to lay down His life for us, His sheep (Jn. 10:15). He is God who guards us and protects us. The Lord, who is our Shepherd, cherishes us in His heart. We are the sheep whom He loves to His death. He guards us and protects us without sleeping or slumbering. Therefore, the Lord is making known that only the Lord is the Most High over the earth.

**Second and last, the Lord is known as the Most High over all the earth by destroying the wicked.**

The wicked men who were trying to destroy the Israelites whom the Lord had cherished in His heart, tried to attack His people, and also conspired against them and gathered together to plot against those God cherished (v. 3). What did they get together to plot against them? Look at Psalms 83:4 – “‘Come,’ they say, ‘let us destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more.’” When these wicked people gathered together and plotted how to destroy the Israelites so that their name would never be remembered again, they plotted with one mind (v. 5). Someday, as I think about the word from Acts 4:25, I remember the words that Herod and Pilate, who were enemies to each other but joined together and became friends in order to oppose Jesus. If we look at Psalms 83:4, 5, the enemies who were against the Israelites also joined forces and gathered together to plot and destroy the Israelites. Not only did the wicked who were trying to destroy the Israelites gather together to plot, but also formed an alliance against them (v. 5). In other words, the wicked opened the united front. The enemies of the Israelites who were on the united front were “the tents of Edom, the Ishmaelites, of Moab and the Hagrites, Gebal, Ammon and Amalek, Philistia, with the people of Tyre. Even Assyria has joined them to lend strength to the descendants of Lot (vv. 6-8).

At this time, the psalmist remembered the God’s work of destroying the enemies of the Israelites in the past,



and prayed to God that God would do the same to the enemies of the Israelites as they did then and destroy them (vv. 9-11). For example, in verse 9, as the psalmist remembered the events in which Gideon destroyed the great army of Midian under God's help during the time of the Judges, and Barak's destruction of his enemies Sisera and Jabin at Gishon under Deborah's direction (Park), he asked God to destroy the enemies of the Israelites. A further analysis of the psalmist's petition against the enemies of the Israelites can be summarized in two ways:

- (1) The first prayer content is 'Let the enemies of the Israelites be put to shame': "Cover their faces with shame so that men will seek your name, O LORD. May they ever be ashamed and dismayed; may they perish in disgrace"(vv. 16-17).

Here, the psalmist asked God that the prayer that the enemies of the Israelites to be put to shamed is a prayer that the plan of the wicked to destroy God's chosen people would fail (Park). And through that failure, he prayed that the wicked would find the name of the Lord. In other words, the psalmist asked God for the enemies of the Israelites to repent and return to God as their plan to destroy the Israelites failed.

- (2) The second prayer content is 'Let the enemies of the Israelites to be destroyed': "Make them like tumbleweed, O my God, like chaff before the wind. As fire consumes the forest or a flame sets the mountains ablaze, so pursue them with your tempest and terrify them with your storm."

This psalmist's prayer, who wanted to drive out the wicked who were nothing before God by the storm of the Lord, implied that the wicked were like chaff before the wind. This implies that if God judges the wicked by blowing them away with His storm, they are bound to fly away. Our holy Lord makes known that He alone is the Most High over all the earth by judging the wicked. By revealing His holiness and His righteousness, God is the God who makes known that only the Lord of the whole world is the Most High.

Our God is the God who reveals Himself. He is the Most High over all the earth. Only the Lord is the Most High of the world. When the Most High Lord came to this very low earth and died on the cross, the tree of curse, He not only made known the holiness and righteousness of God to the whole world, but also made known His great love, grace, and compassion to the whole world. We are saved by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ who was punished on the cross in the wrath of the God for our sins and for us who must be destroyed forever. We are exalted by the death of the Most High Son of God on the cross. We have become God's precious and honored children. And we are still being led by the Lord toward that high heaven. We must leave this world and enter into heaven while praising the greatness of the Lord as much as possible until we die.

As I think about Mrs. Jang who praised God until she passed away,

James Kim

(Desire to sing “How Great Thou Art” until I die)

## The blessed people

### [Psalms 84]

Abraham Lincoln had several nicknames, and one of them was 'honest Abraham'. This is the story of his teenage years when he was working as a store clerk. After a customer came and paid for a think that he bought, Lincoln later learned that he had not paid back 10 cents. He struggled all night with 10 cents, then visited that customer who was living three miles away, the day after the holiday, and returned the 10 cents. People around him praised him for his honesty. But Lincoln rather said, 'I don't know why I should be praised. I will not be a person praised for what I should do, but I will be a person who is praised for doing more than I should.' After Lincoln became a lawyer, the first thing he did was give free services for unjustly treated people who couldn't sue because they had no money. On the first day of the lawsuit, he said, 'I am happy to keep my promise to God that I swore when I was a teenager' (Internet).

I think Abraham Lincoln was the channel of blessing that God used. This thought came to me when I thought about the blessing of freedom for many: 'God has given me abundant blessings by using my parents and parents-in-law as channels of blessing.' Because of the blessings God has given me through them, I also want to be a channel of blessing to others. To do so, I would like to meditate on the words of Psalms 84. In Psalms 84, the word 'blessed' appears three times (vv. 4, 5, 12). When I think about this word, I would like to meditate on three things about who the blessed man is. I hope and pray that all of us can be the blessed people and be used by the Lord to be the channels of blessing to other.

### **First, the blessed people are those who dwell in the house of the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 84:4 – “Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Selah.” This psalmist may have been a priest who came to Jerusalem for a pilgrimage (Park). He longed so much to go to the temple (vv. 1-4). Why did he so long for the temple of the Lord? The reason was because the temple of the Lord was a place to pray to God (Park). The psalmist longed for the Lord's temple deeply because he prayed to God there, met God through prayer, and communed with Him. In that longing, the psalmist confessed, “How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty!” (v. 1) This is what Dr. Park said: ‘The beauty of the church is not the building, but the fact that there is the Spirit of God’ (Park). The temple of God is a house of prayer. Because God came near to him when he pray to God in that temple (Deut. 4:7), he confessed that it was very lovely because he experienced God’s presence in the temple. To what extent did he yearn for the Lord's temple? Look at Psalms 84:2 – “My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.” The

psalmist yearned for God's courts so much that his body was weakened. The reason he longed for the Lord's temple was because he longed for God's presence through prayer. Therefore, his heart and his flesh cried out for the living God. As he cried out to the Lord Almighty, his King and his God, he expressed his heart like this: "Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young-- a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God" (v. 3). Here, the psalmist expressed his heart of begging to go to the temple of the Lord because he was sad by the situation in which he was far away from the temple even though the sparrow found the nest for herself, where she might have her young (Park). That was why he said: "Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked" (v. 10). Here, dwelling in the courts of the Lord refers to a life in which we can have true fellowship with God (Park). The psalmist's confession that living one day in true fellowship with God is better than thousand days living in an evil life teaches us that we should yearn for the Lord and His Church more and more.

Like the psalmist, we must yearn for God's temple, the church. We must go up to God's temple and gather together, hold on to His word of promise, and experience God's presence while devoting ourselves to prayer. The church, the house of the Lord, is a house of prayer. As we experience the taste of the prayer, we must yearn for God's temple more and more. In longing, we must always praise the Lord while dwelling in the Lord's house like the blessed man (v. 4). I still remember that in 2003, at the retreat of the Church Renewal Pastors Association, after I received the Lord's promise of Matthew 16:18 "... I ... will build my church ..." and sang the hymn "I Love Thy Kingdom", I shed tears while thinking about Victory Presbyterian Church. Especially when I was singing verse 1, I couldn't control my crying: "I love Thy Kingdom, Lord, The house of Thine abode, The Church our blest Redeemer saved With His own precious blood." And as I was singing verse 3, "For her my tears shall fall, For her my prayers ascend; To her my cares and toils be given, Till toils and cares shall end," I determined to come back to Victory Presbyterian Church and faithfully serve His church. When we think of that heaven, the eternal home of God, How much more can we not yearn to dwell there? We, like the psalmist, have already made a pilgrimage toward heaven, the true New Jerusalem temple. That's why we, like the ancestors of faith in Hebrews 11, we confess that we are strangers and exiles on the earth (Heb. 11:13). We are the ones who desire a better country (v. 16). As we go to that better country, we will see the Lord face to face (1 Cor. 13:12). And we will dwell with our Lord forever. Therefore, we must set our mind on the things above and keep seeking the things above (Col. 3:1-2). Such people are truly the blessed people.

### **Second, the blessed people are those whose strength is in the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 84:5 – "Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage." The blessed man, the psalmist, longed for the temple of the Lord and wanted to receive the strength from God as he cried out to Him with strong passion to go up to the temple. This he cried out to God in prayer, longing to experience the presence of God who was his strength (18:1). Why did the psalmist so long for the strength of the

Lord? Look at Psalms 84:7 – “They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion.” The reason he longed to experience God's presence and gain the strength He provided was because he knew that only with the strength God provided that he could go up to the temple of Zion (Park). Why did he need God's strength to go up to the Lord's temple? The reason is given in verse 6: “As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools.” This is what Dr. Park said: There were pains and difficulties, such as ‘valley of tears,’ in the planning and efforts of the Israelites living abroad to visit the temple in Jerusalem once. However, if you endure it and pass through it, you will end up with “a place of springs,” that is, the comfort and joy of the soul. And there, we spiritually experience seeing God while receiving the gift of heaven like “the autumn rains” (Park). Therefore, the psalmist cried out to God, “Hear my prayer, O LORD God Almighty; listen to me, O God of Jacob. Selah” (v. 8).

Among my favorite gospel songs, there is a song called ‘The blessed man’. If you look at the lyrics of the song, it reads: ‘You are a blessed man, who is strengthened by the Lord and has the highway of Zion in your heart. Lord is so pleased with you. You are a blessed man, who long to dwell in the house of the Lord and praise Him always. The Lord loves you very much. Your service is beautiful praise and your devotion is a fragrant prayer. Wherever you step on, the name of the Lord will be exalted.’ This song is based on Psalms 84. Whenever I listen to this song, there are many times when I get strength. When I hear or sing this praise, I am strengthened by the Lord and I am more eager to dwell in the house of the Lord. Even if I am discouraged, I will rise again with the power of the Lord and move toward heaven. Especially, when I think about the things above and think of those saints of faith who are there in heaven, I miss that heaven more and more in my heart. Perhaps such heart can be referred to as “the highways to Zion”. The highways to Zion that is deeply engraved in our hearts becomes more and more heavenly. The steps to walk that highways with the Lord are steps full of strength and hope. Therefore, we are the blessed people.

### **Third and last, the blessed people trust in the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 84:12 – “O LORD of hosts, How blessed is the man who trusts in You!” In what kind of God did the psalmist trust?

#### **(1) The psalmist trusted in God who is “our shield”.**

Look at Psalms 84:9 – “Behold our shield, O God, And look upon the face of Your anointed.” The psalmist trusted in God more and more as the shield of the church, as there were many pains and difficulties like a valley of tears on this journey toward the temple of Zion. This is what the psalmist said: “My shield is with God, Who saves the upright in heart” (7:10).

#### **(2) The psalmist trust in God who gives grace and glory.**

Look at Psalms 84:11 – “For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.” The God the psalmist trusted in is the God who gives grace and glory, but doesn’t withhold anything good to those who walk uprightly. The psalmist trusted in such God.

This is what the hymn “Simply Trusting Every day” the verse 1 says: “Simply trusting ev’ry day, Trusting through a stormy way; Even when my faith is small, Trusting Jesus, that is all. Trusting as the moments fly, Trusting as the days go by; Trusting Him whate’er befall, Trusting Jesus, that is all.” We must trust only in God who is our shield and who gives grace without sparing good things and glory to those who act honestly. As the years go by, we must rely more and more on only Jesus in the midst of our fragile faith that we realize our weakness and helplessness every time we encounter difficult things. Those who trust only in the Lord are blessed people.

You are blessed people who come up and longing for the Lord's house in this rainy evening and praying and praising the Lord. You who cry out to God and receive strength from the Lord and have the highways to Zion in your heart are blessed people. As the years go by, you who trust in the Lord more and more are the blessed people. The Lord is so pleased with you. The Lord loves you so much. Your service is a beautiful praise. Your dedication is a fragrant prayer. Wherever you go, the name of the Lord will be exalted.

With sincerely wish that we become a channel of blessing to other as “The blessed people”,

James Kim

(Being strengthened by the Lord and rejoicing over the blessed people who have the highways to Zion in their hearts)

## **‘Grant us Your salvation’**

### **[Psalms 85]**

The article ‘Fulfill your salvation’ teaches us some lessons: (1) The first lesson is that we should be faithful to God even in small things. Many people spend most of their lives regretting their bad habits. Although they talk about being reborn into a new life, they never actually set out to fulfill their salvation. You have the privilege of entering more fully into your salvation every moment. Whenever God gives permission, use it. (2) The second lesson is that we should listen to God. We must live in God's presence. And we must avoid things that lead us away from Him. We must find Him who dwells in us and pour out our hearts on Him. We must love God more than anything else. We must give our plans to God's will. We need to discover what He wants from us and do it quickly. Even small things become big when we do God's will. (3) The third lesson is that we must do what God has asked of us in love and obedience. That's enough. No matter how difficult and uncomfortable our situation becomes, we are free because we have received it all from God's hand. The greatest thing is to accept the pain without being discouraged (Internet).

I remember the contents of the book Pastor Martin Lloyd Jones' Ephesians 3 Sermon Book that I read yesterday evening. The fact that the people who believe in Jesus are people who rejoice and glad in pain. We aren't just accepting the pain given to us in our reality by thinking that it will get better. We accept it with joy. We should accept it all from God's hand. Then we are free. Therefore, when we suffer, we should not be discouraged or despair, but rather long for God's salvation (deliverance).

If we look at Psalms 85:7, we can see the psalmist longing for God's salvation: “Show us Your lovingkindness, O LORD, And grant us Your salvation.” I would like to think about how God saves us when we ask for the salvation of the Lord in four processes under the heading “Grant us Your salvation” based on Psalms 85.

#### **First, the Lord who saves us turns away His burning anger from us.**

Look at Psalms 85:3-4: “You withdrew all Your fury; You turned away from Your burning anger. Restore us, O God of our salvation, And cause Your indignation toward us to cease.” As those who long for the Lord's salvation, the first thing we must do after we sin is to seek the Lord's lovingkindness (v. 10). Although we should be punished as a result of our sin, we should ask the Lord to turn away His anger from us instead of imposing punishment on us. The psalmist prayed to God, “grant us Your salvation,” and prayed that all of His anger against us would be withdrew and ceased (vv. 3-4). Then he pleads with God with faith believing that God would never be

angry with His people He loved: “Will You be angry with us forever? Will You prolong Your anger to all generations?” (v. 5) Look at what the psalmist confesses in Psalm 30:5 – “For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; ....” Our God is a God who is slow to anger. His anger is but for a moment. Therefore, when we have sinned and provoked God's anger, we must ask God for His lovingkindness and mercy and turn away all His anger against us. And when we pray, we must pray in fear of the Lord (85:9). In such fear, we must ask for God's salvation. Then the God who saves us will turn away from us all His anger against us.

### **Second, the Lord who saves us covers all our sin.**

Look at Psalms 85:2 – “You forgave the iniquity of Your people; You covered all their sin. Selah.” The grace that the Lord gives us after He first turns all the anger against us in saving us (v. 1) is covering all our sins. In other words, our God forgives all our sins in saving us. Our God, rich in love and grace, who has forgiven our sins in the past and covered all our transgressions (v. 2), is pleased to and wants to forgive our sins even now. Why does God please and want to forgive our sin? The reason is because God wants to show His lovingkindness (v. 7). That was why the psalmist prayed to God like this: “For Your name's sake, O LORD, Pardon my iniquity, for it is great” (25:11).

Even though our sins are great, God's love for us is even greater. That's why our God forgives our great sins with His great love in saving us. And God speaks peace to us (v. 8). Therefore, like the psalmist, we must decide to listen to this word of God (v. 8). And we must not turn back to folly (v. 8). In other words, we must never go back to sin. Regarding the truly blessed people, the psalmist David says in Psalm 32:1-2: “How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit!” Those who are forgiven of their sins and whose sins are covered are blessed. Those whom God doesn't impute iniquity are blessed. These blessed people have no deceit in their hearts. In other words, they honestly and sincerely confess and ask God for forgiveness without hiding their sins before Him. This is our responsibility. We must honestly confess all our sins to God and ask Him for forgiveness. Then God, who is rich in love and grace, will cover all our sins.

### **Third, the Lord who saves us revives us again.**

Look at Psalms 85:6 – “Will You not Yourself revive us again, That Your people may rejoice in You?” God takes away all His anger against us in saving us, covers all our sins, and revives us again. In other words, He restores and revives our souls. The guilty soul needs to be restored after repentance. After repentance of the repressed heart due to sin, the soul needs to be restored and revived through God's Word along with God's forgiveness of sins. In Psalms 85, we can see how the psalmist describes in detail the work of the salvation of God who revived him again by looking at verse 1: “... You restored the captivity of Jacob.” Here, “Jacob's captivity” refers to Israel who was captured by Babylon or other nations (Park). The fact that the psalmist longed for God's



work of salvation and asked for revive his soul again indicates that he prayed for the freedom of the Israelites who had been captive. Therefore, he asked for the Israelites to return to the land of Canaan. In a word, the psalmist asked for “restoration” [“You restored the captivity of Jacob” (v. 1b), “Restore us, O God of our salvation” (v.4a)].

The God of our salvation is the Lord who makes us to rejoice in Him by reviving us (v. 6). First, of course, we are rejoicing because we have been restored (saved). But in the end, God makes us rejoice and be glad in God Himself (v. 6, Park). I remember the first question on the Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 1: (Q) What is the chief end of man? (A) Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever. God is the Lord who makes His chosen people to enjoy Him by making them to glorify Him. He revives us and raises us up so that we can live in the presence of the Lord (Hos. 6:2).

#### **Fourth and last, the Lord who saves us gives us what is good.**

Look at Psalms 85:12 – “Indeed, the LORD will give what is good, And our land will yield its produce.” The God who restores us is the very good God who freely gives us good things while letting us live before Him. He is not a God who gives us only spiritual blessings abundantly. He is the God who gives us abundant material blessings as well. He is God who does not spare good things for those who walk uprightly (84:11). Look at Romans 8:32 – “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” The God who doesn’t spare us the only Son, Jesus, but gives us salvation by giving Jesus up on the cross, is the God who gives us freely all good things. According to the apostle Paul, God loved us and blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Eph. 1:3). He chose and predestined us before creation and gave us redemption, the forgiveness of sins. And He made us His children (vv. 4-5). God has freely given us all these spiritual blessings in the One He loves (v. 6). In this way, we are living by receiving the blessings that God has freely given us.

What kind of God is our God? First, God is the God who knows me best (Ps. 139). Second, God is the God who loves me the most (Rom. 8:32). Third, God is the God who gives me the best things right now (Ps. 84:11; 85:12). This God poured out all His wrath on His begotten Son, Jesus. The wrath that He should have been poured out on us, instead He poured it out on Jesus. And in order to forgive all our sins, He put all our sins on Jesus and made Him die on the cross. However, God raised Jesus from the dead on the third day. And in Jesus, He gave us every spiritual blessing freely (Eph. 1:3).

After praising the God of salvation,

James Kim(Always living day by day because of God’s goodness)

## **“Oh grant Your strength to Your servant”**

### **[Psalms 86]**

All of the funeral services of Pastor Andrew Kim, who was the visitation pastor of our church and who is also my uncle, ended in the grace of God. Now, he is no longer in the world with us in a physical body, but our hearts cherish his memories that God left in our lives. While cherishing those memories, we will have to put into practice the lessons God has given us through the servant of the Lord, giving thanks for the grace and love God has given to each one of us through Pastor Andrew Kim. I think this is one of Henry Nowen’s remembrance ministry. What I thought about at this morning prayer meeting was that ‘Cancer is greed’ as brother in Christ Lee Hee-dae, director of Youngdong Severance Hospital Cancer Center said in connection with Numbers 11:4, “The rabble who were among them had greedy desires; and also the sons of Israel wept again and said, "Who will give us meat to eat?"” God caused me to read Dr. Lee Hee-dae’s book titled “Hee’dae’s Hope’ because of Pastor Andrew’s cancer and challenged me to think about his word ‘Cancer is greed’ during this morning prayer meeting. According to Dr. Lee Hee-dae, we have all cancer cells in us. But the reason we aren’t suffering like cancer patients is because there are many healthy cells in us than cancer cells. What I came to think of here is that if we call cancer cells "greedy" spiritually, then what is a good (healthy) cell? I think the good (healthy) cell is to be satisfied with Jesus alone (being content with Him). In other words, our spiritual health is not to have greed like unbelievers, but to live with satisfaction with only Jesus like the apostle Paul. In that case, we can live spiritually healthy through the strength that Jesus gives us. I hope you diagnose yourself spiritually with the word of God. As if we go to a hospital once a year for comprehensive health checkup, we must have a spiritual health checkup every day and every moment. Spiritually healthy believers are satisfied with Jesus alone. And despite their shortcomings, inadequacies, and weaknesses, they boldly move toward heaven through the power of God.

In Psalms 86:16, the psalmist David is praying to God: “Turn to me, and be gracious to me; Oh grant Your strength to Your servant, And save the son of Your handmaid.” I hope and pray that the Lord to give us strength while thinking of three things about what kind of strength the Lord gives us under the heading “Oh grant Your strength to Your servant” based on Psalms 86.

### **First, the strength that the Lord gives us is the power of prayer.**

Look at Psalms 86:1, 6, 7 – “Incline Your ear, O LORD, and answer me; For I am afflicted and needy. ... Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; And give heed to the voice of my supplications! In the day of my trouble I shall call upon You, For You will answer me.” David cried out to the Lord in the day of trouble. He cried out to God in

distress and need. David describes the trouble he faced as follow: “O God, arrogant men have risen up against me, And a band of violent men have sought my life, And they have not set You before them” (v. 14). David's enemies were proud and didn't fear God. So they tried to kill the righteous man David. Why did they aim for David's life? The reason was because they hated David (v. 17). In this situation, David trusted in God (v. 2) and cried out to Him. What did he cry out to God for? He first asked for God's grace (vv. 3, 15). He cried out to the Lord all day long for His grace (v. 3). He also asked for the Lord to preserve his soul: “Preserve my soul, for I am a godly man; O You my God, save Your servant who trusts in You” (v. 2). In short, David's prayer topic was God's salvation (v. 2). He asked God to deliver him from his enemies. And he was sure that God would answer his prayer. David was convinced that the God of salvation would deliver him from the hand of his enemies. How could he be so sure? The reason was because the Lord's lovingkindness toward David was great (v. 13).

Because many people pray for Pastor Andrew Kim, I believe that God has compassion for Pastor and has accomplished the work of salvation to preserve his soul forever. When I say "salvation", of course, receiving healing from sickness is the work of God's salvation. But I was convinced that God's salvation is leading us to eternal heaven through my first baby Charis' death. I hope and pray that we will be able to experience the work of God's salvation more and more as we devote ourselves to prayer. As a result, I hope and pray that we may be strengthened by the God of salvation who answers our prayers.

### **Second, the strength that the Lord gives us is the power of love.**

Look at Psalms 86:5, 13, 15 – “For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You. ... For Your lovingkindness toward me is great, And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol. ... But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.” When David cried out to God, longing for God's salvation, he had the assurance of answered prayer because he knew who God was. In other words, he knew that the God of David is a God of mercy and a God who wants to show us grace. He believed that God was slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth (v. 15). David had assurance of God answering his prayers because he cried out as he trusted in God. He knew that God was good to those who call upon Him and that He is good and abundant in lovingkindness (v. 5). Therefore, the answer to the prayer that he was convinced that God would answer, since he trusted in God's generous mercy, was the assurance of forgiveness of sin. David believed that God was good and wanted to forgive him.

We are those who need the assurance that we have been forgiven. One of the reasons is because many of us live with the guilt of making mistakes in our relationships with the loved ones. Maybe some of us are living with more guilt over the death of a loved one. We are also people who need the power of love. We must become people who know how to forgive each other with the love of God. We also need to forgive ourselves just as God forgave us

in Jesus Christ. And we must forgive those who sin against us. We are God's people whose sins are forgiven. We are people who, in part, experience God's great lovingkindness through His forgiveness. Therefore, we must show this love of God to others. In other words, we must live a life of forgiveness. This is the power of love. To experience this power of love, we must obey God's Word. Those who love God obey His commandments. That was why David cried out to God like this: "Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name" (v. 11). We must strive to obey the word of the Lord with one heart. One of the Lord's commandments is 'Forgive.' Therefore, as those who have been forgiven by God, we must live by forgiving each other. As a result, we must be strengthened by the God of love.

### **Third and last, the strength that the Lord gives us is the power of praise.**

Look at Psalms 86:9, 12 – "All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And they shall glorify Your name. ... I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, And will glorify Your name forever." David was confident of answering his prayers as he cried out to God, relying on the abundant lovingkindness of God (v. 5). That was why he not only praised the Lord with all his heart, but also determined to glorify the Lord forever (v. 12). Furthermore, David urges all nations to come and worship before the Lord (v. 9). He said that all the nations should also glorify His name (v. 9). Then what kind of God is the God that David praised with all his heart?

#### (1) The God whom David praised with all his heart is great God who does wondrous deeds.

Look at Psalms 86:10 – "For You are great and do wondrous deeds; You alone are God." Because the great God gave a great work of salvation in David's life, David was compelled to praise Him with all his heart because of the great grace and love of God.

#### (2) The God whom David praised with all his heart is the only God.

Look at Psalms 86:8 – "There is no one like You among the gods, O Lord, Nor are there any works like Yours." There is no God in this world who does like God in saving His people.

#### (3) The God whom David praised with all his heart is the God who helps and comforts us.

Look at Psalms 86:17 – "Show me a sign for good, That those who hate me may see it and be ashamed, Because You, O LORD, have helped me and comforted me." As we held the Pastor Andrew Kim's funeral service today, we received God's help and comfort when we thought about how the deceased Kim praised the greatness of the Lord in our lifetime. Like the deceased Kim, we must praise God whenever possible until we die. As those who have received God's great love, we must praise Him.

Our Lord is the God who gives us strength. He is the God who answers our prayers, who shows us His great and abundant love, and is the only God of salvation who is great and helps and comforts us. The power He gives us is the power of prayer, the power of love, and the power of praise. How can we receive this strength that God gives? Look at Psalms 86:4 – “Make glad the soul of Your servant, For to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul.” We must look up to the Lord. Then our Lord will give us strength and will fill our souls with joy.

After I praised “O Lord my strength”,

James Kim

(Thanking God for the power of prayer, the power of love, and the power of praise)

## The true church

### [Psalms 87]

D A. W. Tozer's book, "The Incredible Christian" is a reinstatement of true faith to warn of hypocrisy and to be a true Christian. The author criticizes the faith that has been lopsided to one side, the faith with experience but without theology, and the unpleasant faith that isn't deeply moved in meeting God but only has dead orthodoxy, and etc. as 'fake faith' distorted by modern church materialism. And he shouted that we must return to the true faith of becoming the real salt of the world and of willing to bear our own cross. Since true Christians believe in Christ's victory, they are willing to suffer in order to participate in His victory. Five things are listed in Pastor Tozer's book list (Internet):

- (1) The real is not ashamed of the rugged cross (chapter 1),
- (2) The real rejects the cotton candy gospel and believes in the crown of thorns gospel (chapter 2),
- (3) The real gives priority to the Lord over the Lord's work (chapter 3),
- (4) The real desires holiness over happiness (chapter 4),
- (5) And the real is true to the basics of faith (chapter 5).

On the other hand, distorted Christians stress more than they need on their favorite Bible texts. In doing so, other texts are relatively underestimated. Pastor Tozer wrote eight things in his book list:

- (1) Fake is instant (chapter 7),
- (2) Fake neglects transformation of character (chapter 8),
- (3) Fake misunderstands the discipline of God as carrying the cross (Chapter 9),
- (4) Fake seeks forgiveness of sins by doing (chapter 10),
- (5) Fake ignores creeds (chapter 11),
- (6) Fake neglects theology (chapter 12),
- (7) Fake neglects feelings (chapter 13),
- (8) Fake has no spiritual balance (chapter 14).

We, the believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, should listen to 1 John 4:1 – "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." We must distinguish the spirit. In spirit, there is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, who came from God, and who leads us rightly to the truth and the evil spirit, a false spirit, that deceives us and corrupts us. We must

distinguish between these two spirits. In particular, we must be able to distinguish false prophets, false churches, false church members, and true prophets, true churches, and true church members. How can we do so? Those who are led by the evil spirit, the spirit of deception, who lead the church are false prophets, those who are taught by false prophets are false churches, and those who are taught by false prophets are false church members. And those who lead the church as they are led by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth from God, are true prophets; those who are instructed by the true prophets are the true church, and those who are instructed by the true prophets are true church members (Internet).

I would like to receive the lessons by meditating on what the true church is based on Psalms 87. And I pray that our lessons will be applied to our churches so that our churches will become more and more established as the true church in the Lord's eyes.

### **First, the true church has firm foundation.**

Look at Psalms 87:1 – “His foundation is in the holy mountains.” This word indicates that the spiritual foundation of the true church is solid (Park). In other words, the true church is solid. How can the true church be solid? It is because the Lord who is the Head of the Church establishes His church “on this rock” (Mt. 16:18). Here, the “rock” is the Peter's confession of faith, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (v. 16). In other words, the church, built on the rock, is a community of people who, like Peter, rightly confess their faith in Jesus. Furthermore, the church, built on the rock, is not only the community of the believers who make the right confession of faith, but also who live according to their confession of faith as Jesus' disciples. More specifically, “rock” here refers to Jesus Christ. Look at Ephesians 2:20 – “having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone.” As Apostle Paul said, it is the church that is built on the rock has been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, in which Christ Jesus is the corner stone. The expression “the corner stone” is found in 1 Peter 2:6 and Ephesians 2:20. The word "cornerstone" in Greek is “akrogoniaios” (ἀκρογωνιαίος), and the “akro” means "high," and refers to "the rock built up high." All of the Israel's buildings start with cornerstone, and the direction of the building is determined by the direction of the cornerstone. In other words, Jesus must be the cornerstone so that the church must stand, and the direction of all church must move according to the Christ's direction. Therefore, when we are all built together on the foundation of the word of the Lord, on the cornerstone of Jesus Christ at the center of the Word, and there is God who comes as the Holy Spirit in this house being built together, this church becomes the beautiful church and the true church (Internet).

Then why does the Lord build His church on the solid rock? This is what it says in Psalms 87:2 – “The LORD loves the gates of Zion More than all the other dwelling places of Jacob.” The Lord has established His church firmly because He loves his church. I hope and pray that our church will become the true church in God's eyes. May God's beloved church, in which Jesus Christ is the cornerstone, and in where God's servants proclaim the

Word of God so that the church can be built on the solid rock and thus have the firm foundation.

### **Second, the true church is glorious.**

Look at Psalms 87:3 – “Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God. Selah.” Why is the true church glorious? The reason is because the true church is “the city of God” (v. 3). In other words, the true church is glorious because God is there. This is what Dr. Park Yun-sun said: ‘It’s not because the city of God itself is beautiful, but because the Lord of glory loves it.’ The true church is glorious because the city of God which the Lord of glory loves is honored by God. This reminds me of the Augustine's book “The City of God.” The time when Augustine was living, it was the time when the Roman Empire was collapsing. The fall of the Roman Empire led to the writing of his famous book “The City of God.” The original title of this book explains the intention of writing this book, ‘The greatest city of the world will fall, but the city of God will dwell forever’ (Internet). Rome recognized Christianity as a state religion in AD 313 and finally established a great empire of politics and religion. Therefore, at that time, the people thought of Rome as the kingdom of God and called it the Holy Roman Empire. They assured that Rome would be a nation that would never perish. But these Romans were attacked and destroyed by the barbarians (Goths). So people deeply troubled and ask, ‘How can the kingdom of God be destroyed by the barbarians?’ Augustine meditated on this problem. After meditating deeply, he concluded: ‘Roman, the kingdom of the world, is not the kingdom of God. Therefore, Rome can be destroyed at any time. The true kingdom of God is under the Lord's reign, and it is completed at the Lord’s Second Coming. And this kingdom of God will not perish but will last forever’ (Internet).

Our church is firmly established by the Lord of glory. The Lord of glory is building up His church faithfully according to His promise of Matthew 16:18, which He delighted and because He loves our church. Therefore, we must ask the Lord to build up His church as “a radiant church” (Eph. 5:27). May the Lord purify our church with the Word and make it holy (v. 26).

### **Third, the true church is established by the Lord Himself.**

Look at Psalms 87:5 – “But of Zion it shall be said, "This one and that one were born in her"; And the Most High Himself will establish her.” Here, “And the Most High Himself will establish her” means the Most High Lord Himself will establish Zion, His Church. This is the same meaning as the promised word of the Lord Matthew 16:18 that our church holds: ‘I will build my church....’ These two Bible verses Psalms 87:5 and Matthew 16:18 clearly tell us that the true church, the Body of the Lord, is established by the Most High Lord, the Head of the Church. And in the Lord's own establishment of the church, the Gentiles will repent and return to Him and become the Zion people (v. 4) (Park).



The Lord's glorious church, established by the Lord Himself, is the people of all the nations He has chosen, multiethnic and universal. Just as the Jews did not embrace the Gentiles, this church never has preconception that there is wall between nations and denies multi-ethnicity and diversity. The church that the Lord Himself establishes is the firm church. And the church that the Lord Himself establishes is the glorious church. The glorious church is being built up by the glorious Lord. Let's keep in mind that our church is the Lord's church. And let us not forget that the church, which is the body of the Lord, is established by the Lord Himself (Ps. 87:5; Mt. 16:18). Therefore, we must not sin against God by trying to build His church in our strength and in our own ways. If we build His church with our own strength and in our own ways, the foundation cannot be firm. And if the foundation is not strong, the church will be shaken and fall. And such church will only manifest the glory of man, not the glory of God. May the Lord Himself build His church.

#### **Fourth and last, the true church is the community of the heavenly citizens.**

Look at Psalms 87:6 – “The LORD will count when He registers the peoples, "This one was born there." Selah.” Here, “The Lord will count when He registers the peoples” is a prophecy of the New Testament period when all the people who believe in Jesus Christ enter into Heaven, that is, all the believers enters salvation (Park). Among the nations in this prophecy include Rahab that is Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia (v. 4). Although these nations are enemies of Israel, the psalmist foretold that in the future God would also make them to repent and bring them back to God. That's why the psalmist said in verse 4, “... among those who know Me ....” In other words, all those who acknowledge God, both Jews and Gentiles, will be regarded by God as citizens of heaven (Park). Therefore, all those citizens of heaven respond to God's grace: “Then those who sing as well as those who play the flutes shall say, ‘All my springs of joy are in you’” (v. 7). That is, they praise God because they are thankful for God's grace.

Let us all hold onto the word of Philippians 3:20-21 by faith: “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.” Our citizenship is in heaven, never on earth. We must not forget that we have citizenship in eternal heaven. Therefore, we must live as heavenly citizens while living on earth. We must live with solid faith built on the Rock, Jesus Christ. We must live for the glory of God. We must move forward to the city of God.

How do we know the true church and the fake church? The true church is a church built on a solid foundation. The true church is a glorious church. The true church is established by the Lord Himself. And the true church is a community of heavenly citizens. But the fake church is a church built on a shaking foundation or sand. The fake church seeks human glory. The fake church is built by people. And the fake church is a community of worldly citizens. I hope and pray that our churches will be established as the true church of God.

Serving the Presbyterian Church established by the Lord,

James Kim

(‘O Lord, may You build Your own Church’)

## **“Incline Your ear to my cry!”**

### **[Psalms 88]**

This Monday (February 25th) I went to the hospital where Mrs. Jung Myung-seon (my older brother's mother-in-law), the wife of Pastor Sang-woo Jung, was lying down. Since her eldest son and daughter-in-law were there, I asked them if I could pray for Mrs. Jung for a moment. After I got their permission, I put my hand on her forehead and prayed for her. While praying for her, I sought God's mercy and grace. Although I may not be able to understand the hearts of her children well, I prayed for the grace of God to restore Mrs. Jung's consciousness even for a moment to communicate with her children. Hearing the voice of her son weeping, I just prayed for God to answer my prayer with them. After that, I left the hospital and headed to the nursing home where Mrs. Park was (one of our church members). It was because as far as I know today was her 90th birthday. When I visited her and look at her, she opened her eyes and lied down quietly. I said hello to her and said few things to her even though I knew that she didn't know who I am. After a moment, I sang "Happy Birthday" to her and congratulated her birthday. Then, after praying to God, I praised the hymn "Since Christ my soul from sin set free." For some reason, whenever I sing that hymn, Mrs. Park slowly closes her eyes and falls asleep. So after I saw her falling asleep, I left. Later in the evening I was at home and my sister-in-law called me. She cried and said, 'I know you are praying, but please pray for my mother.' So I prayed for her mom, Mrs. Jung, on the phone. When I thought about how painful she would be, I thought about the time when my first baby, Charis, fell asleep in my arms after 55 days of her life in this earth. When I thought that maybe there could be a situation where Mrs. Jung doctor or nurse had to remove everything such as the respiratory system, it reminded me Charis and how I felt at that time. I did so in order to try to understand what my sister-in-law was going through. But in the end, Ms. Jung passed away this morning. Now, she has gone to heaven, the eternal world where she no longer has to see the tears flowing in her right eye.

The world in which we live is a world of mortality. I feel more and more that this world is a world full of sorrows, hardships, and sinful things. How should we live the rest of our lives in this world? Psalms 88 says that we must pray and cry out to God more and more. I would like to meditate on two things with the title "Incline Your ear to my cry!" written in the second half of Psalms 88:2. The first think I want to think about is, 'Why did the psalmist cry out to the Lord?' And the second is, 'What kind of God did the psalmist sought?' While answering these two questions based on Psalms 88, I pray that the Lord will raise us men and women of prayer.

The first think I want to think about is, 'Why did the psalmist cry out to the Lord?' The reason was because the psalmist was in a situation where he had no choice but to pray. We can think of the

situation in four ways:

**First, the situation where the psalmist had no choice but to pray was full of troubles.**

Look at Psalms 88:3, 9, 15 – “For my soul has had enough troubles, And my life has drawn near to Sheol. ... My eye has wasted away because of affliction; I have called upon You every day, O LORD; I have spread out my hands to You. ... I was afflicted and about to die from my youth on; I suffer Your terrors; I am overcome.” The reason the psalmist cried out to God was because his soul was full of trouble enough to feel the threat of his life. The troubles were ‘depression and affliction’ (Park). ‘Affliction’ could also mean ‘painful disease’ [the meaning of the word “Mahalath Leannoth” in the superscript of Psalms 88]. And ‘depression’ could be depression from a painful illness. Hence, the psalmist said, “my soul has had enough trouble” (v. 3). One of the reasons seems to be that the psalmist has been in trouble since he was young and had many experiences close to death (v. 15). And in such troubles, the psalmist confessed, “My eyes has wasted away” as a result of praying to the Lord every day (v. 9) (Park).

There is a lot of hard work in this world and there are no days off. How many people are around us suffering from sickness and pain? Some people are at the crossroads of life and death. What can we do at these times? I remember the words of Psalms 109:4 – “... But I am in prayer.” When we are full of trouble, we just pray to God. That's right. We must cry out to God more and more and every day, like the psalmist, as our troubles become more and more full.

**Second, the situation where the psalmist had no choice but to pray was extremely lonely.**

Why was the psalmist extremely lonely? We can find two reasons in Psalms 88.

(1) The first reason is because the psalmist felt that he had been rejected by God.

Look at Psalms 88:14 – “O LORD, why do You reject my soul? Why do You hide Your face from me?” As we meditate on the words of the psalms every Wednesday, often the psalmist reads, ‘God, why have you rejected me?’ (22:1; 43:2) The psalmist felt like he had been rejected by God, especially when he cried out to God during his suffering and when there was no answer from Him. It was too unbearable for him. He felt extremely lonely in that situation. In the midst of this extreme loneliness, the psalmist cried earnestly to God.

(2) The second reason is because the psalmist thought that the Lord had removed his lovers and his friends away from him.

Look at Psalms 88:8, 18 – “You have removed my acquaintances far from me; You have made me an object of loathing to them; I am shut up and cannot go out. ... You have removed lover and friend far from me; My acquaintances are in darkness.” In addition to feeling rejected by the Lord, the psalmist had feeling of being rejected by his beloved friends. Indeed, he was in the miserable situation.

Like the psalmist, we can have enough feelings of being rejected by God and our beloved family members and friends. So we can feel extremely lonely enough. If we are in this situation now or in the future, we must pray earnestly to God like the psalmist. Rather, we should use our loneliness as an opportunity to depart from the world and enter the wilderness ourselves to seek God earnestly.

### **Third, the situation where the psalmist had no choice but to pray was at the crossroads of life and death.**

Look at Psalms 88:3b-6, 10, 15 – “... And my life has drawn near to Sheol. I am reckoned among those who go down to the pit; I have become like a man without strength, Forsaken among the dead, Like the slain who lie in the grave, Whom You remember no more, And they are cut off from Your hand. You have put me in the lowest pit, In dark places, in the depths. ... Will You perform wonders for the dead? Will the departed spirits rise and praise You? Selah. ... I was afflicted and about to die from my youth on; I suffer Your terrors; I am overcome.” In reality, when we see our loved ones at the crossroads of life and death, we realize that there is not so much we can do for them. In other words, as I experience my own helplessness as I encounter people who have been at the crossroads of life and death, I have a little bit of a skin feel that the only thing I can do is pray. Perhaps this feeling was felt not only by me, but also by those who were sick. The reason why I think so is because the psalmist confessed that “I am reckoned among those who go down to the pit; I have become like a man without strength” (v. 4). When we think about why the psalmist confessed that he was like a person without strength, the answer is found in verse 5: “Forsaken among the dead, Like the slain who lie in the grave, Whom You remember no more, And they are cut off from Your hand.” That is, because he thought that the Lord didn’t remember him anymore, and he was cut off from His hand. When we are at the crossroads of life and death, we feel that the Lord no longer remembers us and doesn’t take care of us anymore, which can make us feel weaker, despondent, and frustrated. Despite such despair, the psalmist looked to God and cried out to Him.

We need to be raised up as prayers who earnestly cry out to God, thinking of our loved ones who are at the crossroads of life and death. Furthermore, when we ourselves are at the crossroads of life and death, we must cry out to God, like the psalmist, even in such circumstances. In particular, we must pray earnestly to God at the crossroads of life and death, just like earnest prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before He died on the cross.

**Fourth and last, the situation where the psalmist had no choice but to pray was under the wrath of God.**

Look at Psalms 88:7, 16 – “Your wrath lies heavily upon me; you have overwhelmed me with all your waves. Selah. ... Your wrath has swept over me; your terrors have destroyed me.” When I think of the wrath of God, I remember last week that I disciplined my beloved youngest daughter. The reason I disciplined her was because she hit her friend in kindergarten even though she knew it was wrong. Even though I saw the tears and runny nose of my crying beloved daughter, I disciplined her. Although I know that it is not comparable to God’s wrath, but for some reason, when I think about God’s wrath, we become afraid of the Lord and sometimes we don’t know what to do in suffering. Then we have no choice but to cry out to God. We confess our sins and pray to God for forgiveness. Yesterday, on Tuesday evening, while talking with my youngest daughter, I heard her confessing that she broke her promise with me and hit a boy. So when I went into her room, she tried to stand on her bed. When I looked at her face, it was a fearful face. So I told her to sit on the bed and then we talked. I asked her why she hit that boy and she told me that he pushed her. So when I asked where she hit him, she said she hit his back. And when I asked about the reaction of the boy who was hit, she said that there was no response. So, I told her again that it was wrong to hit another person no matter how angry she was. Then I encourage her to confess her sin to God and pray for forgiveness. Then she said to God, “I am so sorry” and prayed for forgiveness. After praying, I hugged her and told her that ‘Daddy loves you.’

When we are receiving God's wrath for our sins, we must repent our sins to God in the fear of the Lord for His discipline. Realizing that all this circumstance is due to my sins, we must cry out to God, remembering that because of God's wrath, I am in trouble, I feel that I have been abandoned by God and my loved ones, and I am at the crossroads of life and death. What about us? What is our circumstance where we must pray? We must believe that God has allowed us to go through that circumstance so that we can pray to Him.

The second and last think I want to think about is, ‘Who is the God the psalmist was seeking in a situation where he had no choice but to pray.’ In other words, to what kind of God did he cry out earnestly? Psalms 88 tells us two things:

**First, the God whom the psalmist earnestly sought was the God of salvation.**

Look at Psalms 88:1 – “O LORD, the God who saves me, day and night I cry out before you.” Here, the expression “O Lord, the God my salvation” comes from the consciousness of a person who has experienced the salvation of God several times (Park). The psalmist cried out to God with confidence in answering prayers in the situation where he had no choice but to pray because he cried out to the God of salvation several times in the past and experienced God’s salvation.

**Second, the God whom the psalmist earnestly sought was God who answered prayers.**

Look at Psalms 88:13 – “But I cry to you for help, O LORD; in the morning my prayer comes before you.” The psalmist cried out “only” to the Lord. The reason is that, besides the Lord, there was no one who would answer his prayers and save him. That is why he asked the Lord in the morning. Our God is a God who inclines His ears to our cries (v. 2).

Let us pray to that God tonight. Whatever situation you and I may be in now, let's use that situation as an opportunity to pray and cry out to God. Our Lord who listens to our prayers is the God of our salvation. Let's pray to that God this night together.

After I pleaded with the Lord who listens to my cry,

James Kim

(As I look at the God of salvation)

## The blessed people

### [Psalms 89:1-18]

What is a blessed family? Of course, in the dictionary sense, we can say that the blessed family is a wealthy family. However, is the wealthy family the blessed Christian family that the Bible speaks of? If we look at Psalms 1, the Bible says “How blessed is the man ...” (v. 1) whose “delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night” (v. 2). The family that meditates on the Word of God day and night is the blessed family. The family that knows God by meditating on the Word of God is the blessed family.

Nowadays, while thinking about the “heritage of faith”, God is teaching me once again how important it is to teach the knowledge to my children and future descendants. In particular, while meditating on Judges 2:7, 10 at the early morning prayer meeting last week, I couldn't help thinking about the difference between the generation who knew God and the generation who didn't know God: “The people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel. ... All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.” Although the Israelites served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the Lord which He had done for Israel, after all of the people of that generation died, the other generations who didn't know God and what He had done for Israel, they eventually committed evil and sinned against God (vv. 11ff.). That's how much knowing God is very important. And it is really important that we and our children know what God did in the lives of our ancestors. Therefore, we must teach. We must tell our children who God is. And we must share with them what God has done in our lives. When we do so, our families, families of our children, and our descendants will all be blessed by the Lord.

In Psalms 89:15, the psalmist said “How blessed are the people who know the joyful sound!” Here, “the joyful sound” refers to the good news that God saves us (Park). Those who have received this good news are truly blessed. Today, I want to meditate on five things about what kind of God the blessed people look and depend on under the title of “The blessed people”. By doing so, I hope and pray that we not only hear the good news of His salvation in faith, but also we become the blessed people who experience His salvation.

**First, the God whom the blessed people look upon and trust in is God of the lovingkindness.**



Look at Psalms 89:1a, 2a, 14 – “I will sing of the lovingkindness of the LORD forever ... For I have said, “Lovingkindness will be built up forever ... Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before You.” The psalmist is determined to sing and praise God's lovingkindness forever and forever. Why was he determined to praise God's lovingkindness forever? The reason was because the psalmist believed that God would act lovingly toward His people forever (Park). Then how did God show His lovingkindness to His people? He chose us in Christ Jesus. Look at verse 3: “I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant.” We have become ‘God's elect’ (“My chosen”) because of God's eternal love. Of course, Psalms 89:3 refers to God's servant David. But in the light of Ephesians 1:4, we are God's chosen people in His eternal love. Therefore, as those chosen by God, we must trust in God's lovingkindness (v. 14, Park). The life of trusting in God's lovingkindness is to believe, experience, and live the fact that God loves us even to the point of giving His begotten Son for our salvation (Jn. 3:16). Since we are the ones who have experienced the love of Jesus on the cross and have conviction that “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8), we must live by trusting in His eternal lovingkindness.

### **Second, the God whom the blessed people look upon and trust in is faithful God.**

Look at Psalms 89:1b, 2b, 5, 8 – “... To all generations I will make known Your faithfulness with my mouth. ... In the heavens You will establish Your faithfulness. ... The heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones. ... O LORD God of hosts, who is like You, O mighty LORD? Your faithfulness also surrounds You.” The faithful God the psalmist trusted in is the God who faithfully fulfills the covenant toward the people He chose in eternal love (Park). Although His chosen Israelites destroy the covenant they made with God, the faithful God keeps the covenant faithfully. God's faithfulness never changes. The reason is because it is steadily implemented in the heaven where there is no unrest (Park). God made the covenant with his servant David, who was chosen by God in His love, and swore to him: “I will establish your seed forever And build up your throne to all generations.” Selah” (v. 4). This word of God's oath is based on 2 Samuel 7:16, the covenant word that God gave to David through the prophet Nathan: “Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.” This covenant, in fact, foretold the blessings of worldwide salvation that will be revealed through Christ (Isa. 55:3-5) (Park). Our God, who faithfully fulfills the covenant, has saved us and is still saving His chosen people in Jesus Christ with His unchanging faithfulness, that is, with His perfect faithfulness (Isa. 25:1). Therefore, like the psalmist, we must make known God's faithfulness to all generations with our mouths (Ps. 89:1). In other words, we must praise the faithfulness of the Lord (v. 5). This reminds me the hymn “Great is Thy Faithfulness”: “Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father/ There is no shadow of turning with Thee/ Thou changest not, Thy compassions, They fail not/ As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be/ Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!/ Morning by morning new mercies I see/ All I have needed Thy hand hath provided/ Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!” (v. 1 & chorus).

### **Third, the God whom the blessed people look upon and trust in is the Creator God.**

Look at Psalms 89:12 – “The north and the south, You have created them; Tabor and Hermon shout for joy at Your name.” This means that God not only created all the regions of the nation of Israel, but also Mount Tabor (mountain in Judah) and Mount Hermon (mountain in the region of Syria) that are far apart from each other are also God's creations. In other words, it means that there isn't any area that God didn't create (Park). The God who created this heaven and earth made the Israelites, His chosen ones, to cross the Red Sea like dry land to save them from Egypt (vv. 9-10). In other words, God the Creator also worked on the sea, making the Red Sea like land and allowed the Israelites to cross safely. About this God, this is what the psalmist confessed: “The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; The world and all it contains, You have founded them” (v. 11). The God of salvation he depended on is the God who built all the worlds. That's right. The God of our salvation is the Creator God. Just as God saved the Israelites at the time of the Exodus from Pharaoh and the Egyptian army even by controlling the nature, even now, God is moving the nature in His providence in order to save His chosen people. Therefore, like the psalmist, we must rejoice in the God of salvation and in the name of the Creator God. In other words, we must praise the name of our Creator God. This reminds me the hymn “How Great Thou Art”: “O, Lord my God! When I in awesome won-der/ consider all the worlds Thy hands have made/ I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder/ Thy power throughout the universe displayed/ Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee/ How great Thou art, how great Thou art!/ Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee/ How great Thou art, how great Thou art!” (v. 1 & chorus).

### **Fourth, the God whom the blessed people look upon and trust in is Almighty God.**

Look at Psalms 89:6, 8a, 10, 13 – “For who in the skies is comparable to the LORD? Who among the sons of the mighty is like the LORD, ... O LORD God of hosts, who is like You, O mighty LORD? ... You Yourself crushed Rahab like one who is slain; You scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm. ... You have a strong arm; Your hand is mighty, Your right hand is exalted.” The God of our salvation is Almighty God. He is the God who can deliver us from trouble. He is the God who scatters the enemies of the Lord with His mighty hand and a strong arm (v. 10) and saves His people. For example, at the time of the Exodus, God destroyed all the Egyptians in the Red Sea and delivered the Israelites. The Israelites experienced the power of God the Creator who created the heavens and the earth. They experienced His saving power. So the psalmist confessed: “For You are the glory of their strength, And by Your favor our horn is exalted” (v. 17). This means that the Lord is the source of our boastful power (Park). Our Lord is the source of our strength. From Him we are empowered. We are blessed because the Lord is the glory of our strength. We are the blessed people who experience God's saving power.

**Fifth and last, the God whom the blessed people look upon and trust in is the Holy God.**

Look at Psalms 89:18 – “For our shield belongs to the LORD, And our king to the Holy One of Israel.” The psalmist says that the king of Israel belongs to the holy Lord. And he confesses that the Holy God is the "shield" for Israel. That holy God is the shield of the Israelites and protects them from their enemies. Furthermore, the Holy God is the God who judges the wicked. That Holy God is the God who saves us from the wicked. He also loves us, but His love is holy love. He is the God who disciplines us with the bonds of love when we sin against Him. He is also faithful God who disciplines us with His love. That God is the Almighty God who created the heavens and the earth, and He is the God who reveals His holiness to us and to the wicked. We who look to Him and trust in Him are the blessed people.

I thought about these words today while praying at the early Morning Prayer meeting. At the same time, I heard the joyful sound, that is, the earnest heart to hear the good news that God saves us, while I was praying for the brothers and sisters in Christ. If only I could hear the good news that the Lord saves and delivers. As we pray for our loved ones tonight, let's pray earnestly together, ‘God, help us to be blessed.’ Let's pray to our God together, saying, 'God, I want to hear the news that you will save us,' and ‘God deliver us.’

Desperately wanting to hear the joyful sound,

James Kim

(After praising “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” and after praying with brothers and sisters in Christ, in the pastoral room of Victory Presbyterian Church)

## God who strengthens me

### [Psalms 89:19-52]

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

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

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

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

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

Our God is the God who gives help us in times of need. Look at Hebrews 4:16 – “Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Our God knows our needs. He is the Almighty God who knows best when we need help. And our God is the God

who can sympathize with our weaknesses (4:15). This God who can sympathize with our weakness helps and strengthens us when we need help. God holds us with His powerful right hand. Especially when we are troubled, tired, depressed, torn down, and in no power at all, God comes to us quietly and holds our hand and speaks to us. What does God say? Don't you think He will say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father (Heb. 1:5) and I love you"? I hope and pray that we may be able hear this voice of God and be strengthened. May God help us and give us strength. May God, who gives us grace to help in time of need, be with us so that we may hear this message and be strengthened as we pray to God in faith.

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

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

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

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

After praising 'O Lord, my strength,'

James Kim

(Giving thanks to God for His eternal love that is with me and for giving me more power to help)

## **‘Teach us to number our days’**

### **[Psalms 90]**

There is an actress named Ingrid Bergman. She became famous for <For Who Will Ring the Bell>, <The Eighth Gospel>, and <Gas Light>, and the films she starred in were always top rated for her performance. Originally from Sweden, she went to Hollywood with great ambition to gain a greater fame from European flavors. And she starred in movies in Hollywood and won two Academy Awards. Perhaps there are few great actresses like her. But the great actress cried out at the peak of her success: ‘Hollywood! Silver screen ... Why is it so desolate and empty ...’ After abandoning her husband and daughter, she married a famous filmmaker, and soon broke up. After that, she had married several men. Then one day, a terrible thing happens in which her daughter kills her stepfather. Ingrid Bergman had a goal. And that goal had been achieved. But there was no purpose. Eventually, she died miserably from cancer. She lived her life with a goal but no purpose. Many people have the goal, but they don't have the purpose of their lives. If the goal speaks direction, the purpose asks meaning. ‘Why live’ is a question for purpose, and ‘Where to go’ is a question about goal. Many people confuse goal and purpose, wandering as if they were one, ruining their precious life that can live only once in this earth (Internet).

Like the actress named Ingrid Bergman, who has achieved her goal but experienced vanity, how many people are experiencing it? The representative biblical character is King Solomon, who wrote the book of Ecclesiastes. Seeing that he said in Ecclesiastes 1:2, “‘Vanity of vanities,’ says the Preacher, ‘Vanity of vanities! All is vanity’”, we can see how he really experienced how empty life is. If we summarize the book of Ecclesiastes in one word, it teaches how empty life without God is. In other words, it shows that all human labors apart from God are in vain, and in the end, only by restoring the relationship between God and man, this man can find eternal value and meaning. Apart from God, wisdom is vain (1:12-6:9), pleasure and material things are vain (2:1-11), material life is vain (vv. 12-23), oppression is vain (4:1-3), all labor is vain (vv. 4-12), and politics is vain (vv. 13-16). The author of Ecclesiastes didn't put forth these thoughts out of thoughts or ideas, but talked about them as lessons based on his own experiences. As a result, eternal and real joy cannot be found in this world, and the real satisfaction of life can be found in a relationship with God or in God (Internet).

How are we to live in this vain and meaningless world? In order to answer that question, we must also offer God the prayer the psalmist gave to God in Psalms 90:12. That prayer is ‘Teach us to number our days’. We can think of this prayer topic in two ways. The prayer ‘Teach us to number our days’ has two contents.

**The first content is, ‘Teach us the vanity of life’.**

Psalms 90:3-10 teaches three ways why life is vain:

(1) Life is vain because it returns to dust.

Look at Psalms 90:3 – “You turn man back into dust And say, "Return, O children of men.” God told Adam, “By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return” (Gen. 3:19). God who made Adam out of dust said to Adam, “For you are dust, And to dust you shall return”. That's right. We have no choice but to return to dust. That's why life is futile. So King Solomon also said in Ecclesiastes 3:19-21: “For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust. Who knows that the breath of man ascends upward and the breath of the beast descends downward to the earth?” As King Solomon said, everything is vain because all is made of dust and everything will return to dust.

(2) Life is vain because it is short.

Look at Psalms 90:4-6: “For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it passes by, Or as a watch in the night. You have swept them away like a flood, they fall asleep; In the morning they are like grass which sprouts anew. In the morning it flourishes and sprouts anew; Toward evening it fades and withers away.” Life is like falling asleep and grass which sprouts anew. Time and life that comes and goes quickly is vain. Life is like being swept away by a flood, the lives of people die quickly. Life is like falling asleep for a while and then waking up. When a person sleeps, it passes unconsciously. So time passes faster than when a person is awake. Not only that, as there are many dreams when sleeping, and there are many empty plans like dreams throughout life (Park). Like the psalmist said, life is like grass which sprouts anew. Just as flowers bloom and grow in the morning and dry up in the evening, life is also empty. So the apostle James said: “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” (Jam. 4:14). Especially in the light of the word that “Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God” (Ps. 90:2), life cannot be compared with the eternal life of God. Truly, life is very short. Life is meaningless and futile that can only be a moment.

(3) Life is vain because its' pride is labor and sorrow.

Look at Psalms 90:10 – “As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, Or if due to strength, eighty years, Yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; For soon it is gone and we fly away.” For as long as our years are seventy, if strong is eighty, life is vain because soon it is gone and we fly away and there is only labor and sorrow. That's why King Solomon also said: “For what does a man get in all his labor and in his



striving with which he labors under the sun? Because all his days his task is painful and grievous; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity” (Eccle. 2:22-23). The Bible tells us that since a life is full of sorrow, full of pain and suffering, and full of labor without rest at night, this is also vain. That’s why King Solomon says, ‘Vanity of vanities, Vanity of vanities! All is vanity’ (1:2).

Like the psalmist, we must pray to God, ‘Teach us to number our days’. In particular, we must learn that Psalms 90 teaches three things about why life is vain. We must have deep understanding. We must understand deeply that life is vain because it returns to dust, it is short and its’ pride is labor and sorrow.

### **The second content is, ‘Teach us how to live a short life worthwhile’.**

Knowing the vanity of life, we should never waste our lives. In other words, we have to think about how to live a short life worthwhile. We can receive three lessons from Psalms 90:

#### **(1) In order to live the short life worthwhile, we must fear God.**

Look at Psalms 90:11 – “Who understands the power of Your anger And Your fury, according to the fear that is due You?” In order to fear God, we must seek “a heart of wisdom” as the psalmist asked God (v. 12). What is the reason? The reason is because the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7). That is why King Solomon said in Ecclesiastes “Vanity of vanities,” and conclusively in Ecclesiastes 12:13, “The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.” The Bible tells us that man’s duty is to fear God and obey His commandments. Therefore, in order to live our short lives worthwhile, we must seek God for wisdom and live a life that fears God.

#### **(2) In order to live the short life worthwhile, we must be satisfied with God’s lovingkindness.**

Look at Psalms 90:14 – “O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness, That we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.” God has given and is still giving true joy in Jesus Christ to us who had no choice but to live our lives in vain in our sorrows throughout our lifetime. That joy comes from the Lord’s lovingkindness. In other words, when we are satisfied with His lovingkindness, we can live this whole life with true joy. And we can live our lives worthwhile when we love God and love our neighbors with His love as Jesus commands.

#### **(3) In order to live the short life worthwhile, we must live for God’s glory.**

Look at Psalms 90:16 – “Let Your work appear to Your servants And Your majesty to their children.” The psalmist asked God to “Make us glad according to the days You have afflicted us” (by the number of years

being afflicted) (v. 15). In order to do so, the psalmist prayed for the Lord's work and His glory to be appealed to them. In order for us to enjoy the joy that God gives us for a lifetime of labor and sorrow, God's works must be appeared in our lives. In other words, when the glory of God appears in our lives, we cannot help but rejoice in the Lord. The reason life is bound to suffer amid toils and sorrows is because we live for our own glory, not God's glory, and only our glory appears. In order to live a truly worthwhile life, we must live for the glory of God. Then, when God's work appears in our lives, that life will be truly rewarding and worthwhile.

(4) In order to live the short life worthwhile, we must seek God's favor.

Look at Psalms 90:17 – “Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; And confirm for us the work of our hands; Yes, confirm the work of our hands.” At the morning prayer meeting on Tuesday morning yesterday, I meditated on the “the kindness of God” (2 Sam.9:3) that David gave to Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, who was crippled in both feet, based on 2 Samuel 9:1. David, who was faithful to the covenant he made with Jonathan, said to Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan, “I will surely show kindness to you for the sake of your father Jonathan” (v. 7). He restored to him all the land of his grandfather Saul (v. 7) and made him to eat at David's table regularly like one of the princes (vv. 7, 10, 11, 13). Then, David made Saul's servant Shiba, along with him his fifteen sons and twenty servants to serve Mephibosheth (v. 10). At that time, this was Mephibosheth's response: “What is your servant, that you should regard a dead dog like me?” (v. 8) As I meditate on these words, the conclusion is that we are only grateful and thankful for the fact that God has given me the grace of salvation and every spiritual blessings in Jesus Christ. That's why I sing this hymn “Since Christ My Soul From Sin Set Free” to the Lord: “Since Christ my soul from sin set free/ This world has been a Heaven to me/ And 'mid earth's sorrows and its woe/ 'Tis heaven my Jesus here to know/ O hallelujah, yes, 'tis heaven/ 'Tis heaven to know my sins forgiven/ On land or sea, what matters where?/ Where Jesus is, 'tis Heaven there” (v. 1 & chorus).

I would like to share with you a poem I found on the Internet while meditating on Psalms 90: ‘The stream flows, wherever it goes, it shows off its beauty before the fallen leaves fall. There is only a moment when we show off our dazzling beauty, and our lives also show off our youth in no time. As the sun turns into a lonely fallen leaf, the late autumn comes, only in vain. Even when we cried out that life was difficult, it made us think of the true meaning of life in the gloom of all the passing and falling leaves watching the last moments of life. Like the color of beautiful autumn leaves, the lingering sound of life disappears without a trace. Whatever the meaning of life in this land, our life becomes the color of beautiful autumn leaves, dyeing our hearts with memories’ (Internet). We desperately need to realize the vanity of life in this vain world. Therefore, we must learn and practice how to live a life worth living once through the Bible. Let us live in fear of our God and be satisfied with His lovingkindness. And let us seek His favor. I hope and pray that we live our short life for the glory of God.

Wanting to live my short life worthwhile before God while thoroughly feeling the vanity of life,

James Kim

(Having been taught by the Lord the death perspective)

## “My refuge”

### [Psalms 91]

I saw TV news last week reporting on Homelessness. Here in a city in Southern California, the city budgeted and helped the homeless to live. But as more homeless people flocked here and there, the city couldn't afford it. So eventually the city demolished that area where the homeless used to live. At that time, I saw a reporter interviewing two homeless women. The reporter usually asked them what they would do in the future. And they answered him that they weren't sure. But they didn't seem to be very worried. Just seeing the homeless wandering around, I remembered the Israelites at the time of the Exodus. They left Egypt and camped in the wilderness and headed toward Canaan, the Promised Land. What was really important to the Israelites at that time was the “tabernacle”. In other words, the tabernacle was the center of life for the Israelites. In other words, the tabernacle was laid by the Israelites to worship God while staying for a while in the wilderness. So this tabernacle was the center of worship. The tabernacle was divided into the Most Holy Place and the Holy Place. The Most Holy Place had the ark. And the Holy Place had the altar of incense, the table for the bread of presence, and the golden lampstands. The 12 tribes of Israel were divided into three tribes each and camped in the north, south, east, west around the tabernacle, the temple of God. The tribe of Levi attended in this tabernacle, the place of God's presence. All the tribes of Israel proceeded together when this tabernacle of God proceeded, and wherever it stayed, they also stayed (Internet).

The psalmist confessed in Psalms 84:1-2: “How lovely are Your dwelling places, O LORD of hosts! My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.” Why did he so long for the Lord's dwelling palaces? The reason was because God was there. In other words, the important thing is not the tabernacle or the palace itself, but whether God was there or not.

If we look at Psalms 91:2, the psalmist says, “I will say to the LORD, ‘My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!’” Based on this word, I want to think about the three graces of God, who is our refuge, that He gives to us under the heading “My refuge” so that we can remember God's grace again and give thanks to Him.

#### **First, God, who is “My refuge”, delivers us.**

Look at Psalms 91:3 – “For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper And from the deadly pestilence.” In this verse, the psalmist tells us two things about where God delivers us from.

(1) The psalmist says that God delivers us from the “snare” (v. 3).

The “snare” is a tool used to catch birds or animals. It is easy for the believers with simple minds to get caught in it as it is harmed by deceptive means (Park). Then, how does Satan bring the simple-minded believers into his snare? There are many ways, but one of them is lies. In other words, Satan, the father of lies, lies and causes the simple-minded believers to fall into the snare. What is the purpose of Satan's deceit and setting the snare for us, the believers, to be trapped in it? The purpose is our destruction (v. 6). But the faithful God (v. 4) who is our refuge has delivered us from this Satanic snare and continues to deliver us.

(2) The psalmist says that God delivers us from “the deadly pestilence” (v. 3).

Here, the term “pestilence” is characterized by being transmitted and spreading, and this is sometimes compared to a poisonous tongue that goes around accusing and harassing (Park). The word “pestilence” appears in verse 6 again: “Of the pestilence that stalks in darkness ....” And verse 5 says, “You will not be afraid of the terror by night, ....” Putting these verses together, the term “the deadly pestilence” refers to the disease that brings us death. Yet another meaning is that “the deadly pestilence” may refer to his poisonous tongue, that accuses us and defames us as Satan deceives us the believers with lies in order to destroy us (Park). In conclusion, God who is our refuge is the God who delivers us from snares and deadly pestilence. In other words, God who is our refuge is the God of salvation who rescues us from destruction and death.

Then, what kind of person does the Bible say that the God of our salvation delivers from the snare and the deadly pestilence? Look at verse 14: “Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him; ....” The God of salvation, who is our refuge, delivers he who loves Him. He who loves God knows that God is “the Most High” and also “the Almighty” (v. 1). And he prays to God as his refuge by believing that this Most High and Almighty God can deliver him from the snare and the deadly pestilence. Look at verse 15: “He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him.” God is the God who answers the prayer of he who loves God and asks Him in faith. Therefore, God answers the prayers of he who loves Him and asks Him, to be with him from trouble, deliver him and honor him.

**Second, God, who is “My refuge”, guards us.**

Look at Psalms 91:11 – “For He will give His angels charge concerning you, To guard you in all your ways.” For believers who make God their refuge (v. 9), God makes their dwelling place safe (vv. 9, 10). How did God make the dwellings of the psalmist and the Israelites who made Him their refuge safe? Look at verses 10-11: “No evil will befall you, Nor will any plague come near your tent. For He will give His angels charge concerning you, To guard you in all your ways.” God loves and protects those who pray to Him from evil and plague. God is

the God who keeps us so that evil and plague don't come near to the tents of those who love Him. This God has sent angels to us to guard all our ways. Psalms 37:7 and 2 Kings 6:16 don't teach the idea that there is one angel protecting one believer, but show that there are many angels working for one person. Although there are many evil forces that try to harm the saints, the power to protect those saints is greater than those evil forces (Park). The God who protects and guards us through His angels in this way is the God who not only bears us up in the angel's hands so that we don't strike our foot against a stone (v. 12), but also protects and guards us from vicious animals such as the lion and cobra (v. 13). Here, "the lion", "cobra", "The young lions" and "the serpent" are likened to ignorant and wicked enemies (Park). Because our God loves us who loves Him and cry out to Him, He protects and guards us from our wicked enemies.

Therefore, we must trust in God who is our refuge (v. 2). The God who protects and guards us, who is our refuge, is the God whom we trust. He is our fortress (v. 2). His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark (v. 4). May Psalms 18:2 be our confession: "The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."

### **Third and last, God, who is "My refuge", satisfies us.**

Look at Psalms 91:16 – "With a long life I will satisfy him And let him see My salvation." What does God, who is "My refuge", promises to satisfy us? It is "a long life". Among the promises of the long life, we are familiar with Ephesians 6:2-3: "'Honor your father and mother' -- which is the first commandment with a promise – 'that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.'" What we need to know from this words is that we are also responsible for receiving the blessing of long life, which is God's promise. Of course, the responsibility here in Ephesians 6:2-3 is "Honor your father and mother". Then what is our responsibility as revealed in Psalms 91? In other words, what is our responsibility to receive the blessing of God's promise of long life? It is to know God and love Him (Ps. 91:14), to trust in Him (v. 2), to take refuge in Him (vv. 2, 9), and to call upon Him (v. 15). Then the God who is our refuge will satisfy our souls. He will extend our lives by rescuing us from trouble (v. 15).

What do we really want? If we truly live with God as our refuge, we will yearn for the eternal nature of our dwelling with the Lord more than our long life in this earth. Obviously, we will be waiting for the consummation day of God's salvation through Jesus' Second Coming. Then our Lord will make our souls completely satisfied. From that day to that moment, we must make the Lord "My refuge". As we trust in Him, love Him, and pray to Him, I hope and pray that we may enjoy God's salvation and protection and the grace that satisfies our souls.

Living in the experience of the salvation, protection, and satisfying grace of the Lord who is “My refuge”,

James Kim

(As my soul longs for our eternal tabernacle)

## The very deep thoughts of the Lord

### [Psalms 92]

Today, my wife went to the Koreatown in Los Angeles in order to get a rainbow rice cake for our youngest daughter Karis' birthday in her kindergarten. Karis said that she told her mother that she would wear a Korean tradition cloth, hanbok, and take the rainbow rice cake to her kindergarten this Friday in order to celebrate her birthday. Haha. So, after ordering the rice cake today, my wife went to pick up our children to the church, the after school. When she arrived there, I think Karis introduced her mother to her friend in Korean like this: “애가 내 엄마야” (This child is my mother). Hahaha. When I listened this, on one hand I laughed, but on the other hand, I thought that Karis seemed to consider her mother as her friend. Haha. When I think of my three children, I am experiencing that God is raising them even though I am truly lacking as their father.

When I think of these precious children God gave me as gifts, I think of the words of Job 1 that I read last night before going to bed. In particular, verse 5 comes to my mind: “When the days of feasting had completed their cycle, Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, ‘Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.’ Thus Job did continually.” Job was a man who was “blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil” (v. 1). He continually offered burnt offerings according to the number of his children because he thought, “Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts” (v. 5). From these words, we can see that as a father, Job cared about the hearts of his children. He didn't want his children to sin against God by cursing God in their hearts. That was why he offered burnt offerings according to number of his children. As I continued reading the book of Job yesterday, I saw the word “curse” appearing several times. For example, when Satan smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head (2:7), his wife saw him suffering and said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!” (v. 9) As I meditate on these words, I am challenged to be wary of sinning against God in my heart or mind and diligently fight the spiritual battle while seeing the image of Job who is blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil. In order to bear this spiritual battle well, we must be transformed by the renewing our mind (Rom. 12:2). In order to do this, we must know the Lord's thoughts while meditating on His word and think about His thoughts so that our thoughts can be consistent with His thoughts.

This is what the psalmist said in Psalms 92:5 – “How great are Your works, O LORD! Your thoughts are very deep.” Here, centering on the words “Your thoughts are very deep,” I want to meditate on His deep thoughts in two ways under the heading “The very deep thoughts of the Lord”. As we do so, I hope and pray that we get to



know and believe in His thoughts so that we may be able to keep our hearts and gain strength to keep transforming.

**First, I would like to think about the very deep thought of the Lord toward the wicked.**

The very deep thought of the Lord toward the wicked is, in a word, destruction. Even though the wicked sprout up like grass, and all those who do iniquity flourish, they will be destroyed forever (v. 7). This word tells us how to view the prosperity of the wicked:

(1) As we are seeing in real life, the wicked sprout up quickly.

The psalmist says that the wicked “sprouted up” by comparing the wicked with grass. It means that the wicked succeed quickly in cunning without any effort. In other words, the wicked can succeed quickly without laboring through the cunning means, but in reality it isn’t the true success of receiving blessings (Park).

(2) The prosperity of the wicked may seem like the lushness of wild grass, but the important thing is that it has no fruit.

In other words, the wicked are not bearing any fruit in the sight of God in their prosperity. The prosperity of the wicked is like a fruitless grass, that is what the Bible describes about the wicked.

(3) The quick prosperity of the wicked is to eventually destroy forever.

For example, as pigs are fed well to gain weight to be brought to a slaughterhouse, the purpose of the prosperity of the wicked is for eternal destruction. Regarding the prosperity of the wicked in this verse, Pastor D. L. Moody said: ‘The wicked must grow like grass to be fuel.’

One day, while meditating on Psalms 73, I received few lessons from God about the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous. Here, a more specific word about the prosperity of the wicked says that the wicked are growing like grass and even if they grow up in the end it will be destroyed forever (Prov. 20:21). We don’t need to be envious and jealous of the quick success or rise of the wicked (Ps. 73:3). What is the reason? The reason is that, just as the wicked speed up their success, so will their destruction. Look at Psalms 73:18-20: “Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors! Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when aroused, You will despise their form.” Like success, the destruction of the wicked will be more quickly than success. They will be destroyed in a moment like awakening in a dream. In Psalms 92:9, the psalmist says, “For, behold, Your enemies, O LORD,

For, behold, Your enemies will perish; All who do iniquity will be scattered.” The wicked, those who do sin, will perish as enemies of God and will all be scattered. Therefore, we don’t have to be jealous and envious to see our enemies succeed and rise. Although the wicked and those who do sin seem to overcome for a while while persecuting the Church of God, we know that they will be destroyed by God’s judgment in the future (v. 11, Park). So we must stand firmly in faith without being shaken.

As I pondered these words, I came to think of these very little things about the very deep thoughts of the Lord. It was the question, ‘Why does God make the wicked grow and flourish for a while?’ I thought about what God’s intention is. That God’s intention is for us, God’s children. In other words, it is for us that the wicked prosper and grow for a while. Look at Proverbs 13:22b – “... And the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.” In light of this word, the Bible says that the growth of the wicked (for example, wealth of the wicked) are for us. This is the deep will of God. When we know this deep divine will of the Lord, we realize that there is no need to be envious or jealous of the growth of the wicked, the rise of the wicked, or the prosperity of the wicked. Also, I think that the reason why the Lord allows the rise of the wicked is to test us. I think the test is to see whether the righteous confess the words of Psalm 73:25 or not by trusting God completely, even in the midst of seeing the prosperity of the wicked, and the righteous going through suffering: “Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.”

**Second and last, I would like to think about the very deep thought of the Lord toward the righteous.**

When the wicked prosper (Ps. 92:7), and the righteous suffer persecution for his enemies, evildoers (v. 11), we often wonder why God, who loves, causes us to suffer such unfair persecution and suffering. However, we must keep in mind that even in the midst of suffering, there is the Lord’s very deep thought. Psalms 92 tells us three things about the very deep thoughts of the Lord:

- (1) The very deep thought of the Lord is that when we suffer, the Lord does great work, that is, He carries out His great salvation.

Look at Psalms 92:5 – “How great are Your works, O LORD! Your thoughts are very deep.” The great work of the Lord that the psalmist is talking about here refers to salvation. In other words, the God of our salvation is the God who rescues (saves) us, the righteous ones, by destroying the wicked in the midst of the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous. The very deep thought of the Lord in saving us is to reveal to us His greatness, and that He is Savior. His will is to reveal to us that He is God!

- (2) The very deep thought of the Lord is to please us and to praise the Lord because of His saving grace for us.

Look at Psalms 92:4a – “For You, O LORD, have made me glad by what You have done ....” God gives us the joy of salvation (Ps. 51:12) through His great act of salvation. Therefore, the Lord makes us to praise God by giving thanks in the joy of salvation. So the psalmist says in Psalms 92:1-4: “It is good to give thanks to the LORD And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning And Your faithfulness by night, With the ten-stringed lute and with the harp, With resounding music upon the lyre. For You, O LORD, have made me glad by what You have done, I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands.”

(3) The very deep thought of the Lord is to make us flourish in the courts of God.

Look at Psalms 92:13 – “Planted in the house of the LORD, They will flourish in the courts of our God.” Here, the word “Planted in the house of the Lord” is a parable of the fact of union with Christ (Park). In other words, it says that we will rise forever in heaven, the court of God, as those who are united with Jesus Christ. Although the wicked rise for a while on this earth, it is the promise that the righteous will rise forever in heaven. In the courts of God, we will flourish like the palm tree and will grow like a cedar in Lebanon (v. 12). In other words, we will live eternally in the glorious body that will not perish, exhaling the fragrance of Christ in the court of God forever. And unlike the fruitlessness of the wicked, the righteous will “yield fruit in old age” and “shall be full of sap and very green” (v. 14). In other words, God will make the righteous to bear fruit and the righteous will have abundant vitality (Park). This is the Lord's very deep thoughts for us. Why is God telling us these promises? The reason is because the Lord loves and honors us. Look at Psalms 92:10 – “But You have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox; I have been anointed with fresh oil.” Here, “I have been anointed with fresh oil” means that God treats those He loves like distinguished guests when we think of the Jewish custom in which the Jews anointed precious guests and treat them precious (Park). In this way, God will welcome us to His court, heaven, and treat us like His distinguished guests. And there He will make us live with the Lord forever.

How can we count the very deep thoughts of the Lord? But one thing is for sure: the Lord is always thinking of us. This is what the psalmist says: “How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand When I awake, I am still with You” (139:17-18). Although we cannot count all of the innumerable and very deep thoughts of the Lord for us, even if we suffer for a while in this world we will rejoice, be grateful and praise the Lord in His courts forever for His saving grace. Let us believe this and live with confidence.

On Wednesday night after praising the Korean gospel song, “Gathered here, within this place”,

James Kim

(May the Lord's deep thoughts become my thoughts)

## **Let us sing praises to God with thanksgiving.**

**“It is good to give thanks to the LORD And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High” (Psalms 92:1).**

Pastor Charles Swindoll encourages us to make commitment to worship God in his book “The Church Awakening”. He said that the Christians are now at war instead of making commitment to worship God in the church. The reason, he said, is because we aren’t focusing on the essence of worship, but on the expression of worship. Some in the church say that we should sing hymns, while others say that we can sing the gospel songs. There are also some who say that the drums can be used in worship while others claim that they shouldn’t be used. The difference between this and that thoughts is that they eventually become disagreements and are at war with each other in the church. But in the end, Pastor Swindoll says, it’s all about asserting what each person has a preference for. In the meantime, he urges us Christians to prioritize the nature of worship and make commitment to it. In other words, we must continue to devote ourselves to the Bible teaching, fellowship, breaking bread (communion), and prayer (Acts 2:42). I personally agree with Pastor Swindoll. In particular, I fully agree with him that the expression of worship should flow naturally from the essence of worship. At the same time, what I personally think is very important is that in order for us to be established as true worshipers that God seeks (Jn. 4:23), we must know ourselves by knowing God (Calvin). We must get to know God through the word of truth. When the Holy Spirit lets us know that God is God through the word of God, we have no choice but to know ourselves. Then we can humbly bow down and be raised as true worshipers who praise and glorify God.

In Psalms 92, “A Song for the Sabbath,” the psalmist says that it is good to thank God and praise the name of the Lord. He also says that it is good to proclaim the Lord's lovingkindness every morning and the faithfulness of the Lord every night (v. 1). What is the reason? The reason is because the loving and faithful Lord made the psalmist glad by what he did (v. 4). Therefore, the psalmist sang for joy at the works of the Lord's hand (v. 4). He praised the Lord for joy and thanksgiving when he thought of the great works God had done (v. 5). In particular, he praised God with thanks and joy for God's very deep thoughts (v. 5). Because the psalmist realized the very deep thoughts of the Lord that a senseless man and a stupid man could never understand (v. 6), he praised the Lord with gratitude and joy.

What was the Lord's very deep thought that the psalmist realized? In short, it was that God would destroy the wicked who prosper forever (vv. 9-11) and that would make the suffering righteous prosperous (vv. 12-14). In other words, the very deep thought of the Lord is to judge the wicked and to save the righteous. God will surely judge the enemies of the Lord (v. 9), the wicked (v. 7). Although now the wicked may seem to succeed quickly

without labor by cunning means, in reality it is by no means a true success blessed by God. To people, their prosperity may seem like the lushness of wild grass, but the important thing is that they have no fruit from God. In the eyes of the world, the prosperity of the wicked, who aren't bearing any fruit in the eyes of God, even though they are in prosperity now will be destroyed forever (v. 7). The prosperity of the wicked in this world is only for eternal destruction. The wicked enemies of the Lord will surely perish (v. 9). God will repay the evildoers (v. 11). But the righteous will be saved. Surely God will save us who are justified by trusting in Jesus. Surely God will make us grow and multiply, and bring us fruit (vv. 12-13). God will make us fruitful even in our old age (v. 14). Therefore, God will not only allow us to praise God with thanksgiving and joy, but He will also make us to declare that He is upright, our rock, and that there is no unrighteousness in Him (v. 15).

Desperately wanting to understand the very deep thoughts of the Lord little by little by the grace of God,

James Kim

(With a heart compelled to praise God with thanksgiving because of His great works in my life)

## How should we view the prosperity of the wicked?

**“That when the wicked sprouted up like grass And all who did iniquity flourished, It was only that they might be destroyed forevermore.” (Psalms 92:7)**

The question an elder asked me weeks before he went to heaven was, ‘Why does the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer?’ Knowing that this elder liked to think deeply, I think he had been contemplating this question for over 80 years. Even if he didn't, the sure fact is that when his the final ending point of life came close, he had a lot of trouble with this problem. Did you ever struggle with this question? Did you ever struggle with this question ‘Why does the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer?’ Regarding the suffering of the righteous, we must have heard many times the words of grace saying that we will participate in Jesus' suffering. But do you know how we should accept the prosperity of the wicked?

Psalms 92:7 is the word of God that tells us how to view the prosperity of the wicked. There are three things we can think of:

(1) As we see in real life, the wicked sprout up quickly.

The psalmist says that the wicked “sprouted up” like grass (v. 7). That means the wicked succeed quickly in cunning way without any effort. Not long ago, there was a part of my house where the backyard lawn was dying. So my wife and I applied some law care chemical, water, and bought and sown seeds. Now it's growing fast and we are seeing green grass. Perhaps the psalmist is saying that the prosperity of the wicked is as quick as grass.

(2) The prosperity of the wicked may seem like the lushness of wild grass, but the important thing is that there is no fruit.

In other words, the wicked are not bearing any fruit in the sight of God in their prosperity. The prosperity of the wicked is like a fruitless grass.

(3) The quick prosperity of the wicked is in order to be eventually destroyed forever.

For example, as pigs are fed well to gain weight to be brought to a slaughterhouse, the purpose of the prosperity of the wicked is for eternal destruction. Regarding the prosperity of the wicked in this verse,

Pastor D. L. Moody said: 'The wicked must grow like grass to be fuel.'

We are witnessing the prosperity of the wicked in our lives even today. As we see their success, we are at risk of falling into distress as we compare our own lives with them. In that case, we must see the wicked how God sees the wicked from the perspective of Psalm 92:7. As the psalmist said in verse 11, "And my eye has looked exultantly upon my foes, My ears hear of the evildoers who rise up against me," we must believe that God will repay the wicked. Then, when we know and believe that their end is eternal destruction, we will not envy them, nor will we fall into worries about the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous.

Being grateful that God, who solved the problem of 'the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous' with the words of Psalm 74, affirmed more and more with Psalm 92:7 today,

James Kim

(After proclaiming these words in faith during the Saturday morning prayer meeting)



## **“The Lord reigns”**

### **[Psalms 93]**

Our God is the Creator and the Ruler of all nature (Ps. 8:1, 3, 6). In other words, our God created and governs man and is in charge of man's life and death (vv. 3, 6). Our God is the God who not only created all things in the universe, but also governs and operates them to continue the history (121:1-6), that is, who governs all things in the universe (103:19). So, what should we do as believers in God's sovereign choice and rule when there are many painful things in our lives? Based on the words of Romans 8:28, we must not be shaken and convinced that if everything is done by God's independent choice and sovereign rule, eventually everything will work together to achieve good. How should we believers who are chosen by God and saved and ruled by God maintain our relationship with God? Based on the words of Psalms 23:1-6, we must maintain the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep. When the sheep follow the shepherd and obey, the shepherd leads them to the shore where they can rest in the green pasture. The path of following the good shepherd must go on forever and dwell in the Lord's house forever. So, we have no choice but to obey the words of Psalms 103:22 – “Bless the LORD, all you works of His, In all places of His dominion; Bless the LORD, O my soul!” (Internet)

If we look at Psalms 93:1, this is what the Bible says: “The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty; The LORD has clothed and girded Himself with strength; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved.” I would like to receive the grace given by meditating on the three aspects of God's reign under the heading, “The Lord reigns,” centering on Psalms 93.

### **The first aspect of God's rule is “God's authority”.**

Look at Psalms 93:1a – “The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty ....” Here, God's own “authority” refers to the glory and dignity of the ruler of the universe (Park). Our responsibility is to obey this divine authority. In other words, it is our responsibility to obey God's authoritative Word. We should not question God's authority. The reason is because God's authority is absolute. God's children who submit to that absolute God's authority have the responsibility to listen to and obey His authoritative word. How can we reveal God's authority? For example, in order for me to reveal God's authority as the head of the family, I can reveal God's authority at home when I obey God's authoritative word. As a pastor in the church, I can stand up to God's authority when I obey God's word. However, if I don't obey the word of God, but live a hypocritical life that doesn't obey His word and doesn't try to obey the word, it is inevitable to become an authoritarian pastor who abuses God's authority, not revealing His authority. Even in my home, if I don't obey God's authoritative word, but speak only the Bible words and don't

obey His words, then I become an authoritarian husband and father. In order for Christians, who are children of our God, to reveal God's authority in this world, we must live a life of obedience to God's authoritative word. Among His words, God's authority must be revealed through our lives as we obey Jesus' two commandments, that is love our God and love our neighbor.

### **The second aspect of God's rule is “the power of God”.**

Look at Psalms 93:1b, 4 – “... The LORD has clothed and girded Himself with strength; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved. ... More than the sounds of many waters, Than the mighty breakers of the sea, The LORD on high is mighty.” Here, “strength” is natural or supernatural power to sustain the created world (Park). When we refer to this power of God, we say 'the might of God.' This attribute of God refers to the infinite power that can accomplish whatever God wills. For example, we can see the omnipotence of God in nature. In other words, we can say the creative power of God who created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1, Heb. 11:3), and the power of God who maintained the created heaven and earth (Col. 1:17). We can also see God's omnipotence in the spiritual world. In other words, God's omnipotence controls not only his holy angels (Dan. 4:35) but also Satan and evil spirits (Job 1:12). That is why the psalmist says, “More than the sounds of many waters, Than the mighty breakers of the sea, The LORD on high is mighty” (Ps. 93:4). How can this power of God be revealed in our lives? We can find the answer in 2 Corinthians 12:9 – “And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.” God's power is revealed through our weaknesses. Therefore, like the apostle Paul, we must boast of our weaknesses. God has chosen the weak people like us to shame the strong (1 Cor. 1:27). When the power of God is revealed through our weaknesses, we will stand firm and not shake. The psalmist says that because of the power of God, “the world is firmly established, it will not be moved” (Ps. 93:1). Because God reigns with His power, the world stands firm and doesn't shake. If God rules us, we too will stand firmly and not be shaken (vv, 1, 2). If God rules our homes by His power and rules our churches, our homes and churches will stand firmly and not be shaken.

### **The third and last aspect of God's rule is “the holiness of God”.**

Look at Psalms 93:5 – “Your testimonies are fully confirmed; Holiness befits Your house, O LORD, forevermore.” God rules all things in the universe, but with His authority and power. Also, God reveals His holiness because He rules the world through His justice. Heavenly Father is holy. His authority is holy authority. His power is also a holy power. In the end, the Holy Trinity God is revealing His holiness through His authority and power. How can we reveal this holiness of God? We can find the answer in 1 Peter 1:16 – “for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’” Because we are holy, we can reveal God's holiness by living in this unholy world. Therefore, we must seek the holiness of God. In order to pursue His holiness, we must be faithful to the Word and

prayer life, longing for the sanctification of the Holy Spirit more and more. And our responsibility is to put our efforts to obey the word of truth.

Among the American gospel songs, there is a song “Ruler over my soul”. As I meditated on the Word today, I remembered this song. And I made that song the subject of my prayer and sang it to God. May God rule my soul. May the Lord rule my family. And I pray that the Lord will govern our church. Therefore, I hope and pray that God's authority, power, and holiness will be revealed.

As a God's creation who is under Creator God's control,

James Kim

(With heart of praising the hymn “How Great Thou Art”)

## “God of vengeance”

### [Psalms 94]

Last Saturday, after proclaiming the words of Ezra chapter 9, I meditated on the same words again under the title ‘God, aren’t you astonished?’ As I meditated on those words again, I thought of Ezra, who sat in astonied and prayed without lifting up his face to God. And I as a Christian and a pastor, should be embarrassed. I couldn’t help but admit that there was no difference between the Israelites and myself who forgot God’s grace and again betrayed God’s commandments. And just as the Israelites, especially their leaders, became the foremost in betraying the Word of God, as a leader of the church, I also looked back at my sins that took precedence in disobeying the Word of God. In the thought of having to live a proper life of faith and to walk the right path, I want to meditate on Psalms 94.

This is what the psalmist said in Psalms 94:1 – “O LORD, God of vengeance, God of vengeance, shine forth!” Here, the word “vengeance” can be interpreted in two ways: ‘punishment’ for the wicked or ‘discipline’ for the righteous. Based on Psalms 94, under the title of “God of vengeance”, I would like to receive few lessons that God gives while thinking about how God punishes the wicked and disciplines the people of God who are the righteous.

#### **First, God of vengeance punishes the wicked.**

Look at Psalms 94:2 – “Rise up, O Judge of the earth, Render recompense to the proud.” Our God of vengeance is a just God. That God is not a God who stays still until the end so that the wicked will exult (v. 3). He is clearly the just God who judges the wicked. The God of vengeance is the God who gives considerable punishment to the wicked. Why does vengeance and righteous God impose considerable punishment on the wicked?

#### (1) The first reason is because the wicked are proud (v. 2).

Because of pride, the wicked pour forth words and speak arrogantly. And they who do wickedness vaunt themselves (v. 4). In other words, because the proud wicked person vomits overwhelmingly wickedness, doesn’t restraint in words that harm others, and even speaks of insult to God (Park), the just God imposes considerable punishment on such proud wicked people.

#### (2) The second reason is because the wicked persecute God’s people and murder the poor (Park).

Look at Psalms 94:5-6: “They crush Your people, O LORD, And afflict Your heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger And murder the orphans.” The wicked persecute God's people. The wicked “band themselves together against the life of the righteous And condemn the innocent to death” (v. 21). They also show the cruelty of killing by slaying the widow and the stranger and by murdering the orphans (v. 6). Therefore, just God imposes considerable punishment on them. How do the wicked speak while doing so wickedly? Look at verse 7: “They have said, ‘The LORD does not see, Nor does the God of Jacob pay heed.’” In short, the wicked people ignore and despise God (Park). They think that God doesn't see them commit evil sins, and He doesn't care. God knows that the thoughts of these wicked are mere breath (v. 11). So God is saying this: “Pay heed, you senseless among the people; And when will you understand, stupid ones? He who planted the ear, does He not hear? He who formed the eye, does He not see?” The senseless, the stupid and the wicked must know the fact that God who formed the eye does see, and He who planted the ear does hear. Eventually, our God of vengeance has brought back their wickedness upon the wicked and will destroy them in their evil (v. 23).

## **Second, God of vengeance disciplines His people.**

Look at Psalms 94:12 – “Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law.” In other words, our God of vengeance is the God who makes things turn right according to His justice. How should God's people who are persecuted by the wicked view the persecution of the wicked? The persecution of the wicked had the significance of discipline and instruction (Park). Therefore, the psalmist says that the believers who are persecuted are happy because they can receive instruction from God through the persecution of the wicked. What an interesting perspective. I think it is a very valuable lesson to be happy for those who take the persecution of the wicked as an opportunity to receive divine discipline and instruction. In verse 10, the psalmist says that the righteous God of vengeance, who is upright and disciplines us, teaches us through knowledge. Blessed are those who think of the persecution of the wicked as God's discipline and receive instruction from the discipline (v. 12). What are the blessings? I thought of it as three blessings:

### (1) There are blessing of learning the Lord's laws (v. 12).

We are blessed to learn the Lord's laws through the suffering due to the persecution of the wicked. In other words, it is a blessing for us because when we suffer due to the persecution of the wicked, we can turn back from our wrongdoings through that suffering and obey the commandments of the Lord and walk the right path. So the psalmist confessed in Psalms 119:67, 71 – “Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word. ... It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.”

### (2) There are blessing of enjoying the peace that God gives even in the midst of trouble.

Look at Psalms 94:13 – “That You may grant him relief from the days of adversity, Until a pit is dug for the wicked.” The meaning of this verse is that those who are subjected to the trouble of discipline will have heart of peace until the trouble leaves (until the persecutors are destroyed). In other words, it means that there is peace in the heart while he faces that trouble (Park). How can we enjoy God's peace during trouble? This is possible because we learn the Lord's precepts during trouble. When we let the Lord's laws govern and rule our hearts, we can enjoy the peace that God gives us. The Holy Spirit rules and controls the word of God in our hearts so that we can enjoy peace that the world cannot understand and give.

(3) There are blessing of the Lord's lovingkindness.

Look at Psalms 94:18 – “If I should say, "My foot has slipped," Your lovingkindness, O LORD, will hold me up.” When we are almost slipping because of trouble, in that dramatic moment our God sustains us with His lovingkindness. For example, in Psalms 73 we have already learned from Asaph's experience - the suffering of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked. Asaph was jealous of the prosperity of the wicked and almost slipped, but God had taken hold of him with His right hand because He loved him (73:23). Therefore, Asaph experienced God's love and confessed: “Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. ... But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, That I may tell of all Your works” (vv. 25, 28). Our God is the God whose consolation delights our souls when my anxious thoughts multiply (94:19). How many thoughts of this or that are there when we are in trouble. At that time, the Lord comforted us not only to bring peace to our souls, but also to delight our souls. The psalmist, who enjoyed peace and joy in his soul, confessed: “But the LORD has been my stronghold, And my God the rock of my refuge” (v. 22). God is our stronghold and the rock of our refuge. When we are persecuted by the wicked, we accept it as God's discipline. So we must humbly receive the instruction and blessings from God in His discipline. In the meantime, we should be able to confess, like the psalmist, ‘God is my stronghold and the rock of my refuge’.

This week, I have a conversation with two pastors. What these two pastors have in common is that they are struggling in their ministry. The difficulty is the difficulty that they face due to their church members who are being tempted. One pastor shared this with me: One of the church members who are being tempted called two families and told them not to go to church while talking badly about their pastor. But what's interesting is that a sister in Christ who received a call from that church member warned that member, ‘If you hate your God's servant so much, you will be punished by God.’ It is heard that the woman who gave the warning saw not only that her father as a pastor and her father suffered such hardships and difficulties, but also God disciplined them when they opposed the servant of the Lord. After hearing this story through that pastor, I personally thought that God is working interesting way. This was an opportunity for me to believe more and more that the Lord loves His servant and His church and protects them. So, as I shared this story with the pastor and told him that God will protect him and his church

because God loves the pastor and loves the church he serves. I just hope that the God of vengeance will bring the members who have been tempted to return to the Lord and walk the right path even through God's discipline. And I pray that the pastors who are suffering from those who have been tempted will also enjoy the blessings that God gives in such suffering. Our God is a God of vengeance. He is a God who inflicts considerable punishment on the wicked who persecute the people of God who are righteous. However, the righteous who are persecuted by the wicked have blessings that are given through persecution or discipline. However, the righteous who are persecuted by the wicked have the blessings that are given through the persecution or discipline. It is the blessing of learning the Lord's laws, the blessing of enjoying the peace that the Lord gives us in the midst of trouble, and also the blessing of experiencing the eternal lovingkindness of the Lord. I hope and pray that we enjoy these blessings in the Lord.

Desiring to enjoy His blessings through God's discipline,

James Kim

(As I remember God's loving discipline)

## Those who enter the rest of God

### [Psalms 95]

How are you getting ‘rest of mind’? In Psalms 94:19, the psalmist says: “When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Your consolations delight my soul.” How many thoughts of this or that are there when we are in a difficult situation. At that time, the Lord comforted us not only to bring peace to our souls, but also to delight our souls. In order to enjoy peace and joy in our souls, we must learn the law of the Lord like the psalmist in difficult situation. Then we can control our hearts with the Lord's precepts even in suffering and enjoy the peace that God gives us. In the midst of that, we go further and experience the Lord's lovingkindness. Then our souls can enjoy rest. This is what Hebrews 4:9-10 says: “There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.” The “Sabbath-rest” that remains for us, we will enter into eternal rest the day the Lord comes again. There we will rest from our work, just as God rests from His work. Therefore, we must strive to enter that eternal rest (v. 11).

In Psalms 95:11, the psalmist David says, “Therefore I swore in My anger, Truly they shall not enter into My rest.” I would like to think about two things those who enter the rest of the Lord do based on this word, under the heading “Those who enter the rest of God”. Therefore, I hope and pray that we can enjoy God's rest even in the process of entering into God's eternal rest.

### **First, those who enter the rest of God praise God.**

Look at Psalms 95:1-2: “O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.” David is exalting all together (“come”) to go to God with thanksgiving and “shout joyfully” (2x). In other words, he is encouraging everyone to praise God together. Why is David encouraging everyone to come together and enjoy praise Him?

(1) The first reason is because God is “the rock of our salvation”.

Look at Psalms 95:1 - “O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation.” In other words, the reason why we should praise God with thanksgiving is because He is our Savior. When I think of God as the rock of salvation, I remember the gospel song “Ascribe Greatness to our God”: “Ascribe greatness to our God the Rock/ His work is perfect and all His ways are just/ Ascribe



greatness to our God the Rock/ His work is perfect and all His ways are just/ A God of faithfulness and, without injustice/ Good and upright is He/ A God of faithfulness and, without injustice.” We, who have received the grace of God's salvation, must praise God, who is the rock of salvation. And we who live in the wilderness while receiving His salvation should praise God with thanksgiving. Just as God gave the Israelites their daily bread and delivered them from hunger and quenched their thirst by pouring out water from the rock, He even quenches our spiritual thirst and rescues us. That's why we must praise God. This is what Dr. Park said: “The reason why no one thinks of the Savior or how to please Him is because he still doesn't know his situation is miserable’ (Park).

(2) The second reason is because God is “a great God” .

Look at Psalms 95:3 – “For the LORD is a great God And a great King above all gods.” I remember the gospel song “Great is the Lord”: “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised/ In the city of our God, In the mountain of His holiness/ Beautiful for situation the joy of the whole earth/ Is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, The city of the great King/ Sing Hallelujah! Sing Hallelujah! Sing Hallelujah!/ The city of the great King.” When a problem, pain and wound seem great, we should look to the great Lord so that we can praise God with gratitude through the grace that God has given us. We can praise the great God when we realize the greatness of God because we become small through pain and adversity.

(3) The third reason is because God is the great Creator God.

Look at Psalms 95:4-5: “In whose hand are the depths of the earth, The peaks of the mountains are His also. The sea is His, for it was He who made it, And His hands formed the dry land.” I remember the gospel song “Great and Mighty is the Lord our God”: “Great and mighty is the Lord our God/ Great and mighty is He (2x)/ Lift up your banner. Let the anthems ring/ Praises to our King.” ‘Because the great God created and has jurisdiction over the deep and high places of the earth, places that human hands cannot relate to, and even the heavens and the earth and the sea, David also praised God (Park).

We must all come together to praise God, the rock of salvation, the great God, and the great Creator God. We must praise with thanksgiving, and sing joyfully to the Lord. When we enter the true eternal rest of God, we will forever give thanks to God joyfully.

**Second, those who enter the rest of God worship God.**

Look at Psalms 95:6 – “Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.” The reason we praise God is because of what He has done for us. We praise God because the great Creator God, the great God, and the rock of salvation have given us the grace of salvation. To worship God means to worship God as

He is. In other words, we are worshiping God not because of what God has done to us, but because “He is our God” (v. 7). “For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand” (v. 7). If we are truly worshiping God, we must hear His voice (v. 7b). We must never harden our hearts (v. 8). Also, we must not test God as the forefathers of the Israelites tested Him in the wilderness (v. 9). We must receive the word of God with the heart like good soil by breaking our unplowed ground. David urges us to “bow down” and “kneel” before the Lord (v. 6) and worship God, teaching us that we who worship God must hear and obey His voice. If we say that we worship God and don’t hear His voice and obey Him, then we are simply worshiping the Lord with our lips, and our hearts are far from Him (Isa. 29:13). Therefore, in the end, the ancestors of Israel made God angry for 40 years in the wilderness (Ps. 95:10). They are the people who don’t know the ways of God, and their hearts went astray (v. 10). And they refused to hear the voice of God and disobeyed His commandments. Therefore, in the end, they made God angry. As a result, they couldn’t enter the rest of God.

Those who enter the rest of God worship God. And those who truly worship God hear His voice and obey His commandments. The true worshipers never harden their hearts when they hear the word of God. Rather, they diligently break up the unplowed ground, soften their hearts, and are quick to hear His word. They know the way of God, so they cannot be deceived. Therefore, they don’t make God angry. Rather, they please God’s heart. And they are the ones who enjoy rest.

We are those who are moving toward an eternal haven. Therefore, we long for the eternal rest that God gives us, and even partly enjoy that eternal rest while we live in this world. All of us who enjoy this rest today must praise God and worship Him.

Enjoying the rest of God,

James Kim

(Praying for worshiping God all the days of my life)

# True worshipers

## [Psalms 96]

The first of our church's three goals is to build up a true worshiper. One of the purposes of our church is that all members of Victory Presbyterian Church that serve the Lord are raised as worship-witnesses. This statement of purpose is that even unbelievers falling on their faces and worshipping God, declaring that God is certainly among us when we praise God's presence in worship (1 Cor. 14:25). This statement of purpose is based on 1 Corinthians 14:25 – “the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.”

I would like to meditate on four things about how a true worshiper lives under the heading of “True worshipers,” centering on the words of Psalms 96. Therefore, I hope and pray that we will be more and more established as true worshipers.

### **First, the true worshipers glorify God.**

Look at Psalms 96:7 – “Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.” Psalms 90 tells us four things about how we can live a life worth living in the sight of God in this empty world. The four things are (1) fear of God, (2) satisfaction with God's lovingkindness, (3) living for God's glory, and (4) seeking God's favor. We must not pursue our own glory, but the glory of God. In other words, we should focus on what God does for us (His works), not what we do for the Lord. Then we can glorify God. In the first half of Psalms 96:8, the psalmist said, “Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name ....” How can we glorify God?

#### (1) We can glorify God by praising Him.

Look at Psalms 96:1, 2, 4 – “Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. ... For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods.” We must praise the great God with new songs. Also, we must praise God with joy and gladness (v. 11). Therefore, we must glorify God. Why should we glorify God by praising Him greatly? The reason is because of “His salvation” (v. 2). We must praise God with new songs every day for the saving grace God has given us.

#### (2) We can glorify God by telling His wonderful deeds.

Look at Psalms 96:3 – “Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.” I remember Pastor Charles Swindoll in his book “Grace Awakening,” saying, ‘The heresy among the heresies in the church focuses on what we have done for God rather than on what God has done for us.’ I think one of the reasons is because we seek our glory when we focus on our deeds for God. But if we focus on His deeds, we can pursue His glory. Therefore, today and tomorrow, we must resolve and strive to live by telling God's deeds. In particular, we must live by proclaiming the “His salvation” God has given us in Jesus Christ every day (v. 2). In doing so, we can give the glory worthy of God's name.

### **Second, the true worshipers do offering.**

Look at Psalms 96:8 – “Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name; Bring an offering and come into His courts.” We often hear the Korean phrase ‘I am going to church to see worship’. But we aren’t going to church “see” worship but to “offer” worship to our God. In other words, worship is to offer our body, mind, devotion, and offering to God. The true worshiper offers all of himself to God with his willing heart. However, the problem for the Jews was to worship the Lord with their lips, but their hearts were too far from Him. God looked at their hearts, but the Israelites offered heartless offerings to Him. Look at Isaiah 1:11-13: “‘What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?’ Says the LORD. ‘I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle; And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats. When you come to appear before Me, Who requires of you this trampling of My courts? Bring your worthless offerings no longer, Incense is an abomination to Me New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies-- I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly.’” The countless offerings offered without the worshipers’ heart are no benefit to God. God isn’t pleased with those offerings. Those offerings are in vain in the sight of God. God is telling us not to bring them. God is telling us that even if we come up to the Lord's temple to worship and to offer offerings to God, God cannot endure doing evil while leaving the Lord's temple and doing evils in the world. Therefore, while we worship God, we must offer offerings worthy of God's sight. In other words, we must present the offerings with dedication in our heart to God. The apostle Paul exhorts: “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship” (Rom. 12:1). We must offer our body, our mind, and our offering as we don’t be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind, so that we may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect (v. 2). Then we will be able to say that we are true worshipers.

### **Third, the true worshipers live holy.**

Look at Psalms 96:9a – “Worship the LORD in holy attire ....” As worshipers of the holy God, we must reveal His holiness in our lives. If we say that we worship God and our lives don’t reveal God's holiness in this world, then we aren’t glorifying God, nor are we fully offering ourselves to Him. We shouldn’t make a distinction

between worship and life. In other words, it shouldn't be distinguished from Sunday worship and weekday life. Worship isn't only offered one hour on a Sunday, but should be offered in our entire life after that Sunday worship. The life that must be given to God is holy life. When we live holy life as worshipers, we can reveal to this world the dignity of God, and His splendor and majesty (v. 6). In addition, when God's holiness is revealed in this dark world through our holy life, we can reveal that "all the gods of the people are idols" (v. 5).

#### **Fourth and last, the true worshipers fear God.**

Look at Psalms 96:9b – "... Tremble before Him, all the earth." The true worshipers have awe as they worship before God's holiness. We must fear God above all gods (v. 4). Our God is the great God (v. 4), the Creator God (v. 5), the God of dignity, of splendor and of majesty (v. 6). And He is the God who governs all worlds and all things in the universe (v. 10). Therefore, those who worship God who is the righteous, faithful and holy judge (v. 13) must tremble before Him. We must fear God. We must come to God and worship Him with awe. We should never despise God. This is what King Solomon said: "Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil" (Eccle. 5:1). We must enter the temple of God and come close to hear His word (v. 1). And we must not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God (v. 2). When we make a vow to God, we must not be late in paying it (v. 4).

I want to become a true worshiper whom God is looking for. I want to glorify God, offer my heart, devotion, and offerings to God, live a holy life, and live in fear of God. I hope and pray that the Lord will raise all of us up as the true worshipers.

May the Lord raise me as a true worshiper,

James Kim

(With the desire to become a man who glorifies God)

## **“The Lord reigns”**

### **[Psalms 97]**

I rethink Psalms 96:10 that I meditated on at the Wednesday prayer meeting last week: “Say among the nations, ‘The LORD reigns; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved; He will judge the peoples with equity.’” When God reigns, we can stand firm. If God rules our family and governs our church, we will not be shaken. Therefore, we must yearn and seek for God's reign, His rule. In Psalms 97:1, the psalmist said, “The Lord reigns....” I would like to receive three lessons on what we should do since the Lord reigns, under the heading “The Lord reigns” based on Psalms 97.

#### **First, we should rejoice and be glad since the Lord reigns.**

Look at Psalms 97:1 – “The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; Let the many islands be glad.” “The Lord reigns” means that the Lord will come to earth and rule over His people. In other words, this word was fulfilled through Jesus, the begotten Son sent by God in the New Testament era (Park). We who believe in Jesus, who died on the cross and resurrected, are the people of God who are living under His reign. And it is because of the Lord's judgment that we should rejoice and be glad under the Lord's reign. Look at verse 8: “Zion heard this and was glad, And the daughters of Judah have rejoiced Because of Your judgments, O LORD.” The Lord's judgment is righteous judgment and justice (v. 2). With that judgment, the Lord judges and punishes the wicked, revealing His righteousness and justice. As a result, all those will be shamed who serve graven images, who boast themselves of idols (v. 7). And all the peoples will see His glory since the heavens declare His righteousness (v. 6). Therefore, since God's reign is judgment for the wicked and salvation for us, the God's people, we have no choice but to rejoice and be glad in Him.

We must believe the Almighty Creator God who reigns and governs all things in the universe. With this faith we must look to this sinful world. In other words, God will judge this world with His righteous and just judgment. God will judge the wicked. But He loves and will save the people He chooses. Therefore, we, God's people, will be able to rejoice and be glad.

#### **Second, we should hate evil since the Lord reigns.**

Look at Psalms 97:10 – “Hate evil, you who love the LORD, Who preserves the souls of His godly ones; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.” As God's people under the Lord's reign, we must hate evil. This is

the life of the people who worship God with true joy (v. 7). If we say we are reigned by God and love evil, then we can never say that we are living our life under God's reign. What wickedness should we especially hate? We shouldn't boast ourselves of serving the graven images and idols (v. 7). We should especially hate this sin. The believers who are reigned by God love good and hate evil by judging by the righteous and fair judgment of the Lord. It can be said that such worshipers' life reveals God's righteousness and justice. In order to do that, we must be upright (v. 11). Because we are upright, we must distinguish between good and evil to love good and hate evil. Then we can shine the light of the Lord (v. 11). There are two promises from God to those who love God who hate evil and live under God's reign: Preservation and Deliverance. Look at verse 10: "Hate evil, you who love the LORD, Who preserves the souls of His godly ones; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked." The faithful people who are reigned by the Lord are ruled by His Word in the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Ruled by the Word of God, they can judge by the Lord's righteousness (96:13). In such judgment, they distinguish good from evil, love good, and hate evil. That's why they are upright and truthful. Therefore, as true worshipers to God, they live a life of light in this dark world.

### **Third and last, we should give thanks since the Lord reigns.**

Look at Psalms 97:12 – "Be glad in the LORD, you righteous ones, And give thanks to His holy name." The psalmist rejoiced and be glad in the reign of God. He gave thanks to God because he was resembling God's holiness in the judgment of the Lord and hating evil. Therefore, we should give thanks to God too. It is inevitable that we are grateful and thankful that God sent His begotten Son to this earth and gave us the grace of salvation through His death and resurrection on the cross. Not only that He made us take part in His holiness, and we cannot help but give thanks to Him. When we look at the psalms, this word often appears: "Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting" (107:1). God is good. God's lovingkindness is everlasting. We who are tasting His goodness and experiencing His everlasting lovingkindness should give thanks to God who reigns.

Since the Lord reigns, we should rejoice and be glad. Also, since the Lord reigns, we must hate evil. Since the Lord reigns, we should give thanks to God.

In the reign of the Lord,

James Kim

(In the process of being established as a person who hates evil and enjoys good)

## **“O sing to the Lord a new song”**

### **[Psalms 98]**

Have you ever praised God in difficult and hard times? Have you ever experienced God's peace in your heart because of praise? Yesterday, I went to a coffee shop for dessert after dinner with four people. I asked one of the people what he did when he was hurt. He said he sang and then he sang the hymn “I’m Pressing on the Upward Way” verse 1. I was surprised that he sang that hymn at the coffee shop in front of us. Haha. If we look at the second half of Psalms 68:35 among the words I read at this morning's prayer meeting, the psalmist David says: “... the God of Israel gives power and strength to his people. Praise be to God!” God, who gives us strength and power, makes us to praise Him when we are in difficulties. By doing so, we experience God’s grace that gives us strength and power.

I would like to receive some lessons from Psalms 98:1-9 as we meditate on why we should sing a new song to God, and who and how should we praise Him, under the heading “O sing to the Lord a new song”.

#### **First, why should we praise the Lord with a new song?**

The reason is because the Lord had done wonderful things. Look at Psalms 98:1 – “O sing to the LORD a new song, For He has done wonderful things, His right hand and His holy arm have gained the victory for Him.” Here, the “wonderful things” ultimately refers to “salvation”. In other words, the reason we should sing and praise the Lord is because of the salvation God has given us. Since God has fulfilled the promised salvation for us, the chosen people, we must praise God (Park). God saved us with His right hand and His holy arm (v. 1). In other words, God saved us with the right hand of His power and with the divine mean (Park). Why did God send His only Son, Jesus Christ, to this earth to die on the cross for such sinners like us? Is it for us? In verse 1, the Bible says that God has given us salvation “for Him”. In other words, it means that God saved us to reveal His own glory (Park). So the psalmist says, “The LORD has made known His salvation; He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations” (v. 2). Because God saved the Israelites, “All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God” (v. 3). The reason why God gave this work of salvation to the Israelites is said: “He has remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God” (v. 3). The reason God gave the Israelites salvation is because of God's lovingkindness and faithfulness to them. God, who remembered that lovingkindness and faithfulness, gave the Israelites salvation. That is why the psalmist is exhorting us to praise God with a new song.



## **Second, who should sing to the Lord a new song?**

It is “all the earth”. Look at Psalms 98:4 – “Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth; Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises.” The Israelites who were saved in God's great love and faithfulness must praise God. Not only the Israelites, but we also ought to praise God with a new song. We must praise God for the saving grace that God has given us. God, who chose the Israelites in the Old Testament in love and promised salvation, faithfully fulfilled that promise and accomplished the work of salvation. In the New Testament era, the work of salvation was realized to all nations until the ends of the earth (v. 3) (Park). Therefore, all nations who enjoy the grace of salvation in God's lovingkindness and faithfulness must sing to God with a new song.

The psalmist says that in addition to all nations, even all creations should praise God with a new song: “Let the sea roar and all it contains, The world and those who dwell in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, Let the mountains sing together for joy” (vv. 7-8). This means that “the sea roar and all it contains”, “The world and those who dwell in it”, “the rivers” and “the mountains” should praise God together. Since the result of Jesus Christ's redemption work will be renewed not only for the people chosen by God, but also for all creation, all creation must praise God with a new song. Look at Romans 8:21 – “that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” The creation, like us, the children of God, are waiting and hoping to be released from slavery to corruption. Therefore, the creation must also joyfully praise God in anticipation and hope.

## **Third and last, how should we praise the Lord with a new song?**

### (1) We should praise the Lord joyfully.

Look at Psalms 98:4, 6, 8 – “Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth; Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises. ... With trumpets and the sound of the horn Shout joyfully before the King, the LORD. ... Let the rivers clap their hands, Let the mountains sing together for joy.” When we sing a new song to the Lord God with all creation, we should sing joyfully. This is because of the redemption God gave us in Jesus Christ. In particular, since we have the joy of salvation, we must joyfully praise God in the joy of salvation.

### (2) We should praise the Lord with musical instruments.

Look at Psalms 98:5-6: “Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, With the lyre and the sound of melody. With trumpets and the sound of the horn Shout joyfully before the King, the LORD.” Like the psalmist's admonition to praise God with the lyre, trumpets, the sound of the horn, we should joyfully use all musical instruments to praise God's saving grace whenever we think about it.

Earlier this year, I participated in the funeral of Mrs. Jang Eul-soo and the Pastor Andrew Kim, and praised God the hymn that they loved, “How Great Thou Art”. They are the ones who praised the greatness of the Lord as much as possible until their death. I remember seeing them crying in tears because they were grateful for the race of salvation that God gave them. I also remember Mrs. Jang memorizing Psalms 23, starting from “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want” (v. 1) and ending with “Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever” (v. 6). Their last appearance on earth was truly a beautiful image of praising the greatness of the Lord. Like them, I also want to stand before the Lord while living a life of praising the greatness of the Lord.

After praising “How Great Thou Art”,

James Kim

(Giving thanks to God for His grace of salvation)

## The church under God's reign

### [Psalms 99]

At a Morning Prayer meeting, I meditated on Psalms 126:5-6: “Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.” When the Israelites were captivated in Babylonia, they shed tears and struggled to keep their faith. At that time, God gave them the grace of salvation and brought them back to Jerusalem. God gave the Israelites the gift of the joy of salvation. Hence, the Israelites who returned to Jerusalem confessed, “We were like those who dream” (v. 1). The reason was because the Israelites experienced God's work of salvation that could not have been expected or imagined. As I meditated on these words, I reconsidered the importance of hope. We, the Christians, should dream as we look to our Lord who is our hope even when we are in difficulties and want to give up, even when we are discouraged and despaired. We must dream in the Lord, meditating on the fact that if we give up ourselves, our homes, our jobs and our business, our churches, our society, and so on, God will never give up on us. So we pray, expect, and wait.

I received this Psalms 126, especially when I personally think of our church. In other words, I am thinking of our church, praying, expecting and waiting. I want to dream in the Lord whatever difficulties and despair our church may go through. I want to continue to dream of raising the 300 soldiers of Christ and send them out into this world to expand the kingdom of God. This reminds me the hymn “There’s Dream That I Dream”: “There's a dream that I dream, of my Savior divine, And I know that my dream will come true; At the morn, in the night, comes the vision of light, With a promise eternally new. O this wonderful dream is a secret of grace, And I would that this secret you knew; For I dream that last I shall look on His face And I know that my dream will come true.”

As I meditated on Psalms 99:1-9, I thought about what church our church should be. And my prayer for our church is ‘May God reign over our church.’ I would like to be instructed in three ways about what kind of church is under God's reign under the title “The church under God's reign.”

### **First, there is trembling, praise, and worship in the church under God's reign.**

Look at Psalms 98:1, 3, 5, 9: “The LORD reigns, let the peoples tremble; He is enthroned above the cherubim, let the earth shake! ... Let them praise Your great and awesome name; Holy is He. ... Exalt the LORD our God And worship at His footstool; Holy is He. ... Exalt the LORD our God And worship at His holy hill, For

holy is the LORD our God.” The psalmist says that God will reign, and all people will tremble, and the earth will shake. This is because of the great and awesome name of the Lord. That is, because God is holy (3x), we must praise and worship Him with fear and trembling. This is the church that exalts God. The three main goals of our church are (1) the church that worships the Lord, (2) the church that imitates the Lord, and (3) the church that exalts the Lord. Here, in order for us to exalt the Lord, we must praise and worship God with fear and trembling before the Holy God. We, the creatures, must praise and worship God because we fear the holy and high God, the Creator. This is what we, the creatures, should do.

But this time in which we live, people are exchanging the truth of God for a lie and are worshiping and serving created things rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25). There is no fear of God at all. There is no fear of a holy God. Therefore, we are guilty of worshiping created things by exchanging the God's truth for a lie. This sinful world, which rejects God's reign, commits great sin against the holy God without fear and trembling. The same is true of religious groups that reject God's reign. People are committing great sins against God by deifying their religious leaders as gods and are worshiping them. Although creation must worship and exalt the Creator God, the sin of exalting and worshiping ourselves should not be done in the church. In other words, since the church is reign by God, we must exalt and worship God only with fear and trembling.

### **Second, the strength of the church under God's reign is to love justice.**

Look at Psalm 99:4 – “The strength of the King loves justice; You have established equity; You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.” The psalmist said, “The strength of the King loves justice.” This word teaches us the precious idea that justice is strength (Park). If this principle is applied to the church, the strength of the church under God's reign is to love justice. The reason why the church of this age is reflected in the world without strength and incapacity is because we don't love justice, don't establish justice, and don't do justice. If we live in this distorted world and don't do the righteousness and justice, then we have already lost our strength as Christians. Therefore, we can never affect the good influence of this world. This loss of influence is because we don't love God's justice and aren't doing it.

Our Lord has something to ask our church. Look at Micah 6:8 – “He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?” God who reigns over us told us to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God. Especially based on Psalms 99:4, we must love God's justice and do it. Therefore, I pray that in our church and through our church the Lord will establish fairness.

### **Third, the church under God's reign prays.**

Look at Bible Psalm 99:6 – “Moses and Aaron were among His priests, And Samuel was among those who called on His name; They called upon the LORD and He answered them.” Here the psalmist introduces three exemplary figures representing the Old Testament Church, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, describing God's work through them (Park). And the principle is nothing but prayer. Moses, Aaron, and Samuel were the people who prayed for the church. They were men of prayer. And they were people who were answered by God in prayer (Exod. 17:11; Num. 16:43; 1 Sam 7:8, 9; 9:12) (Park). One interesting point is that in Psalms 99:7-8, the psalmist speaks of two things about the proper qualification to receive answer of prayer:

(1) In order to receive answer to prayer, we must obey the Word of God.

Look at Psalms 99:7 – “He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud; They kept His testimonies And the statute that He gave them.” The saints under God’s reign hear the word of God. And they obey that word. That’s why they can use fair judgment and do justice. The psalmist teaches us that God will answer these saints’ prayers.

(2) We must receive forgiveness of sins in order to receive answer of our prayer.

Look at Psalms 99:8 – “O LORD our God, You answered them; You were a forgiving God to them, And yet an avenger of their evil deeds.” Our God is just God. That is why our God disciplines our sins. And our God is God of love. So when we repent of our sins, our God forgives us.

Our church must be a church under God's reign. Therefore, we must devote ourselves to prayer. God's work in the church is accomplished through those who devote themselves to prayer. The Lord builds up His body, the Church, through people of prayer like Moses, Aaron, and Samuel. And those who pray are forgiven of their sins and keep the word of God. May the Lord raise us to be these prayers and build His church through us. There is trembling, praise, and worship in the church under God's reign. And the strength of the church under God's reign is to love justice. And the church under God's reign prays. I dream that our church will become like the church under God’s reign.

Praying God to reign over Victory Presbyterian Church,

James Kim (Dreaming a church where there is worship, love and prayer)

# How will we come before God?

## [Psalms 100]

During last Sunday's English Ministry service, I encouraged my church members to live for one week by comforting anybody whom the Lord allowed them to meet, based on the words of Acts 15:22-35. Then yesterday, after the Morning Prayer meeting on Tuesday, I had breakfast with the church leader couple. We had coffee together, and I was comforted by them rather than comforting them. Particularly, when the leaders' wife shared God's abundant grace in her life of faith before God, "Coram Deo", we rejoiced and thanked God together. What is our Christian life before God? Coram Deo's life is life before God. This is a God-centered idea that eventually leads us to live without shame in front of God (Internet). When we live without shame in front of God like this, our hearts are free when we come to God and give praise and worship Him.

As we meditate on Psalms 100 and answer "How will we come before God?" in three ways, I want to receive few lessons and apply in our lives.

### **First, we should come before God with thanksgiving.**

Look at Psalms 100:4 – "Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise Give thanks to Him, bless His name." When we come to the temple of the Lord to worship Him, we must come in with thanksgiving. Why should we come into the temple with thanksgiving to praise and worship God? The reason is because the psalmist says: "For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations" (v. 5). The reason why we come up to the Lord's temple and give thanks to God and worship Him is because God is good and His lovingkindness and faithfulness toward us is eternal. That is, because God saves His people through the virtue of His lovingkindness and faithfulness. This is what Dr. Park said, 'God doesn't love the saint only for a while, and He doesn't change in the middle. There are many twists and turns in the life of a believer. The course may be difficult and perhaps plain. But it is all joined together to benefit him, and all are the Lord's loving counsel. His sincere care for us extends from generation to generation' (Park). We must come up to the Lord's temple and worship Him because we are grateful as we think of the saving grace that has been granted to us in Jesus Christ.

How is it? Do you come up to the Lord's temple on Sunday to worship God with thanksgiving in your heart? For some reason, it seems that there are many times when Satan seduces us who come up to church to worship on Sunday so that we cannot step on the Lord's temple and return home. Often, due to marital quarrels, it seems that there are cases where people cannot step on the Lord's temple and go back home. It's not easy to come

up to His temple with thanksgiving in our hearts. There will be times when we come up with complicated mind because of these and other things. And there will be times when we enter the Lord's temple with heavy heart out of anxiety, stress, and worry. However, in Psalms 100, when the psalmist comes up to the Lord's temple to worship God, he urges us to come up to worship Him with thanksgiving. Let us all come up to the Lord's temple and worship God because we are grateful for the saving grace of God that God has given us in Jesus Christ.

### **Second, we should come before God as we get to know Him.**

Look at Psalms 100:3 – “Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.” In this age of a famine for hearing the words of the Lord (Am. 8:11), we see a very sad reality in which we cannot hear the voice of the Lord even though we have ears. In particular, as we the pastors gave up our knowledge of God and forgotten God's law (Word) like Israeli priests in the time of Hosea, the flock is suffering from spiritual malnutrition and Satan's temptations like the lost sheep. At this time, we must press on to know the Lord (Hos 6:3). We must grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Therefore, when Jesus asked His disciples “But who do you say that I am?”, we should confess like the apostle Peter did – “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt. 16:15-16). In Psalms 100:3, the psalmist exhorts, “Know that the LORD Himself is God.” He encourages us to know that God is the Creator God who made us and He is the Shepherd who raises us. Therefore, he is saying that we must go up to the Lord's temple to praise and worship God because we ought to know and acknowledge the Lord as our God, and we are His people and the sheep of His pasture (v. 3).

### **Third and last, we should come before God with joy.**

Look at Psalms 100:1-2: “Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing.” When we come up to the Lord's temple and give praise and worship to God, we should acknowledge and appreciate God's God. And we must not only praise and worship God with thanksgiving, but also praise and worship Him with joy. Why should we praise and worship God with joy? We can think of three things: (1) Because God has saved us, we must praise and worship God with the joy of salvation within us. (2) Because our God cannot overcome joy because of us (Zep 3:17), we must also offer praise and worship to God with God's joy. (3) The reason why we must also praise and worship God with joy is that our God is our joy.

This morning, I met deceased Pastor Andrew Kim in my dream. I can see the pastor saying, ‘I am not always with you.’ Then, I saw tree branches disappear one by one due to the water being sprayed. Then, while relatives and family members gathered around my father and tried to sing four songs, I woke up from a dream while singing the hymn “Just a Few More Days”. So, at this early Morning Prayer meeting, I praised this hymn to God and thought of the pastor and the saints who went to heaven first. “Just a few more days to be filled with praise, And to tell the old, old story; Then, when twilight falls, and my Savior calls I shall go to Him in glory” (v. 1).

“What a joy 'twill be when I wake to see/ Him for whom my heart is burning!/ Nevermore to sigh, nevermore to die/  
For that day my heart is yearning/ I'll exchange my cross for a starry crown/ Where the gates swing outward never/  
At his feet I'll lay ev-'ry burden down/ And with Jesus reign forever” (v. 4 and chorus).

“Then, when twilight falls, and my Savior calls I shall go to Him in glory” ...

James Kim

(Praising and worshiping the Lord of glory with thanks and joy)



## The ideal king and his ideal people

### [Psalms 101]

In this week's TV news, Pastor James Dobson, one of the pastors representing evangelicalism in the United States, came out so I looked at it with a little concern. He came out on the news and made some remarks about Senator Obama, a Democratic candidate among the United State presidential candidates. And I heard him pointing out that Obama had “confused theology.” That doesn't mean Pastor Dobson is going to elect another Republican presidential candidate, John McCain. Pastor Dobson is unlikely to vote for both. I think that's because the pastor's view of two presidential candidates from the biblical point of view is less suitable to be the next president of the United State.

Four years have already passed. After hearing the news of the impeachment of President Roh Moo-hyun in South Korea after the morning prayer meeting on March 13, 2004, I meditated on the word of 1 Samuel 15:23, “... Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king.” Focusing on this word, I saw a little bit of the biblical perspective on the impeachment of the President in South Korea. I remember being comforted by the fact that even though there was King Saul who was abandoned in the midst of suffering and crisis, at the same time there was also King David who was a man after God's heart. How shocked would it have been to all the people when the king of a nation was abandoned? However, God was preparing another king. When I asked the question why King David was the man after God's heart, the famous word of 1 Samuel 15:22 came to mind: “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.” The king who is after God's heart is the one who hears and obeys God's Word. At that time, I ended my meditation with the words, ‘I earnestly pray that God will raise up a president who is after God's heart in Korea.’ Then, four years later, we saw a huge candlelight demonstration in Korea under the slogan of renegotiation of beef, shortly after the church elder became president. I also read the criticism of President Lee as I was exposed to this incident on the Internet. Then later, I met a Christian, and from his point of view, he thought that President Lee was proud. As we hear these and that, each of us will have our own thoughts on not only the president of South Korea, but also the current president of the United States where we live, and the candidates running for the presidential election in November. After putting those thoughts down for a while, I want to learn what the Bible says about the ideal king is and at the same time about the ideal people are, based on Psalms 101:1-8.

The first thing to think about is ‘What kind of king is the ideal king?’ The ideal king has a perfect heart. Therefore, he is be careful to lead a blameless life. Look at Psalms 101:2 – “I will be careful to lead a blameless

life-- when will you come to me? I will walk in my house with blameless heart.” What is the ideal king's perfect heart, blameless heart (NIV), or integrity of his heart (NASB)?

### **First, the ideal king's heart is a heart that yearns for God's love and justice.**

Look at Psalms 101:1 – “I will sing of your love and justice; to you, O LORD, I will sing praise.” In the rule of a nation and his people as a king, love and justice are essential. These two are absolutely necessary in governing the people as king of a country, like the front and back of a coin. What if there is no love or justice? Love without justice fall into weakness, and justice without love falls into tyranny (Park). King David, the psalmist, ruled over the Israelites with God's love and justice.

### **Second, the ideal king's heart is humble heart.**

Look at Psalms 101:3 – “I will set before my eyes no vile thing. The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me.” Here, the word “vile thing” means “the evil of apostasy. Those who hold the authority tend to become proud, so they may fall away from the truth (Park). However, David hated the evil of apostasy because his heart was not proud but humbled before God. He kept away from apostasy itself. He loved what to love and hated what to hate. That is, he loved the Son of Man and righteousness, and hated the evil of apostasy.

### **Third, the ideal king's heart is far from perverse heart.**

Look at Psalms 101:4 – “Men of perverse heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with evil.” Here, the “perverse heart” refers to a cunning heart, a life that is different inside and outside (Park). In other words, the perverse heart refers to hypocrisy. David kept away from this hypocrisy, the perverse heart. A king who practices in this way can discern and defeat the treacherous subject (Park). The ideal king doesn't have cunning heart. He never lives different life inside and outside. King David was the ideal king who disrespected hypocrisy.

As I thought about the ideal king, like the psalmist David, based on Psalms 101, I thought of the ideal president. The ideal president loves the people of his country. If he doesn't love his people but only does justice, then he will eventually become a domineering president. So the ideal president not only loves his people, but also does justice to them. Love without justice is bound to flow into weakness. Such love is a false love that is out of balance. Therefore, the ideal president harmonizes the balance of love and justice and rules the people whom God has entrusted to him. The ideal president humbly serves the people. He never yields power just because he has power. By no means the ideal president does evil in the midst of pride. The ideal president stays away from hypocrisy. And he doesn't get close to sneaky people. He never puts near-by politicians who act hypocritically.

The next thing to think about is ‘What kind of people are the ideal people of the ideal king’? In a word, the

ideal people also walk on the perfect path. Look at Psalms 101:6b – “... he whose walk is blameless will minister to me.” Here we can think of ‘walking blamelessly in five ways:

### **First, the ideal people love their neighbors.**

Look at Psalms 101:5a – “Whoever slanders his neighbor in secret, him will I put to silence ....” Here, the term “Whoever slanders his neighbor” means ‘a person who harms others with secret propaganda’ (Park). If there are many of these people in the government, they are wicked people who harm the faithful ones. The psalmist King David says that these people will destroy the ideal king. In this passage, we can say that the ideal people are not those who harm others, but those who love others.

### **Second, the ideal people are the humble.**

Look at Psalms 101:5b – “... whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure.” The ideal king never tolerates the proud. If the arrogant people participate in the country's affairs, they will abuse the people with the psychology of haughtiness, will try to sit only at the high ranks, and will inevitably seek rebellion (Park). Therefore, the ideal king should have the ideal people, the humble ones.

### **Third, the ideal people are faithful.**

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.” The ideal king looks over the people and makes those who are faithful to the land his servants. The reason is because the ideal king needs faithful workers, not cunning people. The loyal and faithful workers should serve the ideal king. “those who have been given a trust must prove faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2). When these faithful and loyal workers are near the ideal president, the country will be able to enjoy peace.

### **Fourth, the ideal people are truthful.**

Look at Psalms 101:7 – “No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence.” Anyone who lies before a just king cannot stand. Only the truthful one can stand before the king. Those who lie with their sly lips are by no means an ideal people. We must keep our hearts from becoming obscene. We must be honest. And you must tell the truth with an honest heart.

### **Fifth, the ideal people do not commit sin.**

Look at Psalms 101:8 – “Every morning I will put to silence all the wicked in the land; I will cut off every evildoer from the city of the LORD.” The ideal king doesn't just look on those who do evil but punish them. This

ideal king should have an ideal people, the people who don't commit sin.

An ideal president should have an ideal people. The ideal people walk on the perfect path. People who walk on the perfect path love their neighbors, are humble, faithful and truthful. And the ideal people who walk in the perfect way don't commit sin.

Another news I heard this week was that ahead of the presidential election in a country called Jimbaway, those who support the current president cut and hit the hands of those who support the other presidential candidates, and rape and kill women. I wonder if there is an ideal president in this world who pays attention to the perfect way with the perfect heart? This unfortunate reality of this world is also evident in the history of Israel in the Old Testament. When I see the kings of Israel, starting with King Saul, I see everyone committing sins against God. Even David sinned. There was no perfect king. The reason is because all imperfect kings refer to Jesus, the King of kings. Our Jesus is the King of kings. He is the King who rules the kingdom of God with lovingkindness and justice. He is the humble King. He has no perverse heart at all. What should the citizens of our heavenly people who belong to the kingdom of God ruled by that King Jesus do? The words of Psalms 101 teach us that we must love our neighbor, be humble, faithful, and truthful and not commit sin. I hope and pray that we, the heavenly people, who have the perfect Jesus, the ideal King, will be raised more and more as those who walk on the perfect (blameless) path with a perfect (blameless) heart like Jesus.

Serving Jesus, the King of kings,

James Kim

(With desire to live like the heavenly citizens)

## **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 and last, 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)

Wanting to be established as a Christian walking on a perfect path with a perfect heart,

James Kim

(Thanking the Lord who called such sinner like me, with so many blemishes that I can't even count)

# The prayer of destitute

## [Psalms 102]

During the Bible study last Sunday about “Spiritual War”, one of the church members shared the word of Matthew 5:3 as he was studying the subject ‘When we face inner temptations’: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” As he shared this word, he said that we must empty our hearts. When I thought about the temptation inside, the reason why I couldn’t resist the temptation is because I didn’t empty my heart. For example, I had lunch with Pastor Gomez, the pastor of Hispanic Ministry today, and we had some conversations about the inner temptation of a leader in the mission field. The inner temptation is pride and greed. What is the problem? It's because we didn’t empty our hearts. How is your heart? Let's take a look inside us. What is it filled with? Is it filled with the love of the Lord or with hatred and envy? Is it filled with humility or pride? Is it being filled with the Word of God? When I thought about the words of Psalms 102, I personally came to think of the necessity of spiritual need. In other words, I thought about the need that I should be hungry for listening to the Word of God. I want to listen, learn, and meditate on His Word with a poor spirit. And I want to cry out to God with the poor spirit. Therefore, I want to fill my heart with the Word of God.

This is what the psalmist says in Psalms 102:17 – “He has regarded the prayer of the destitute And has not despised their prayer.” I would like to think about two things under the heading “Prayer of the destitute” based on Psalms 102.

### **First, what is “the destitute”?**

The destitute refers to ‘a saint who suffers’ (Park). When we look at Psalms 41:1, the word “the helpless” comes out. Here, the helpless refer to “the poor (Exod. 30:15), the ill (Gen. 41:19), and the weak (2 Sam. 13:4) (Park). Putting all these meanings together, “the helpless” refers to ‘all those who suffer under God's discipline’ (Calvin). Those who suffer under God's discipline are the helpless (those who cannot do anything by themselves, those who are helpless). This Hebrew word is translated “poor” or “weak” in other Bible passages. This refers to a person who is lowered out of economic poverty, that is, a person who is in a lower position and is prone to oppression. In 1 Thessalonians 5:14, the Bible describes how this helpless is described as “the timid” and “the weak”. This “helpless” is similar to “the destitute” in Psalms 102:17. In other words, the helpless and the destitute refer to those who suffer under God's discipline. This destitute man, the psalmist, prayed earnestly to God in Psalms 102.



What kind of suffering did this destitute was going through that he earnestly prayed to God? It is difficult to know who wrote this psalm, but it is certain that the author wrote this psalm from the Babylonian captivity, longing for the restoration of Jerusalem (Park). In other words, the suffering of the destitute refers to the suffering of Babylonian captivity. Because of that suffering, the destitute was weakened in body (v. 3), and his heart was smitten like grass (v. 4). Also, the destitute was in a very lonely situation (vv. 6-9). The “pelican” and “owl” in verse 6 symbolize loneliness. In other words, the believers are often in solitude (v. 7) (Park). Through such a gap of loneliness and anxiety, the psalmist, who was the destitute, his enemy struck him. To make matters worse, this was his hardship (Park). The most painful thing for the psalmist who was in such a hardship was written in verse 10: “Because of Your indignation and Your wrath, For You have lifted me up and cast me away.” The psalmist knew that because of God's wrath, the Israelites were being held captive in Babylon and were suffering. The cause was, of course, the sins of the Israelites.

Aren't we the destitute? Aren't we suffering under God's discipline for our sins? Haven't our body and mind weakened because of the suffering? Aren't we in a lonely position? In the meantime, aren't we suffering more and more from the people who afflict us who make the matter worse? If we are suffering this pain, this is a great opportunity for us to pray. Like the destitute in Psalms 102, we must seek God earnestly. We must pray earnestly to God.

## **Second, how was the prayer of the destitute?**

We can think in two ways:

(1) The first thing I want to think about is ‘the prayer attitude of the destitute’.

In one word, the prayer attitude of the destitute can be said to be the assurance of salvation. In other words, the psalmist prayed and hoped to God because he was convinced that God would deliver the Israelites from captivity in Babylon. This is a belief from God.

**(a) The cause of this belief is based on God's eternal existence.**

Look at Psalms 102:12 – “But You, O LORD, abide forever, And Your name to all generations.” When we come to know that God lives forever, we come to the conviction that everything will be solved (Park). The psalmist had the confidence that the living and eternal God would fulfill the word of His promise according to the revealed word of truth. With that confidence, he prayed earnestly to God.

**(b) The reason for this belief is because the Lord will arise and have compassion on Zion (v. 13).**

In other words, the assurance of salvation for the destitute is based on God's compassion. Look at verse 13:

“You will arise and have compassion on Zion; For it is time to be gracious to her, For the appointed time has come.” Knowing that God would have compassion on Israel (“Zion”), the psalmist was convinced that God would save the Israelites at His appointed time. The reason why the psalmist knew that God would be compassion to the Israelites was because he saw that Israel repented and admired the formerly precious “Zion,” the church, and found pleasure in the stones and dust there (v. 14) (Park).

We must also have this assurance of salvation. As we pray to God, we must believe and ask God that God is eternal and that He will deliver us no matter what afflictions we may face because He is compassionate to His Church. In particular, in verse 16, we can pray to God with faith because our Lord built “Zion,” that is, His church, and will appear in His glory. God looks down on His people (v. 19) and frees us by ‘hearing the groaning of the prisoner’ (v. 20). What is its purpose? The purpose is to make His people proclaim the glory of God and serve Him (v. 21).

(2) The second thing I want to think about is ‘the contents of the prayers of the destitute’.

**(a) The first prayer of the destitute was to prolong his life.**

Look at Psalms 102:23-24: “He has weakened my strength in the way; He has shortened my days. I say, ‘O my God, do not take me away in the midst of my days, Your years are throughout all generations.’” Since the psalmist was going through the miserable suffering in which he was in the midst of weakness in body, mind, and in many ways, he asked God to restore his weak mind and body to health and save him from early death (vv. 3-11, Park).

**(b) The second prayer of the destitute was to ask that the Lord's descendants would always exist and stand firm before the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 102:28 – “The children of Your servants will continue, And their descendants will be established before You.” While praying to God, the destitute psalmist not only prayed for God's help to heal his weak mind and body and save him from early death, but also prayed for God's people to be eternal. He was able to pray that way because he believed in God's eternity. The psalmist prayed to God with faith, convinced that because of the eternal God, the church, the body of the Lord whom He loved, would survive forever.

As I meditated on the prayer of this destitute psalmist, I came to think of Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. What was the prayer of Jesus, who was very distressed and troubled (Mk. 14:33), whose soul was deeply grieved to the point of death (v. 34) and who knew that His disciples would abandon him (v. 27)? His prayer was “Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will” (v. 36). In the end, He died on the cross for our salvation as the Father's will. And as He was dying, He cried in a

loud voice, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (15:34) Because Jesus was forsaken by His Heavenly Father, eternal life was given to us through His death. The Lord's church became eternal through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Therefore, as the heavenly people who are moving toward the eternal heaven, we must offer the prayers of the destitute like Jesus to Heavenly Father on this wilderness journey. No matter what kind of suffering and affliction we may be in, we must pray earnestly with the assurance of salvation to the eternal God who is rich in mercy. God will make us to live with the Lord in Heaven forever.

Wanting to become the destitute man of prayer,

James Kim

(After singing the hymn “I Can Hear My Savior Calling” during the Wednesday night prayer meeting)

## **Let's not forget all the benefits of God.**

### **[Psalms 103]**

I meditated on Isaiah 30:18 at the prayer meeting this morning: “Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him.” God, who waits to show us grace and mercy and who hears and answers our prayers when we cry out to Him, gives us abundant grace. As those who have received His abundant grace, our responsibility is not to forget the grace given to us. In Psalms 103:2, the psalmist David says, “Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits.” I hope and pray that we will live in the grace of God by meditating on and remembering the five benefits of God under the heading “Let's not forget all the benefits of God” based on Psalms 103.

#### **The first benefit of God is to forgive all our sins.**

Look at Psalms 103:3a – “Who pardons all your iniquities ....” At least, if we are a conscientious Christian, no one will not worry about the problem of sin. The reason is because of God's holy presence, His holy Word, our sins are exposed and our conscience is pierced. However, the problem is that some people struggle with guilt while struggling with the problem of sin. Eventually, these people are endlessly disappointed with themselves, suffering from guilt. Therefore, they have low self-esteem. They value their own existence low. This phenomenon is due to unbalanced self-reflection and self-examination. The reason is because even though it is precious grace to realize sin through God's Word, we don't realize God's love and grace because we don't look at Jesus in faith who forgives all our sins.

This is what the psalmist David says in Psalms 103:10, 12 – “He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. ... Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.” God doesn't repay for our sins (evil). God is angry when we sin (vv. 8, 9), but He isn't a God who is hastily angry and punishes us (verse 8). What is the reason? The reason why God's punishment doesn't come quickly when we sin is because God wants us to repent (Rom. 2:4). In other words, the reason why God doesn't immediately punish us when we commit sin is to give us time (opportunity) to repent. God is a God who is angry when we sin, but doesn't hold it long (Ps.103:9). The reason is because God's lovingkindness toward us is great (v. 11) and abundant (v. 8). Therefore, our loving God doesn't repay us for our sins. Our God is the God who has removed our sins far away from us as far as the east is from the west. Our life of faith, which we don't really understand, is that we hold our sins too close, even though God has removed our sins far away from us

as far as the east is from the west. Although God is pleased to forgive our sins, so he thoroughly forgives our sins, we don't often forgive our sins. We must accept by faith that God has removed our sins as far away as the east is from the west. God has thoroughly forgiven our sins. The more we live our faith in that grace, the deeper we must realize it.

Psalms 86:5 says "For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive ...." Pastor Sung-Geon Hong said in his book, 'A Person Who Participates in God's Character': 'But when we repent, God's mercy will come. No matter how severe situation we are in, even in the vicious circle of sin, God is so happy to forgive' (Hong). Why is God happy to forgive our sins? Why does God act kindly to us? The reason is because God knows our constitution (103:14). That is, because He remembers that we are but dust (v. 14). Look at Psalms 103:15-16: "As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, And its place acknowledges it no longer." A life like a grass, a life like a flower in the field, a life that disappears when the wind passes, a life that is truly weak, and God has compassion for us because He knows this constitution (v. 13). That is why God loves to forgive our sins. We must not forget this God's benefit. We must not forget the benefit of God who loves to forgive all our sins.

### **The second benefit of God is to heal all our diseases.**

Look at Psalms 103:3 – "... Who heals all your diseases." I see a lot of people around me who are suffering from illness these days. Like the phrase 'Birth, old age, sickness and death', people are born and grow old, and then they have no choice but to die from sickness. Therefore, getting sick is, in a way, extremely natural. Knowing that fact, when we get sick, we ask God to heal our sickness. Who would want to suffer from a disease? That is why we are looking for God.

When we look at Exodus 15:26, the Bible says "... for I, the Lord, am your healer." And Psalms 147:3 says, "He heals the brokenhearted And binds up their wounds." He is the God who heals our physical ailments, but first solves our fundamental problems and then heals our physical diseases. The fundamental problem is nothing but sin. Not all (eg. Job), but one of the reasons we get sick physically is because of our sins. An example is King Jehoram in 2 Chronicles 21:18-19. The Bible says that the Lord smote Jehoram and caused a disease in his bowels with an incurable sickness. When we have sinned and don't repent, we must keep in mind that our holy God causes us to dwell in sickness and the accompanying wounds and suffering as a result of that unrepentant sin. One example of solving the fundamental sin problem before He healed our physical illness is the paralytic man lying on the bed in Matthew 9:1-8. The Lord first forgiven the paralyzed man's sin [(v. 2) "And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, "Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven"] He healed his physical sickness [(vv. 6-7) "... then He said to the paralytic, 'Get up, pick up your bed and go home.' And he got up and went home"]. How does God heal all our sicknesses? He heals with His words. Look at Psalms 107:20 –

“He sent His word and healed them, And delivered them from their destructions.” In the New Testament Matthew 8:8 we can see the centurion asking Jesus to heal his servant. There the centurion said to Jesus, “Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed” (v. 8). Our God is the God who not only solves our fundamental sin problems with the power of His words, but also heals our physical diseases as well. We must not forget this benefit of God.

### **The third benefit of God is to redeem our lives from the pit.**

Look at Psalms 103:4a – “Who redeems your life from the pit, ....” Here's a biblical character that comes to mind when I think about the word “pit” is none other than Jonah. The reason is because the prophet Jonah disobeyed God's command, ‘Arise, go and cry against it’ (Jonah 1:2) so he went down and then went down to the depths of the sea, that is, the pit (2:6). He went down to Joppa (1:3), went down into the ship (v. 3), went down into the hold of the ship (v. 5) and further went down into the roots of the mountains (2:6). Jonah disobeyed and eventually went down to the pit (v. 6). However, even in that deep pit, Jonah looked again toward God’s holy temple (v. 4). Therefore, God answered his prayer and delivered his life from the pit (v. 6). When I think of Jonah, I think of Jesus. Unlike Jonah, Jesus went down to hell or suffered hell-like pain, like a deep pit, despite obeying God's word. Jesus, God’s begotten Son, was forsaken by Heavenly Father. Why did Jesus suffer such destruction? The reason is because He wanted us to redeem our lives. Job's friend Elihu told Job: “To bring back his soul from the pit, That he may be enlightened with the light of life” (Job 33:30). God's purpose in turning our souls out of a hellish pit is because He wants to shine on us with the light of life. In other words, the reason God redeemed us by the death of Jesus on the cross is to give us eternal life. We, who have received this eternal life as a gift in Jesus Christ, must not forget this benefit of God.

### **The fourth benefit of God is to give us abundant grace.**

Look at Psalms 103:4b – “... Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion.” This word refers to the abundant grace that all people can see (Park). We must not forget the abundant grace that God has given us in our lives. Another thing to remember is that God tests us first, trains us, and then gives us abundant grace. Look at Psalms 66:10, 12b – “For You have tried us, O God; You have refined us as silver is refined. ... Yet You brought us out into a place of abundance.” In order to receive abundant grace, we must become the vessels to receive that grace. In order to become the vessels that can contain such abundant grace, we need training. Through that training, we can open our hearts and mouths wide. And when God shows us the abundant grace that He has built up in heaven, we can receive it with humility and gratitude through faith. We must also keep in mind that God's abundant grace can be enjoyed in the deep realization of sin. Look at Romans 5:20 – “... but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” Those who can receive and enjoy God's abundant grace are those who know the size, extent, and depth of their sins. Those who know these sins receive the redeeming grace of Jesus and can dwell and

enjoy the rich grace that God has given and still gives in Jesus Christ. What should we, who live by receiving and enjoying this abundant grace of God, do? Look at Psalms 103:20-21: “Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.” The Christians who receive and enjoy God's abundant grace listen to God's Word and live by obeying it (v. 20). And they serve God and do His will (v. 21).

### **The fifth and last benefit of God is to satisfy our desires with good things.**

Look at Psalms 103:5 – “who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.” This verse indicates that God gives the saints spiritual grace abundantly so that they can rejoice and strengthen their hearts so that they will not quickly become old (Park). I think one of the words that the Lord spoke to the church in Laodicea is one of the words that apply to many of us in this time in which we live: “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot ...” (Rev. 3:15). Why do we refer to our own life of faith as a ‘Life of faith that is neither cold nor hot’? One of the reasons is because, like the Laodicea saints, we are saying “I am rich, and have become wealthy” (v. 17). In other words, it is because living in the illusion of self without a thirsty and hungry soul who desperately needs something, thinking that he is a “rich man” who has no need for himself. How do we know this? How do we know that there is no poor spirit? We can see it by looking at the soul that does not seek Him. In other words, we can see it by looking at the soul that doesn't pray. The psalmist, who had a hungry and thirsty soul, and a longing soul, says in Psalms 107:4-5, “They wandered in the wilderness in a desert region; They did not find a way to an inhabited city. They were hungry and thirsty; Their soul fainted within them.” In such a hungry and thirsty situation, he cried out to the Lord out of his distress (v. 6). Then God answered his prayer: “For He has satisfied the thirsty soul, And the hungry soul He has filled with what is good” (v. 9). The psalmist responded by experiencing God who fills the longing and hungry souls with good things: “Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men!” (v. 8) Why then does the Lord satisfy our desires with good things? The reason is to renew our youth like an eagle's (v. 5). Here, why did David compare his youth to “the eagle”? It is said that the “eagle” doesn't die because it is old, but because it lives too long, their beak is too long to be used well and dies because it cannot eat. Therefore, the eagle is a symbol of eternal youth. It is true that believers live long in their bodies because of the power of their faith (Park). So the prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 40:29-31: “He gives strength to the weary, And to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.”

We are those who have received God's benefits. Therefore, we must shout to ourselves like the psalmist David: “Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits- ... Praise the LORD, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the LORD, O my

soul” (Ps. 103:1-2, 22). Our souls must praise God. We must praise God as those who have received God’s benefits. And we must not forget the benefits He gives us.

Living by the grace of God

James Kim

(After the morning prayer meeting)



## **“How many are your works, O Lord!”**

### **[Psalms 104]**

We should focus on what God has done for us, rather than thinking about what we have done for Him. In other words, we must live by meditating on what God is doing for us. That is why the psalmist says in Psalms 77:12 – “I will meditate on all Your work And muse on Your deeds.” We must meditate and ponder what the Lord has done. We must meditate on the things He did to us, as well as what He did and still does in this world.

Among the many things that our God has done, God created and rules the heavens and earth and all things (Ps. 104). Our great and strong and majestic God (v. 1) is the Creator God. He made the heavens (v. 2) and set the earth on its foundations so that it can never be moved (v. 5). God the Creator made the heavens and the earth and all things, but made us all in wisdom (v. 24). Therefore, we see God's wisdom through the heavens, the earth, and all things. This Creator God is ruling on the heavens and the earth and all things. If we look at question 27 of the Heidelberg Catechism, the question “What dost thou mean by the providence of God?” comes up. The answer is, “The almighty and everywhere present power of God; whereby, as it were by his hand, he upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures; so that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, and all things come, not by chance, but be his fatherly hand” (Internet). In the 13th article of the Belgic Confession of Faith, we read, “We believe that the same God, after he had created all things, did not forsake them, or give them up to fortune or chance, but that he rules and governs them according to his holy will, so that nothing happens in this world without his appointment: ...” (internet). In other words, God, who created the heavens, the earth and all things, is ruling everything in the heavens and the earth in His providence. God makes springs pour water into the ravines so that the wild animals and birds can drink it (vv. 10-11), and even the birds of the air can nest by the waters (v. 12). As a result, “the earth is satisfied by the fruit of his work” (v. 13). In addition, God makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate – bringing forth food from the earth (v. 14). And also, our God gives us wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart (v. 15). God makes rain so that we can get the vegetables, grains, fruits, and oil we need. Those who see these groceries, conscientiously, cannot deny that they are made by the craftsmanship of the Creator (Park). God manages the moon and the sun, and is the God who controls the night and the day (vv. 19-20). Also He controls all the beasts of the forest (vv. 21-22). The God who made the sea and all the creatures below it in His wisdom (vv. 24-25) and created and governed all things, is our God who especially preserves and cares for creation, and provides the needs of all creation. When this God opens His hand and gives it to His creatures, they are satisfied with good things (v. 28). In the end, the glory of God will endure forever, and God rejoices over His works

(v. 31).

Looking at the many things that the Creator God has done what should we do? When the psalmist saw the many things God has done, he made this decision: “I will sing to the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the LORD. ... Praise the LORD, O my soul. Praise the LORD” (vv. 33-35). The psalmist decided to sing and praise God all his life. Praise, but rejoicing in God, dedicated to exalting God for life. Knowing the movement of God's great, wonderful, and great power, we cannot help but praise God all the days of our lives. I want to praise the hymn “How Great Thou Art”: (v. 1) “O, Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder/ consider all the worlds Thy hands have made/ I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder/ Thy power throughout the universe displayed/ Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee”, (v. 2) “When through the woods and forest glades I wander/ And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees/ When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur/ And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze”, (chorus) “Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee/ How great Thou art, how great Thou art!/ Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee/ How great Thou art, how great Thou art!” The psalmist, who was determined to praise the Lord God's greatness for life, prayed to God that sinners and wicked would be destroyed from the earth and vanish from the earth (v. 35). He wanted sinners to disappear from this world. He also prayed the curse of this world to return (MacArthur). In other words, the psalmist yearned for “a new heaven and a new earth” prophesied in Revelation 21:1. I want to praise the hymn “How Great Thou Art” verse 4: “When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation/ And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!/ Then i shall bow in humble adoration/ And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!” He wanted to praise the Lord forever in that new heaven and new earth. Like the psalmist, we must glorify in our hearts all the worlds that the Lord God has made, and we must forever praise the greatness of the Lord in longing for the new heavens and new earth. Let's praise forever the God who made, ruled the heavens and the earth, the God who wisely claims the heavens and the earth in the providence of God, the great and powerful omniscient, and the Almighty Creator.

As my soul sings “How great Thou art”,

James Kim

(Yearning for “a new heaven and a new earth”)

## Let's remember God's works.

### [Psalms 105]

One of Henry Nowen's books is "The Living Reminder." In that book, Nowen recommend that we must be the reminders of Jesus' healing. If we as ministers are the ones who remind Jesus, the first task is to access the broken memories of the past and provide room for them to come back into the light without fear. The minister's great mission is to constantly connect human stories with God's stories. It is healing that reveals that the wounds we humans are most closely connected to the pain we suffer directly from God. Therefore, to remember Jesus Christ vividly is to reveal that our little suffering is in line with the story of the tremendous suffering God suffers in Jesus Christ. 'Healing doesn't essentially eliminate pain. Our suffering is a part of greater suffering, our sorrow is a part of greater sorrow, and it is to reveal that our experience is a part of the greater experience of Christ who has spoken "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:26) (Internet).

Indeed, as I have to do this healing ministry, I personally reconsider the content of this writing by Henry Nowen, and two words came to my mind: 'remembrance' and 'commemoration'. What does it mean to remember? According to Henry Nowen, 'To remember is to bring events from the past into the present and to commemorate them here and now.' This is what Brevard S. Child said: 'The act of remembering is realizing the past for a generation that didn't exist when the event occurred. This allows people to experience intimately the great works of salvation. ... In the past, despite the temporal and spatial separation from the realm of God's revelation, the gap disappears through memory, and the excluded people share the work of salvation again' (Nowen). We have to train these memories. Since we remember the works of salvation that God gave us in the past, we must commemorate those events in our present life. Then, amidst any adversity, suffering, and wounds, we can stand up and walk toward the heaven boldly with the assurance of salvation, praising God with thanksgiving through the grace of God's salvation.

In Psalms 105:5, the psalmist says, "Remember His wonders which He has done, His marvels and the judgments uttered by His mouth." He is exhorting us to remember God's works. What does the God's works here refer to? It refers to all the wonderful things that God did to fulfill the promise of giving the land of Canaan to Abraham (vv. 8-11). So, what are all the wonderful things that God did to give Abraham the land of Canaan that He promised? Several things can be found in Psalms 105:12-44:

**First, when the Israeli patriarchs who received this promise were living as strangers**

**in the land of Canaan at the time they received the promise, they were wondering about from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people (vv. 12-13). At that time, God protected them in order to fulfill the word of promise given to Abraham (vv. 14-15).**

Look at Psalms 105:14-15: “He permitted no man to oppress them, And He reproveth kings for their sakes: ‘Do not touch My anointed ones, And do My prophets no harm.’” God protected the small number of Israelites who weren’t able to settle in the land of Canaan from being harmed by the kings of the land of Canaan. One example is the Bible story that God protected Abraham and Sarah. In Genesis 12:10-17, when Abram and his wife Sarai, who received the word of promise during the famine, went down to Egypt to sojourn there because of the severe famine. Since Sarai was a beautiful woman, he told her to say that she was his sister so that he wouldn’t get and live. So later she was taken into Pharaoh’s house. At that time, God struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues so that Abram could bring his wife Sarai back. A similar story appears in Genesis 20:3-7. At that time, Abraham said Sarah his wife was his sister in a place called Gerar. So when the king of Gerar Abimelech took Sarai, God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night and told him, “Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married” (v. 3). By doing so, God protected and delivered Abraham’s wife Sarah. In this way, God not only gave Abraham the word of promise, but also protected Abraham and his wife Sarah in fulfilling His promised word.

**Second, God sent Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, to Egypt beforehand, when a small group of Jacob, his children, and descendants were not settled and were wondering here and there, and sent the famine in order to break the whole staff of bread in order to fulfill His promise to Abraham (Ps. 105:16-17).**

Isn't it weird how God, who gave Abraham the word of promise, didn't allow Abraham's grandson Jacob, his children, and his descendants to continue to live abundantly in the land of Canaan, flowing with milk and honey, but caused famine to come to them and made them needy? This is a word that we cannot well understand with our common sense. This cannot but be a subtle providence of God for fulfilling the word He promised to Abraham. That providence of God is that God told Abraham “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years” (Gen. 15:13), and in order to fulfill that promise to Abraham, He caused the famine in the land of Canaan, where the Israelites were living (Ps. 105:16), and Joseph was hated by his older brothers and sold him as a slave to Egypt (v. 17), and his father Jacob, his children, and all his descendants came down to Egypt to live (v. 23) and made the Israelites great prosperity there (v. 24). Isn't God's providence amazing that He who greatly prospered Jacob's children and descendants (70 people) (v. 12), a small group who were living in the land of Canaan, in the midst of suffering in Egypt. Look at Deuteronomy 10:22 – “our fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons in all, and now the LORD your God has

made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.” In the end, God promised Abraham that he would multiply his descendants like countless stars in the sky (Gen. 15:5), and he fulfilled that promise in Egypt in suffering. The God who made a handful of Israel (Jacob) and his children and descendants in need through famine eventually brought them all down to Egypt and made them prosper greatly in the painful life of slaves, making them stronger than their enemy Egypt (v. 24). This God was fulfilling the word of promise to Abraham in His providence.

**Third and last, God delivered the Israelites who had greatly prospered in Egypt 400 years later in order to fulfill the word of promise given to Abraham (Ps. 105:26-43). He led the Israelites, the descendants of Abraham, to the land flowing with milk and honey, the land of Canaan (v. 44).**

When God made the Israelites prosperous in Egypt and made them stronger than the Egyptians (v. 24), the hearts of Pharaoh and the Egyptians changed and hated the Israelites (v. 25). Eventually, when the Israelites cried out to God in tribulation and persecution, God sent Moses and Aaron to Egypt and caused ten plagues through Moses so that they were able to come out of the Egypt with silver and gold (v. 37). And God brought them out of the wilderness with the pillars of cloud and fire (v. 39), and He satisfied the Israelites with the bread of heaven, that was quail, and with water flowed out of the rock (vv. 40-41). Psalms 105:42 tells the reason why God did this: “For He remembered His holy word With Abraham His servant.” God faithfully fulfilled the promised word because God remembered the holy word that he had promised to Abraham. So He delivered the Israelites from Egypt. “And He brought forth His people with joy, His chosen ones with a joyful shout” (v. 43). Then, why did God fulfill His promise to the Israelites? What was the purpose? The purpose is written in verse 45: “So that they might keep His statutes And observe His laws, ...” Because God gave Abraham the word of promise and fulfilled it, he made Abraham's descendants, his chosen Israelites, to obey His word.

As I meditated on all the amazing things God did to fulfill His promise to Abraham by giving the land of Canaan to his descendants in three ways, I tried these applications. In the process of fulfilling the word of Matthew 16:18, which is the promise the Lord gave to our church, I am confident that our God is surely protecting us. Furthermore, when we think of the word of promise that God will protect us, the reason that gives us great comfort and strength is that we have become strangers in this wilderness while allowing us to enter the true land of Canaan, heaven, the promise given to us in Jesus Christ. In addition, I believe that the Lord is still fulfilling the promises of Abraham by making the spiritual children of Abraham who are living in this wilderness-like world to be multiplied and be numerous like stars in the sufferings of heaven. Through such sufferings, we must keep walking toward heaven, the land of promise, trusting in Him who cuts off all the things we depend on and makes us completely dependent on Him in need.

God has given us the grace of salvation. What is its purpose? The purpose is obeying the word of God. We are God's chosen people who were saved from Satan's kingdom like Egypt. And we are now strangers walking in the wilderness toward the kingdom of God. In our yearning for a better homeland, we must obey the Word of God. As we live according to the word of the Lord, we must not swerve to the right or the left. In the meantime, I hope and pray that we be able to thank God like the psalmist (v. 1a), to sing and to declare His saving works (vv. 1-2) and to seek His face and power, as we move toward the heaven (vv. 3-4).

After I sang the hymn "I am pressing on upward way" during Wednesday night prayer meeting,

James Kim

(As I desire to be drawn by the Word of God's promise)

## Remember me, O Lord, in Your favor

### [Psalms 106]

What is Amnesia? It comes from the Greek ἀμνησία, which is simply memory impairment. There are organic and functional factors that cause amnesia. Memory loss due to organic factors is called traumatic amnesia, and it is a memory disorder caused by an abnormality in a part of the brain responsible for memory (usually the hippocampus of the brain). It occurs when the brain is damaged by drugs. The functional factor of amnesia is called dissociative amnesia. Functional factors are psychological factors such as defense mechanisms. There is something called "partial memory loss" of memory loss. This partial memory loss is usually divided into long-term memory loss and short-term memory loss. Here, "long-term memory loss" refers to the loss of old memories, which means partial memory loss. There are two parts here. If we cannot remember only part of the past, it is called partial amnesia. And when we cannot remember the whole, it is called complete amnesia. On the other hand, "short-term memory loss" refers to not remembering what happened just before. This short term memory loss is the most common type of memory loss. We can't even remember what we said just before. Although amnesia is called forgetfulness, we often forget about forgetfulness in the meaning we use in everyday life. But in this case, it is said that the difference is that we forget it perfectly (Internet).

As I was looking for amnesia on the internet, I had this thought: Forgetfulness is nothing compared to short-term memory loss, but this short-term memory loss is somehow fine compared to long-term memory loss. In particular, even in long-term memory loss, it is fortunate that we cannot remember only a part of the past. But I wondered if it would be a big problem if we had "complete memory loss" in which we cannot remember the whole. The reason why I came to think of this is that while meditating on the words of Psalms 106, I think that if I forget God's grace completely like the Israelites (loss of complete spiritual memory), I think that the result would be a bit terrible. But even though we may not fully remember God's grace, there is one hope that is certain. One hope is that we can also offer the prayer the psalmist offered to God: "Remember me, O LORD, in Your favor toward Your people; Visit me with Your salvation" (Ps. 106:4). I would like to meditate on two things under the heading "Remember me, O Lord, in Your favor": First, what did the Israelites not remember? Second, what did God remember?

What did the Israelites not remember? The psalmist says 3 things in Psalms 106:

**First, the Israelites didn't remember God's abundant kindnesses.**

Look at Psalms 106:7 – “Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; They did not remember Your abundant kindnesses, But rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea.” What were the abundant kindnesses that God gave to the Israelites at the time of the Exodus? It is the love that saved the Israelites because God heard their cry and was compassionate and sent Moses and brought 10 plagues to Pharaoh and Egypt. However, the Israelites didn’t understand God’s wonders in Egypt and forgot the abundant kindnesses that God gave them and rebelled at the Red Sea. When they were staying by the Red Sea, they were told that the Egyptian army was chasing them, and they complained to Moses (Exod. 14:11). This is like resentment against God who made Moses the leader. This was unbelief (Park). In spite of the Israelites’ sinning, God saved the Israelites from the Red Sea for the sake of His name (Ps. 106:8). In other words, God rebuked the Red Sea and made it dry, so that the Israelites could pass through the sea like passing through the wilderness (v. 9). And the Egyptian army who followed the Israelites died because the water covered them (v. 11). God saved the Israelites from the hand of the one who hated them and redeemed them from the hand of their enemies (v. 10). Therefore, God made His power known (v. 8). As a result, the Israelites came to believe the word of God’s promise and sang praises to God (v. 12).

Aren’t we living after forgetting God’s abundant lovingkindness like the Israelites? Aren’t we living in unbelief in the kingdom of Satan, such as Egypt even though God gave us the grace of salvation for the sake of His name? That’s why like the psalmist, we have no choice but to pray, “Remember me, O Lord, in Your favor” (v. 4).

### **Second, the Israelites quickly forgot God’s works.**

Look at Psalms 106:13 – “They quickly forgot His works; They did not wait for His counsel.” Despite experiencing God’s work of salvation in the Red Sea, the Israelites sinned against Moses, God’s established leader, for a temporary lack of food in the wilderness. In this way, the Israelites quickly forgot God’s works. Therefore, rather than waiting for God’s supply, they urged for food and committed a sin against Moses (Park). Look at verse 14: “But craved intensely in the wilderness, And tempted God in the desert.” Even though they sinned like that, God gave them spring water to drink and supplied them with manna and quail meat (Park). In other words, God gave them their request (v. 15). Nevertheless, the Israelites committed sin of rebellion against Moses and Aaron (Num. 16), and further committed an extremely abominable sin of making and worshiping a golden calf at Horeb (Ps. 106:19, Exod. 32). They committed the sin of transforming God’s glory into a grass-eating cow (Park).

The sinful world we are living in now commits the sin of exchanging the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures (Rom. 1:23). The problem is that we, the God’s people, are also committing this sin. In other words, we Christians are also guilty of replacing the glory of God with the glory of man. One of the causes is greedy (“craving” in Ps. 106:14). Whether the greed is the greed of honor or the greed of the material, because of this greed, God’s people are guilty of pursuing their own glory rather than pursuing the glory of God. The reason we seek the glory of man rather than the



glory of God is that it focuses on man's deeds rather than focusing on God's works. Therefore, like the psalmist, we have no choice but to pray, "Remember me, O Lord, in Your favor" (v. 4).

### **Third, the Israelites forgot God their Savior.**

Look at Psalms 106:21 – "They forgot God their Savior, Who had done great things in Egypt." The Israelites not only forgot God's abundant kindnesses and what He did for the Israelites, but they also forgot God, their Savior. God had done "great things" in Egypt (v. 21) and saved the Israelites by showing His great power. But the Israelites forgot their Savior God. The Israelites who forgot God the Savior who did awesome things by the Red Sea (v. 22) didn't believe the promises of God (unbelief) (v. 24) and didn't obey God's word in resentment (disobedience) (v. 25). Furthermore, they worshiped Baal-peor, the foreign god (v. 28). Also, they were rebellious against the Spirit of God at the waters of Meribah (v. 33), and didn't destroy the Gentiles when they entered the land of Canaan, but instead mingled with them to learn their actions (v. 35) and worship their idols (v. 36). They even shed their children's blood on that idol and sacrificed it (vv. 37-38). They became unclean in their practices and played the harlot in their deeds (v. 39). Eventually, because of the sins of the Israelites, the holy God was angry (vv. 23, 29, 32, 40), and gave them into the hand of the nations (v. 41). Thus their enemies oppressed them (v. 42). So the Israelites cried out to God and God heard their cries and knew their distress (v. 44). So God delivered them many times (v. 43). However, the Israelites were rebellious in their counsel and so sank down in their iniquity (v. 43).

We are living as we quickly forget God's saving grace. Furthermore, we are living as we forget God too quickly who gave us that salvation. Although God had mercy on us and delivered us because we cried out to God in the midst of suffering and adversity, we often forget His grace too quickly when we were peace without suffering and adversity. We people cannot easily forget pain and adversity, but quickly forget the saving grace of God, who delivered us from the pain and adversity. In other words, while we remember the pain and adversity we suffered, we too quickly forget the grace of God's work that saved us from the pain and adversity. And when we are in peace after being saved, we often forget God the Savior. Therefore, like the psalmist, we have no choice but to pray, "Remember me, O Lord, in Your favor" (v. 4), which God gave us.

### Then what did God remember?

### **It is "His covenant" made with us.**

Look at Psalms 106:45 – "And He remembered His covenant for their sake, And relented according to the greatness of His lovingkindness." In this way, the Israelites forgot God's love and grace and sinned in disbelief and disobedience. Therefore, God, who disciplined the Israelites, had mercy on them in the end when they cried out in pain. God remembered His covenant for their sake and relented according to the greatness of His lovingkindness (v. 45). Also, He made them objects of compassion in the presence of all their captors (v. 46). That is, God once again

saved the Israelites from temporary discipline (Park). Although the Israelites forgot the greatness of God's lovingkindness and His great works, and went further, forgot their Savior God, God remembered His people the Israelites, and didn't forget His covenant made with them. Although the Israelites were unfaithful to the covenant they made with God, God was faithful to His covenant people. What was the reason? We can find the answer in 2 Timothy 2:13 – "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." This is it. The reason God is faithful to us, His covenant people, is because He cannot deny Himself. In other words, God is a God who has no choice but to be faithful to us. That is His Godhead. What is this if not God's grace? I remember the words of Isaiah 49:15 – "'Can a woman forget her nursing child And have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.'" Even if a mother may forget her nursing baby, this saying that our God doesn't forget us. What a great grace of God? I don't remember God's great lovingkindness and quickly forget the works He has done in our lives, and go further to forget God and live countless times. But God will never forget such people like us. What is this if not God's grace? Therefore, like the psalmist, we have no choice but to pray, "Remember me, O Lord, in Your favor" (v. 4), which God gave us.

Tonight, let's pray to God like the psalmist: "Remember me, O Lord, in Your favor" (v. 4) that you have given us. Even though we suffer from spiritual amnesia and don't remember God's great lovingkindness and His many works, let's pray to God "Remember me, O Lord, in Your favor." Even if we are living by forgetting God the Savior, let's pray to God, "Remember me, O Lord, in Your favor."

"I know not why God's wondrous grace To me He hath made known,"

James Kim

[Desiring to be able to confess, "by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10)]

## God who shows great grace in the midst of great sins

### [Psalms 106:6-12]

In the Bible verses, at least in my head, there is a word that God gives me grace through that word in times of need. That word of God is Romans 5:20b – "... but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." God is revealing my sins through this word. What is amazing in the work of the Holy Spirit is that the grace of God fills my heart. In other words, I experience the magnitude of God's grace among the magnitude of sin.

In Psalms 106:6-12, when we think about what kind of God is God, our God is " God who shows great grace even in the midst of great sins." I hope and pray that I will be able to meet this God through Psalms 106:6-12.

The first thing we need to think about is the great sin committed by the Israelites. In Psalms 106:6, the psalmist confesses, "We have sinned like our fathers, We have committed iniquity, we have behaved wickedly." What was the wicked sin they committed with their ancestors? There are three things we can think of:

**First, the evil sins the Israelites committed with their ancestors was that they didn't understand the Lord's wonders.**

Look at Psalms 106:7a – "Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders ...." The Israelites didn't realize God's wonders in Egypt at the time of the Exodus. They didn't care at all. In other words, in David's day, the Jews committed the sin of forgetting God's works (wonders) in the lives of their ancestors in Egypt (v. 7). How about us? Aren't we committing the same sins as the Israelites? I don't think we are very different either. We too are quickly forgetting what the good things that God has done for us in the past. Even now, as we live in this world, we don't realize what God is doing in our lives. This is our great sin pointed out in today's text.

**Second, the evil sins the Israelites committed with their ancestors was that they didn't remember God's abundant kindnesses.**

Look at psalms 106:7b – "... They did not remember Your abundant kindnesses ...." In the days of David, the Israelites forgot God's wonders in the lives of their ancestors in Egypt, so they committed the sin of forgetting God's many love as well. How about us? How often do we often forget the great and much love that God has shown us through the works of God in the past? This is also said to be a great sin in the Bible.

**Third and last, the evil sins the Israelites committed with their ancestors was that they rebelled against God.**

Look at Psalms 106:7c – “... But rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea.” In front of the Red Sea, the Israelites complained against Moses when they saw the Egyptian army chasing them (Exod. 14:11). To blame the leader God has established is the same as blaming God Himself.

What was God's great grace for the Israelites who committed such great sin? It was salvation. Look at Psalms 106:8 – “Nevertheless He saved them for the sake of His name, That He might make His power known.” God made great works of salvation to the Israelites who committed great sins. What a wonderful thing and great grace? It was the grace of God who saves despite the Israelites sinning. Why did God save the ungrateful Israelites who committed great sins? The reason was for the sake of His name (v. 8). What is the meaning of the name “Jesus”? Isn't it ‘God is salvation’ or ‘God is the Savior’? Even though we have sinned, the Savior, our Lord, saves us for the sake of His name. What a great grace is this? Furthermore, He made His power known to the Israelites through salvation of the great grace that God had given them. Although the Israelites feared the Egyptian soldiers, God saved Israelites by rebuking the Red Sea to dry it and led the Israelites through the deeps, as though the wilderness (v. 9). Therefore, God saved the Israelites from the hand of their haters and redeemed them from the hand of their enemies (v. 10). Why did He do that? It was because the Egyptians, enemies of the Israelites, hated them, but God loved the Israelites who sinned against Him. God's great power was revealed not only in the salvation of His beloved people, but also in the destruction of the Egyptian army, the enemy of the Israelites (v. 11).

How should the saints, who have committed a great sin against the holy God but have experienced great saving grace through the great power of God, should respond? Look at Psalms 106:12 – “Then they believed His words; They sang His praise.” The Bible says two things: (1) They should believe in the Word of God more and more. In other words, believe in the word of God's promise and live a life that is led by His word. It means that believers who have experienced God's great grace in the midst of their great sins will trust God more and more. (2) They should praise God. Those who have experienced God's saving grace cannot but praise God. May God bless us with this grace.

With gratitude to God for showing great power with great grace even in my great sins,

James Kim

(Prior to the Saturday New Life Festival)

## Realize God's great love

### [Psalms 107]

In order to live truly valuable life in the sight of God in this vain life, we must live a life that is satisfied with the Lord's lovingkindness (Ps. 90:14). God has given us a longing for eternity (Eccl. 3:11). Therefore, as new creatures in Jesus, we can live a satisfying life when we live and love each other with the eternal love of God. However, we are living without remembering God's abundant kindnesses like the Israelites (Ps. 106:7). To us like this, God is telling us the words of Psalms 107:43 – "Who is wise? Let him give heed to these things, And consider the lovingkindnesses of the LORD." I would like to receive the grace given by thinking about how we can realize God's great love under the heading "Realize God's great love".

How can we realize God's great love? With God's wisdom, we can realize His great love. When we have the wisdom of God, we will give heed to "these things" (v. 43). Here, what is "these things" that the psalmist talking about? In other words, what is "these things" we need to pay attention to with God's wisdom? That is "His wonders" (vv. 8, 15, 21, 31). What, then, are the wonders that God had done to the sons of men? It's God's work of saving the Israelites. In Psalms 107, we can think of four things about from what kind of situation God saved the Israelites (Park).

**First, God saved the Israelites when they wandered in the wilderness in a desert region (vv. 4-9).**

Look at Psalms 107:4-5: "They wandered in the wilderness in a desert region; They did not find a way to an inhabited city. They were hungry and thirsty; Their soul fainted within them." When the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness in the desert region, they were tired due to hunger and thirst. So they cried out to the Lord in their trouble and God delivered them out of their distresses (v. 6). And God not only delivered the Israelites who were wandering in the wilderness out of suffering, but also led them to the city where they would live (v. 7). So, what should the Israelites, who have received the grace of salvation, do? Look at verse 8: "Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men!" Why should the Israelites praise God? The reason is because God satisfied the longing souls of the Israelites and also filled their hungry souls with good things (v. 9).

The world we live in is a wilderness. Living in this wilderness-like world, we are hungry and thirsty. This is extremely natural. However, for some reason, we avoid this reality and like to live in the middle of the city. In

this city-like world that pursues the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of this life, we are busy pursuing worldly abundance. And we also gains worldly abundance. Nevertheless, our souls aren't satisfied. This abundance can never be good for poverty in the wilderness.' This is because, at least in the wilderness, there are longing and hungry souls who earnestly seek God out of poverty. Therefore, poverty in the wilderness is more precious than the abundance in the city. The God who satisfies our needy souls grants us the grace of salvation when we cry earnestly to God in longing and hungry souls. And God doesn't allow us to wander in the wilderness, but rather leads us in the right path, to the true city of Jerusalem. Therefore, we must praise God for His great love.

### **Second, God saved the Israelites when they were in captivity (vv. 10-16).**

Look at Psalms 107:10 – “There were those who dwelt in darkness and in the shadow of death, Prisoners in misery and chains.” Why, then, did the Israelites dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death, and were bound by misery and chains? The reason is that the psalmist says: “Because they had rebelled against the words of God And spurned the counsel of the Most High” (v. 11). That sin is strongly going against the Word of God. Those who commit such great sins deserve the punishment of becoming prisoners more terrifying than death (Jere. 22:10) (Park). As a result, God humbled the Israelites with their hard with labor, so that even if they stumbled there was none to help (Ps. 107:12). At that time, the Israelites cried out to the Lord in their trouble (v. 13). As a result, God saved them out of their distresses (v. 13). He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, breaking their bands apart (v. 14). Therefore, what the Israelites, who had received the grace of salvation, must do was to give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness and for His wonders to the sons of men (v. 15). Why should the Israelites praise God? The reason is because God set them free (v. 16).

There are people around us who live in captivity or slavery. Even those who refuse to forgive and refuse to be forgiven are living in captivity. People with alcoholism, drug addiction, and gambling addiction are in some way enslaved. Because of rebelling against God's Word and despising the Most High, we are bound to suffer in captivity or slavery. Therefore, God humbles us and cuts off those who help us. Therefore, when we fall down before God alone and cry out to God in sorrow, like the Israelites, God delivers us from suffering. He cuts off all our chains. God gives us real freedom. Therefore, we must praise God for His great love.

### **Third, God saved the Israelites when they were on the verge of dying like seriously sick people (vv. 17-22).**

Look at Psalms 107:18 – “Their soul abhorred all kinds of food, And they drew near to the gates of death.” Here, the saying that the Israelites' soul abhorred all kinds food indicates that they were sick and couldn't eat food (Park). Therefore, the Israelites were close to the door of death. What was the reason? The reason for this was because the fools suffered because of their transgressions and sins (v. 17). At that time, the Israelites cried out to the

Lord in their trouble, and God saved them out of their distresses (v. 19). God sent His word and healed them, and deliver them from their destructions (v. 20). In other words, God had His sovereignty and commanded to save the Israelites who were on the verge of dying like a seriously sick people (Park). Therefore, what should the Israelites who had received the grace of salvation do? Look at verses 21-22: “Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men! Let them also offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, And tell of His works with joyful singing.”

I think there are three kinds of gates in this world: (1) the gate of Achor [“valley of Achor”, Hos. 2:15], that is, the gate of trouble, (2) the gate of death (Ps. 107:18), and (3) the door of hope (Hos. 2:15). As we live in this wilderness-like world, in a world of troubled, full of sin, and truly many deaths, even if we pass through the door of pain and death, in the end, we will surely pass through the door of hope. Even today, the Lord is leading us to the heavenly gate. When we think about this saving grace, we cannot help but praise the Lord even to the point of death because of God's great love.

**Fourth and last, God saved the Israelites when they were in peril like those who were heading for a storm in the sea (Ps. 107:23-32).**

God the Creator spoke and raised up a stormy wind which lifted up the waves of the sea (v. 25) and melted the hearts of the Israelites in their misery (v. 26). He made them to be reeled and staggered like a drunken man (v. 27). “Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, And He brought them out of their distresses. He caused the storm to be still, So that the waves of the sea were hushed” (vv. 28-29). Furthermore, God led the Israelites to their desired haven while rejoicing for serenity (v. 30). This reminds me the hymn “With Christ as My Pilot”: (v. 1) With Christ as my Pilot though billows be high, Though dim be the light-house and dark sea and sky, With Christ at the helm ev'-ry gale we endure, For Jesus the Savior is my Pilot sure, (v. 2) Though tempests may threaten the craft and the crew, And wide gape the jaws of the deep for me, too, With Christ at the oar I am safe in His will, And Jesus my Savior is my Pilot still, (v. 3) If Jesus but speak, in His voice of great pow'r, The billows must sleep and be still from that hour, And I, at the brightness of dawning, shall be, With Jesus, my Pilot, safe over the sea, (chorus) I nothing can fear! I nothing can dread! For Jesus keeps watch here, and by Him I'm led. My seas may be rough, but when voy'-ges are past, My haven of hope will be heaven at last. So, what should the Israelites who have received the grace of salvation do? Look at Psalms 107:31-32: “Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men! Let them extol Him also in the congregation of the people, And praise Him at the seat of the elders.”

Just as a pearl shell makes beautiful pearls deep in the sea even if waves hit the sea and there is a storm, God is transforming us into precious children of God through the storm in this wilderness-like world. Often when the storms of life come and the rains blow, when our hearts are shaken, afraid, and trembling, when we cry out to

God in distress, our God rescues us and gives peace in our hearts. That's why we praise God: "I have found sweet rest for my weary soul, Found a harbor safe tho' the billows roll, Found a Mighty One who can storms control, Leaning on the everlasting arms. Oh, the everlasting arms, How they hold me, Ever hold me, and enfold me; I am safe in life or death, For around and underneath Are the mighty, everlasting arms"(Hymn "I Have Found Sweet Rest", v. 1).

In the end, God saved the Israelites through suffering and adversity, blessed them, and made them prosper (v. 38). God raised the needy Israelites out of trouble and made their families like a flock (v. 41), so that the upright see it and were glad (v. 42). What are some of the wonders God has done in our lives? Are we realizing God's great love through those wonders? When we were wandering in this world like the wilderness, when we were slaves to sin, when we had to die forever, when storms struck our lives, hasn't God delivered (saved) us? How can we not praising the Lord when we consider this saving grace?

"I've anchored my soul in the 'Haven of Rest,' I'll sail the wide seas no more;  
The tempest may sweep o'er the wild stormy deep; In Jesus I'm safe evermore."  
(Hymn "My Soul in Sad Exile", chorus)

"The love of God is greater far Than tongue or pen can ever tell;  
It goes beyond the highest star, And reaches to the lowest hell;  
The guilty pair, bowed down with care, God gave His Son to win;  
His erring child He reconciled, And pardoned from His sin.  
Oh love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong!  
It shall forever more endure, The saints' and angels' song."  
(Hymn "The Love of God is Greater Far", verse 1 and chorus)

Living while tasting God's great love,

James Kim

(With gratitude for God's saving grace)



## **Are you realizing God's great love?**

**“Who is wise? Let him give heed to these things, And consider the lovingkindnesses of the LORD.” (Psalms 107:43)**

Are you realizing God's great love in the midst of suffering? How can we realize God's great love when we are in pain?

In order for us to realize God's great love in suffering, we must have the wisdom of God. When we have the wisdom of God, we give heed to “these things” (Ps .107:43). And when we give heed to the wonders of the Lord (vv. 8, 15, 21, 31), we can realize God's great love even in suffering. What are the wonders of the Lord that we need give attention to?

### **First, the wonders of the Lord are to humble our hearts with labor.**

Look at Psalms 107:12a – “Therefore He humbled their heart with labor ....” Why is God giving us labor? The reason is because we rebel against the words of God and spurn His counsel (v. 11). As a result, God makes us to dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death, and makes us to be prisoners in misery and chains (v. 10). Even at this time, we must realize God's great love through His wonders. The great love of God that we must realize is His wonders who humbles us even through such labor. If we can only be humble through labor, we should be willing to appreciate it and rejoice. And we must realize God's great love for us through His wonders.

### **Second, the wonders of the Lord are to make us to have no helper.**

Look at Psalms 107:12b – “... They stumbled and there was none to help.” When we are laboring, we want to ask someone for help. Especially the more severe our bitter labor, the more we desperately need someone's help. But the Bible says that God makes no one to help us even if we stumble. Why does God do this? How is this the wonder of the Lord? How can we feel God's great love through this? God not only makes us realize that our help is not within us (Job 6:13), but also makes us realize that the help of man is in vain and useless (Isa. 30:7). Therefore, God makes us realize that our help is only God: “I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From where shall my help come? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth” (Ps. 121:1-2). Through this wonder of the Lord, we must realize God's great love.

### **Third, the wonders of the Lord are to send His word and heal us.**

Look at Psalms 107:20 – “He sent His word and healed them, And delivered them from their destructions.” God humbles us when we are in pain and disciplined for our sins. Also He makes us look only to the Lord humbly because there is none to help us. And God sends us His word. That is, God's discipline leads us into the wilderness, and God's love speaks tenderly to our hearts in that wilderness (Hos 2:14). That word is the word that heals us (Ps. 107:20). It is the word that exposes our sins and makes us rely on Jesus on the cross and His blood. It is the word that makes us repent of our sins and gives us the assurance of forgiveness. Because of that word, we first receive healing for our inner person. And when we are healed, we experience God's great love because of His word. This is His wonder, and through it we must realize God's great love for us.

**Fourth, the wonders of the Lord are to cause the storm of our lives to be still.**

Look at Psalms 107:29 – “He caused the storm to be still, So that the waves of the sea were hushed.” Our God is the God who gives us a great storm when we disobey His commands (Jonah 1:4). Then God makes the sea increasingly stormy (v. 11) and makes us confess our sins (v. 10). At that time, if we throw ourselves into the sea of the blood of Jesus that was shed on the cross, the sea will stop its raging (v. 15). In other words, God causes the storm of our lives to be still (Ps. 107:29). God calms the ocean of our stormy hearts. God gives peace in our hearts. This is the wonder of the Lord, and we must realize God's great love for us. God calms our hearts that are like a stormy sea. God gives peace to our hearts. This is the miracle of the Lord, and we must realize God's great love for us.

**Fifth, the wonders of the Lord are that when we cry out to God in our trouble, He hears our prayers and delivers us out of our distresses.**

Look at Psalms 107:6, 13, 19, 29 – “Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble; He delivered them out of their distresses. ... Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble; He saved them out of their distresses. ... Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble; He saved them out of their distresses. ... Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, And He brought them out of their distresses.” The wonders of the Lord are that God not only heals our inner beings, but also delivers us from our distresses. When we cry out to God in distresses, God listens to our prayers and delivers us from our distresses. Although hearing the prayers of sinners like us is the wonders of the Lord, God also answers our prayers and delivers us from the wilderness and from darkness and hardship. When we experience this saving grace, we cannot but be grateful for God's great love. We cannot but confess that “God is salvation” (the meaning of the name “Jesus”). This is the wonders of the Lord, and we must realize God's great love for us.

**Sixth, the wonders of the Lord are that He leads us by a straight way.**

Look at Psalms 107:7 – “He led them also by a straight way, To go to an inhabited city.” Our God saved us from the kingdom of Satan like Egypt and led us in this wilderness-like world, and now leading us to the true land of Canaan, that is heaven. Of course, we as God’s flock must hear and obey the voice of our Shepherd and our Lord (Cf.: Jn. 10). But there are times in this wilderness-like world that we not only turn left or right, but also wander (Ps .107: 4). At that time, our Shepherd and our Lord comforts us and guides us with His rod and His staff (23:4). Therefore, we no longer walk in Satan's crooked path, but in the right path. This is the wonders of the Lord, and through these wonders we must realize the great love of God..

**Seventh, the wonders of the Lord are to satisfy our longing souls and to fill the hungry souls with what is good.**

Look at Psalms 107:9 – “For He has satisfied the thirsty soul, And the hungry soul He has filled with what is good.” God leads us into the wilderness and makes us needy. He makes our souls hungry. And God gives our hungry souls to long for God and also to long for His word (Cf.: Deut. 8:2-3). And God gives us understanding by His Word, making us realize that there is no one else on earth to long for except the Lord (Ps. 73:25). The reason is because God wants us to live with satisfaction (contentment) with only the Lord. This is the wonders of the Lord, and through the wonders we must realize the great love of God for us.

**Eighth, the wonders of the Lord are to give us true freedom.**

Look at Psalms 107:14 – “He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death And broke their bands apart.” The God of truth is the God who sets us free (Cf.: Jn. 8:32). God is the God who sets our inner person first free from sin and frees our outer man from distresses. The reason is because God knows that it is a bigger problem to be slaves to sin by being bound by the chains of sin than to suffering from the chains of the flesh. However, many times we suffer in the chains of our flesh. But we don’t realize how much the chains of sin are big problem to ourselves. And we often don't even realize the cause of why we suffer in physical chains. Although God wants us to realize the great difference between being slaves of righteousness and slaves to sin by being suffered in the chains of the flesh, there are countless times we don’t realize the wonders of God because we are foolish. Therefore, we must ask God for wisdom (Jam. 1:5). And we must give heed to the wonders of God with the wisdom God gives us (Ps. 107:43). And we must realize the great love of God who frees us from sin and from the chains of the flesh.

**Ninth, the wonders of the Lord are to guide us to our desired heaven.**

Look at Psalms 107:30 – “Then they were glad because they were quiet, So He guided them to their desired heaven.” God calms the storms of our lives and guides us to our desired heaven. The Lord Himself has been our Captain and continues to guide us to that heaven. Even though we may seem far and tough, I hope and pray that we

can reach that heaven so that we may be able to see the Lord face to face.

### **Tenth and last, the wonders of the Lord are to make us praise God.**

Look at Psalms 107:8, 15, 21, 31-32: “Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men! ... Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men! ... Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men! Let them extol Him also in the congregation of the people, And praise Him at the seat of the elders.” In the end, God makes us to praise God because of His great love and because the wonders that He has done in our lives. When I think about God who humbles us with suffering, I remember the third lyrics of the hymn “Out of My Bondage, Sorrow and night”: “Out of unrest and arrogant pride, Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come; Into Thy blessed will to abide. Jesus, I come to Thee; Out of myself to dwell in Thy love, Out of despair into rapture above, Upward for aye on wings like a dove, Jesus, I come to Thee.” When I think about God, who makes us have no helper, the first lyric of the hymn “My Lord to Thee I Cry”: “Jesus, my Lord to Thee I cry; Unless Thou help me I must die: Oh, bring Thy free salvation nigh, And take me as I am.” When I think about God who sends the Word to us and healed us, the third lyric and the chorus of the hymn “Sing Them Over Again to Me”: “Sweetly echo the gospel call, Wonderful words of life; Offer pardon and peace to all, Wonderful words of life; Jesus, only Savior, Sanctify forever: Beautiful words, Wonderful words, Wonderful words of life. Beautiful words, Wonderful words, Wonderful words of life.” When I think about God who calms the storms of our lives, I remembered the third lyric of the hymn “With Christ as My Pilot”: “If Jesus but speak, in His voice of great pow’r, The billows must sleep and be still from that hour, And I, at the brightness of dawning, shall be, With Jesus, my Pilot, safe over the sea. I nothing can fear! I nothing can dread!” When I think about God who hears our cry out in distresses and delivers us from our distressed circumstances, I remember the third lyric and the chorus of the hymn “My Soul in Sad Exile”: “The song of my soul, since the Lord made me whole, Has been the old story so blest, Of Jesus who'll save whosoever will have; A home in the ‘Haven of Rest.’ I've anchored my soul in the ‘Haven of Rest,’ I'll sail the wide seas no more; The tempest may sweep o'er the wild stormy deep; In Jesus I'm safe ever-more.” When I think about God who is leading us on the right path, the fourth lyric and the chorus of the hymn “Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us” came to my mind: “Early let us seek Thy favor, Early let us do Thy will; Blessed Lord and only Savior, With Thy love our bosoms fill. Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus! Thou hast loved us, love us still; Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus! Thou hast loved us, love us still.” When I think about God who satisfies our longing souls and supplies good things to our hungry souls, the third lyric and the chorus of the hymn “I’d Rather Have Jesus” came to my mind: “He's fairer than lilies of rarest bloom; He's sweeter than honey from out the comb; He's all that my hungering spirit needs, I'd rather have Jesus and let Him lead; Than to be the king of a vast do-main; Or be held in sin's dread sway. I'd rather have Jesus than anything This world affords today.” When I think about God who gives us true freedom, the first lyrics of the gospel song ‘I am Free’ came to mind: ‘I am free, you are free, we are free (2x); The Lord says

the chains are broken, we've are free Hallelujah; I am free, you are free, we are free.' When I think about God who is leading us to the harbor of heaven, it reminds me the chorus of the hymn "With Christ as My Pilot": "I nothing can fear! I nothing can dread! For Jesus keeps watch here, and by Him I'm led. My seas may be rough, but when voy'ges are past, My haven of hope will be heaven at last." As we realize God's great love for us by giving His wonders, we are compelled to praise the hymn "O Lord my God! When I in Awesome Wonder":

1. O, Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder consider all the worlds Thy hands have made,  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, Thy power throughout the universe displayed,
2. When through the woods and forest glades I wander And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;  
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze
3. And when I think that God, His Son not sparing, Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in;  
That on the cross my burden gladly bearing, He bled and died to take away my sin;
4. When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!  
Then i shall bow in humble adoration And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!

[Chorus]

Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

Praise the Lord, O my soul,

James Kim

(With gratitude for God's great love)

## **“I will awaken the dawn!”**

### **[Psalms 108]**

The motto of our church this year is, ‘Let us continually devote ourselves to prayer.’ Considering this year’s motto, I wonder how we can assess whether our church is devoted to prayer at all. There may be several ways to evaluate that. For example, if we evaluate numerically, we can think of how many people attend once a month prayer meetings, the Wednesday night prayer meeting, and the early dawn prayer meeting on Saturday. Although we can evaluate it by the number of attendance at prayer meetings, we also need to evaluate it qualitatively. Of course this won’t be easy. Each person will have to evaluate himself or herself. In other words, whether or not the whole church members are striving to pray at all can be seen by looking at the prayers offered to God during our early dawn prayer meeting. Why the early dawn prayer meeting is because it is the first hour of the day. In order to support God the first hour of the day, the more people who come up to the Lord’s temple to pray to God and pray with thanksgiving and praise to Him, the more we can say that our church is really striving to pray for this year. It won’t be easy to wake up at dawn, which can be very tired and sleepy, and come to the Lord’s temple to offer the first hour of the day and pray to God with thanksgiving and praise. Therefore, it would be enough to say whether we must have a dawning prayer meeting or not. However, if we can wake up the dawn and start the day with thanksgiving and praise to God, we can say that such people can be said that they are awaking the dawn. Then how do the people who awaken the dawn pray? There are three things we can think of.

#### **First, those who awaken the dawn pray to God with thanksgiving and praise.**

Look at Psalms 108:3 – “I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the peoples, And I will sing praises to You among the nations.” If we look at Psalms 108, we see the psalmist David who awaken the dawn. When he prayed to God, he began to pray with thanksgiving and praise. Why did he pray to God with thanksgiving and praise? The reason is because David experienced the greatness of God’s lovingkindness and His truth. Look at verse 4: “For Your lovingkindness is great above the heavens, And Your truth reaches to the skies.” How, then, did David experience God’s great lovingkindness and truth? He experienced God’s great lovingkindness through the grace of God’s salvation (v. 6). And he experienced God’s great truth by hearing when God spoke in His holiness (v. 7).

I think it is very precious faith to be able to give thanks and praise to God for His lovingkindness and truth as we come up to the Lord’s house at dawn in the beginning of the day and pray to Him. Furthermore, if we can live a day in the Lord by giving thanks and praising the Lord, it is truly precious faith. However, I confess that I have

not been able to live this life enough before God when I look back on my last one-week life. What is the cause? In light of Psalms 108, I think the cause is that I have not fully experienced God's saving grace and His holy Word. If I have been living my spiritual life in experiencing God's deliverance and while listening to His holy Word, how would I not come up to the Lord's house at dawn and pray to God with thanksgiving and praise? Like David, who awakens the dawn, I want to pray to God with thanksgiving and praise when I come to God's house and pray to Him. I want to pray while giving praise to God with thanksgiving due to God's deliverance and because I am thrilled for hearing God's holy Word. How about you? Like David, don't you want to pray to God with thanksgiving and praise because of God's saving grace and because you are hearing His words?

### **Second, those who awaken the dawn pray for the glory of God.**

Look at Psalms 108:5 – “Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, And Your glory above all the earth.” Those who awaken the dawn humble themselves before the holy God. Never can they be proud of themselves and exalt themselves before their holy God. If they boast of themselves before God like a Pharisee and pray, they can never be said that they are awakening the dawn. Also, a prayer that prides the prayers on themselves will never be said to be true prayers. David, the prayer who awakens the dawn, prayed that only the Lord would be exalted. He prayed that only the Lord would be lifted up high and His glory would be exalted above the world. David prayed like this because he experienced God's great lovingkindness and truth. Therefore, while praising the Lord's greatness even with his soul (v. 1), David prayed that only the Lord would be exalted while praying. He prayed that the glory of God would be exalted over the whole world (v. 5).

### **Third and last, those who awaken the dawn pray for salvation from God.**

Look at Psalms 108:6 – “That Your beloved may be delivered, Save with Your right hand, and answer me!” David prayed to God with thanksgiving and praise for God's lovingkindness and truth, and also prayed for the glory of God. In the meantime, David asked God to save him from the adversary. David, who experienced God's great lovingkindness through the grace of salvation in the past, was still asking God to deliver him from his adversary. In David's prayer, we knew that deliverance by man is in vain (v. 12). Therefore, he prayed to God for His lovingkindness and truth. In particular, he knew that if God didn't reject the Israelites and went forth with their armies (v. 11), he couldn't fight against the adversary and win. That was why he only relied on the God and asked Him for deliverance.

Like David, we must also rely solely on God and pray to Him. We must know that deliverance by man is in vain, and we must ask for God's deliverance by trusting only in Him. In particular, when we fight spiritual battles, we must believe that God is the God who doesn't reject us, but who goes with us (v. 11), and ask God for help to fight our enemies and pray for victory. Those who awaken the dawn have one thing and do another thing:

(1) Those who awaken the dawn have steadfast heart.

Look at Psalms 108:1 – “My heart is steadfast, O God; I will sing, I will sing praises, even with my soul.” Those who awaken the dawn pray with thanksgiving and praise to God, and pray for the glory of God have steadfast heart while praying to God for His deliverance (salvation). This steadfast heart is God's grace given to those who fully trust in God and pray. Look at Psalms 112:7b – “... His heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.” Those who awaken the dawn have peace in their hearts because they pray with full trust in God.

(2) Those who awaken the dawn do valiantly.

Look at Psalms 108:13 – “Through God we will do valiantly, And it is He who shall tread down our adversaries.” After David relied on God completely and prayed, he acted bravely. He wasn't afraid of his adversaries and walked boldly and courageously with the assurance of victory with his armies. The reason was because he believed that God would go with him and his armies (v. 11). He also believed that God would bring him and his armies to victory and lead them to “the besieged city” (v. 10). Therefore, David acted boldly and bravely.

Dear friends, let's devote ourselves to prayer. Like the psalmist David, let's strive to become a man and woman of prayer who awakens the dawn. He prays to God with thanksgiving and praise because of His great lovingkindness and truth. Also, like David, let's pray, “Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, And Your glory above all the earth” (v. 5). Let's ask God for deliverance (salvation). Then God will give us steadfast heart and courage. Let us have strong heart that cannot be shaken, and walk bravely for the glory of the Lord.

Wanting to be a man of prayer who awakens the dawn,

James Kim

(As times goes by, learning to rely on God more and more and pray to Him)



## **“But I am in prayer”**

### **[Psalms 109]**

Who will God use? Yesterday, while exercising at YMCA and listening to a lecture by a president of Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte on MP3, there was a word that came to my heart among the words God wrote about Moses. It was the word about Moses' 120 years of life by dividing it into three parts that show how God gradually prepared Moses in order to use him: (1) When Moses was in Egypt for 40 years, he thought he was SOMETHING, (2) When Moses was in Midian for 40 years, he began to understand that he was NOTHING, (3) When Moses led the Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years, he knew that God used NOTHING. As I listened to this lecture, I thought about where I am now. Perhaps it goes back and forth between (1) and (2). I often mistake myself thinking that I am SOMETHING. Then God loves me and teaches me that I am nothing. That SOMETHING seems to be making me greedy and arrogant. Whenever I do, God is leading me into the wilderness and humbles me. God makes me quiet before Him alone, and exposes my sins in my heart with His holy words and makes me to repent my sins. I am comforted and strengthened by God's tender words to me (Hos 2:14). I remember the words of Mark 9:29 – “And He said to them, ‘This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer.’” Just as Jesus taught us that we cannot cast out demons except by prayer, it seems that we only have prayer to empty our sinful things such as greed and pride.

In Psalms 109:4, the psalmist David says: “In return for my love they act as my accusers; But I am in prayer.” This means that David loved his enemies, but his enemies were against David. In such situation, David said, “... But I am in prayer” (v. 4). How, then, did David's enemies resist David? They opposed David with evil words. Look at verses 2-3: “For they have opened the wicked and deceitful mouth against me; They have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, And fought against me without cause.” David's enemies made violent wickedness to harm David (‘wicked mouth’) and also tried to harm David with false words (‘deceitful mouth’). Furthermore, they oppressed David, who had no transgressions, forcing him to be guilty (“fought against me without cause”) (Park). David's enemies repaid David evil for good and hatred for his love (v. 5).

The tongue is indeed beneficial, but at the same time, there are scary aspects. The beneficial side of the tongue is that, of course, we can preach the gospel, speak good words, comfort and encourage others, and have gracious words. But the scary side of the tongue is it hurts and injures others. It also slander, spread lies and rumors, and even bury a person. Not long ago, there was an article on CNN Internet news about a 13-year-old girl who took

her own life. Maygan Meyer, 13, a girl from Missouri, USA, met a boy named Josh Evans, 16, at Myspace, an American online relationship' site. She fell in love with Josh because he tempted her with such word as 'You are sexy.' As they kept sending and receiving each other's messages, Josh said that he was suddenly leaving. So Maygan clung onto him and told him to come back. But Josh sent a message saying, 'Without you, the world would be a better place' and Maygan hanged herself 20 minutes later and eventually died. Maygan's parents soon discovered that Josh was actually a woman in the same neighborhood, Lori Drew, 17 (Internet). In this case, the mother of a friend of a girl who committed suicide, disguised as a boy and dating a girl on the Internet site 'My Space'. She later inflicted a deep wound with a violent swearing or ill-treatment, and eventually the girl committed suicide. I think it is an event that sounds the alarm about the danger of malicious rumors or malicious comments spreading across the Internet. So, the apostle James says, "But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison" (Jam. 3:8).

David's enemies opposed David with their tongues, the a restless evil and full of deadly poison. They loved cursing, and they were also clothed themselves with cursing as with their garments (Ps. 109:17-18). They were not happy to bless others. Rather, they rejoiced and liked to curse. Why did David's enemies like to curse David? David said the reason: "Because he did not remember to show lovingkindness, But persecuted the afflicted and needy man, And the despondent in heart, to put them to death" (v. 16). David's enemies were those who didn't think of any compassion for the poor and needy and the broken hearted. Rather, they persecuted and tried to kill the poor, needy, and broken hearts. These cruel people opposed David. They cursed David with their tongues. In this situation, David prayed to God. NIV says "I am a man of prayer" and NASB says "But I am in prayer". In other words, David said, "But I am praying" in the situation where his enemies were cursing and trying to harm him with their evil tongue. The literal translation of the original Hebrew language is 'But I prayer'. This means that David himself is praying. In other words, it means that his life was made up of prayer (Park). So, what was David's prayer content? We can think of it in two main ways (Park):

(1) David prayed for God's discipline to come upon his enemies (Ps. 109:6-20).

David prayed to God that the wicked would control his enemies (v. 6). They deserve to be condemned, and their prayers are only temporary flattery, not genuine prayers of repentance, so they are bound to be condemned rather than receiving God's answer (v. 7). Psalms 109:8-16 is a prayer that David asks God for his enemies, the evil ones, to be punished (Park). And the prayer of verses 17-20 is a prayer asking God to repay his enemies who love to curse him.

(2) David prayed for God's deliverance (Ps. 109:21-31).

This prayer of deliverance that David offered to God was a prayer that God saw his pitiful situation and was compassionate to save him (vv. 22-25). He said that he was afflicted and needy, and that his heart was

wounded (v. 22). And he was passing like a shadow when it lengthened (v. 23) and his knees were weak from fasting (v. 24). That was why he relied on God's lovingkindness and asked God for help and deliverance (v. 26). David prayed that his enemies would know that God had saved him (v. 27). And he had assurance of salvation (v. 28). He surely believed that God would stand at his right hand, the needy, and deliver him from his enemies. Also, David prayed to God that even if his enemies poured a curse on him, He would turn the curse back and bless him (v. 28). And he prayed to God that his enemies (v. 18), who clothed themselves with cursing as with their garments, "let them cover themselves with their own shame as with a robe" (v. 29). Relying on God's lovingkindness, he prayed to God, and he was convinced that God would answer his prayers. So he decided: "With my mouth I will give thanks abundantly to the LORD; And in the midst of many I will praise Him" (v. 30).

Let us pray like David no matter what difficulties, adversities, and unfair circumstances we may face. Even if our enemies try to harm us with evil words, let us always pray as if we were saying "But I am in prayer" (v. 4). God will punish our enemies and deliver us from their hands. Therefore, we will greatly give thanksgiving and praise to our God with our mouths.

"But I am in prayer",

James Kim

(As I trust in God's great lovingkindness)

## **“Your youth are to You as the dew”**

### **[Psalms 110]**

Last Sunday, I participated in the 4th Cell Bible Study and studied about “The spiritual war belonging to the Lord”. As we studied, we discussed the biggest battlegrounds each of us faced in the ‘Open Heart’ section. I shared that the great battleground is my home, my work, my relationship with people, and my inner self. At the same time, we asked each one the question, ‘Are we properly armed in this spiritual war?’ The reason is because we cannot win this big fight without properly armed. Are we wearing the full armor of God? Are we armed with the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the gospel of peace as shoes, and the word of God as the sword of the Holy Spirit? Are we fighting well with the word and faith of God in the spiritual war we are fighting now? Are we fighting with the assurance of salvation? Are we using it as an opportunity to experience and share the gospel of peace?

Personally, I lost my own big battlefield on the next Monday, the fight with my inner self, after last Sunday's section bible study. When I couldn't sleep late on Monday night, I looked back at myself on the living room sofa, I remembered the words I had preached. I remembered the words “their heart was hardened” (Mk. 6:52) that I proclaimed at the dawn of last Friday and Saturday and Sunday English Ministry service and ‘for the sake of salvation’ (Acts 27:27-44) that I proclaimed at the Sunday Korean Ministry service. And I saw myself not being able to keep peace in my heart and disobeying God’s word as I harden my heart. Even though I knew what was proclaimed, when I saw myself, who had lived a day with intentionally rebelling against His words that I proclaimed all day long and thinking of sinful thoughts at my own will, my heart was heavy and I was disappointed by myself again. Looking at my own weaknesses, inadequacies, worthlessness, and sinfulness, I sought God's mercy and grace while facing my inner self who had fought and defeated by my old sinful nature. I confessed my sins to God, admitted and asked for forgiveness. Then, at the early Morning Prayer meeting on Tuesday, when I talked about my spiritual battle with myself on Monday, and when I prayed to God, I remembered Philippians 4:6-7 among the words proclaimed during the Sunday Korean service. Then I prayed to God with thanksgiving. And I decided and determined to be grateful. In the midst of that, God allowed me to have peace in my heart on Tuesday and let me taste the joy of victory.

In order to win this spiritual war that belongs to God, we must be raised up as the young men of the Lord like the dew in the morning mentioned in 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.” I first heard this phrase at

Seohyun Church in Korea. I heard it for the first time when an assistant pastor in charge of young adult referred to Seohyun's young people as 'The Lord's young people like the morning dew.' At that time, I thought it was a really good phrase without knowing the meaning. Then, while meditating on Psalms 110, I saw the phrase "Your youth are to You as the dew". And I began to meditate on what kind of people are the youth who are to the Lord as the dew. I would like to think of three things. In the midst of that, I pray that all of us will be raised up as the youth of the Lord like the morning dew so that we can win our spiritual battle.

**First, the young men of the Lord who are like the morning dew are those who are willing to devote themselves to the Lord.**

The young men of the Lord like the morning dew refer to those who are willingly or cheerfully devoted to the Lord Jesus, who is the commander on the day of the Lord's power, that is, the day of the Lord's war. These young men like the morning dew who joyfully devoted themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, who rose from the death and ascended to heaven and who sat at the right hand of God and reigning as the King of Heaven (v. 1), are countless numbers (Internet). In other words, the countless young men of the Lord who have joyfully devoted themselves to Christ and for His church represent the Lord's spiritual army (Park). The Lord's youth, like the morning dew, that is the Lord's spiritual army, are the good soldiers of Christ Jesus. In other words, these are the good soldiers of Christ Jesus who suffer hardship with the Lord, who aren't entangled themselves in the affairs of everyday life, so that they may please the Lord who enlisted them as a soldier (2 Tim. 2:3-4).

The Lord has recruited us into His army. We are the young men of the Lord who are like the morning dew who joyfully devote ourselves to the Lord who is the captain. We must strive to become the Lord's good soldiers as the Lord's spiritual soldiers recruited into the Lord's army. In order to do so, we must participate in His suffering, knowing that suffering with the Lord is God's grace (Phil 1:29; 3:10). And we should try not to get stuck in our own lives but to please the Lord who has recruited us. In order to please Jesus, the commander of the army as the good soldiers of the Lord, we must be loyal to Him and obey His commands. We must dedicate ourselves to Jesus, the commander, and to obey His words.

**Second, the young men of the Lord who are like the morning dew are those of holy character.**

The morning dew is freshness without dust. Therefore, the Lord's youth who are like the morning dew refers to the Lord's young men who are pure like the clearness of the bright dew shining in the morning light (Internet). The Lord's young and pure men were in holy array (v. 3). In other words, the Lord's young men who are like the morning dew are the Lord's holy spiritual soldiers on the day of the Lord's war. Then, what kind of war is the war in which the spiritual soldiers of the Lord go to the war of the Lord and fight by relying on Jesus, the

commander? It's a holy spiritual war. We, who are in this holy spiritual war, must shine like dew as the Lord's holy spiritual soldiers. In other words, as we fight this dark world, we must shine the holy light of the Lord. To do this, we must expose and rebuke the unfruitful deeds of darkness (Eph. 5:11, 13). By no means should we, as the holy soldiers of the Lord, participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness (v. 11). Therefore, as the Lord's holy spiritual soldiers, we must give glory to the holy Lord as we triumph in holy spiritual war.

**Third and last, the young men of the Lord who are like the morning dew are those who overcome the world with renewed strength.**

As the Lord's holy soldiers and the young men of the Lord who are like the morning dew who engage in the holy spiritual war are triumphant in spiritual warfare by receiving fresh strength from Jesus Christ who is sitting at the right hand of God. The Lord's young men who are like the morning dew and who are in this holy spiritual war know that their struggle is not against the flesh and blood (Eph. 6:12). In other words, they keep in mind that the spiritual warfare is against "the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (v. 12). Therefore, the Lord's spiritual soldiers who are like the morning dew must wear the full armor of God. Especially in the fight against evil spirits, they must sharpen their only weapon, the sword of the Spirit. We must fight spiritual warfare by sharpening our minds and hearts with the Word of God, and by praying with sound judgment and sober spirit (1 Pet. 4:7). Never should the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word and make it unfruitful (Mt. 13:22). We cannot win if we fight spiritual war while we are spiritually dull. We must fight against ourselves, sins, the world, and Satan by faith in Jesus, with assurance of victory. This should be the image of the church. We must all live a combative life with assurance of victory.

What does the church really need to fight in spiritual warfare as the Lord's youth (armies) who are like the morning dew? It is the new strength that is supplied from the Lord every day, every moment. We must receive the new strength from the Lord, who overcame death, resurrected, and ascended to heaven, sitting at the right hand of God so that we can gain strength and win in this holy spiritual war. In order to obtain the new strength that the Lord provides, we must listen to God's quiet voice in the quiet hearts. As the dew falls silently in the middle of the night, we must be refreshed because we hear God's small voice in the quiet hearts. In order for us to fight and win spiritual war, we must never be weakened. Rather, in order to fight against the forces of injustice and sin, we must be provided with the strength that the Lord gives us daily. We need the power of God's Word, the sword of the Holy Spirit. We need the power of the gospel. Also, in order for the church to win in spiritual warfare, we need the power of prayer.

If we look at Exodus 17:15, we find the word "The Lord is our Banner". When Israel and Amalek fought at Rephidim, Moses raised his hand and prayed, then Israel won (v. 11). When Moses' hand didn't come down for

the sun to go down, Israel triumphed and built an altar and named it Jehovah Nissi (v. 15). The power that triumphed in the war was God's power in answering Moses' prayer (Internet). Today, we must hear this word and pray. We must not let go of our prayers in order to win our spiritual battle we face, the great spiritual war we are currently fighting in. As the young men of the Lord who are like the morning dew, we should be joyful and devoted to the Lord. And as good soldiers of the Lord, we must shine the light of God's holiness. We are the Lord's holy spiritual soldiers. We must fight this dark world and reveal the holiness of the Lord. We must receive the new strength from the Lord day by day and moment by moment in order to win the spiritual battles given to us. Therefore, I hope and pray that we can put the flag of victory, that is 'Jehovah Nissi' or "The Lord is My Banner" in our battlefield.

Wanting to live a militant Christian life with assurance of victory,

James Kim

(After singing the hymn "There's a Royal Banner" with my church members at the Wednesday night prayer meeting)

## **“A good understanding”**

### **[Psalms 111]**

Last night, I was reading John chapters 11-13, and my gaze stopped at John 13:2 – “During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him.” Then I continued to read the Bible, and read another passage about Judas Iscariot, John 13:27 – “After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, ‘What you do, do quickly.’” As I meditated on the words of these two verses, I thought Judas Iscariot, who wasn’t able to fight spiritually in the realm of thought, and eventually became deceived by Satan and let the thought of selling Jesus come into his heart and let it grow. Why do you think Judas Iscariot has come from the through realm of selling Jesus to the action realm of selling Jesus? I found the answer in John 12:4-6: “But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, ‘Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?’ Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.” In John 12:4-6, when Mary, at the house of Lazarus living in Bethany, took very costly perfume of pure nard and pour it on Jesus’ feet, and wipe His feet with her hair (v. 3), Judas Iscariot told Mary, “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?” (v. 5) The reason Judas Iscariot said so wasn’t because he thought of the poor, but because he thought of money. He was a thief in charge of the money box and stealing what people put in there (v. 6). In other words, Judas Iscariot was a money lover. As a result, the Satan put the thought of selling Jesus into the heart of Judas Iscariot (13:2). In other words, the Satan put the idea of selling Jesus in the mind of Judas Iscariot who loved money. And this thought matured, and Satan entered Judas Iscariot (13:27) and eventually Judas Iscariot sold Jesus to the high priests for thirty silver (Mt. 26:15, 26:46-50).

As I meditated on these words, I remembered the words of James 1:15 – “Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.” In the end, Judas Iscariot, who loved money which is “a root of all sorts of evil“ (1 Tim. 6:10), accepted the thought of selling Jesus in his heart when the devil put that thought in him. He didn’t guard his heart and thus he was deceived. As a result, the sin of thought matured and brought forth the fruit of sin. As I meditated on the life and death of Judas Iscariot, who grew a tree with bitter roots and eventually bears rotten fruit, I came to rethink the importance of fighting thoughts. When the devil puts bad and sinful thoughts in me, I reaffirmed my responsibility to fight with good thoughts. To do that, we must meditate on the Word of God day and night. In the midst of that, we must have understanding through the Word of God. What is this understanding? James Pecker said in his book, “Guard Us Guide Us: Divine Leading in Life’s Decision,” that understanding means understanding how to live by obeying God’s revelation. Wisdom is above all



understanding (Packer). Furthermore, wisdom includes taking realizations into action carefully (Packer). This is referred to as “a good understanding” in Psalms 111:10. I would like to receive God's grace from Psalms 110, focusing on verse 10, as I think about how to get good understanding under the title of “A good understanding”.

How can we get the good understanding? The answer can be found in Psalms 111:10 – “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever.” The Bible says that in order for us to gain good understanding, we must keep the commandments of God. Then, what is the commandments of God that the psalmist speaking here? It is to fear God (v. 10). What really is fearing God? I mainly thought of the fear of God is to hate evil (Prov. 8:13). Of course, I don't think I'm wrong because that is what the Bible says. But while I was reading James Packer's book “Guard Us Guide Us: Divine Leading in Life's Decision,” I realized that I didn't know what it was to fear God. ‘Fear has nothing to do with fear,’ Packer said. He said, ‘Fearing God means respecting Him. Fear refers to an attitude that looks up to God's greatness and at the same time actively acts to obey Him and make Him happy’ (Packer). As I read this saying, I came to realize that fearing God is of course obeying God's Word and hating evil, but it goes further that fearing God is praising and worshiping the greatness of God. So, what must we do to praise and worship the greatness of the Lord? I came up with three answers to this question in Psalms 111. I hope and pray that we will be able to gain good understanding through praising and worshiping the greatness of the Lord by learning and practicing these three biblical principles.

**First, in order for us to praise and worship the Lord's greatness, we must all study the Lord's works.**

Look at Psalms 111:2 – “Great are the works of the LORD; They are studied by all who delight in them.” Specifically, the “work of the Lord” referred to here is that God brought the Israelites out of Egypt by bringing down ten plagues through Moses (v. 4), that God gave manna, quail, and water for food in the wilderness (v. 5) and gave Canaan, the promised land, to the Israelites as an inheritance (v. 6). This “work of the Lord” refers to the “redemption” God gave to the Israelites (v. 9). Why did the psalmist say that those who enjoyed God's great work of salvation that God gave to the Israelites at the time of the Exodus in the past should be studied? The reason is to learn more about the saving work that God gave to the Israelites in the past, and to believe that God's saving righteousness will be eternal in the present and in the future (v. 3) (Park). In short, the reason why we should study God's works in detail is for our faith and assurance. The kind of faith and assurance is that of salvation.

We must study the works of God's salvation in the Bible for faith and assurance that God, who accomplished the work of salvation in the past, saves us from the hardships and difficulties we face in the present. Among those studies, Joseph is my personal favorite God's work of salvation. God delivered Joseph from his older brothers, from Potiphar and his wife, and from prison, so in the end, God sent Joseph ahead of them to save the life

of Jacob's family (Gen. 45:5). Therefore, God made the Israelites prosper in Egypt, and about 400 years later, through Moses, He delivered all the Israelites and led them to Canaan, the Promised Land. The work of God's salvation in Joseph's life indicates that Jesus, who is the true Joseph, saved us through life and death and led us to the promised land of heaven. Therefore, even if we face such a crisis unjustly like Joseph, we can have trust and assurance that God will save us and bring all things together for good. For this faith and assurance of salvation, we must study in detail and diligently the work of God's salvation in the Bible. Therefore, in understanding, we must praise and worship the Lord who is great.

**Second, in order for us to praise and worship the Lord's greatness, we must all remember the Lord's works.**

Look at Psalms 11:4 – “He has made His wonders to be remembered; The LORD is gracious and compassionate.” God, who is gracious and merciful, reminded the Israelites of the psalmist's time to remember the work of salvation that He had done to the Israelites during the Exodus. What was the purpose? The purpose was to reveal that God is the faithful covenant God who remembered and established the covenant He made with the Israelites (vv. 5, 9).

Our God is the God who makes us remember the works of salvation and the wonders that He has done in our lives. Therefore, no matter what kind of adversity and hardship we face in our present life, He gives us the faith and assurance that God will save us even the present adversity and hardships because it reminds us of the works of salvation in the past. Therefore, we can sing the fourth lyric of the hymn “O, Lord my God! When I in Awesome Wonder”: “When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart! Then I shall bow in humble adoration And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!” Our Lord, who faithfully fulfills the covenant He have made with us, has already begun salvation, which is a good work within us, and at the moment Jesus Christ comes again, He will complete our salvation. Therefore, we will praise and worship His greatness in heaven all the days of our lives.

**Third and last, in order for us to praise and worship the Lord's greatness, we must all delight in the Lord's works.**

Look at Psalms 111:2 – “Great are the works of the LORD; They are studied by all who delight in them.” The great work that the Lord did to the Israelites at the time of the Exodus was “redemption.” Here, “redemption” refers to God's given grace of salvation by paying the price of His Son Jesus' death on the cross by shedding His precious blood just as God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt by telling the Israelites to put the sheep blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts during the tenth plague. Look at 1 Peter 1:18-19: “knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but

with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”

Therefore, we can sing the first lyric of the hymn “I Know not Why God’s Wondrous Grace”: “I know not why God's wondrous grace To me He hath made Known, Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love Redeemed me for His own.” The reason is because we have “the joy of Your salvation” (Ps. 51:12). We must enjoy the great work, splendid and majestic of God's salvation (111:2, 3). And with the joy of the Lord's salvation, we must praise and worship God. I hope and pray that all of us will be able to glorify God by gaining good understanding by obeying His commandment to fear God, that is, to praise and worship the greatness of the Lord.

“Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee How great Thou art, how great Thou art! Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee How great Thou art, how great Thou art!” (The chorus of the hymn “O, Lord my God! When I in Awesome Wonder”),

James Kim

(Remembering the great works of salvation the Lord has done throughout my life)

**I will give thanks to God with all my heart  
and will praise Him forever.**

**“Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart, In the company of the upright and in the assembly. ... The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever.” (Psalms 111:1, 10)**

In commemoration of the 34th anniversary of the founding of Victory Presbyterian Church, we are holding a revival meeting. Yesterday Friday, the message God gave me through the pastor’s sermon was ‘Only by the saving grace of the Holy Triune God’ (Eph. 1:3-14). I was told that God the Father loved sinners like me and chose me before creation, Jesus the Son redeemed me by dying on the cross, and God the Holy Spirit sealed and guaranteed me. After receiving this message, we all praised God with the gospel song “How great is Your love.” That night, I sat in a chair in the church's pastoral room, looked for the gospel song on the Internet YouTube and listened to it over and over again (singing and playing the violin). Particularly when I heard the song being played by a young sister in Christ on the violin, I was thrilled. After that, I started reading Psalms 119, which should be read at the Morning Prayer meeting for the last day of the Morning Prayer meeting in preparation for the revival meeting, and then went back and meditated on Psalms 111, which I had already meditated on during the Morning Prayer meeting this week. As I read and read the words of Psalms 111, I focused on the words of verse 1b and verse 10b.

In Psalms 11:1, 10, the psalmist gave thanks to God with all his heart and said that praising God should continue forever. What was the reason? The reason was because the great works that God had done (v. 2). He was pleased with the great works God had done, so he studied them (v. 2). In particular, he studied what God did to the Israelites in the past of Exodus, which can be divided into three steps:

**The first step is that God brought the Israelites out of the hands of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, through Moses, by bringing 10 plagues to Egypt.**

Look at Psalms 111:4 – “He has made His wonders to be remembered; The LORD is gracious and compassionate.” Here what were God's wonders remembered by the psalmist? These were the 10 plagues that God brought upon Egypt at the time of the Exodus. The psalmist not only remembered but studied these great wonders of God (v. 2). This was the confession of the psalmist who studied His wonders: “The Lord is gracious and compassionate” (v. 4). Like the psalmist, we also should enjoy the great wonders God has done in our lives. And

we must study them. As we look back on our past, we must remember the wonders God has done for us. The wonder of God we must remember is that through Jesus, the true Moses, He delivered us from the kingdom of Satan, that is like Egypt. How did God set us free and deliver us from the kingdom of Satan that we used to be slaves to sin? That is, God delivered us from the Satan's kingdom by making Jesus, the begotten Son, who is the Lamb of the Passover, to die on the cross like the tenth plague that fell on Egypt. When we remember this great wonder of God, we must confess, like the psalmist, that God is gracious and compassionate' (v. 4).

### **The second step is that God gave food to the Israelites in the wilderness.**

Look at Psalms 111:5 – “He has given food to those who fear Him; He will remember His covenant forever.” Not only did the psalmist remember and study the great wonder of God who delivered the Israelites from Egypt, but also he remembered and studied God’s feeding the Israelites for 40 years in the wilderness. He remembered all the way which the Lord God had led the Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years (Deut. 8:2). And he remembered God feeding them with manna (v. 3). When God rained down manna upon them and fed the Israelites to eat and gave them food from heaven (Ps. 78:24), the confession of the psalmist was “He will remember His covenant forever” (111:5, 9). Like the psalmist, we must rejoice in the great wonders that have been done by God in our lives and study them. As we look back on our past, we must remember that God has given us daily bread. In particular, we must remember the heavenly food that God gave us, that is Jesus. In other words, we must remember Jesus, who is the bread of life (Jn. 6:48). We must remember the eternal covenant that God made with Jesus. Although the first Adam disobeyed the word of the covenant made by God, Jesus, the second Adam, obeyed the word of God until He was crucified and died. As a result, God has forgiven all our sins and saved us according to the promise made with Jesus. We are forgiven and saved in Jesus Christ and have eternal life. Therefore, we who have this eternal life must confess, like the psalmist, “Holy and awesome is His name” (v. 9).

### **The third step is that God gave the Israelites Canaan, the promised land, as an inheritance.**

Look at Psalms 111:6 – “He has made known to His people the power of His works, In giving them the heritage of the nations.” What is the inheritance that God gave to His people, Israel? It was the land of Canaan, which is “the heritage of the nations” (v. 6). God showed His power by giving the Promised Land, Canaan, to the Israelites (v. 6). God was with Joshua and the Israelites and made them to conquer the land of Canaan (Josh. 18:1). God destroyed the seven tribes of the land of Canaan and gave it to the Israelites as an inheritance (Acts 13:19). The true “Joshua” is Jesus (the meaning of the two names is the same – “God is salvation”). And the true “land of Canaan” is heaven. God gave us forgiveness of sins (redemption) and salvation (eternal life) through Jesus' death on the cross. And God became our inheritance (Deut. 10:9). Because of the Lord, who is our eternal hope, we have come to “a better country” (Heb. 11:16). We, who experience this power of salvation, must confess like the psalmist:

“The works of His hands are truth and justice; All His precepts are sure. They are upheld forever and ever; They are performed in truth and uprightness” (Ps. 111:7-8). We say, ‘The work of salvation that God does is truth and justice. We must confess, “They are performed in truth and uprightness” (vv. 7-8).

What was the psalmist's confession when he studied the great works that God did to the Israelites? Look at Psalms 111:3 – “Splendid and majestic is His work, And His righteousness endures forever.” What is ‘the work of God’ here? It is “redemption” (v. 9). God redeemed the Israelites and saved them. The psalmist realized that the saving righteousness of God stood forever and confessed, ‘God is splendid and majestic’ (v. 3). And he said, ‘I will give thanks to the Lord with all my heart. I will continue to praise Him forever’ (vv. 1, 10). Like the psalmist, let us remember and study the great work of salvation that God has done for us, so we wholeheartedly can give thanks to God and praise God forever.

With the redemptive grace of Jesus, who became the Passover Lamb who died on the cross to deliver such sinner like me from the kingdom of Satan,

James Kim

(Going toward that heaven, following the guidance of the Shepherd Lord in this wilderness-like world)

## The blessing of those who keep God's commandments

### [Psalms 112]

Today, I came to church with my two daughters, Yeri and Yeun, by car to attend the Wednesday prayer meeting. In the car, Yeri read a book to Yeun about a dull rabbit mom, a duller rabbit dad, and a dullest child. After I heard this, I told as a joke that the children that the story was somewhat similar to our home. Yeri continued reading to Yeun maybe because she couldn't hear what I said or maybe she heard it as a joke. Haha. But after few seconds, Yeun said, 'Then I am dullest since I am the youngest child in our home.' When I heard this, I thought that Yeun was disappointed. So I said to fix it: 'It isn't important to be smart, but effort is important.' I learned a spiritual lesson from this conversation. The lesson is that in order not to be spiritually dull, we must devote ourselves to meditate on the Word of God diligently. And through that meditative word, I think that I should become a person who listens to and follows the voice of the Lord, the Shepherd.

Focusing on the words of Psalms 111 that we meditated before, we thought about "a good understanding" (v. 10). We have been taught that in order to gain good understanding, we must obey God's commandments (v. 10). We also learned that the commandments of God is to fear God (v. 10), and to fear God is to praise and worship the greatness of the Lord. And we are taught that in order to praise and worship the Lord's greatness, we must study, remember, and rejoice in His works. We have learned to live wisely in this world through the good understanding by keeping the commandments of God. In Psalms 112:1, the psalmist encourages us to greatly delight in His commandments: "Praise the LORD! How blessed is the man who fears the LORD, Who greatly delights in His commandments." The Bible says that when we greatly delight in God's commandments, we will be blessed. I hope and pray that we will be able to enjoy the same blessing as we keep God's commandments while meditating on what are the blessing of those who keep the commandments of God based on Psalms 112.

**First, the blessing of those who keep God's commandments is that their descendants will be blessed as well.**

Look at Psalms 112:2 – "His descendants will be mighty on earth; The generation of the upright will be blessed." One of the things our parents of faith want the most is the desire to pass on their faith to their descendants. But does it go the way we want now? I am sure you know better that it doesn't go the way we want to nurture our children. Indeed, what can we as parents do to pass on a legacy of faith to our children and descendants? As taught in Psalms 112, we must first fear God, and that fear must be demonstrated by keeping God's commandments. We

must not hand over incredible wealth to our descendants, but hand over the teaching of revering the living God (Park). We parents must obey God's commandments with fear of God, even in order for our children and descendants to be blessed. In a word, we must be “upright” (v. 2). Then, even after we die, God will bless our children and our descendants so that they will become powerful on this earth. Let us keep in mind that even after we die, in order for our children and descendants to remain powerful in this harsh world, we must keep the commandments of God diligently with fear of God.

**Second, the blessing of those who keep God's commandments is the abundance of wealth.**

Look at Psalms 112:3 – “Wealth and riches are in his house, And his righteousness endures forever.” Those who fear God and keep His commandments receive material blessings. In other words, those who keep God's commandments are truly rich. So what kind of person is truly rich? A true rich man may not have a lot of wealth, but he always feels satisfied and gives relief because he has God as an inheritance. If he isn't satisfied with a lot of wealth, such person is a slave of greed and vainness and life, but never rich (Park). But the true rich man is “gracious and compassionate and righteous” (v. 4). He lives his life by helping others (Park). How can we become truly rich? In other words, how can riches be enriched? The reason is because those who fear God and those who keep His commandments also possessed “righteousness” (v. 3, Park). In other words, it means that God sees our righteousness and gives us material blessings. Those who fear God and keep His commandments have eternal righteousness (vv. 3, 9). Therefore, God blesses their houses with rich wealth. Therefore, there is contentment in their hearts.

**Third, the blessing of those who keep God's commandments is that they receive God's grace.**

Look at Psalms 112:4 – “Light arises in the darkness for the upright; He is gracious and compassionate and righteous.” God already rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col. 1:13). We no longer belong to this dark world (Jn. 17:14). But living in this dark world, there are times when we are dark in the fear of God and striving to keep His commandments. But even in such darkness, God allows the light to rise. In other words, we receive God's grace even in a difficult life, such as sickness and tribulation (Park). But when the upright person dwells in darkness, God shines the light on him and delivers him. Therefore, those who fear God and keep His commandments enjoy the greater grace of God in darkness.

**Fourth, the blessing of those who keep God's commandments is that they are well.**

Look at Psalms 112:5 – “It is well with the man who is gracious and lends; He will maintain his cause in



judgment.” Those who fear God and those who keep His commandments show the grace of God they have received to others. They are gracious and lends (v. 5). Look at verse 9: “He has given freely to the poor, His righteousness endures forever; His horn will be exalted in honor.” He who fears God and keep His commandments lends to others. In other words, he lives a life of service. Therefore, he is well. Look at Proverbs 11:24-25: “There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more, And there is one who withholds what is justly due, and yet it results only in want. The generous man will be prosperous, And he who waters will himself be watered.” The reason why he becomes even more rich even though he scatters relief is because while God's righteousness to save others continues, his wealth does not fluctuate (Park). The secret to doing this well is to far God and keep His commandments. One of the commandments to keep is to do everything in justice. Look at Micah 6:8 – “He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?” It is good to do everything in justice. This is the secret to be well. The wicked, who are envious of the prosperity of the righteous, who are doing well will see it and be vexed, will gnash his teeth and melt away. “The desire of the wicked will perish” (v. 10).

**Fifth and last, the blessing of those who keep God's commandments is that their hearts are upheld.**

Look at Psalms 112:8 – “His heart is upheld, he will not fear, Until he looks with satisfaction on his adversaries.” Why are those who fear God and those who keep His commandments strong in heart and not afraid of the “bad news”? (v. 7) The reason is because they hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord (v. 7). In the midst of that, those who fear God and keep His commandments are not afraid because they provide relief to the poor (Park). There is no fear in love for the poor because it is to love their neighbor (1 Jn. 4:18). The reason is because perfect love drives out fear. We too must be steadfast in our hearts because we keep His commandments in the fear of God. We should not be afraid to hear any “bad news” from the wicked. As we completely trust in God, our hearts must be steadfast.

Those who fear God and keep His commandments are blessed. Even their descendants are blessed. They are blessed with material things. They receive the grace of God. And those who keep God's commandments do well. They aren't afraid. The reason is because their hearts are strong. May we have these blessings.

Wanting to be blessed by keeping the commandments of God,

James Kim

(Longing for the joy of obeying His word)

## **“Praise, O servants of the Lord”**

### **[Psalms 113]**

What is praise? An internet post says that praise can be a self-diagnostic method to diagnose one's spiritual condition: ‘If you want to know your spiritual state right now, you can take a look at the songs that often hang in your mouth these days. If you are lonely, you will sing a song about loneliness. And if you are desperate, a pessimistic and sad song will flow from your mouth. The same goes for the spiritual state. If you look at the praises that often come out of your mouth, you can immediately see your spiritual condition. If you are singing “There is none like You”, then you probably need comfort and healing. Our mouths express what is in us. But even more surprising is the fact that changing the song of our mouth also changes our condition. If you want to change your spiritual state, you can change the praise of your lips. God loves songs, so He will hear the praise of our lips and He will work as it is’ (Internet). I think it makes sense to say that we change our spiritual condition by changing the praise of our lips. Of course I think this is impossible without God’s grace. It can only be done by faith. Without faith, for example, it would be impossible to praise the hymn “How Great Thou Art” in a painful and hurting heart. Of course, we can forcibly sing it with our lips. But as we praise the hymn to God, our own spiritual condition will not change. However, when we look to God with faith, the Holy Spirit changes our hearts when we praise. Furthermore, as we can see in Acts 16, as a miracle happened when Paul and Silas in prison prayed and praised God, God not only changes our spiritual condition when we praise God with faith but also He will change the situation.

Therefore, we must praise God. In Psalms 113:1, the psalmist exhorts, “Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD, Praise the name of the LORD.” Here, “servants of the Lord” are those who are in a lowly position for God (Park). This word teaches us that we must be humble in our faith, know God right away, and give proper praise to Him (Park). We must praise the name of the Lord from this time forth and forever in lowly places (v. 2). That is, in time perspective, we must praise God forever.’ Also, the whole world with us must humbly praise God from the rising of the sun to its setting (v. 3). So why should we praise God forever in our lowly position? Two reasons can be seen in the text.

### **The first reason is because God is high above all nations.**

Look at Psalms 113:4-5: “The LORD is high above all nations; His glory is above the heavens. Who is like the LORD our God, Who is enthroned on high.” When I think of these words, I think of the hymn “How Great Art Thou”. He who praises the high and great of the Lord knows how high and great his God is. And knowing that God

is high and great, he cannot help but praises, “Then I shall bow in humble adoration And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!” In other words, a believer who knows the high and great of the Lord has no choice but to humble himself. Therefore, he humbly bows down and praises the high and great of the Lord. The psalmist encourages us to give proper praise to God by humbly getting to know who God is. That proper praise refers to the praise of knowing God’s highness. In Psalms 113, the psalmist exhorts us to praise the glory of God high above all nations and above the heavens and glorious God who is enthroned on high forever (vv. 4-5). How can we know that God is high and great so that we can bring the praise and glory that deserve to Him? Of course, we can know it through the Word of God (special revelation) and also through the natural world created by God (natural revelation). One suggestion is to study God’s great works (111:2), meditate and remember (v. 4), so that we can realize the high and greatness of the Lord. In other words, as we remember, meditate, and rejoice in God’s great work of salvation in our lives, we can praise God worthy by knowing the high and greatness of the Lord.

### **The second reason is because God humbled Himself.**

Look at Psalms 113:6 – “Who humbles Himself to behold The things that are in heaven and in the earth?” The reason why we should praise God is because God is humbled and looks down and sees all mankind. Among the psalms we have already meditated on, there is a saying that God considers everything we do: “From heaven the LORD looks down and sees all mankind; from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth - he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do” (33:13-15).; “God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there is anyone who understands, Who seeks after God” (53:2). What kind of people are those whom God humbles Himself and looks down? They are “the poor”, “the needy” (v. 7), and “the barren woman” (v. 9). In other words, those whom God humbles Himself and behold are the poor, the lowly and those who have no alternative (those who can’t do anything). God is looking for those who are truly in poverty (Park). God beholds them, raises them from the dust, lifts them from the ash heap (v. 7) and makes them sit with princes of His people (v. 8). The reason we should praise God is that the Most High God humbles Himself and merciful with the lowly (Park). When I meditate on God’s sympathy, I remember the words of Hebrews 4:15 – “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.” The Lord, who has been tempted in all things as we are, is the high priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses. Therefore, the Holy Spirit helps our weaknesses (Rom. 8:26). Although we don’t know how to pray as we should, the Holy Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words (v. 26). Therefore, we must praise the Lord.

I remember Philippians 2:6-8, which describes Jesus who humbled Himself: “who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Jesus Christ didn’t regard equality with God, but

humbled Himself and was submissive to His Heavenly Father until he died on the cross. What was the result? Look at Philippians 2:9-11: “For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” The Most High Lord humbled Himself, came to this earth, and died on the cross in order to save us. As a result, God made us glorify our Heavenly Father by praising the Lord forever. Therefore, we must humbly praise the Lord forever.

“Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee How great Thou art, how great Thou art!...”(Hymn “O, Lord my God! When I in Awesome Wonder”)

James Kim

(Desire to praise the Lord until I die)

# The church as God's sanctuary

## [Psalms 114]

What do you think the true image of the Church is? What is the true church like? I personally meditated on the book of Acts and came to realize five principles in the form of the early church. The five principles are: (1) a church of prayer, (2) a church filled with the Holy Spirit, (3) a church boldly proclaiming the gospel, (4) a church where the Lord adds believers, and (5) a community of love. I hope and pray that we can apply these five principles to our church so that our church can be like true church.

In Psalms 114: 2, the psalmist says “Judah became His sanctuary, Israel, His dominion.” Here the psalmist says “Judah” as “His sanctuary.” In other words, the psalmist speaks of Israel as the sanctuary of God. What is the sanctuary of God? The sanctuary of God is where God is present among His people and dwell with them. There is the word of God and it is proclaimed in the sanctuary of God. It is also a place where God's people gather there to offer sacrifices, listen to the words of the covenant, and worship and pray to God. There was a great feast. The Old Testament “the sanctuary of God” refers to the New Testament “the church.” In other words, the sanctuary of God refers to the church. I want to meditate on the church, the sanctuary of God, in three ways and want to receive lessons. I hope and pray that our church will be this community.

What kind of community is the church, the sanctuary of God?

### **First, the church, the sanctuary of God, is a saved community.**

Look at Psalms 114:1 – “When Israel went forth from Egypt, The house of Jacob from a people of strange language.” The psalmist is reminding what God did through Moses during the time of the exodus in which God rescued the Israelites from the barbarian Egyptians (Park). In other words, the psalmist recalls the work of salvation when God brought the Israelites out of Egypt. Why did God bring the Israelites out of Egypt? Why did God save them? The reason is because God loved the Israelites and was keeping the oath that He made to their forefathers. Look at Deuteronomy 7:7-8: “The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.” God's salvation is achieved entirely in God's sovereignty. God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt because God set His love on them and chose them because God kept the oath which He swore to their forefathers.

In the New Testament, the Church is the true people of God who are saved. Indeed, the Greek word "ekklesia" (church) is "ek" (out of) + "kaleo" (call). In other words, the church means to be called out of. God chose the church in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will (v. 5). He saved the church from the Satan's kingdom like Egypt to the praise of the glory of God's grace (v. 6). Therefore, whenever we think of God's saving grace, we must praise God. In other words, the church must be a community of worship. Also, when we think of the salvation God has provided in Jesus Christ, we must hope for salvation to be completed by the Second Coming of the Lord.

### **Second, the church, the sanctuary of God, is a community where God is with us.**

Look at Psalm 114:2 – “Judah became His sanctuary, Israel, His dominion.” “His sanctuary” is where God is present among His people and dwells with them. In other words, the church must experience God's presence to know, feel, and experience that God is always with us. In particular, we must experience the fact that God is with us as we worship Him in Spirit and in truth. Also, we need to experience God's presence more deeply in crisis and adversity. In Psalms 114:2, the psalmist recalls that God was with the Israelites who were liberated from Egypt (Park). God was with the Israelites. In the days of Exodus, God was with them in the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud. God also walked with the Israelites in the wilderness by coming to them in the tabernacle. God gave the Law to the Israelites through Moses on Mount Sinai (Park). In other words, God walked with the Israelites through the Word.

When we look at John 1, the Bible says the Word who was in the beginning with God (vv. 1, 2) became flesh (v. 14). The Bible says that God who dwells among us is “Immanuel” (Mt. 1:23). In other words, God is with us. Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:16 – “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” We are the temple of God. The Spirit of God dwells in us. The Holy Spirit, who is with us all the time, is sanctifying us who are saved. Therefore, the church must be holy. In order for the church manifest that God is really with us to this dark world, the church must be holy. We must live a life that is set apart from this world by the Immanuel faith, that is, God with us. In other words, the church is the holy community of God.

### **Third, the church, the sanctuary of God, is a community that manifests the power of God.**

God demonstrated His power many times as God delivered Israel from Egypt and led them to Canaan, the Promised Land during the Exodus. In Egypt, through ten plagues, God demonstrated His power. And in the wilderness God watered from the rock, and sent manna from heaven to feed the Israelites (Ps. 114:8). God also revealed His power in the Red Sea, and about 40 years later. When the Israelites came to the land of Canaan, God

manifested His power in the Jordan River (vv. 3, 5). Before the power of God, the sea split and became like land, and water came out of the rock. In this way, the natural world also vibrated before God's power (Park). Therefore, the psalmist said in verse 7: “Tremble, O earth, before the Lord, Before the God of Jacob.” When all the people of the world see the power of God, they must fear God.

The church must manifest the power of God. The power of God is the gospel. Look at Romans 1:16 – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” We must manifest the power of God’s salvation by boldly proclaiming the gospel, the power of God. The church of God is the saved community, the community that God is with, and the community that manifests God's power. May our church be such church of God.

Praying that Victory Presbyterian Church can be used by the Lord as a channel of God’s salvation,

James Kim

(Dreaming the Biblical community)

## Those who are blessed by God

### [Psalms 115]

I meditated on Colossians 1:6 at this morning prayer meeting: “which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth.” As I meditated on this word, I was taught that from the day when I heard the gospel and truly realized God's grace, I must have “fruit” in my life. The deeper, the broader, and the more I realize that grace, the more I am taught that I must bear fruit in all good works (v. 10). What is the great grace God has given us? The apostle Paul says, “in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (v. 14). In the great grace that God has given us, I have thought about redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Indeed, just thinking about this fact that the problem of sin was solved in Jesus, I cannot help but be grateful.

We who have received this grace of God and still receiving it, this is what the Bible Psalms 115:15 says: “May you be blessed of the LORD, Maker of heaven and earth.” The Bible says that we are blessed by God. Yes. We are those who are blessed by God. We are blessed and have received the tremendous great blessing. How much blessed we are because we are loved by God, are chosen by Him, are predestined, and are saved through the death and resurrection of Jesus and received eternal life. Above all, since Jesus, who is the source of blessings, is our Lord and is with us, we have no choice but to think, “I am a blessed person,” when we count the blessings we have received. Just thinking that the Lord who blessed us loves us and is with us, we cannot but say that we are blessed by God and are still being blessed. In verse 15, the psalmist says that the Israelites are those who are blessed by God. The psalmist prayed for such a blessing to them: “May the LORD give you increase, You and your children” (v. 14). When I thought of this psalmist's prayer for blessing, I remembered Joey, the first grandchild of Deacon Kim in our church. The reason is that I remember hearing from the child's mother that the name “Joey” means “God increases”. The blessing prayer given by the psalmist in Psalms 115 is that he wanted more prosperity, that is a prayer that blessed the increase of the number of Israelites (including both the current Israelites and their descendants) (Park). How to know it, we can find out in verse 16: “The heavens are the heavens of the LORD, But the earth He has given to the sons of men.” The psalmist prayed for prosperity to the Israelites with confidence based on the fact that the One who blesses the Israelites is Almighty God and that God gave the earth to humans to multiply (Park).

If so, who is the one who is blessed with such a prosperous blessing from God? I would like to think about three things based on Psalms 115:



## **First, those who are blessed by God to prosper are those who give glory to God.**

Look at Psalms 115:1 – “Not to us, O LORD, not to us, But to Your name give glory Because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth.” In 1 Samuel 15:12, King Saul, who disobeyed God's word to destroy Amalek, came to Carmel and set up a monument for himself after winning the war. What does this show? This shows that he gave the victory of war to himself rather than to God. King Saul set up the monument to himself commemorate his achievement. He didn't consider winning the war with Amalek to be God's grace, but as his own achievement. Saul, who had considered himself small, became proud as king and disobeyed God's command. Then, rather than convicting of his sin and repenting, he set the monument to glorify himself. In view of this, we need to take more seriously the importance of the psalmist's prayer, “Not to us, O LORD, not to us, But to Your name give glory” in Psalms 115:1. This psalmist's prayer is, in a word, the prayer that refuses to give himself and the Israelites the glory that should be given to God. He refused to steal the glory of God by praying to God and repeating ‘not to us’ twice (v. 1). He wanted to give glory only to God. He prayed to God and desperately wanted only God to be glorified. Why did the psalmist want to glorify God alone? The reason is because of the Lord's lovingkindness and His truth (v. 1). Psalms 115 is an Israeli prayer praying for God's help during the war against the Gentile enemies (Park). If this is true, the psalmist prays that God alone will be glorified because the truth will work as He promised to save the Israelites by loving them in the midst of the war between the Israelites and the Gentile enemies. The psalmist prayed that God would win the Israelites in the war with His lovingkindness and His truth. Therefore, he wanted God alone to be glorified. But what if Israel was defeated in war and the idolatrous Gentiles won (vv. 4-8)? The Gentiles would mock the Israelites and say, “Where, now, is their God?” (v. 2) The psalmist was the only one who sought the glory of God and didn't want the glory of God to be hidden. For this reason, he prayed to God that God would show His lovingkindness and truth in the midst of war by delivering the Israelites from the hands of the Gentile enemies and make the Israelites victorious. In this prayer, the psalmist recognized God's sovereignty: “But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases” (v. 3). God may help the Israelites to win the war, but He may also not help them to be defeated. One of the reasons for not helping the Israelites to be defeated may be God's discipline for their unrepentant sin. In conclusion, the psalmist's prayer will be answered as God wants. In other words, the victory and defeat of war depends on the sovereignty of God.

Those who are blessed by God are those who give glory to the Lord who is the source of blessings. They never want to give the glory of the Lord to themselves. The reason for this is because those who are blessed by God only ask for the Lord's lovingkindness and truth. In other words, those who receive the blessing of prosperity from God give glory only to God because they know that God has answered their prayers by asking based on the Lord's lovingkindness and truth. Here, ‘answered prayer’ doesn't mean receiving answers exactly as they prayed to God. Rather, it means that receiving answers exactly as God wants in His sovereignty. Therefore, those who are blessed by God give glory to God even if their prayers aren't answered the way they want. The reason is because they experience God's lovingkindness and truth in God's work under God's sovereignty. Therefore, if we want our

children and our descendants to receive the blessing of prosperity even more, we must glorify only God. We pray to God only by relying on His lovingkindness and truth, so that God's glory will appear in our lives.

### **Second, those who are blessed by God to prosper trust in the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 115:9-11: “O Israel, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield. You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield.” Here, the psalmist is exhorting the Israelites to trust in the Lord three times. What is the reason? Why did he exhort the Israelites to trust in Him three times? Why should we trust in God? The reason is because God is our help and our shield (vv. 9-11). In verses 9-11, the psalmist not only admonished us three times to “trust in the Lord”, but also repeats the reason “He is their help and their shield” three times. The God who is our help is the God who helps us when we ask God for help in the midst of adversity and suffering, when we are desperately aware of our weaknesses, tired and exhausted. We must never trust in the idols (v. 8) that have mouths but cannot speak, have eyes but cannot see (v. 5), have ears but cannot hear, have noses but cannot smell (v. 6), have hands but cannot feel, have feet but cannot walk and they cannot make a sound with their throat (v. 7). As an example, starting from 2 Chronicles 16:7, when King Asa was at war with the great army of the Ethiopians and the Lubim, King Asa didn’t depend on the king of Aram, but on God, so God gave the Israelites victory. God strongly supports those who turn to Him with all their hearts (v. 9). Therefore, when we are in our weakness, we must trust in God with all our hearts. Then, God will help us. God will give us power. God is our shield. In other words, when we face tribulation, God prevents the harm of tribulation (Park). Look at Psalms 121:5-8: “The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun will not smite you by day, Nor the moon by night. The LORD will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul. The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in From this time forth and forever.” Our God is the God who protects us without slumbering or sleeping. He keeps us from all troubles. Therefore, the sun will not smite us by day, not the moon by night. Therefore, we must trust in God who is our help and shield. As the years go by, we must trust in Him more and more. We must trust solely in the Lord. The Lord will help us and protect us from all the years of trouble.

### **Third and last, those who are blessed by God to prosper are those who fear God.**

Look at Psalms 115:13 – “He will bless those who fear the LORD, The small together with the great.” Those who fear God aren’t afraid of enemies even in war. The reason is because Almighty God, the triumphant God, helps, protects and triumphs His people. Rather, they fears God. To these people, God blesses them to prosper. In Deuteronomy 6:1-2, we can see that before the Israelites entered Canaan, the Promised Land, God gave the Israelites commands, ordinances, and laws through Moses (Dt. 6:1). What was God's intention? Look at Deuteronomy 6:2 – “so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.” God gave

the Israelites commands, ordinances, and laws to make the Israelites to fear God throughout their lives. Therefore, what does the Bible say will happen if the Israelites, their children, and their descendants listen to His commands, ordinances, and precepts and obey them? Look at Deuteronomy 6:3 – “O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.” May this God’s blessing of prosperity be upon us who brings glory to God, who trust in God more and more, and who fear Him.

He who is blessed by God,

James Kim

(Praying for the Victory Presbyterian Church to be prospered by the Lord)

## **“I shall call upon Him as long as I live”**

### **[Psalms 116]**

Today, I drove to church with my youngest daughter, Yeun, to attend the Wednesday prayer meeting. Suddenly, as soon as she got into the car, she said ‘I want to grow up, Daddy.’ So, when I asked Yeun why she wanted to grow up quickly, the five-year-old kid said ‘because I want to have a pretty baby.’ Haha. So I told Yeun that when she grows up she had to marry a Christian man who loves Jesus so that she can have a baby. I encouraged her to start praying to God for such a man. Then I told Yeun, ‘This father was also praying and that God sent your mother to my life and got married.’ And I said to Yeun that I prayed for four children and that God answered my prayer and gave me four children. But Yeun said nothing. So I asked her whether she was listening to me and she said that she was praying. So I asked her what she prayed for, and she said she prayed for her boyfriend. So, when I asked Yeun if she prayed for a boyfriend who loved Jesus, she said she forgot to pray for the boyfriend who loved Jesus. Haha. In addition to this, while having conversations with Yeeun, I tried to teach her how to pray to God. In other words, I wanted to teach Yeun the need for prayer. Also, I wanted to teach Yeun that God answers our prayers.

As I looked closely at this presidential election and the Propositions 8 and 4 in which California, where I live, voted, I felt more of the need to pray for this country and its people. Although the current Proposition 8 support for traditional marriage (against gay marriage) has already been passed, I think that the problem will continue to become serious in the future. With lawyers here and there and civil right organizations suing the court, we cannot but pray more and more for our family. Also, since the church isn’t like the true biblical church, it gives the impression of anti-homosexual, judgmental, and hypocrisy to unbelievers, so I think our church should repent. Since the church doesn’t show the true Christianity of this world, and rather, it is more and more known as what Christianity isn’t, I think this is also a point for us to repent. Also, I feel that I must pray more and more for all people but also for the leaders of this nation (1 Tim. 2:1-2). Nevertheless, when I look back at myself, I have to confess that I still don’t feel the need for prayer for some reason.

When I looked at an internet site, I saw an article saying, ‘In the case of Calvin, a reformer of the 16th century, the need for prayer is based on the Bible, the Word of God, and there are numerous necessities for prayer’: ‘The first reason we pray is so that the desire and enthusiasm to always seek, love, and serve God can be burning in our hearts. The second reason is to prevent shameful desires or wishes that we cannot share with God to invade in our hearts. The third reason is to be able to receive God’s various graces with sincere gratitude. The fourth reason is to meditate more hard on God’s lovingkindness with the confidence that God has answered our prayers. The fifth

reason is in order to receive with greater joy what we admit that we have obtained through prayer. The sixth and final reason is to confirm His providence by habit and experience according to our degree of weakness' (Internet). When I think about these six reasons, the fourth reason especially came to mind. I agree that we need to pray to God to meditate more and more earnestly on God's lovingkindness through answering prayers from God. In my prayers, God gives me the confidence that He has already answered my prayers. So He gives me the grace to go deeper into His love and grace. Therefore, God is compelling me to pray.

In Psalms 116:2, the psalmist is determined to say, "... Therefore I shall call upon Him as long as I live." Why did he decide, "I shall call upon Him as long as I live"? The reason is because God heard his prayer. Look at Psalms 116:1-2: "I love the LORD, because He hears My voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear to me, Therefore I shall call upon Him as long as I live." The God who hears our prayers is the God who listens to our petitions when we cry out in pain. When the psalmist was "greatly afflicted" (v. 10) and was in "distress and sorrow" (v. 3), God answered his petition. In other words, when the psalmist cried out, "save my life" (v. 4) in the "cords of death" and "the terrors of Sheol" (v. 3), God heard his prayer and saved him (v. 6). God not only saved him, but also gave rest to his soul (v. 7). Furthermore, God dealt bountifully with him (v. 7) and gave him abundant grace (v. 12). So the psalmist said: "What shall I render to the LORD For all His benefits toward me?" (v. 12).

Do we really realize and know all the grace that God provides? Indeed, are we enjoying all the grace of God who "is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us"? (Eph. 3:20) If so, we must determine to act like the psalmist, "I shall call upon Him as long as I live". Why should we make this determination? The reason is because we get to know who God is His answered prayers. In other words, because we get to know that God is gracious, righteous, and compassionate God through answered prayers like the psalmist (v. 5), we must make a decision to pray to God as long as we live. Therefore, we need the tribulation, pain, and sorrow that make us to pray. In other words, in tribulation, suffering, and sorrow, we must become "the simple" (v. 6). Here, "the simple" refers to the 'open ones,' that is, those who open their hearts and entrust themselves to God and don't rely on their wisdom (Park). Those who trust in their wisdom in tribulation, pain, and sorrow will surely turn to human help. However, those who open their hearts and trust in God know that "All men are liars", so they pray to only God who is gracious, truthful, righteous, and compassionate (v. 11). We must brought low by tribulation, suffering, and sorrow (v. 6). The psalmist said that "I was brought low, and He saved me" (v. 6). That's right. We must humble before God through adversity, difficulties, pain, and sorrow in our lives. In other words, through such a difficult, painful, and sad environment, we must humble ourselves before God and pray to God. What kind of grace did God give to the psalmist at that time? Look at verse 8: "For You have rescued my soul from death, My eyes from tears, My feet from stumbling." How did the psalmist, who received answers from God and experienced the grace of salvation, respond? In other words, how and with what should we repay the grace of God who answered our prayers and saved us? (v. 12)

### **First, we must love God. And we must confess that love like a psalmist.**

Look at Psalms 116:1 – “I love the LORD, because He hears My voice and my supplications.” We must sincerely confess, “God, I love you,” to God who hears our prayers and who gives us the grace of salvation. The psalmist said, ‘I love the Lord. The reason is because He hears My voice and my supplications’ (v. 1). The order is confess love first. We have already meditated on this psalmist's confession in Psalm 18:1 – “I love You, O LORD, my strength.” We must be able to confess ‘Lord, I love You,’ to God who answered our prayers and delivered us.

### **Second, we must always strive to walk fully before God.**

Look at Psalms 116:9 – “I shall walk before the LORD In the land of the living.” The psalmist pledged to walk before the Lord throughout his life because of God's answer to his prayer. Because God delivered him from the place of death, he tried to live completely in front of God who gave him the second life (Park). The Bible says, ““He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me” (Jn. 14:21). If we truly confess to God, “I love you,” we must obey His commandments. Therefore, we must live a whole life before the Lord.

### **Third, we must praise and worship God with thanksgiving in our hearts.**

Look at Psalms 116:13, 17 – “I shall lift up the cup of salvation And call upon the name of the LORD. ... To You I shall offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, And call upon the name of the LORD.” We praise and worship the Lord because we are grateful for the God's saving grace. Those who receive God's grace and don't have warm gratitude will not receive more grace in the future (Park). In order to receive more grace in the future, we must praise and worship God with thanksgiving in our hearts. Especially when we think of the saving grace (eternal life) that God gave us in Jesus Christ, we have reason to be grateful in everything. Therefore, we must give praise and worship to God because we thank God for the saving grace of God.

### **Fourth and last, we must pay our vows to God.**

Look at Psalms 116:14, 18-19: “I shall pay my vows to the LORD, Oh may it be in the presence of all His people. ... I shall pay my vows to the LORD, Oh may it be in the presence of all His people, In the courts of the LORD'S house, In the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!” As the psalmist decided to fulfill his vow, he remembered the fact that he had been saved by the dead before (v. 15) (Park). Look at verse 15: “Precious in the sight of the LORD Is the death of His godly ones.” This is the saying that God takes the matter of the death of a saint seriously and doesn't allow his death without a special precious purpose (Park). Our God takes our life and death very seriously. Therefore, even when we are at the crossroads of life and death, we must long for and look forward to the Lord's salvation while trusting in God who controls life and death. Then, when God hears our vow and rescues us from suffering and pains, we must pay the vow to Him.

Our God is the God who hears our prayers. He is the God who delivers us by listening to our cries when we are humbled ourselves in in pain, trouble, and sorrow. Furthermore, He is a God who gives us peace and who deals bountifully with us. Therefore, we will love Him more and more. We express that love to God because we walk fully before God. We also pay our vows to God by offering praise and worship to Him. May we become a lifelong prayer to God.

Praising the hymn “Sweet Hour of Prayer”,

James Kim

(After Wednesday prayer meeting)

## **"I shall call upon Him as long as I live"**

### **[Psalms 116:1-12]**

In the grace of God and the consideration of your love, I have had a good Sabbath month over the past two months. For about 5 weeks, I went to Korea under the concept of ministry on the Cyworld Internet homepage, which I personally run, and had many precious meetings that God gave me. Through these encounters, God not only allowed me to see the tears flowing around their eyes, but also allowed me to see the tears in their hearts. There was pain and hurt and suffering in their hearts. And they were enduring with vague faith in pain and suffering while not being able to understand the will of God. There were hit by the world, and were living day by day looking at the hopeful Lord amidst discouragement and frustration. Some are in the midst of diseases, others in the midst of wounds and pains from the past, and some have marital conflicts and discords, difficulties in raising children and difficulties at work, and some have anxiety over an uncertain future. Would this be all? There will be countless grievances for all of us that cannot be expressed in words. Why did God let me meet these people? I thought maybe God wanted to teach me His hear, the Father God's heart. I shared it with a few people whom I met, but for some reason, I think God wanted people to meet those who shed tears so that I could see what Heavenly Father sees and hear what Heavenly Father hears. In this way, after carrying out the ministry in Korea by God's grace and returning to the United States, I read the Bible and received a message of hope for those who are weeping in Luke 6:21. The message of hope is that "Blessed are you who weep now". Why is it blessed for those who weep? The reason is because those who weep will laugh (v. 21). The reason is because God will comfort those who weep (v. 24), and He will reward greatly those who weep (v. 23).

After staying in Korea for about 5 weeks and enjoying the grace that God has given me, I came back to the United States and stayed at my father-in-law's house for a week. There was not much that I could do, so I just offered praise to God, read the Bible, and prayed to God next to my father-in-law who was suffering from physical ailments. Meanwhile, last Chuseok (Korean Thanksgiving Day), I went to see the family doctor with my father-in-law and mother-in-law, and I found out that my father-in-law had lung cancer. In addition, brother in Christ Kim of our church is hospitalized after undergoing cancer surgery. Another brother in Christ Kim's younger sister is also hospitalized after undergoing cancer surgery. And the mother of our church associate pastor also has cancer surgery. What should we do when we consider those who are suffering from illness and suffering? Indeed, what should we do when we consider these loved ones?

I found the answer in Psalms 116:2 – "... Therefore I shall call upon Him as long as I live." The psalmist



in Psalms 116 is making a resolution to God: 'God, I will pray to You as long as I live.' In one word, he devoted himself to prayer. Why did he commit himself to prayer? The reason is because God heard his prayer (vv. 1, 2). Do you really believe that God is the God who hears your prayers? Do you really believe that God is the one who listens to your petitions when you cry out to God in pain? This time in Korea, there was a couple that God let or allows me to meet. The husband is an elder of the church, and the wife is a lady who serves her church faithfully. Through their son, I found out that the elder is suffering from a recurrence of cancer, and that his wife is suffering after undergoing brain tumor surgery. So I visited the couple in order to encourage them. When I first visited the couple, I saw tears flowing around Mrs. Kim's eyes. So I prayed to God for her. At that time, she kept saying, "Amen, amen." When I was leaving their house, I promised to see them again before I go back to United States. So I went to their house again on Saturday, the day I was returning to United State. On that day, after having conversation, I encouraged them to praise together with me. So we sang the gospel song "God is so Good" together. Then when I got up and tried to pray, the elder grabbed my leg and said to sit down and pray. So we sat in a circle, holding hands and we prayed to God. Even at that time, she said, "Amen, amen." The psalmist in Psalms 116 believed that God is the God who answers his prayers. Therefore, when he faced "distress and sorrow" (v. 3) and was "greatly afflicted" (v. 10), he cried out to God. The distress, sorrow, and great affliction he encountered was so much that he was at the crossroads of life and death. That was why he said "The cords of death encompassed me" and "the terrors of Sheol came upon me" (v. 3). In the midst of that, he cried out to God. In other words, the psalmist cried out to God when he was at the crossroads of life and death.

What do you think our prayers for God would be if we were at the crossroads of life and death? What do you think we are going to pray earnestly to God? The psalmist prayed to God: "... O LORD, I beseech You, save my life!" (v. 4) He cried out to God, "save my life" (v. 4). At that time, God not only saved him by hearing his prayer (v. 6), but also gave rest to his soul (v. 7). This is it. Even though we are at the crossroads of life and death, we Christians who trust in God and who pray have assurance of salvation and enjoy the peace of souls from God. That's why we can sing the first lyric of the hymn "When Peace, Like a River, Attendeth My Way": "When peace, like a river, attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll; Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, 'It is well, it is well with my soul. It is well with my soul; It is well, it is well with my soul.'" Furthermore, God had dealt bountifully with the psalmist (v. 7). Also He gave him abundant grace (v. 12). The psalmist who experienced this abundant grace said: "What shall I render to the LORD For all His benefits toward me?" (v. 12) Do we realize and know all the grace God has given us? Do we realize and know all the grace of God who answers our prayers and gives us "far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20)? What should we do if we realize a little bit of that abundant grace of God? Like the psalmist, we must determine to pray to God as long as we live and act upon our determination. Those who have tasted prayer will be compelled to devote themselves to prayer, deciding, "I shall call upon Him as long as I live," like the psalmist.

I think we need distress, pain, and sorrow in our lives that make us to pray to God. To be more specific, we

must become “the simple” in the midst of distress, pain, and sorrow (v. 6). Here, “the simple” refers to the ‘the open ones,’ that is, those who open their hearts and entrust themselves to God and don’t rely on their wisdom (Park). We need training to open our hearts and entrust everything to God, even though the painful circumstances that are given to us. The reason I think this is because our human instincts seldom rely on God for some reason and don’t leave everything to God through prayer. Our instinct relies on our own wisdom in distress, pain, and sorrow, so we constantly ask for help from other people. However, because those who open their hearts in their distress, pain, and sorrow and trust in God know that “All men are liars” (v. 11). So they ask only God who is gracious, righteous and compassionate for help (v. 5). Also, we must be humbled by distress, suffering, and sorrow (v. 6). Not only must we open our hearts to God through distress, suffering, and sorrow and entrust everything to Him, we also must be humble before God. The psalmist said that when he was brought low God saved him (v. 6). That’s right. We must humble ourselves before God through adversity, difficulties, distress, pain and sorrow in our lives. In other words, through such a difficult, painful, and sad environment, we must humble ourselves before God, fall humbly, and pray to Him. What kind of grace did God give to the psalmist at that time? Look at verse 8: “For You have rescued my soul from death, My eyes from tears, My feet from stumbling.” He experienced God’s grace of salvation. In other words, when the psalmist humbly bowed before God through suffering, God delivered him from death, from tears, and from falling. Don’t you want to experience this saving grace?

Last Wednesday during Chuseok (Korean Thanksgiving Day), after I met the family doctor with my father-in-law and mother-in-law, we came back to the father-in-law's house. Then I praised God with the father-in-law who was lying in the hospital bed. I praised the hymn “When Peace, Like a River, Attendeth My Way,” which is my father-in-law’s favorite hymn, and the hymn “For Away in the Depths of My Spirit” and so on. The reason is because God gave peace to my father-in-law’s heart. Now is the time to pray. As we see our beloved brothers and sisters in Christ are suffering from disease we must unite and pray to God. Just as the psalmist asked God to “save my life” (v. 4) in great trouble, distress, and sorrow, we must also ask God to deliver our lives. Then God will incline His ear to our prayers (v. 2). And He will answer our prayers and grant us the grace of salvation. When we experience the abundant grace of that salvation, we will be able to confess, “I love the Lord, because He hears My voice and my supplications” (v. 1).

With gratitude to God for listening to the prayers of the needy,

James Kim

(After receiving the message of God on the first Sunday after the Sabbath month)

## Why we should praise God

### [Psalms 117]

During this morning prayer meeting, I meditated on 2 Peter 2:8 – “(for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds).” As we lived in this world that is like Sodom and Gomorrah, I thought that our righteous spirits were bound to be tormented by the lawless deeds of the world by what we see and hear (v. 7). What should we do when our righteous hearts are tormented? (1) We must have the assurance of salvation (v. 9). Obviously, we must look with confidence that God will deliver (save) the righteous and destroy the wicked. (2) We must stand firmly in strong faith (3:17). The Bible says that false teachers (2:1) entice unstable souls (v. 14) and “entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error” (v. 18). Therefore, we must stand firm so as not to be deceived and sin against God. (3) We must meditate on the suffering of Jesus on the cross when our righteous hearts are tormented and suffered by all the sinful things we see, hear, and feel in this sinful world. As we do so, our suffering will diminish and we will experience the Lord's binding and healing of our broken hearts.

After proclaiming this word, I read the newspaper in the morning that a Korean young man shot and killed his friend several times and then threw his body somewhere near Highway 110 to the Dodgers Ballpark in Los Angeles and was caught later while he was gambling. With the thought of how this well-looking young Korean young man could do this, I came to think of the words of the early Morning Prayer meeting again. This must be a truly sinful world. We are living in the world full of lawless deeds. What should we do when we see, hear, and encounter these sinful things in this world? I personally say to myself, ‘This world is not my home’ and ‘I’m heading toward heaven.’ In the midst of that, I hold on to the Lord’s promise that He will come back. He said that he will come and take us to the place He has prepared. This is what the apostle Peter said in 2 Peter 3:12-13: “looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.” We are those who look to the new heavens and the new earth, who are grateful for God's saving grace, and who have no choice but to praise God until we die. In addition, as those who pray, expect and wait for the completion of salvation and the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, we ought to praise and worship God.

This is what the psalmist said in Psalms 117:1 - “Praise the LORD, all nations; Laud Him, all peoples!” Why did the psalmist say that all of God's people should praise God? This is what he said about the reason: “For

His lovingkindness is great toward us, And the truth of the LORD is everlasting. Praise the LORD!” (v. 2) Here we can think of two reasons to praise God:

### **The first reason is because of God's great lovingkindness toward us.**

We often refer to November as the season of gratitude. The reason seems to be, of course, because it is the month of Thanksgiving. However, when we think of God's love for us, we think that each month is a month of thanksgiving, and we are God's children who can only be thankful every day and every moment. Of course, there are countless times when we know that we should be grateful in everything according to the words of the Bible. But when faced with a difficult situation, it's hard for us to be thankful. The reason is because we don't experience God's great love. In other words, when we face the difficult situation, we cannot give praise to God because we don't realize God's great love even in the midst of the difficulty. Psalms 117:1 says “For His lovingkindness is great toward us.” Here, the word “great” is the Hebrew word “gabar”, which means “more” (Park). The reason why this meaning is interesting is that God's lovingkindness for us is increasing more and more as the years pass (Park). How in contrast to our human love? Human love decreases as the years pass, but God's love increases more and more. What is important is whether we feel and experience the increasing love of God as the years go by. In particular, the more difficult we are, the more we realize, know, and feel the increasing love of God toward us.

In Psalms 139:17-18, the Bible says that God's precious thoughts toward us can't be count and outnumber the sand. There are times when we are filled with thoughts, worries and anxieties while we live our faith, especially in the midst of our love for one soul while serving the Lord's church. Even then, do we still feel His love and His countless thoughts for us and for the one soul whom He loves and we love? Therefore, are we praising God because we are grateful to Him? If we decide to praise God for His great (increasing) love for us, we must never stop praising God. We must love our neighbors with the great love of God. Our love for one soul must gradually increase. If our love for the soul, whom God loves, is not increasing but decreasing, we can never be said to be a worshiper who praise the great lovingkindness of God. If we are those who praise God's great lovingkindness toward us, we must increase our love for our neighbors as the years pass by. Therefore, we must become the people who gradually let the light of God's great lovingkindness to shine to our neighbors.

### **The second reason is because of God's eternal truth to us.**

When a Korean actress Jin-sil Choi committed suicide, I remember seeing an article written by using the word "Ga-sik Choi" (meaning: 'Pretense' Choi) instead of the name "Choi Jin-sil". What does 'pretense' mean? When I look at an internet dictionary, it says, “an attempt to make something that is not the case appear true”. I don't know why some regarded “Jin-sil Choi” as “Ga-sik Choi” and what someone wrote such an article. But the suicide case of the mother of two children who couldn't endure while suffering from such people's words and criticism is

probably the top news from the entertainment industry this year. As far as I still remember, I can't forget the advice of an elderly woman. When I went to her apartment with my grandmother because my grandmother wanted to see her, she, whom I met at the time, was in front of the apartment and was walking toward the apartment, supported by my grandmother. At that time, my grandmother told her that I am her grandson and I was going to be a pastor. When she heard that, she turned her head and looked at me and said one word: 'Be truthful.' I still haven't forgotten what she said. Sometimes, when I think of it, I wonder why she said that to me. Probably it was because there were so many untruthful pastors who kept on lying to others. At the same time, I feel very heavy responsibility to be truthful.

In Psalms 117, the psalmist said that the second reason for all peoples to praise God is because of God's eternal truth toward us. What does this mean? What does it mean to say that God's truth toward us is eternal? This word means that God faithfully fulfills His promises to us. The surprising fact is that our God is faithfully fulfilling the promise He has made to us, even though we cannot faithfully bear our responsibilities as those who have received the word of promise from God. Psalms 117:1 was quoted by the apostle Paul in Romans 15:11. The reason is because, as promised in the Old Testament, God made the gospel preach to the Gentiles as well as the Israelites (for example, through Paul) and called them and made them God's chosen people (Park). Therefore, the apostle Paul and the psalmist in Psalms 117 say that all Gentile believers should all praise God with the Israelites.

One of the promises God gave us in Jesus Christ is Hebrews 4:9 – “So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” God has promised us eternal rest. The day Jesus comes again, the Lord will lead us to an eternal haven. The eternal God of truth will surely fulfill the word of this promise. What are our responsibilities? This is what the author of the Book of Hebrews said: “Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience” (v. 11). We must strive to enter that rest with the hope of eternal rest. In other words, we must live a faithful life with faith. We must hear and obey the voice of the Lord and head toward the heaven. I remember the lyrics of the gospel song ‘To us’: (v. 1) The Lord’s lovingkindness toward us is great, great and great (2x), The Lord’s truth toward us is forever, ever and forever.’

As I sing the Lord’s great lovingkindness and truth toward us,

James Kim

(‘Lord, I want to be more loving and truthful’)

## **“Give thanks to the Lord”**

### **[Psalms 118]**

Looking back this year, when and how did we really experience God's goodness and lovingkindness? Personally, the best thing I remember is the funeral service I attended. I still remember having tasted (experienced) the goodness and lovingkindness of God while attending the six funeral services this year, especially two funeral services that were viewing and graveyard services that I had privilege to lead. At both services, as we praised the hymn “O, Lord my God! When I in Awesome Wonder”, we praised God who controls life and death, His high and greatness, and experienced God's great lovingkindness and greatness more deeply. Especially, when I think of the saving grace that God has given them in the last image of the late grandmother Eul-soo Jang or Pastor Andrew Kim, I remember praising God because I thank God for His goodness and lovingkindness.

Why should we give thanks to God? The reason is because God is good and His lovingkindness is everlasting. Look at Psalms 118:1 – “Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.” In Psalms 118:1-5, we see that the psalmist gave thanks to God for answering his prayer as a result of his prayer in suffering. Look at verse 5: “From my distress I called upon the LORD; The LORD answered me and set me in a large place.” Perhaps the psalmist, as David, sinned against God and was disciplined by God (v. 18), and he was in suffering and pain. God's discipline was a situation where the nations who hated the Israelites (v. 7) and the nations (v. 10) surrounded the Israelites and felt fear of death as well as suffering and pain. If we look at verses 10, 11, and 12, we can know this by seeing these words, “surrounded” (v. 10), “surrounded ... surrounded” (v. 11) and “surrounded me” (v. 12). David and the Israelites, who were in extreme pain and suffering due to the siege of these enemies, the nations, still confess that God didn't given them over to death (v. 18). In the midst of this, David cried out to God earnestly. When he was in these difficulties, he had no way out of nowhere. So in the midst of it he prayed to God. At that time, God heard David's earnest prayers and set him in a large place (v. 5, Park, Delitzsch). In other words, God answered David's prayer and rescued him from among the nations surrounding him and led him to the large place. In a word, God gave David the grace of salvation. David confessed, “The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone” (v. 22). This means that David was persecuted by many powerful people (“the builders”) in his early years, but God made him who was forsaken as a king (“the chief corner stone”) (Calvin, Park). In the end, David was severely disciplined by God for his sin, so he prayed earnestly to God in the midst of pain, suffering, and a fearful situation. At that time, because God delivered him, David experienced God's goodness and His unchanging love for all things to work together for good.

How many times do we doubt God's goodness and lovingkindness when we are suffering from hardships and adversity? In such a time, how many times have we been unable to endure in the thought of where is the good will of God while thinking in our hearts the question, 'If God really loves me, why should I suffer such suffering and hardship?' In particular, in the midst of the suffering and hardship, isn't there time when it seems that both east, west, north and south are blocked, and there are no ways to solve the problem. We should use this as an opportunity to cry out to God like the psalmist. And we must experience God's unchanging love through God's saving grace and the goodness of God who works together for good. We need to experience God's unchanging goodness and lovingkindness more deeply and with certainty, both in hard times and in peace. How is this possible? How did David experience God's goodness and lovingkindness by praying to God even in the fearful situation where God's discipline threatened his life? It was because David had a fearless heart and assurance of victory in war (vv. 6-16). Look at verse 6: "The LORD is for me; I will not fear; What can man do to me?" There is no fear in love, and perfect love casts out fear (1 Jn. 4:18). Despite the threat of life in a fearful siege, David relied on God's perfect love and asked God without fear and boldly. He could he pray to God without fear even though he could be frightened enough to lose courage, discouraged, and afraid of losing the war? It was because David completely trusted in God. Look at Psalms 118:8-9: "It is better to take refuge in the LORD Than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD Than to trust in princes." If we look at Isaiah 30:15, the Bible says "...In quietness and trust is your strength." As I meditated on this word, it was an opportunity to remind myself that it is my strength to quietly trust in God. In doing so, I gained strength in my heart and gained confidence and boldness of salvation rather than fear. Since David completely trusted in God, not only did he ask God without fear, but he also had boldness, courage, and assurance of victory in war. How could David have assurance of victory under siege? It was that he had nothing to fear because God was for him (Ps. 118:6, 7). He believed that God on his side would help him and the Israelites (vv. 7, 13) with His right hand of His power (vv. 15, 16). Look at verse 13: "You pushed me violently so that I was falling, But the LORD helped me."

What did David do when he was saved by God's help? He confessed, "The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation" (v. 14) and decided to enter the temple of God and give thanks to God (vv. 19-21, 28). Look at Psalms 118:21, 28 – "I shall give thanks to You, for You have answered me, And You have become my salvation. ... You are my God, and I give thanks to You; You are my God, I extol You." And he made up his mind to proclaim, by faith, the works of the Lord who would save him (v. 17). Not only did he give thanks to God and proclaimed the works of His salvation, but he exhorted us all: "Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting" (v. 29). Let us all thank God. He is good and His lovingkindness is everlasting. In this season of thanksgiving, let us be grateful for the saving grace that God has given us, as we think of Jesus Christ, who has become the chief corner stone which the builder rejected.

Even in situations where we cannot be grateful, we cannot help but be grateful when we think of God's saving grace in Jesus,

James Kim

(As I give thanks to God's saving grace)



## **Those who walk in the Lord's ways**

### **[Psalms 119:1-8]**

The essence of Psalms 119:1-8 is that those who walk in the Lord's ways are blessed. In other words, the Bible Psalms 119:1-8 says that those who practice the law of the Lord are blessed (v. 1). That's right. Those who walk in the law of the Lord and whose way is blameless are blessed (v. 1). What do these blessed people do? There are two things that they do:

#### **First, those who are blessed do no unrighteousness.**

Look at Psalms 119:3a – “They also do no unrighteousness ....” How can we do no unrighteousness? We must learn to judge righteously. Look at verse 7: “I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of heart, When I learn Your righteous judgments.” When we learn righteous judgment, we can make a clear distinction between right and wrong, good and evil. In such a situation, those who have righteous judgments don't do unrighteousness. But if we don't have righteous judgments, we will choose the wrong way (evil), and if we choose the wrong way, we will defile ourselves. Then we are bound to be ashamed (v. 6).

#### **Second, those who are blessed keep the commandments of God.**

Look at Psalms 119:1 – “How blessed are those whose way is blameless, Who walk in the law of the LORD.” Those who are blessed learn righteous judgments through the law of the Lord. And they choose the right way (good) and don't choose the wrong way (evil) with their righteous judgments. Therefore, they don't do unrighteousness. How, then, can we learn righteous judgments? We can do so through the law of the Lord. The more we learn His law, the more we will have righteous judgments. Therefore, we have the ability to clearly distinguish between right and wrong and good and evil. This can be called biblical discernment. With this discernment, when we choose good with righteous judgments and hate evil, our hearts are bound to be upright. And we who have upright hearts will choose the path of righteousness, not the path of unrighteousness.

We must have righteous judgments through the Word of God. And with righteous judgments, we must choose good and live a life of hating evil. In other words, we should not end with learning the Word, but become the doers of the Word. We must be doers of the Word and not deceive ourselves just by listening to the Word (Jam. 1:22). We must do this diligently. In other words, we must keep the Word of God diligently (v. 4). Never should we be diligent in doing unrighteousness (v. 3). We must ask God for this. In other words, we must seek God with

all our heart to observe His Word (v. 2). And while praying, we must practice His Word.

Those who observe the word of God are blessed (v. 2). They will not be ashamed (v. 6). And they will give thanks the Lord (v. 7).

Desire to be a doer of the word of God,

James Kim

(In the midst of the crisis of uprightness, while pursuing upright heart)

## **“How can a young man keep his way pure?”**

### **[Psalms 119:9-16]**

We, who believe in Jesus, want to imitate the Lord's holiness in our hearts. But there are times when we see our weak body chasing sin. So the apostle Paul confessed: "... So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin" (Rom. 7:25). This is a spiritual fight. This is the spiritual battle with ourselves. In this spiritual battle, we must find the biblical view of ourselves, that is human corruption (sinfulness). This is what Proverbs 20:9 says: "Who can say, 'I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin'?" And this is what Job 15:14-16 says: "What is man, that he should be pure, Or he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, He puts no trust in His holy ones, And the heavens are not pure in His sight; How much less one who is detestable and corrupt, Man, who drinks iniquity like water!" Indeed, we are corrupt. Who are we to be clean? But in Psalms 119:9, the psalmist asks this question: "How can a young man keep his way pure? ...." Focusing on this verse, I would like to meditate on four ways how we can live a pure (holy) life.

### **First, in order for us to live a pure (holy) life, we must live according to the word of the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 119:9 – "How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word." The purifying ourselves and the word of God have a profound relationship. For example, the apostle Peter tells us that the way to purify our souls is possible through obedience to the truth: "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart" (1 Pet. 1:22). That is why the psalmist says in Psalms 119:9, that we must 'keep' our way pure according to His word. Here, the word 'keep' has two meanings. First, in a passive sense, there is an implied command, 'to avoid', that is, "Don't". One example is Deuteronomy 4:23 – "'So watch yourselves, that you do not forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything against which the LORD your God has commanded you.'" Another implied meaning is active, which implies a command, 'to keep', "Do". One example is Genesis 18:19 – "'For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.'" So, what must we do to keep our ways pure according to His word? There are three guidelines:

- (1) We must meditate on the Lord's precepts.

Look at Psalms 119:15a – “I will meditate on Your precepts ....” We must meditate on the word of God. We must cultivate a good habit of meditating on His word. Meditating on God doesn't just mean reading the Bible. Meditation is thinking and thinking about the words that we read. And meditation is to think over and over again with a prayerful heart while pondering what the word we read means (v. 148)

(2) We must regard the Lord's ways.

Look at Psalms 119:15b – “... And regard Your ways.” As we meditate on the word of God, we must find a way of God. In other words, through the Bible, we must discover Jesus and pay attention to His footsteps. Therefore, when we come to realize the Lord's way through the word of God, we must compare our walking way with the Lord's way. If the way we are walking on is different from the Lord's way, we must repent of our sins and return to walk the way of the Lord.

(3) We must rejoice in the way of the Lord's testimonies.

Look at Psalms 119:14 – “I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches.” We love riches. The psalmist confessed that he rejoiced in obeying the word of the Lord as he rejoiced in all riches. A Christian who tastes the joy of obeying the word of God cleanses his conduct in the joy of obedience.

**Second, in order for us to live a pure (holy) life, we must seek the Lord with all our hearts.**

Look at Psalms 119:10a – “With all my heart I have sought You; ....” Why are we seeking the Lord? Why are we praying to the Lord? We want to live a holy life want the way we are walking on to be clean and pure. So we meditate on the word of God and think the Lord's way, but we fall and sin again and again. That is why we pray to the Lord with earnest desire to imitate His holiness. The psalmist's earnest prayer was “Do not let me wander from Your commandments” (v. 10). This should be our prayer as well. The reason is because we humans have a sinful instinct to turn away from the commandments of the Lord. Although we have holy desire to obey His commandments, there are countless times that we depart from His commandments because of our sinful nature within us. In particular, the pride within us is causing us to depart from the Lord's way and fall (v. 21). Therefore, like the psalmist, we must seek God with all our hearts. We must pray earnestly to God, “Do not let me wander from Your commandments” (v. 10). In the meantime, we must ask God, “Teach me Your statutes,” as the psalmist prayed (v. 12). We must acknowledge our human ignorance. We must admit that we ourselves cannot understand the statutes of the Lord. In the meantime, we must acknowledge the need for God's sovereign teaching (v. 34). We must seek the Lord with all our hearts in order to purify our conduct. We must seek the Lord with all our hearts in order to live by the word of the Lord. In acknowledging before God our ignorance and our inability to obey His

commandments, we must ask God for wisdom and power. Therefore, we must live a holy life.

**Third, in order for us to live a pure (holy) life, we must treasure the word of the Lord in our hearts.**

Look at Psalms 119:11 – “Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.” What does it mean to put the word of the Lord in our hearts? This means to keep the word of the Lord in our hearts. This is the will of the Lord for us. That is why the Bible recommends this in Proverbs 7:1 – “My son, keep my words And treasure my commandments within you.” Why should we keep the word of God in our hearts? The reason is not to sin against the Lord (Ps.119:11). If we put the word of God in our heart, we can be controlled by and drawn by His word.

How, then, can we keep the word of God in our hearts? There are two ways to learn from Psalms 119:9-16:

(1) In order for us to put His word in our hearts, we must delight in His word.

Look at Psalms 119:14, 16a – “I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches. ... I shall delight in Your statutes ...” It is very difficult to read the Bible without enjoying the word of God. However, when we taste the blessings of God by obeying His word, then we are compelled to be close to His word. The psalmist urges us to rejoice in the Lord's way of testimonies as we rejoice in all our riches (v. 14). When we delight in the Lord's statutes (v. 16), we can keep the word of God in our hearts.

(2) In order for us to put His word in our hearts, we must be determined not to forget His word.

Look at Psalms 119:16b – “... I shall not forget Your word.” If we don't get close to God's word, it's easy for us to quickly forget. Further, we harden our hearts. As a result, we are bound to disobey His word. We must not disobey His word. We must be close to His word. Like the psalmist, we must make up our mind not to forget His word. We must be committed to the word of God. In particular, in order not to forget His word, we must obey God's voice while meditating on His word. Then we can write down the word of God in our hearts. Then the word of God can become ours (v. 56). I think this is the best secret not to forget His word.

**Fourth and last, in order for us to live a pure (holy) life, we must tell the Lord's words.**

Look at Psalms 119:13 – “With my lips I have told of All the ordinances of Your mouth.” In order to keep the word of God in our hearts, we must proclaim it with our lips. Of course, in proclaiming His word, our life itself

must first live as the word proclaimed. In living such life of testimonies, we must testify the word of God. In other words, we must proclaim His holy word while pursuing a holy life, a pure life. We must live a life of testimonies as witnesses of Christ. We must proclaim His word with an unbearable heart (39:1-3, 40:9).

How can we live the pure (holy) life? We must live by the word of the Lord (v. 9). We must seek the Lord with all our hearts (v. 10). We must keep His word in our hearts. And we must proclaim His word. Therefore, I hope and pray that all of us to live the holy and pure life.

Relying on His blood on the cross,

James Kim

(‘Must be washed clean’)

## **“That I may not sin against You”**

**“Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You”  
(Psalms 119:11).**

The news of December 25, Christmas Day, covered a large number of murders in the city of Covina under the heading “Christmas Massacre”. A 45-year-old divorced man went to his ex-wife's parents' house at around 11:30 pm on Christmas Eve, dressed as Santa Claus, and indiscriminately shot and set fire at the people who were having a Christmas Eve party, killing nine people. He committed suicide later. Hearing this terrible criminal case, I came to think in my mind that the shock of a divorce could have these consequences. It thought that he had committed such a terrible crime without being able to control these things, such as hatred, anger, and impulse. In addition to this news and many of the news I hear on TV, I think that when people are filled with sinful things in their hearts, it seems that they have no choice but to commit such crimes. I think this is the same for believers in Jesus. If we are filled with ugly and sinful things in our hearts, we cannot but sin against God. However, if our hearts are gradually filled with God's word, our sins against the Lord will gradually decrease. In order to do that, we must be determined and committed. We must be determined to not sin against the Lord. In order to do that, we must be committed to putting the word of the Lord in our hearts.

In Psalms 119:11, the psalmist confesses that he put the word of the Lord in his heart so that he would not sin against the Lord. How can we put the word of God in our hearts? I thought about five things:

**First, in order to keep God’s word in our hearts, we must pray. We must pray to God, saying, ‘God, please teach me Your word.’**

Look at Psalms 119:12 – “Blessed are You, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes.” The psalmist prayed for God to teach His word to put it in his heart. We too, like the psalmist, must pray to God for Him to teach us His word. The reason is because the author of the Bible is God the Holy Spirit. This is because God the Holy Spirit lives in us, who believe in Jesus, so we can understand the His word only when the Holy Spirit illuminates His word. In the midst of such situation, if we lack a heart to learn God's word, we must pray for desire to long for His word and heart to learn His word while repenting.

**Second, in order to keep God's word in our hearts, we must pay attention to His word and meditate on it diligently.**

Look at Psalms 119:15 – “I will meditate on Your precepts And regard Your ways.” The psalmist heeded the word of God and meditated on it day and night. Like the psalmist, we must pay attention to His word. We must be close to His word. We must meditate on it diligently and regularly. While reading the Bible, we must reflect on the word of God. We must prayerfully ponder and think over His word. In such meditations, we must humbly listen to what God is trying to tell us.

**Third, in order to keep God’s word in our hearts, we must share the word of meditation.**

Look at Psalms 119:13 – “With my lips I have told of All the ordinances of Your mouth.” With his lips the psalmist proclaimed all the Lord’s ordinances. We must share the enlightenment we have given while meditating on the word of God with our brothers and sisters in Christ. In particular, we must share the gospel of Jesus Christ that we realize while meditating on His word. Then His word will remain more in our hearts when we share. As we write down and share the words we meditate on, our hearts are filled with His word.

**Fourth, in order to keep God’s word in our hearts, we must enjoy the word of God.**

Look at Psalms 119:14 – “I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches.” The psalmist rejoiced in the word of God as he rejoiced in all riches. We must rejoice in His word as we rejoice in our wealth. It will not be easy to enjoy His word from the beginning. However, as we meditate on His word, if we taste the enlightenment that God gives, we will realize a little bit of the psalmist’s confession (v. 103) that the word of God is sweeter than honey. In the end, the more we taste the honey of God’s word, the more we will be compelled to enjoy His word. In this joy, we will yearn for the word of God more and more and meditate on His word more and more.

**Fifth and last, in order to keep God’s word in our hearts, we must not forget His word.**

Look at Psalms 119:16 – “I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word.” The psalmist was pleased with the word of God, so he decided not to forget it. We must also have this determination. We must also dedicate ourselves to God that we will not forget His word. The more joyful we have while praying to God and meditating on His word, the less we will have His word in our hearts, not just in our heads. The more we do this, the more we will live a life of personifying His word without forgetting the word. The believer who lives this life progressively and more fully will not sin against the Lord.

When the people of this world commit sins, those who believe in Jesus should not commit sins. When the worldly people commit sins in their homes, we Christians must not commit the same sins in our homes. When all



kinds of sins are being committed in the organizations of this world, those sins must not be committed in our church. In order to do that, we must put the word of God in our hearts. We must fill our hearts with the word of God. In order to do this, we must pray, meditate on His word, share the word of meditation, enjoy His word and we must not forget His word. Therefore, by putting the word of God in our hearts, I hope and pray that we all don't sin against God.

Not wanting to sin against the Lord,

James Kim

(Relying on the blood of Jesus)

## **“That I may not sin against You” (2)**

### **“Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You” (Psalms 119:11).**

If we are a conscientious Christian who believes in Jesus, no one wants to sin against the Lord. But as we see ourselves committing unwanted sins, we often struggle in a swamp of frustration and disappointment amidst guilt. Why are we committing the unwanted sins? Why aren't we obeying the word of God but commit the unwanted sins against Him? We can find out why in Romans 7:13-25. The reason is because “sin which dwells in me” (vv. 17, 20). The apostle Paul confessed, “Wretched man that I am!” while seeing himself serving the law of sin with his flesh while he wanted to serve the law of God with his mind (v. 25). That is what we are. It is the appearance of not doing the good we want, but doing the evil we hate (vv. 15, 19). What should we do? We must look to our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 25). In the midst of that, we must strive to faithfully take our responsibilities. Its responsibility is nothing but to not sin against the Lord. How is this possible?

In the context of Psalms 119:9-16, in order to treasure the word of God in our hearts so that we don't sin against the Lord, we must practice four things.

#### **First, we must pray to God.**

The psalmist sought the Lord with all his heart (v. 10). The reason is because he didn't want to wander from His commandments (v. 10). Therefore, he prayed to the Lord and asked “Teach me your statutes” (v. 12). We must also pray to God for God to teach us His word. We must ask God to teach us His word with humble attitude to learn. Sometimes the word I preached and taught come back to me and pierce my conscience. What I feel at that time is that I have neglected to teach myself. I feel that I have to diligently cultivate the habit of reflecting my heart and life in the word of God, the spiritual mirror. The Lord reminds us that we must teach ourselves very diligently and teach others. I pray to the Lord to be a humble learner. I want to have a good habit of praying to God diligently to receive the teaching of His word.

#### **Second, we must meditate on the word of God.**

The psalmist meditated on the Lord's precepts and heeded the Lord's way (v. 15). We don't stay still praying that God will teach us His words. We must yearn for the word of God. We need to be close to the Bible. And we must cultivate the habit of diligently meditating on His word regularly. And we must heed His word. I

think it's important to cultivate the habit of practicing QT (word meditation). We don't end with listening to, reading, and studying His word, but we need training to think more intensively. Through this training, when we meditate on the word of God day and night like a psalmist, we can fight against sinful thoughts with His word in the realm of thought.

### **Third, we must obey the word of God.**

The psalmist proclaimed with his lips all the ordinances of the Lord's mouth (v. 13). We don't end up learning the Word and meditating on it. We must listen to and follow the voice of the Lord while learning and meditating on the word of God. That is, we must obey the word of the Lord. Then the word is written in our heart and becomes our possession (v. 56).

### **Fourth and last, we must rejoice the word of God.**

The psalmist confessed that he rejoiced in the way of the Lord's testimony, as he rejoiced in all riches (v. 14). When we learn the word of God in prayer and obey His voice in meditation, we experience the joy of the word. When we have the joy of this word, we will not forget the word of God (v. 16). In order for us not to sin against the Lord, we must treasure the word of God in our hearts. In order to do this, we must learn and meditate on His word while praying to God. In such a time, we must obey God's teaching. Therefore, we must enjoy the taste of His word.

Not wanting to sin against the Lord,

James Kim

(While meditating on His word on Monday, the first day of the early morning prayer meeting)

## Spiritual fuel

**"Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You. ... This has become mine, That I observe Your precepts" (Psalms 119:11, 56).**

I felt anxious again as I attended the morning prayer meeting this morning. Previously, I was in a church car and came out to the Morning Prayer meeting, and there was no gasoline. So I suffered a bit of anxiety because there is no gasoline in the car and couldn't go to church for the Morning Prayer. Today I was in my car, and the gasoline measuring needle was almost at the bottom. So, while praying, I drove with the hope that the Lord would help me get off Highway 2 and get to Arco gas station. Thankfully, after arriving at the Arco gas station, I put gasoline in my car. And I accelerated and speeded up to get to the church safely.

Thinking about this happening this morning, I proclaimed the words of Psalm 119:11 and 56 during the Morning Prayer meeting. The psalmist treasured the word of God in his heart (v. 11). He treasured His word in his heart so as not to sin against God. A life of obedience to that word was the psalmist's possession (v. 56). In other words, the psalmist was full of spiritual fuel. Therefore, even if the temptation to commit a sin came to him, he was drawn to the word of God and escaped from the temptation, as if by stepping on the acceleration of a car to speed up.

But as I examine myself and asked myself 'Why am I unable to speed up the word like the psalmist?', I think it's because the spiritual fuel isn't being filled (supplied) from time to time. It's as if I haven't been riding my car for a week, so I don't know how much gasoline was in my car's fuel tank, I don't know how much my spiritual fuel I used in the chasing life of faith as I'm busy serving. When I am supplied with the living and energetic word of God, which is my spiritual fuel and when I apply it to my life and make it my own, my spiritual tank is filled with fuel so that I have to quickly get out of the world's many temptations. I would do it, but I think the reason why I cannot do that is because my spiritual fuel is insufficient. Another reason is because even if there is spiritual fuel, I think it is important what kind of fuel is there. In other words, when I put gasoline in my car, I put Regular Unleaded almost every time. The reason is because it is the cheapest gasoline I can put in my car. However, when I drove a long distance this time to Arizona, where my father-in-law's house was, I remember putting in Premium Unleaded. My wife told me that Premium Unleaded gasoline is better than Regular Unleaded, so it is good for long-distance driving. But the better gasoline than Premium Unleaded is Super Unleaded. This gasoline is expensive per gallon, so I almost never put it in. Likewise, I think that my spiritual fuel can be divided into three. I think the cheapest Regular Unleaded can refer to the spiritual state of knowing the word of God with its head. In other words, it refers to His word in our heads as information. A better gasoline Premium Unleaded can be referred to as

receiving grace through His word and trying to apply it a little but often falls down. The reason is because the roots are not deep. Lastly, the best gasoline, Super Unleaded, can be referred to as applying God's word to our lives and being transformed. I think it refers to a life in which roots are embedded and bear fruit. Perhaps the psalmist's spiritual fuel was not made his own while applying God's word like Super Unleaded. That is why he thinks that the words have also brought him back to life.

I was anxious to see the gasoline in my car today. In prayer, I remembered what the psalmist had said to his soul, "And why have you become disturbed within me?" (42:5, 11, 43:5). When spiritual fuel is scarce, the soul is bound to be insecure. Also, we are bound to disappoint. That is why I checked my spiritual fuel frequently and instructed me to refill when the signal came so that the needle was not pointing at the bottom. I think it would be better to always supply spiritual fuel from the Lord before the signal comes. I'm sure that filling my spiritual fuel tank with the best "spiritual gasoline" will speed up and over any kind of temptations. As if I was going to use a car and regularly and constantly put gasoline in the fuel tank, I always fill my own spiritual fuel tank with the best spiritual fuel of God's word to speed up the Word no matter what the temptations of the world come. I want to take it out and 'run away' like Joseph. This morning, after checking my own spiritual fuel tank, meditating, proclaiming, and praying, I wrote down the words I gave while meditating again, filling my spiritual fuel tank with the best "spiritual gasoline" in obedience to His word.

With gratitude for God's teachings this morning which was my spiritual fuel,

James Kim

(While praying for speeding up with God's word in my long-termed spiritual journey)

# Purpose of life

## [Psalms 119:17-24]

Johns Hopkins University's social scientists asked 7,948 people (48 universities), 'What is your most important thing now?' As a result, 16% of the respondents said 'make money,' while 78% said it was 'discovering the meaning of my life.' The conclusion of this survey is that humans are not fundamentally pursuing their own possessions, but the meaning of life. What is the meaning of your life? What are you living for? What is the purpose of our life? If you look at the first question and answer of Westminster Shorter Catechism, it is written like this: (Q 1) "What is the chief end of man?" (Ans.) "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever" (1 Cor. 10:31; Rom. 11:36; Ps. 73:24-26; Jn. 17:22-24). How do we live a life that glorifies God?

In Psalms 119:17b, the Bible says that in order to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, that is the purpose of life, we must keep the word of God. What must we do to keep His word? I would like to meditate on three things, focusing on Psalms 119:17-24.

### **First, in order for us to keep God's word, our spiritual eyes must be open.**

Look at Psalms 119:18 – "Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Your law." The psalmist prayed to God, "Open my eyes". What was the reason? The reason was to see the wonderful things from the Lord's law. The psalmist tried to examine the wonderful things of the word by the inspiration of God (Park). We are strangers in this earth (v. 19). This land is not our home. That is why we are moving toward the better home, that is heaven. In the midst of that, we have a responsibility to live by obeying the word of God as strangers on this earth. The reason is that we are citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20). Therefore, as citizens of heaven, we must live on earth and live like citizens of heaven. In other words, we must live on this earth according to the word of God. However, while living on this earth, we cannot see His word unless our spiritual eyes are opened. We cannot see God's work on this earth unless our spiritual eyes are opened. Therefore, the psalmist asked God, "Do not hide Your commandments from me" (Ps. 119:19). We must also say this prayer to God. Therefore, since God is compassionate and answers our prayers, when our spiritual eyes are opened, we will see the wonderful things of God's Word. Therefore, we will be able to keep the word of God. This is the purpose of life: to keep His word!

### **Second, in order for us to keep God's word, our souls must be crushed.**

Look at Psalms 119:20 – "My soul is crushed with longing After Your ordinances at all times." The

psalmist said that his soul was crushed with longing after God's ordinances at all times. How long could his soul have been crushed because he longed for the word of God? Are we, like the psalmist, always longing for God's word to the extent that our souls are crushed? Our answer to this question should be "yes", but I don't think it is. One of the reasons is because our spiritual eyes aren't opened and we don't know the wonderful things of God's word. That's why we aren't longing for His word to the extent that our souls are crushed. We aren't fully aware of the absolute necessity of the word of God in our life's journey. As a result, we are arrogant and wander from His commandments (v. 21). And because we are wandering from His commandments, the Lord is rebuking us (v. 21). What should we do? We must humbly repent and return to the Lord. We must re-dedicate ourselves to keeping the word of the Lord. Then we can be comforted by His word as strangers in this world (v. 23). We can be comforted by the word of God even in the midst of the persecution of our enemies ["reproach and contempt" (v. 22)]. Therefore, our souls need to be crushed through tribulation and adversity in our journey of life. When there is crush in our souls, we will long for His word more and more with that broken heart in order to keep His word.

### **Third, in order to keep God's word, we must taste the great joy of His word.**

Look at Psalms 119:24 – "Your testimonies also are my delight; They are my counselors." The psalmist said that the word of God is "my delight" and "my counselors". What is our joy in this world as guests? The only one whom we long for in this world is the Lord (73:25). All we desperately need in this world is the word that comes from the mouth of the Lord (Deut. 8:3). It is only the Shepherd Lord who can lead us to heaven from this world. We are those who absolutely need the Lord's guidance. And we need to be guided by the words that come out of the mouth of the Lord. Therefore, we, like the psalmists, should make the word of God our delight and counselors. In order to do that, we must taste the great joy of His word. We must experience the power of His word. In order to do that, we must humbly obey His word by faith. When we keep His word, we can taste the power of God. Then we will realize how joyful it is to obey God's word.

The purpose of our life is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. In order to live this life, we must keep the word of God. And in order for us to keep His word, we must pray. We must ask God to open our spiritual eyes (v. 18). And we must always long for God's word to the extent that it crushes our souls (v. 20). And we must taste the joy of His word. Then we can keep His word. I hope and pray that all of us can glorify God and enjoy Him forever by keeping the Word of God.

Only His word!

James Kim

(Praying to glorify God by obeying His word and enjoy Him forever)

## **I will run to Your words!**

### **[Psalms 119:25-32]**

A pastor visited the family of a believer. It seems to there is an indication of a person in the house, no matter how much he knocked, the door didn't open. The pastor, who felt like the believer was ignore him, left with a note of Revelation 3:20 – “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.” It was next Sunday. The believer who had been visited also handed a note to the pastor in the same way. The pastor, who looked at the note couldn't stop laughing. There was a Bible verse Genesis 3:10 written on the note: “He said, ‘I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself’” (Internet). There is a lesson to learn from reading this illustration. It is nothing but application of the word of God. When I looked at an internet article, I saw a pastor saying that the biggest problem in the Korean church today is that the theory is abundant, but the application is weak. As I was reading the article saying that even though the Biblical knowledge is overflowing, each church is full of Bible study hours, and even if you go to a Christian bookstore, there are so many good Christian books, the problem is there is no power from heaven. As I was reading this, I was challenged that in order to experience power from heaven, we have to apply God's word in our lives. Then what is application of His word? ‘If meditation is to hold on to His word and let it take root and influence deep in our minds and hearts, it is application that makes it appear concretely in our lives’ (Internet).

I want to apply the three lessons of Psalms 119:25-32 under the heading “I will run to Your words!” in our lives. I want to be challenged with two prayer topics and one dedication.

### **In running to the Lord's words, the first prayer topic is 'Make me understand Your words!'**

Look at Psalms 119:27 – “Make me understand the way of Your precepts, So I will meditate on Your wonders.” I thought about how I could describe this age. At that time, I remembered the words of Mark 4:12 – “... and ever hearing but never understanding; .....” Why is this age never understand? The reason is because this age draws close to evil. Look at Job 28:28 – “... Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding.” If we apply this to us in more detail with the words of the apostle James, the reason why we Christians don't understand the word of God is because we are stained with the world (Jam.1:27). The reason we don't experience our righteous souls being tormented day after day even though we see and hear the worldly



people's lawless deeds (2 Pet. 2:8) is because we are stained with this world. In other words, because we have not been able to protect ourselves from being secularized, even if we listen to the word of God dozens, or even hundreds of times, we don't understand. The prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 44:18 why the Israelites didn't understand: "They do not know, nor do they understand, for He has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot comprehend."

The psalmist in Psalms 119, who was living in a dark age, wanted to understand the way of the Lord's precepts (Ps. 119:27). When he was in a situation where he saw, heard, and felt the way of lawless deeds a lot (2 Pet. 2:8), he prayed to God and received a prayer answered (Ps. 119:26). The psalmist received the prayer answered from God as a result of praying to God for his many difficult ways. Therefore, the psalmist said: "I have told of my ways, and You have answered me; Teach me Your statutes" (v. 26). The psalmist, who wanted to understand the word of the Lord more and more through the answered prayers, wanted to understand the way of the Lord's precepts rather than walk the way of lawlessness in the world, and wanted to walk the way of the Lord. What was the reason? It was because he wanted to meditate on the Lord's wonders (v. 27). He wanted to understand the way of the Lord's precepts in order to meditate and appreciate the beauty of the Lord's words ("wonders") (Park).

I desperately want this year to be a year in tasting (experiencing) the beauty of the word of the Lord. I hope and pray that this year be a year of seeing, listening, and meditating on the Word and enjoying the sweet taste of every verse of the Bible through the realization of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, as the psalmist said in Psalm 119:103, I sincerely hope that there will be a confession among us: "How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

**In running to the Lord's words, the second prayer topic is, "Strengthen me according to Your word!"**

Look at Psalms 119:28 – "My soul weeps because of grief; Strengthen me according to Your word." In what circumstance was this second prayer of the psalmist offered? He prayed to God to strengthen him according to the word of the Lord when his soul was melting by pressure. This is when he was suffering from tribulation and hardship (Park), and when his soul was mourning for suffering (Calvin), he prayed that he would be strengthened according to His word. In other words, when the psalmist suffered from tribulation and hardship and his strength was poured out like water, he prayed for the weakened heart to be strengthened by the power of the Lord's word. The heaviness in the heart melts and wastes our hearts as if a candle melts and wastes. The repentant soul melts its heart with tears because of sin. But even these repentant souls can melt their hearts through tribulation. Then we feel like we want to pour out our hearts and cry out to God. The psalmist's prayer situation is explained in verse 25a: "My soul cleaves to the dust; ...." This means that the psalmist prayed to God when hope was lost in his soul because of all the worthless things in this world. What did the psalmist pray for? He prayed, "Revive me according

to Your word” (v. 25). What the prayer of the psalmist who knows the sweet taste of the Word? The psalmist who knew that all the world could give was the bitter taste, and he put hope in the word of God even when hope was lost in his soul due to the suffering of tribulation and hardship, and all the worthless things in this world. The reason is because he believed that only the word of God would revive and strengthen his weakened and lost soul.

I believe in the power of God's word. I believe that the word of God has the power to revive our stagnant and discouraged souls. The reason is because the word of God itself is living and active (Heb. 4:12). Even though we are exhausted while serving the church, which is the body of the Lord, we must hold onto the word of the Lord's promise, 'I will build my church' (Mt. 16:18). And with the word of that promise, we must gain the strength of our hearts. With that promise, the Lord raises us up so that we can faithfully serve the church. We experience Proverbs 24:16 in our lives: "For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again ...." I sincerely hope and pray that we will be built up more and more with the word of the Lord's promise. In this vain and meaningless world where everything is worthless, even though our hearts and souls are melted down like water through tribulation and suffering, let us only hope in the word of God's promise and experience its power when we are weakest. May the grace of God be among us.

### **One application in running toward the Lord's word is 'I will devote myself to the word of the Lord'.**

How did the psalmist devote himself to His word? We can think of it in three ways.

#### **(1) The psalmist chose the faithful way.**

Look at Psalms 119:30 – “I have chosen the faithful way; I have placed Your ordinances before me.” The psalmist didn't choose the unfaithful way, even though many unfaithful ways were laid before him. So he prayed to God like this: “Remove the false way from me ....” What choices do we make? One of two: the way of truth or the way of lies. But the very sad reality is that too many of us are confused the way of truth with the way of lies. We regard lie as truth and choose to walk the way of lie, but we are mistaken for walking the way of truth. The word of God is clear. Furthermore, the reason why we choose the way of lies while discerning the way between truth and lies is because we have lost the ability to choose the way of truth. The psalmist, who realized the word of God and tasted its sweet taste, and who experienced the revival by the word, chose the way of truth. He made the truth the standard of his life (v. 30). Like the psalmist, we must choose the faithful way, the way of truth, and devoted to walking it.

#### **(2) The psalmist clung to the Lord's word.**

Look at Psalms 119:31 – “I cling to Your testimonies; O LORD, do not put me to shame!” Why are we

Christians being shamed by the world? The reason is because we don't live according to His word. For example, we can choose the faithful way and walk on it. But since we walk on the false way, we are ashamed (vv. 29-30). Likewise, when we don't live a life of obeying His word, we are bound to be shamed by the people of the world. The psalmist, who clung to the Lord's words in order not to be ashamed, was firmly attached to His words (Park). In other words, he was faithful to God's word. Like the psalmist, when we cling to the word of the Lord, we can avoid lies.

(3) The psalmist devoted himself to run on the way of the Lord's commandments.

Look at Psalms 119:32 – “I shall run the way of Your commandments, For You will enlarge my heart.” The psalmist chose the faithful way, not the false way, and was also clung to the word of the Lord. Therefore, he said that he would run on the way of the Lord's commandments because he was sure that the Lord would enlarge his heart. Here, the word ‘to run’ refers to ‘to make a straight line movement by focusing, but the movement is relatively quick and enthusiastic.’ Those who focus on His word and run toward it, the Lord will enlarge their hearts even further (eg. 1 Kgs. 4:29). Why was the psalmist able to run on the way of the Lord's commandments? The reason was because the Lord set his heart free (Ps. 119:32).

We must run the way of the word of the Lord. In order to do that, we must pray to God. We must ask God to make us understand His word. Also, we must ask God to strengthen us according to His word. As we pray, we must devote ourselves to the word of the Lord. We must devote ourselves in choosing the faithful way, striving to cling to His word. And we must run on the way of the Lord's commandments. May this prayer and devotion be for all of us.

Desire to run the way of the Lord's commandments,

James Kim

(Devote to His word)

## **“I shall observe it to the end”**

### **[Psalms 119:33-40]**

Yesterday evening on the CBS 9 o'clock news, I saw a person from Hermosa Beach running around the 3.36 miles of sand for 24 hours with a group of participants to help with financially troubled schools. As I watched it, I thought how difficult it would be for the people to run without a break for 24 hours on the sandy beach because even running 24 hours on the playground is very difficult. But they have a purpose (last year the participants jumped 83.04 miles, set a world record, and people donated tens of millions of dollars) and it was nice to see them struggling to achieve that goal. And looking at it for some reason, I thought about our race of faith. As we know, the race of faith is not a 100-meter running, but a long-distance marathon. We can't help thinking about what to do and how to finish this long-distance spiritual marathon.

If we look at Psalms 119:33, the psalmist said: “Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, And I shall observe it to the end.” In other words, he was committed to keeping the commandments of the Lord to the end. How is this possible? What and how can we keep God's word to the end? There are three things we can think of:

#### **First, we must enjoy keeping God's commandments.**

Look at Psalms 119:35 – “Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, For I delight in it.” The psalmist prayed that God would enable him to walk in the way of the Lord's commandments. The reason is because he found delight in the path of the Lord's commandments. It means that the psalmist enjoyed the delight that God gives (v. 35) because he obeyed the enlightened word with all his heart (v. 34) because God taught him (v. 33) and made him understand the word (v. 34). When we enjoy this delight, we can keep the word of God to the end. When this joy is in us, we can complete the race of faith to the end. When I see my youngest child, Yeun, I think it's a little different from the rest of our family. Yeun does what she loves to do with joyful and willing heart. Yesterday, after came back from the summer school, she asked me and my wife whether she could move her school to the summer school. The reason was because she thought that the summer school is better than her school. I think her reason was because she loved the cooking class and the summer school had it, not her own school. And I think she really liked her summer school teacher. It was really nice to see Yeun liking and enjoying so much. I just thanked God. Looking at my youngest child, Yeun, I remembered the first question and answer of Westminster Short Catechism. And in the answer, I thought we were too much focused on the first part, “Man's chief end is to glorify God.” We all know that we Christians must live for the glory of God. However, I think that what we don't seem to know very well is to enjoy God forever. I think we even don't know how to enjoy God. When we can live for the

glory of God and enjoy Him, we can run the race of faith that lies before us to the end. When we can enjoy keeping God's commandments, we will be able to keep His word to the end.

### **Second, we must be revived by God's word.**

Look at Psalms 119:37, 40 – “Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity, And revive me in Your ways. ... Behold, I long for Your precepts; Revive me through Your righteousness.” When our souls cleave to the dust because of tribulation and persecution (v. 25), and when our souls weep because of grief (v. 28), we must experience the restoration and revival of our souls by the word of God. Then we can keep the word of God until the end.

Personally, whenever my soul is discouraged and fall, the Lord raised me up again with the word of promise given to me so that I came thus far. Even though I fell, the Lord made me to meditate on the words of John 6:1-15, and gave me hope to my soul so that I came thus far. God revitalized my soul and led me through the faith that He who promised is faithful and cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13) and clearly does what He said to me (Num. 23:19). When my soul is discouraged and anxious (Ps. 42:5, 11; 43:5), God made my soul to look again at the Lord with the living and active word of God (Heb. 4:12), and to long for and hope for the Lord. Therefore, I earnestly hope and pray that the faithful covenant God will allow me to obey His word until the end.

### **Third and last, we must fear the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 119:38 – “Establish Your word to Your servant, As that which produces reverence for You.” The psalmist asked for God to fulfill the word of His promise to him. As a result, he wanted to fear God. The psalmist wanted his heart not to turn to dishonest gain because he feared God through the fulfillment of the word of the Lord's promise (v. 36). And because he feared God, he wanted his eyes to turn away from looking at vanity (v. 37). Because the psalmist fears God, he didn't look to the left or to the right, but only wants to keep God's word to the end.

I want to walk one road to the end. I want to walk to the end of the righteous path that the Lord wants me to walk, looking only at the Lord, not leaning to the left or to the right. However, I experience the works of Satan countless times, which makes me to lean to the left or to the right because even though my spirit is willing, my flesh is weak (Mt. 26:41). I admit that some of the works of Satan is the greed (dishonest gain) and vain that the psalmist spoke of in today's text. In the lust of the eyes (1 Jn. 2:16), I often see myself looking at things that are vain and meaningless. There are many times when I am disappointed with myself when I see the greed of my heart that wants it as my eyes look at something empty that is of no value and is of no benefit to me. When I think about why I commit these sins against holy God, my problem is because I don't fear God. I don't hate evil because I don't fear God. Therefore, the prayer topic that the psalmist asked God in Psalms 119:38 is also my earnest prayer topic: “Establish Your word to Your servant, As that which produces reverence for You.” I want to fear God like the

psalmist because God fulfills the word of promise given to me. And because of the fear of God, I want to be free from greed, vain, and all sinful things that make me lean to the left or to the right in walking the righteous path to the end.

When I became a gray-haired old man, I want to be able to look back on my life and see the righteous path that the Lord was with me and walked with me (Prov. 16:31). In particular, I want to be able to confess, like the apostle Paul, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept my faith” (2 Tim. 4:7). I want to give glory to God by obeying His word until the end. To that end, I want to enjoy more and more of the delight in keeping His word. I want to have more and more experiences in which my soul is revived by the word of God. Because of fearing God, I want to stay away from evil and live a life that keeps only the way of the Lord and only His word.

Wanting to complete the race of faith,

James Kim

(Only by Word, only by faith)

# Walk at liberty!

## [Psalms 119:41-48]

Pastor Charles Spurgeon said of the highest form of liberty: “The highest form of liberty is always laboring to know the mind of God and to be conformed to it” (Spurgeon). How is this possible? First we must get to know God's heart. We must get to know God's heart through the word of God. In the midst of that, we must obey God's commandments. This is the life of supreme freedom. In other words, by getting to know God's heart through His word and obeying His word, we can enjoy the true freedom that God gives us.

This is what the psalmist said in Psalms 119:45 – “And I will walk at liberty, For I seek Your precepts.” The psalmist said, “I will walk at liberty.” How could he say that he could walk at liberty? How can we walk at liberty? Psalms 119:41-48 teaches us at least two things:

### **First, in order for us to walk at liberty, we must seek the Lord’s precepts.**

Look at Psalms 119:45 – “And I will walk at liberty, For I seek Your precepts.” The psalmist sought the Lord's precepts. Here, “precepts” refer to directions, rules, or principle lessons that all people in the covenant society must obey. This means that we can enjoy true freedom as we seek and obey biblical principles. But I think the problem is to distinguish between biblical and non-biblical principles. Too many times it seems that we are confused between these two principles. I think one of the causes is the confusion that comes from our lack of learning the heart of God through His word. In other words, when we don’t learn the word of God well, we are confused biblical and non-biblical principles because our will is ahead of God's will. Therefore, in order for us to truly walk at liberty, we must know the heart of God through His word. And we must understand and obey God's will by knowing the heart of God.

### **Second, in order for us to walk at liberty, we must love the Lord’s commandments.**

Look at Psalms 119:47-48: “I shall delight in Your commandments, Which I love. And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, Which I love; And I will meditate on Your statutes.” What does it mean to love the commandments of the Lord? There are four ways to think about it:

- (1) It is to meditate on His commandments because we take delight in them.

Those who love the commandments of the Lord are delighted to meditate on His words. In a word, those

who love His commandments take delight in meditating His words.

(2) It is to trust in His commandments.

Look at Psalms 119:42 – “So I will have an answer for him who reproaches me, For I trust in Your word.” If we love the commandments of the Lord, we trust them. Therefore, like the psalmist, we pray, “May Your lovingkindnesses also come to me, O LORD, Your salvation according to Your word” (v. 41). Like the psalmist, we trust in the word of the Lord's promises even before those who blaspheme (v. 39).

(3) It is to keep the word of truth at hand.

Look at Psalms 119:43 – “And do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, For I wait for Your ordinances.” The psalmist wanted the word of the Lord and wanted to keep it close to his mouth. In other words, he wanted his lips and heart to be controlled by His word. The heart that is governed by the word of truth is a free heart.

(4) It is to keep the Lord's commandments continually.

Look at Psalms 119:44 – “So I will keep Your law continually, Forever and ever.” In order to walk the path of the Lord's commandments to the end (v. 33), we must always keep the Lord's law forever and ever (v. 44). To walk truly free is to walk the path of the Lord's commandments. Keeping those commandments and obeying them is the secret of walking at liberty. Those who love and obey His commandments are those who love the Lord (Jn. 14:21).

Jesus said in John 8:32 – “and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” I hope and pray that we can walk at liberty through the truth and knowing God's heart and obeying His commandments according to His will.

Wanting to enjoy true freedom by obeying the word of truth,

James Kim

(A truly free man in the Lord)



## Comfort myself!

### [Psalms 119:49-56]

Today, I heard the news of the division of a big Korean church belonging to the PCUSA denomination in the American Christian newspaper and I am worried about what will happen to that church in the future. Even in the PCA denomination to which our church belongs, the Korean church, which was already a big church, was divided into two and worship separately in one church building. Especially when I think of my brothers and sisters in Christ who will be hurt, this is a very sad reality. These days I have a lot of thoughts like this. It is the thought that the church isn't a place to be healed, but rather a place to be hurt. Perhaps that is why I think that it is a time in desperate need for a comforter like Barnabas whose heart is burning with God's love.

Personally, I have been praying to God for a long time to become a comforter whose heart is burning with God's love. But this time, due to the resignation of my beloved English ministry pastor, I saw myself in pains and tears, refusing to be comforted by anyone. Perhaps the reason was because it was very painful and hurting. After going through such a process, in light of Psalms 119:49-56, the question is, 'How can a pastor develop spiritual self-power to comfort himself?' The reason is because if the pastor cannot comfort himself, he cannot comfort the flocks whom the Lord has entrusted him.

I think we refuse to be comforted when we are so sick and distressed. When the pain and suffering are so great that we cannot endure ourselves, we are at risk of despair. There is a danger of becoming natural to be more discouraged, more disappointed, and more ill to live in suffering and hurt. But the surprising fact is that even though the psalmist in Psalms 119:49-56 was in his affliction (Ps. 119:50), he comforted himself (v. 52). So, while meditating on the words of Psalms 119:49-56, I would like to think about two answers how to develop the spiritual self-power in comforting ourselves like the psalmist.

**First, there is one thing we must not do in order to develop the spiritual self-power in comforting ourselves is that we must be on guard against the arrogant who speak to our souls.**

The psalmist said that the arrogant utterly derided him (v. 51). What was the evil intention or purpose of the arrogant? Its purpose was to make the psalmist turn aside from the law of the Lord (v. 51). What a terrifying Satanic scheme. Just as a wicked man pulls a fish out of a fishbowl and tries to kill it, Satan uses an arrogant to take us out of the fishbowl of the Word and kill us badly. Psalms 14:1 came to mind when I thought about what the gross

ridicule of that arrogant: “The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God. ....” Especially when we are in trouble like the psalmist, like the foolishly proud mocking, we tend to ask our own souls, ‘If there is God, why doesn’t He deliver me from this pain?’, ‘Why should I suffer such pain and wounds?’ In the midst of that, we see that we are filled with victim mentality. We tend to blame of people, environment, and even God. In that sense, our pride is being exposed in the midst of trouble. We doubt God’s existence, reject His helping hand, and let the pain and circumstances we face dominate our souls. Eventually, we see in our troubles the tendency to fall for Satan’s schemes and forsake the word of the Lord. And it seems that we spend each day in pain and tears without knowing this at that moment. I mean I was like this. Because of the resignation of my beloved co-worker, I spent day by day in pain and tears. Although I tried hard to practice the word of God and prayer in my own way, I couldn’t let His word to control my heart. I spent about 3 weeks day by day in a daze. In the end, Satan caused me to forget the word of the Lord through pain, tears, and distress, and thus causes the symptoms of spiritual dementia. Therefore, leaving and forsaking His word, I made myself more discouraged and sad. We should never be wary and prevent Satan from speaking to our souls using the ridicule of the arrogant. In doing so, we will be able to develop our spiritual self-power to comfort ourselves.

**Second and last, there are three things we must do to develop the spiritual self-power to comfort ourselves:**

(1) The first thing we must do is to remember the Lord’s promises (119:49, 52, 55).

The psalmist comforted himself by remembering the “ordinances” of the Lord (v. 52). Here, the Lord’s “ordinances” refer to the word of God that has been revealed to be true from a long time ago and that stands firmly (Park). In other words, the psalmist remembered the word of God’s promise that had been revealed to be true from his past life and stood firmly. For example, it’s like remembering the Lord’s promise to our church ‘I will build My church’ (Mt. 16:18) and thinking about the evidences that the Lord has been building this church in various ways for past years according to His promise. As the psalmist looked back on the past, he found true comfort in his soul, thinking about the faithfulness of God in fulfilling His promise. So the psalmist confessed, “This (the word of the Lord’s promise) is my comfort in my affliction, That Your word has revived me” (Ps. 119:50).

We seem to be running busy just looking ahead. When we run hard and face difficulties or adversity like a psalmist as we pursue our future goals, successes and so on, we need to think about it at least once: ‘The Lord is giving me an opportunity to pause and see through these difficulties and adversity to look back at my life and remember the footsteps of how the Lord has fulfilled the word of promise.’ Now we are living a life in which we are just looking ahead and running toward our own selfish goals without any hesitation. That’s why it is good for us that we are afflicted (v. 71). When we have time to look back, we shouldn’t

remember the painful wounds or bad memories of the past, but the footsteps of God's faithful grace. In particular, like the psalmist, we must remember and hold on to the word of the Lord's promises more and more "in the night" (v. 55) when the painful things that darkens our hearts continue to come.

(2) The second thing we must do is to hold on to the Lord's word of promise and cry out to God.

This is how the psalmist cried out to God in Psalms 119:49 – "Remember the word to Your servant, In which You have made me hope." As he remembered the word of the Lord's promise, and held on to it, he prays to the Lord: 'Lord, you gave me Your promised words. Please remember those words.' Of course, our Lord doesn't forget the promises He has given us. However, there are many times we forget those words of promises in trouble. The reason why the psalmist prayed to the Lord to remember His words of the promise is because the Lord made him hope.

In a way, it seems that when we are in extreme trouble and suffering, the light of the Lord's words of promise given to us shines more and more hopefully, as if the light shines brighter and brighter in the extreme darkness. Therefore, like the psalmist, we must also fall down in great pain and trouble, proclaiming the word of promise to the Lord in our prayers. Because we knew that we have no hope elsewhere through extreme pain and trouble, we must go to the Lord alone, confessing that only hope is the Lord and His promises. We must experience the work of the word of God by the Holy Spirit who revives our lonely souls that cannot be comforted with anything in the garden of solitude while praying with His words of hope.

(3) The third and last thing we must do is to keep the Lord's laws (commandments).

In other words, even if we are in extreme pain and trouble, we shouldn't leave the Lord's laws, but rather keep them better. The way to overcome Satan's schemes is not to leave the word of God, but rather be closer to His word, holding on to His word of promise, and gaining spiritual power through prayer and taking the lead in practicing His word. The psalmist kept the Lord's law (vv. 55, 56). Furthermore, he confessed that observing the Lord's precepts had become his (v. 56). How can we possess the word of God? How can we make His words that we hear and learn to be our own possession? It's simple. We just have to live according to His word. That's why the psalmist did when he was in trouble. We will not be able to deny that there are many times when we are drawn to our sinful nature and don't live according to His commandments when we are comfortable.

As we live, we live by exchanging affliction, pains, hurts and wounds. Especially, in the church called the body of the Lord, we are exchanging affliction, pains, hurts and wounds with each other. Unfortunately, however, we are not making this "affliction" beneficial to us. The reason is because, like the psalmist, we

have weak spiritual self- power to comfort ourselves. Like the psalmist, we must cultivate spiritual self- power to comfort ourselves. Therefore, we must live the life of a true comforter like Barnabas.

With heart of gratitude to the Lord for giving me the opportunity to be afflicted and thus to develop spiritual self- power to comfort myself,

James Kim

(After asking the Lord to raise me up as a comforter with burning heart of love again at a prayer meeting)

## The Lord who made me hope

**“Remember the word to Your servant, In which You have made me hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, That Your word has revived me” (Psalms 119:49-50).**

Now we have a New Year. Let us say “Happy New Year” to each other. I sincerely hope and pray that all of you, Victory Presbyterian Church, have the New Year full of joy and happiness. We already know what will continue in the world in this New Year. So, for many people, the New Year may not be a very hopeful. Rather, there will be many people who are worried and anxious about how to survive this year. For them, the New Year may be the New Year of despair rather than of hope. But in this New Year, we must hope in the Lord. The reason is because the Lord will make us hope, even if the New Year's financial difficulties come in our lives.

In Psalms 119:49, the psalmist confessed, “... In which You have made me hope.” Our Lord didn't make only the psalmist to hope in Him. The Lord has made us have clear and sure hope. How did the Lord make us hope? By giving us the word of promise, the Lord has made us hope. There are countless words of God's promises in the Bible. Among them, I am sure each of you are holding on to your own promises of God's words. The word of promise that I am holding onto regarding Victory Presbyterian Church is Matthew 16:18 “... I will build my church.” Considering this promise, I can confess as the psalmist confessed in Psalms 119:50 – “This is my comfort in my affliction, That Your word has revived me.” When I meditate on this promised word that the Lord will build the Victory Presbyterian Church, the body of the Lord, I am comforted no matter how hard my heart is. In other words, when I look at the faithfulness of God who gave me the word of promise, His word of promise rekindles my discouraged and frustrated soul.

In this New Year, I hope and pray that the Lord continues to build you up even more firmly. Also, as the Lord promised, I pray that the Lord continues to build your home even stronger. Also, I pray that the Lord continues to build our church up more and more solidly in this New Year. Although the news says that this New Year is a year when the whole world is getting more and more difficult economically, we hope that our victorious members will hold on to the word of the Lord's promise with faith in the meantime. No matter what difficulties and adversities come into our lives this New Year, I hope and pray that we will be comforted by remembering the promises of the Lord (v. 52). I bless you that the word of the Lord's promise will restore and revive our souls more and more fully this year.

Hoping in the Lord,

James Kim

[As I remember His word “Be joyful in hope” (Rom. 12:12)]

# **The Christians who are victorious by the Word of God**

## **[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.

Praying for the Lord to raise up the Christ-centered visionary leaders and send them out to expand the Kingdom of God,

James Kim

(Thanks to God for His grace again through His word Psalms 119, while preparing for our church revival meeting)

## **My possession**

### **“This has become mine, That I observe Your precepts” (Psalms 119:56).**

In this New Year, during the Korean Ministry service of Victory Presbyterian Church, we are praising the gospel song “I offer my life” during offering time. One of the reasons why I chose that gospel song for offering time was so that we could offer not only our own possession but also our lives as well. Although it was easy to think of matter when we think about our own possession, we can see a different side of our own possession through Psalms 119:56. In other words, our own possession can mean observing the laws of the Lord.

The psalmist didn't say that knowing the laws of the Lord was his possession. Rather, he said that observing the law of the Lord was his possession. This tells us that the psalmist lived a life of obedience to the commandments of the Lord, that is, a life of personification of His word. Based on Psalms 119:49-51 more contextually, the personalization of the psalmist's life can be thought of in three ways:

#### **First, the psalmist lived without forgetting the promises that the Lord gave him.**

Look at Psalms 119:49a – “Remember the word to Your servant, ....” Why did the psalmist want to remember God's word to him? The reason was because God's promised word made him hope (v. 49b). As I meditated on this word, I remembered Abraham in Romans 4:18. The reason why Abraham was able to hope against all hope was because he remembered the word of God's promise “So shall your descendant be” (v. 18) and was fully assured that the Lord would fulfill it (v. 21). In other words, the promised word-driven life is the secret to living a life of personifying the word of God, and the secret of the word of the Lord to become ‘my possession’.

#### **Second, the psalmist was comforted by the word of the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 119:50a – “This is my comfort in my affliction ....” The Lord comforted us with God's word of promise when we cried in solitude and with tears to seek only the comfort of the Lord in the midst of the troubles that no one could comfort us and in the midst of rejecting anyone's comfort. For me, the words of ‘Two fish and five breads’ miracle of John 6:1-15 are the greatest comfort. When I fell and became discouraged, when no one could raise me up, and when I was in spiritual depression where I had no choice but to refuse the comfort of anyone, the promise of John 6:1-15 delivered me and revived me (Ps. 119:50) and I came thus far. The reason why the psalmist received comfort by the Lord's word of promise is because he experienced revival that saved him by His word. When we live a life that experiences spiritual revival through the word of God, obedience to His word is

bound to become 'my possession'.

### **Third and last, the psalmist lived a life that turn from the law of the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 119:51 – “The arrogant mock me without restraint, but I do not turn from your law.” The psalmist didn't depart from the Lord's law, even though the arrogant mocked him with restraint. When I think of this principle, I think of John 6:68. When the Lord's teaching was so difficult that many disciples left Jesus and didn't go with Him again (Jn. 6:66), Jesus said to the twelve disciples, “You do not want to go away also, do you?” (v. 67) The apostle Peter answered: “... Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life” (v. 68). What a wonderful confession is this? Many of us, Christians, are leaving the Lord and His church because the words of the Lord are so difficult to believe and understand. Like Peter, since we cannot taste the word of eternal life of the Lord, we are listening to the false gospel of Satan in a moment instead of listening to the gospel of Christ, who gives eternal life. Even pastors are listening to the words of this life rather than the words of eternal life with church members. However, the psalmist didn't depart from the promises of the Lord, no matter what circumstances he was in. He didn't even listen to anything else. The reason was because the Lord's word of promise gave him hope when he had no hope and revived him with comfort in trouble.

What lesson do these facts teach us? The lesson that we should learn is that our life, which should be personified by the word of God, should become "my possession" so that when we may offer our lives to the Lord when we worship Him. It isn't offering “my possession” to God when we go to church on the Lord's Day and just do offering. Rather, it is offering “my possession” to God on the Lord's Day when we don't turn from the Lord's words but find comfort in them from Monday to Saturday as we remember His words and offer our lives to the Lord on the Lord's day. In other words, as we live a life in which we are driven by His promise words from Monday to Saturday, we should come up to the Lord's temple on the Lord's day to offer our lives as personified by the Word, as well as praise, prayer, offerings expressed from the inside to the outside, and our ears (listening to the Word) to the Lord. When we do so, we can 'my possession' that God is pleased with.

Earnestly desire to dedicate 'my possession' to the Lord and be faithful in pastoral ministry,

James Kim

(As I pursue a life of personifying the word of God)

# Turn your feet!

## [Psalms 119:57-64]

This is what Adam Clark said about the secret to living a godly life: ‘Decision makes a good beginning, prayer keeps godliness on, and reflection corrects mistakes’ (Internet). I think it makes sense. I think reflection is especially important in a godly life. It is very important in a godly life to reflect on oneself with the spiritual mirror, that is the holy Word of God, and to acknowledge and repent of the sins that are revealed. This is what the psalmist said in Psalms 119:59 – “I considered my ways And turned my feet to Your testimonies.” I would like to receive two lessons on how we will turn our feet under the heading “Turn your feet!” based on Psalms 119:57-64.

### **First, we must consider our ways.**

Look at Psalms 119:59a – “I considered my ways ....” The psalmist thought of his own ways. In thought, he presents us with six checklists in today's text:

- (1) Are you keeping the word of the Lord? (v. 57) Aren't you neglecting to keep it? (v. 60)
- (2) Are you seeking the Lord's favor with all your heart? (v. 58)
- (3) Aren't you living with forgetting the Lord's law? (v. 61)
- (4) Are you giving thanks to the Lord because of the Lord's word? (v. 62)
- (5) Do you fear the Lord? (v. 63)
- (6) Do you make friends who obey the commandments of the Lord? (v. 63)
- (7) Are you filled with the Lord's lovingkindness? (v. 64)

Each of us needs to take a closer look at our lives as we ask ourselves these seven questions in this checklist. And while looking closely, we need to humbly reflect ourselves before God. In other words, we must have self-reflection in self-examination.

### **Second and last, we must turn our feet to the Lord's testimonies.**

Look at Psalms 119:59b – “...And turned my feet to Your testimonies.” After the psalmist made a decision and promised before God that he would keep the word of the Lord (v. 57), he sought the Lord's favor with all his heart (v. 58). Then, the psalmist hastened and didn't delay to keep the Lord's commandments (v. 60). In other words, the psalmist decided, prayed, and quickly took action. We, too, must take a closer look at our own actions and then keep the commandments of God that we have decided to do, pray and quickly take action. But there will

be temptations when we do this quickly to keep His commandments. However, we should not forget the word of the Lord when there is temptation (v. 61). Rather we should take it as an opportunity to deepen the word of God in our hearts and minds. We must continue to learn the word of the Lord as we look back at our daily routine in the middle of the night and give thanks (vv. 62, 64). We must make friends with those who fear the Lord and keep His word (v. 63).

Devoted to diligently reflecting my ways in the Word of God,

James Kim

(Praying that I will be established as a person who decides what I have learned and puts them into action.)

## **Get rid of fat in your heart!**

### **“Their heart is covered with fat, But I delight in Your law” (Psalms 119:70).**

Can fat get stuck in the heart and cause obesity? According to Professor Lim Soo, a professor of internal medicine at Seoul National University Bundang Hospital, obesity can occur because fat is trapped in the heart just as fat accumulates in the abdomen. And it is said that if there is ‘heart obesity’, there is a high risk of developing cardiovascular disease even if it isn’t obesity as a whole (Internet). The problem is that the heart muscle is unable to move according to its will, so you cannot directly lose heart fat. Therefore, in order to indirectly reduce heart fat, it is said that it is necessary to maintain a normal weight, refrain from intake of salt or saturated fat, eat a lot of fiber such as fresh vegetables, grains, and legumes, and exercise regularly (Internet).

In Psalms 119:70, people with “heart obesity” are found. In other words, there were people whose hearts were covered with fat. Those were the arrogant people, and those who lied against the psalmist (v. 69). As I meditated on these words, I thought that not only our adversaries, but also we could cover our hearts with fat. In other words, we too can have fat in our hearts, so that we can become arrogant and false, hiding the glory of God and becoming an obstacle to spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. Why do these fats get in our hearts? The reason is because we don’t enjoy the Lord’s law (v. 70) and don’t obey the Lord’s precepts (v. 69). More specifically, the reason why we have fat in our hearts and are arrogant and false is because we have not put the word of the Lord in our hearts (v. 11). Fat is created in our hearts because we don’t obey the Lord’s precepts and the Lord’s word isn’t our possession (v. 56). Therefore, we are wandering from His commandments (v. 10) and sinning against Him (v. 11). And our hearts are inclined to dishonest gain (v. 36). What should we do? We need to get rid of fat in our hearts. How is this possible? How can we get rid of fat in our hearts?

#### **First, we need profitable affliction.**

We need the affliction from our faithful God (v. 75). The reason is because through profitable affliction, we realize that we went astray (v. 67) and learn the Lord’s statutes (verse 71) so that we can keep the word of the Lord (v. 67).

#### **Second, we must take in the word of God well.**

In order to do that, we must enjoy the word of God (v. 70). And we must meditate on it all the day (v. 97). Therefore, we must be wiser and insightful (vv. 98-99). Only then can we have spiritual discernment, distinguish

truth from lies, throw away lies and choose and consume the truth.

**Third and last, we must keep the word of God.**

We must obey the voice of God that we hear as we meditate the word of God day and night and have learned through affliction. When we obey, the word of God is written in our hearts. And when we obey, we lose fat in our hearts, and build spiritual muscles. And when we have spiritual muscles in our hearts, we have the spiritual power to eradicate all sins, including pride and lies. Then, even though we are persecuted and troubled by our adversaries, we will not only overcome the fear in our hearts, but our hearts will not be shifted to the left or to the right and will not sin against God.

Dedicating to removing fat from my heart,

James Kim

(Praying for strengthening the spiritual muscles in the heart)

## **The benefit of suffering**

**“It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes. The law of Your mouth is better to me Than thousands of gold and silver pieces.”  
(Psalms 119:71-72)**

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

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

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

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

Look at Psalms 119:67 – “Before I was afflicted I went astray, ....” We often don't know that we are going astray until we have suffered. Of course, it is true that there are times when we know that it is a deliberate wrong way to walk but we still walk that path. But many times, we don't walk on the path of the narrow cross that the Lord has walked but sway to the left or to the right because we are spiritual blind and deaf. Then, through the suffering that the Lord gives us, we become spiritual awaken. Like a good shepherd who tends his sheep when the sheep goes astray, our good Shepherd Lord us the stick of loving discipline to tend us and to make us to walk the



right path of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what the prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 53:6 – “All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; ....” Because we are foolish sheep, we are busy going astray. We are walking the broad road of this world instead of the narrow path of the Lord Jesus Christ. At that time, the suffering that is given to us reminds us of our going astray.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He so good to me.”

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

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

(5) Suffering removes ‘fats’ in our hearts.

Look at Psalms 119:70 – “Their heart is covered with fat ....” Obesity became a major problem in the United States. So many people try to lose weight by diet and exercise. Some people even have an operating to remove fat. While so many people are trying to get rid of the fat of the flesh, we Christians have to devote ourselves to remove the fat in our hearts. If we have the fat of the flesh, how uncomfortable it is and how many adult diseases do we end up with? But the fat of our hearts seems to be giving birth to a greater sin that weighs down the sinful consequences that makes our Christian life very uncomfortable. I think that suffering is the best medicine to our spiritual condition to remove fat from our hearts. We must remove the fats in our hearts even through suffering.

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

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

this earth? Suffering makes us to understand the preciousness of the Word of God and the supreme value of the Word rather than the riches of this world.

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

Wanting to be a man of suffering who knows how to enjoy the benefit of suffering,

James Kim

(Wanting to share the grace that I received after preaching this word of Psalms 119:71-72)

# Wait for the word of the Lord!

## [Psalms 119:73-80]

Waiting is a virtue. Especially, it is the beauty of Christians who pray in faith and wait for God's prayer answers in anticipation. The appearance of a believer waiting for his salvation while looking at the Lord of hope with faith is beautiful. If we look at Psalms 119:74, we see a beautiful believer, the psalmist: "May those who fear You see me and be glad, Because I wait for Your word." I would like to receive two lessons on how we should wait under the heading "Wait for the Word of the Lord!" based on Psalms 119:73-80.

### **First, we must wait with knowledge.**

Look at Psalms 119:75 – "I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are righteous, And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me." What is the psalmist saying we should know?

#### (1) We must know that the Lord's judgements are righteous.

The psalmist was suffering because of the arrogant. Those arrogant subverted the psalmist (v. 78). Then the psalmist feared God (vv. 74, 79) and obeyed the Lord's law (vv. 77, 80). Therefore, he prayed to God like this, relying on the righteous judgment of the Lord: "May the arrogant be ashamed ..." (v. 78), "... So that I will not be ashamed" (v. 80).

#### (2) We must know that the in faithfulness the Lord has afflicted us.

What does it mean? The psalmist believed that in the midst of affliction from the arrogant, the Lord would faithfully carry out His perfect will (v. 75). What was the Lord's perfect will? One of them was that God trained him through affliction, especially holding onto the word of the Lord and making him to pray earnestly to God, to expect His answer, and to wait for the fulfillment of His word of promise. We must wait for the Lord in faith, knowing that He is faithful and righteous. We must wait and believe in God's righteous judgment and God's faithfulness when we are afflicted by the arrogant.

### **Second, we must pray and wait.**

What are we to pray for? In Psalms 119:73-80, the psalmist is giving us five prayer topics:

#### (1) We must seek the Lord's comfort.

Look at Psalms 119:76 – “O may Your lovingkindness comfort me, According to Your word to Your servant.” The psalmist wanted the comfort of the Lord more than anyone's comfort in his distress. He made the Lord's lovingkindness his comfort. We should take the Lord's lovingkindness, which is better than our lives, as our comfort (63:3), and seek His comfort when we are afflicted.

(2) We must seek the Lord's compassion.

Look at Psalms 119:77 – “May Your compassion come to me that I may live, For Your law is my delight.” When we are in distress, like the psalmist, we must make the Lord's lovingkindness as our comfort and the Lord's law as our delight. In the midst of that, we must seek the Lord's compassion. When we are delighted in God's Word through affliction and realize our own sins because we take delight in His word, we are compelled to seek the mercy of the Lord.

(3) We must see the Lord's justice.

Look at Psalms 119:78 – “May the arrogant be ashamed, for they subvert me with a lie; But I shall meditate on Your precepts.” The cause of the psalmist's affliction was the arrogant (v. 78). They subverted the psalmist. They afflicted him with lies. In the midst of such affliction, the psalmist wanted to learn the word of the Lord more and more (v. 73) and meditated on it (v. 78). And the psalmist, who had been waiting for God's word in affliction, sought the Lord's justice. Soon, he pleaded with God to shame the arrogant.

(4) We must seek the Lord's provision.

Look at Psalms 119:79 – “May those who fear You turn to me, Even those who know Your testimonies.” When the psalmist was suffering, God provided him with the Lord's fearful comrades of faith. What a great comfort must have been for each other in our hardships? When we suffer, we must pray to God to send these comrades of faith who fear the Lord. Therefore, when the Lord answers our prayers and sends us our fellow believers, we must overcome difficulties together while comforting each other while hoping for the word of the Lord.

(5) We must seek the Lord's perfection.

Look at Psalms 119:80 – “May my heart be blameless in Your statutes, So that I will not be ashamed.” The psalmist prayed for the word of the Lord in his distress, asking God for his heart to be blameless with the word of the Lord. He used affliction and distress as an opportunity for his heart to be blameless with the word of the Lord. Like the psalmist, we must use the affliction and distress as an opportunity to make our hearts blameless with His word.

We must wait for the word of the Lord. And we must wait with knowledge. We must wait, knowing that the Lord's judgment is righteous. And we must wait and know that in the Lord's faithfulness He has afflicted us. We must pray and wait. We must wait for the word of the Lord, seeking His comfort, compassion, justice, provision, and perfection.

As I wait for the word of the Lord,

James Kim

(Praying for patience based on the knowledge of the truth)

## **“When will You comfort me?”**

### **[Psalms 119:81-88]**

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

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

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

There are times when our souls are languished and tired like a psalmist. Although we cry out to God in the painful situation we are in and when there seems to be no answer to our prayers, but our situation is getting worse, we get tired and exhausted both physically and spiritually. What is so dangerous at the time is disappointment and discouragement. The situation we are in is hard and painful, even though we cry out to God no matter what the answer seems to be. And when the situation seems to be getting worse, we can be depressed and even despair when we cannot bear it anymore. Especially when our proud enemies continue to slander us, "Where is your God?" (Ps. 42:10), we can be discouraged and even depressed. Especially when we think that God 's judgment is slow enough to make us feel like the psalmist,' When will God execute judgment on those who persecute me?'(v. 84), we can surely be depressed. What should we do then? No matter how we pray to God and wait for the salvation of God, there is no answer to prayer. What should we do when our soul is disturbed and depressed? What should we do

when we wait for God's comfort but there is none and we cry out to God "When will You comfort me?" This is the challenge of endurance.

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

When we are tired of longing for the salvation of the Lord (v. 81), what should we do? When the comfort of the Lord is slow, and when we are waiting for the promises of the Lord to be fulfilled, when our eyes become tired (v. 82), and when I feel like I am useless (v. 83), what should we do? What should we do when arrogant people who don't keep the law of the Lord persecute us and have dug pits for us, but God's judgment to them is slow (vv. 84-86)? Even when they almost destroy us (v. 87), what should we do? What should we do when there is challenge of our endurance? Although we get tired and exhausted in seeking and waiting for God's salvation we must trust in the word of the Lord (v. 81). This is because the Lord's commandments are trustworthy (v. 86). Also, when we wait for the promises of the Lord to be fulfilled (v. 82) and get tired but we must not forget the laws of the Lord (v. 83). Though our arrogant enemies persecute us and cause us to die almost without cause, yet we must not abandon the Lord's precepts (v. 87). In doing so, God will revive us according to His lovingkindness (v. 88). Then we will continue to keep the law of the Lord (v. 88).

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

Wanting to pray, expect and wait with faith in God's promise word, that is trustworthy, to be fulfilled even in the limit of patience by being challenged by God and His word,

James Kim

[As I remember the Lord who demonstrates His perfect patience to me (Cf. 1 Tim 1:16)]



## “my delight”

### [Psalms 119:89-96]

What is your delight? What is your delight, especially when you are in distress? In Psalms 119:92, the psalmist confessed: “If Your law had not been my delight, Then I would have perished in my affliction.” I hope that God's grace will be given to us as we meditate on what we should be our delight and what we must do in order to be delightful, and what the result of our delight is, under the heading of “my delight”.

#### **First, what is “my delight”?**

The psalmist's delight was the law of the Lord (Ps. 119:92). He delighted in His law even in his affliction (v. 92). Therefore, he said, “I will never forget Your precepts” (v. 93).

#### **Second, what must we do to delight in the law of the Lord?**

##### (1) We must consider the law of the Lord.

Look at Psalms 119:95 – “The wicked wait for me to destroy me; I shall diligently consider Your testimonies.” The psalmist was diligently considered the law of the Lord as he looked at the wicked who waited for him to destroy him. In other words, he diligently meditated on the word of the Lord when he encountered a crisis in his life. Why did he do that? The reason is because His word revived him (v. 93). This should become our habit. In times of crisis, we must cultivate the habit of meditating the word of God more diligently.

##### (2) We must seek the law of the Lord.

Look at Psalms 119:94 – “I am Yours, save me; For I have sought Your precepts.” The psalmist sought the law in order to enjoy the law of the Lord, and the reason he sought His law was because he wanted the Lord's salvation. A true believer puts his hope in the word of God. Therefore, he finds it without forgetting it (vv.93-94). During suffering, our only hope is the Lord. We have no choice but to hope for the word of the Lord during our suffering. Also, the only thing that can deliver us from suffering is His word.

#### **Third and last, what was the result of considering and seeking the law of the Lord?**

The results of the psalmist's considering and seeking the Lord's law can be thought of in two ways:

- (1) As the psalmist considered and sought the Lord's law, he saw the broadness of the Lord's commandment.

Look at Psalms 119:96 – “I have seen a limit to all perfection; Your commandment is exceedingly broad.” He considered and found the law of the Lord during his affliction, so he was transformed by the power of God's word. Therefore, affliction is a great opportunity to broaden our hearts with the very broad word of the Lord.

- (2) The psalmist came to confess that the word of the Lord settled in heaven forever.

Look at Psalms 119:89 – “Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.” Suffering is for a while. However, the word of God is forever. With that eternal word, God is ruling over heaven, earth, and all things. The psalmist came to realize this truth by considering and seeking the law of the Lord during his affliction.

We must enjoy the word of God. His word must be “my delight”. Therefore, we must diligently consider His word. Especially when we are in crisis, we must consider His word more and more. The reason is because God's word can save us. Also, we must seek the word of God. Especially in the midst of trouble and distress, we must seek His word. What is the reason? Why should we seek God's word? The reason is because we want God's salvation (deliverance). Those who seek God's deliverance must earnestly seek the word of God. As a result, we will see that the word of God is very broad. We will have precious grace that broadens our hearts through the power of God's word. And as we consider and seek the word of God, we will enjoy the grace of standing firmly on the eternal word of God.

After considering and seeking Jesus who is “my delight”,

James Kim

(While enjoying meditation on His word)

## **A man of understanding**

### **[Psalms 119:97-104]**

Today, there is an interesting article in the Korean Gospel Newspaper of the America and I want to share with you. The article is about a questionnaire to 3,338 senior pastors of about 3,000 Korean churches throughout the America. The result of analyzing the contents of 333 who responded double, the biggest difficulty in the immigration ministry was conflict between pastors and church members (21.35%). Ask the question why the conflict between pastors and church members is the biggest challenge for pastors like me. One of the reasons seems to be that we the pastors lack interpersonal skills or problem or conflict resolution skills. If we think about this in light of Psalms 119:97-104, I think that these conflicts become a great difficulty for the pastors in the ministry because they lack understanding or insight.

"Understanding or insight" is defined in a biblical dictionary as "relates to intelligent knowledge of the reason". It is also referred to as "wise dealing and use of good practical common sense" (Dictionary). However, the problem is that the word of prophecy of Hosea 4:6 "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" is being fulfilled because we have rejected the knowledge. In more detail, the prophetic word that God's people are destroyed is being fulfilled because "priests", in modern words, pastors like me have rejected the knowledge of God. It seems that the ministry is a mixed worldly principle and method rather than doing the ministry according to the principles of the word of God as we pursue the knowledge of the world by throwing away the knowledge of God. The cause is lack of knowledge of God, that is, lack of understanding. Since we pastors who don't use good practical common sense, one of the consequences can be the conflict between pastors and church members.

This is what Jeremiah 9:24 says: "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." Looking at this word, the understanding that God is pleased with can be thought of in two ways: (1) knowing God and (2) realizing that God exercise lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on the earth. With this knowledge and understanding, I would like to think about three things about who is a man of understanding or what kind of person is the man of understanding with hope that I can become such pastor or a saint with understanding who pleases God.

### **First, the man of understanding meditates on the word of the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 119:99 – "I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my

meditation.” The psalmist said that because he meditated on the word of the Lord, he had more insight than all his teachers. This is talking about the intellectual side. That is, the psalmist got to know the Lord through the word of the Lord and also the actions of the Lord. Having tasted the fruits of these two meditations, the psalmist was more understanding than all his teachers. Further, he became wiser than his enemies by the Lord’s commandments (v. 98).

As we go through our daily lives, we often encounter the temptations of our enemy, Satan. Satan is much wiser than we are. Of course, that wisdom is perverse wisdom, but it is clear that Satan knows the word of the Bible more and better than we do. He is just talking to us by twisting the word of God he knows. Therefore, we should not fall into this satanic plots and let him distort our hearts. In order to win this intellectual fight or mind fight, we must eagerly meditate on the word of God. Therefore, we must sharpen our minds with the word as if sharpening the sword of the Holy Spirit. In addition, we must let His word to control our minds and hearts. Then we will be wiser than our enemy and will be able to fight him and win.

### **Second, the man of understanding loves the word of the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 119:97 – “O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.” The psalmist, who meditated on the word of the Lord all day long, was a man who loved His word. He wasn’t the man who knew the word of God only intellectually. He was the man who loved His word very much. This speaks of the emotional side. The saying that he loved the Lord’s word tells us that he loved the Lord, and he was happy to hear the Lord’s voice. The psalmist who had understanding wanted to know the Lord more and more. He also wanted to experience more and more that the Lord was working in his life through His word.

Although the word of God we know is the same word of God as the psalmist knew, it seems like so many times it is too hard for us to know that even in many sermons and Bible studies, God is working in our lives through His word. Although we know His word in our heads and we proclaim to know Him, it seems that there are so many times we cannot experience the Lord in our lives. Therefore, we reflect ourselves on whether we are truly loving the word of God or not.

### **Third and last, the man of understanding observes the word of the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 119:100 – “I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Your precepts.” This is the volitional aspect. The psalmist devoted himself to observe the word of the Lord, not only intellectually and emotionally, but also willingly. More specifically, how the psalmist dedicated himself to keep His word can be thought of in three ways:

- (1) The psalmist had restrained his feet from every evil way.

Look at Psalms 119:101 – “I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word.”

We live by making decisions every day. Some decisions are made by our faith, but in too many times, our decisions are guided by unbelief and temptation by Satan. We are standing at a crossroads every day as if there is one path of truth and ninety-nine satanic paths of temptation or lies ahead of us. Satan's paths of temptation and false paths are so clearly visible to our eyes. The ninety-nine Satanic paths of temptation or false paths are good for food, a delight to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise. Statistically, we are far more likely to choose the Satan's ninety-nine false paths rather than a single path of truth. Therefore, there are many times when we lay one step down on Satan's false paths, suffer in guilt, and wander in confusion. But the psalmist didn't. He didn't even set foot on every evil way. He forbade his feet at all. How amazing was he who had the power of His word? It was the life of the man of understanding who pleased God.

(2) The psalmist didn't turn aside from the word of the Lord.

Look at Psalms 119:102 – “I have not turned aside from Your ordinances, For You Yourself have taught me.” How many times do we use words and actions that are not related to the Word of God every day? How many emotional aspects are inappropriate as God's people? I know the common sense that fish cannot live outside the fish tank (water). But aren't we ignoring the eternal truth that God's children cannot live apart from Heavenly Father's word? We are breathing and living our daily life today in a spiritual state separated from His word. We have to seriously reflect on whether we are living the life of the (spiritually) dead or not. The psalmist confessed that he had not left the word of the Lord (v. 102). When we get to the end of life, we must make this confession too.

(3) The psalmist hated every false way.

Look at Psalms 119:104 – “From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.” The psalmist who meditated on the word of the Lord, and who loved the word of truth hated every false way because their minds and hearts were filled with only His word. He had holy wrath because he knew God's word whole personally (mind, emotion, will), saturated with His word of truth. In other words, those who love the truth have no choice but to hate every false way. Lies couldn't penetrate the the psalmist because he loved the truth.

When I think about how the psalmist devoted himself to the word of God, I found the answer in Psalms 119:103 – “How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” The psalmist who knew the sweet taste of the Lord's words couldn't help but devote himself more and more to the Lord's word. The psalmist who meditated on His word, loved it, and devoted himself to keeping it, was a believer who devoted himself to the word of God. Therefore, the Bible says that he is a man of understanding. I hope and pray that all of us will be able to become people of understanding like the psalmist and experience the happiness of life of those

who keep the word of God.

With the heart of asking the Lord to change the foolish me into a man of understanding,

James Kim

(Desiring to be saturated with the word of God)

## **Let us keep the Lord's word to the very end!**

### **[Psalms 119:105-112]**

I meditated on Ecclesiastes 7:8 at this morning prayer meeting: "The end of a matter is better than its beginning; ...." The beginning of the work is also important, but more important is the end of the work. The reason is because no matter how grand and beautiful the beginning of the work is, it is useless if it cannot be finished. We have to be people who are willing to finish to the end. The beginning is meaningless unless we finish to the end.

If we look at Psalms 119:112, this is what the psalmist said: "My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end." I would like to receive the grace of God given by paying attention to the five things we must do in order to keep the Lord's word to the very end under the heading "Let us keep the Lord's word to the very end!" based on Psalms 119:105-112.

**First, in order to keep the Lord's word to the very end we should take an oath and confirm it.**

Look at Psalms 119:106 – "I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws." Of course, we must not make an oath in front of God. But we need to make the oath when it comes to keeping the word of the Lord. The reason is because the word of the Lord is the word of eternal life (Jn. 6:68). Another reason is because the word of God is a lamp-like guide to this dark world (Ps. 119:105).

**Second, in order to keep the Lord's word to the very end we must hold onto the word of God and pray.**

Look at Psalms 119:107 – "I have suffered much; preserve my life, O LORD, according to your word." When did the psalmist pray to God? He prayed to God when he had suffered much. What was his much suffering? Look at verse 110a – "The wicked have set a snare for me ...." The psalmist was being persecuted by the wicked. So he was always in danger of life (v. 109). In the midst of this danger of life, the psalmist prayed to God: "... Revive me, O LORD, according to Your word" (v. 107). He prayed to God in faith for salvation from suffering. Meanwhile, the psalmist prayed to God like this: "O accept the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, And teach me Your ordinances" (v. 108). He gave praise to God because he had joy in his heart as much as he kept the word of the Lord during his suffering.

**Third, in order to keep the Lord's word to the very end we must not forget the word of God.**

Look at Psalms 119:109 – “My life is continually in my hand, Yet I do not forget Your law.” The psalmist decided not to forget the words of the Lord even when life was in danger. We forget God's word well at the crossroad between life and death. We don't hold onto the word of God well in a crisis situation. We often depart from God's precepts. However, this is an act that is dominated by the environment and that we abandon our beliefs. We must not throw away the lamps while walking in the dark.

**Fourth, in order to keep the Lord's word to the very end we must inherit the word of God.**

Look at Psalms 119:111 – “I have inherited Your testimonies forever, For they are the joy of my heart.” Because the word of God is our joy, we must forever take the word of the Lord as our inheritance. However, without tasting this joy, we cannot take God's word as an inheritance. The joy of our hearts is only the word of God. As we live according to that word, we will have divine joy in our hearts. We should enjoy that joy fully.

**Fifth and last, in order to keep the Lord's word to the very end we must incline our hearts to perform the word of God.**

Look at Psalms 119:112 – “I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes Forever, even to the end.” In order for us to follow God's commandments to the end, we must incline our hearts to the word of God. In the midst of great suffering, we must pay more attention to His word. And we must hold on to His word. Therefore, we must be led by the word.

We must keep the word of God to the very end. We should take the oath to keep His word. And we must hold on to the word of God and pray to Him. We must not forget His word. We must inherit the word and incline our hearts to perform it. Therefore, I hope and pray that we will keep the word of God to the very end.

Wanting to walk the way of the Lord's commandment to the very end,

James Kim

(Praying that I will be led by His word to the very end)



## Let's clarify the objects of love and hate!

### [Psalms 119:113-120]

Although the Bible commands us to say "yes" to "yes" and "no" to "no", it seems that we aren't living a life of faith according to this command. It seems that we are living our life of faith in which "yes" can sometimes be "no" and "no" sometimes can be "yes". How many times do we live in disobedience to God's commandments, saying "Yes" to God's command but "No" in action? Conversely, it seems that there are many times when we commit sins by accepting "yes" so naturally to what God commands us not to do even though we suppose to live a life of "no" in obedience to His command.

We seem to like gray over white and black. Although we should love the life of obedience to what the Lord loves and hate the sins of the world, we are living in a gray area that is neither this nor that, like the Israelites on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs. 18:21). Now we are living a life of faith that isn't clear. Right now, we aren't living with a clear object of love and hate that we love to love and hate what to hate.

However, the psalmist of Psalms 119 was clarified the object of love and hate. He hated those who are double-minded but love the law of the Lord (v. 113). We must draw the clear line like the psalmist. But we are reluctant to draw that line. One of the reasons is because our life is comfortable in the gray area. We are so used to life in that gray area. This is because if we live a lukewarm life of faith that is neither this nor that, we can live a peaceful life in this world without that many problems. But the Bible wants our colors to be clear. If it is God, it is God, if it is an idol, it is an idol. God doesn't want us to live a life of faith that is neither this nor that. As we meditate on the psalmist's clear object of love and hate today, I hope and pray that we can also clarify the object of love and hate.

### **First, what was the object of the psalmist's love?**

In Psalms 119:113-120, we can see that the object of the psalmist's love was the word of God. Of course, because the Lord was the object of love to him, the word of the Lord was also the object of his love. Then, I would like to think about four things what kind of life those who love the word of the Lord live:

(1) The psalmist had regard for the word of the Lord continually.

Look at Psalms 119:117 – “Uphold me that I may be safe, That I may have regard for Your statutes

continually.” The psalmist respected and valued the word of God.

(2) The psalmist observed the commandments of God.

Look at Psalms 119:115 – “Depart from me, evildoers, That I may observe the commandments of my God.” The psalmist kept the commandments of the Lord. In John 14:21, it is said that those who love the Lord are those who keep His commandments. Those who love the Lord don’t end by just respecting and placing importance on the word of the Lord, but they observe it.

(3) The psalmist waited for the word of the Lord.

Look at Psalms 119:114 – “You are my hiding place and my shield; I wait for Your word.” If we keep the word of the Lord, we are often attacked by Satan. Therefore, like the psalmist, we must make the Lord our hiding place and our shield (v. 114), must dwell in Him, and hope in the Lord’s (promised) word (v. 116).

(4) The psalmist was upheld by the word of the Lord.

Look at Psalms 119:116-117: “Sustain me according to Your word, that I may live; And do not let me be ashamed of my hope. Uphold me that I may be safe, That I may have regard for Your statutes continually.” When we try to keep the word of the Lord with respect and importance, we may be in danger and attack by Satan. At that time, we must dwell in the arms of the Lord who is our hiding place and our shield, hoping for the fulfillment of His promised word. Then the Lord will make us to live (v. 116) and will save us (v. 117). If we are upheld by the word of the Lord in this way, the Lord will make us to live and save us according to His word.

**Then, what was the object of the psalmist’s hate?**

The object of the psalmist’s hate was “those who are double-minded” (v. 113). Who were those who were double-minded? If we look at James 1:6-8, the Bible says that those who doubt are those who are double-minded. Are we not the ones with double-minded? How doubtful are we when we pray to God? Those who have double-minded are unstable in all their ways (v. 8). We must hate our own double-mindedness. In the context of Psalms 119:113, there are three things that can be said about the double-minded people:

(1) The double-minded people are those who have rejected the word of God.

Look at Psalms 119:118 – “You have rejected all those who wander from Your statutes, For their deceitfulness is useless.” We, who love the Lord and His word, must hate those who have departed from the word of God, that is, those who are double-minded. The Bible says that the Lord has rejected all those

who wander from His statutes (v. 118). Since these are deceitful people who are pursuing in vain things, those who love the word of the Lord should hate those who have departed from His word.

(3) The double-minded people are evildoers.

Look at Psalms 119:115 – “Depart from me, evildoers, That I may observe the commandments of my God.” Those who are double-minded who have left the word of the Lord have no choice but to do evil. Therefore, those who love the word of the Lord hate evildoers.

(4) The double-minded people are the wicked.

Look at Psalms 119:119 – “You have removed all the wicked of the earth like dross; Therefore I love Your testimonies.” The Christians who make it clear that the Lord is the object of love make the wicked object of hate clear and live a life of faith.

One remarkable fact here is that God promises to us whom He loves to thoroughly purge away our dross and remove all our impurities (Isa. 1:25). What a wonderful grace and love of God? God who throws away the wicked like dross, promises to us that He will thoroughly purge away our dross and remove all our impurities. And hasn't God fulfilled this promised word through Jesus Christ? God made us completely purified us with the blood of Jesus on the cross. Therefore, we should no longer confuse the objects of love and hate and live a life of dross. We should no longer live a life of impurities. We should not mix objects of love and objects of hate and live a life of faith in gray area. If it's hot, it's hot, or it's cold, it's cold. We shouldn't be lukewarm Christians. We must stop wavering between two objects but must make a choice. I hope and pray that all of us who choose the object of love and the object of hate and draw a clear line between the two and live a life of faith.

With gratitude for the grace and love of our Heavenly Father for purifying me who was like dross,

James Kim

(Committed to a life of faith that clarifies the objects of love and hate)

## **“It is time for the Lord to act”**

### **[Psalms 119:121-128]**

When is it now? I think now is the time to keep the grace and to practice the commandments of God with the power of God's grace that we have received. There are times when we receive grace, but it is very important to keep the grace that we received and to practice God's commandments more and more with the power of that grace.

If we look at Psalms 119:126, the psalmist says: “It is time for the LORD to act, For they have broken Your law.” Based on this word, I would like to think about two things: (1) What time is it now? (2) What should we do at this time?

#### **First, what time is it now?**

There are two things that Psalms 119:121-128 teaches us:

##### **(1) Now is the time for the people to break the Lord's commandments.**

Look at Psalms 119:126b – “... , For they have broken Your law.” Now is the time to break the commandments of God. And now is the time to oppress those who do justice and righteousness (v. 121). In other words, it is a time when the arrogant oppress the servant of the Lord (vv. 122, 125).

##### **(2) Now is the time for the Lord to act.**

Look at Psalms 119:126a – “It is time for the LORD to act ....” Here, act of Lord can be thought of in two ways: (a) Act of the Lord refers to God's judgment (Park). God will judge those who violate God's commandments. God will judge those who continually and intentionally violate His commandments. Also, God will judge those who oppress the saints who practice justice and righteousness. God will definitely judge the arrogant. (b) Act of the Lord refers to God's salvation. Look at Psalms 119:123 – “My eyes fail with longing for Your salvation And for Your righteous word.” The time when the arrogant oppressors abolish the Lord's laws is the time when our eyes fail looking for God's salvation. Of course, the oppression itself may be tiring, but rather, it is tiring to long for the Lord's salvation and His righteous words. Therefore, this time of breaking the commandments of the Lord is the time to pray for the Lord's salvation and His word.

## **Second, what should we do at this time?**

What should we do at this time when we break the Lord's law and His commandments? How are we to act when the arrogant are oppressing us, the servants of the Lord, who practice justice and righteousness?

### (1) We must love the Lord's commands more.

Look at Psalms 119:127 – “Because I love your commands more than gold, more than pure gold.” At such time, the psalmist loved the commands of the Lord more than gold. We should too. We must love the Lord's commands more and keep them more when we are under pressure from breaking the Lord's commands. As we keep the commands of the Lord, the persecutions and sufferings of this world that are to come must not lead us far from them. On the contrary, we should not compromise in the midst of tribulation and persecution. Rather, we should devote ourselves more to love and keep the commands of the Lord.

### (2) We must consider all the Lord's commands right.

Look at Psalms 119:128 – “and because I consider all your precepts right, I hate every wrong path.” Like the psalmist, when people break the commands of the Lord, we must consider them right. And we must hate every false act that goes against His right commandment.

Now is the time that people are breaking God's commands. Now is the time for God to act. Now is the time for God's judgment and salvation. God will judge those who break His commands, and will save those who keep His commands. In this time, we must love the Lord's commands more and more. And we must consider all the Lord's commands right in this time. Hopefully, as we consider God's commands right, I hope and pray that we will hate every wrong path.

Experiencing God's action,

James Kim

(As I consider all God's commands right)

## **“Establish my footsteps in Your word”**

### **[Psalms 119:129-136]**

I think it is impossible to walk one path faithfully to the end without the grace of God. The reason is because without God's grace, we are more likely to fall into this or that path of delusion than to keep walking faithfully on one path. Our steps need some solidity. We need the solidity to walk one path faithfully. In walking the path of Golgotha that the Lord walked, that narrow path, we must establish our footsteps more and more firmly. Therefore, we must not be deceived by the wide path that unfolds before us.

If we look at Psalms 119:133, the psalmist is praying to God like this: “Establish my footsteps in Your word, And do not let any iniquity have dominion over me.” Today, I would like to think about two things under the heading “Establish my footsteps in Your word” based on Psalms 119:129-136: (1) Why should we establish our footsteps firmly in the Lord’s word? (2) How can we establish our footsteps firmly in the Lord’s word?

#### **First, why should we establish our footsteps firmly in the Lord’s word?**

There are two reasons:

- (1) The reason why we must establish our footsteps firmly in the Lord’s word is so that sin would not control us.

When does sin claim us? When we don’t put the word of the Lord in our hearts, sin claims us. Look at Psalms 119:11 – “Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.” In this time of breaking the Lord’s commands, we see in ourselves the phenomenon that we don’t care about the word of God. The result of this phenomenon is sinning. The reason we have no choice but to sin is because we don’t put the word of God in our hearts, and letting our old sinful nature to claim our hearts rather than His word to claim our hearts. We should not let this happen. We should no longer let sin claim us. Rather, we must put the word of God in our hearts, and we must make it to assert us. Because we love the commandments of the Lord more and more, we must keep them. Therefore, we must establish our footsteps firmly in the word of the Lord.

- (2) The reason why we must establish our footsteps firmly in the Lord’s word is to save us from oppression of man.

Look at Psalms 119:134 – “Redeem me from the oppression of man, That I may keep Your precepts.” The pressure that comes upon us as we keep the word of God is a good test for us to know whether we are standing firmly on His word or not. If we don’t stand firmly on the word of God, we will give up His word due to oppression, and we will sin against God because we compromise with the world. However, if we stand firmly on the word of God, the oppression on us will be a great opportunity for us to stand firmly on His word. This is God’s salvation. Of course, salvation is delivered from the pressure, but it is also God’s salvation to stand firmly on the word of the Lord because of the oppression.

## **Second and last, how can we establish our footsteps in the Lord’s word?**

Psalms 119:129-136 teaches us three things:

(1) In order to establish our footsteps firmly in the Lord’s word, we must be the simple.

Look at Psalms 119:130 – “The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.” Here, “the simple” refers to a believer who isn’t double-minded in front of God and wants to honor only God with single-minded (Mt. 11:25; Ps. 27:4) (Park). There is understanding when the word of God is unfolded to such person. And when there is understanding, we can establish our steps firmly in the word of the Lord.

(2) In order to establish our footsteps firmly in the Lord’s word, we must open our mouth wide and pant.

Look at Psalms 119:131 – “I opened my mouth wide and panted, For I longed for Your commandments.” The psalmist longed for the Lord’s commandments knowing that he would die if it wasn’t His commandments as if a person didn’t breathe air, he would die (Park). That is why we must long for the word of the Lord. We have to open our mouths and pant for His word. We need to know a little bit that we will die without eating the Lord’s word. So, in order to live, we must long for the Lord’s word. We must have a sense of survival crisis and long for God’s Word.

(3) In order to establish our footsteps firmly in the Lord’s word, we must observe the Lord’s wonderful word.

Look at Psalms 119:129 – “Your testimonies are wonderful; Therefore my soul observes them.” Because the psalmist was experiencing the wonders of God’s testimonies, he kept the commandments of the Lord. He set his footsteps firmly on the words of the Lord. How about us? If we are experiencing the wonders of the Lord’s word, we will be more and more obedient and striving to keep it. However, if we aren’t

experiencing the wonders of His word, we will neglect to keep it. We will not even try to learn the words of the Lord like the psalmist (v. 135). As a result, we will make tears in the eyes of those who keep God's commandments because we don't keep them (v. 136). We shouldn't do that anymore. We must experience the wonders of God's word. By obeying His word, we must experience the grace of God deeper (v. 132). Therefore, we must set our footsteps firmly in the word of the Lord.

We must establish our footsteps firmly in the word of the Lord. In order for no sin to take control of us, we must set our footsteps firmly in His word. Also, in order to save from the oppression of those who break God's word, we must establish our footsteps firmly in the word of the Lord. In order to do that, we have to be the simple. We must long for the word of the Lord with an attitude of honoring only the Lord with single-minded. And we must open our mouths and eat the word of God in order to live. I hope and pray that all of us who are moving forward by keeping the wonderful word of God and establishing our footsteps firmly in the word of the Lord.

Desiring to stand firmly in the word of the Lord in my footstep toward heaven,

James Kim

(As I hope and pray for building His house on the Rock)



## **When trouble and anguish have come upon me**

### **[Psalms 119:137-144]**

What should we do when trouble and anguish have come upon us?

In Psalms 119:143, the psalmist confessed: “Trouble and anguish have come upon me, Yet Your commandments are my delight.” What did the psalmist do when trouble and anguish had come upon him that the Lord’s commandments were his delight? I want to think about in three ways and apply them to our lives. Therefore, I hope and pray that we, like the psalmist, will be able to take the commandments of the Lord as our delights in the midst of trouble and anguish.

#### **First, when trouble and anguish have come upon us, we must be upright.**

Look at Psalms 119:137 – “Righteous are You, O LORD, And upright are Your judgments.” In trouble and anguish, it is easier for us to lie than to be honest. The reason is because we may think that if we lie we can get out of our trouble and anguish at that moment. However, like the psalmist, we must make upright judgments when there is trouble and anguish. Our judgment should never be blurred. In order to do that, we must have our own character overlaid with the righteousness of the Lord. Uprightness must emerge from the Lord’s righteousness. The Lord’s law is truth (v. 142). We must be personified by this word of truth and live an honest and upright life. Never should we fall into false temptations and give up our honesty and uprightness.

#### **Second, when trouble and anguish have come upon us, we must be faithful.**

Look at Psalms 119:138 – “You have commanded Your testimonies in righteousness And exceeding faithfulness.” It may not be easy to be honest in trouble and anguish, but being faithful may not be easier. This is because, in trouble and anguish, faithfulness requires patience or endurance. However, the psalmist was faithful. Even though he was in trouble and anguish because of his enemies (v. 139), the psalmist was faithful to the words of the Lord. He didn’t forget the Lord’s words of the Lord (v. 139). The reason he was able to be so faithful to His words was because he tasted “exceeding faithfulness” of His words (v. 138). In other words, since the psalmist not only knew God’s faithfulness through the word of God, but was actually tasting God’s faithfulness in his own life, he firmly trusted in God’s faithfulness amidst the trouble and anguish of his life were allowed by God in His faithfulness. Like the psalmist, we must firmly trust in the Lord’s faithfulness. In particular, we must do so more and more in trouble and anguish.

**Third and last, when trouble and anguish have come upon us, we must love the word of God.**

Look at Psalms 119:140 – “Your word is very pure, Therefore Your servant loves it.” We must love the very pure word of God. Why should we love the very pure words of God? The reason is because through trouble and anguish of life, we are refined by the very pure words of God, as if by melting gold in a furnace to produce pure gold. What a wonderful power of the word of God that refines our faith, our heart and our character in trouble and anguish. Therefore, we, like the psalmist, have no choice but to take the commandments of the Lord as our delight even in the midst of trouble and anguish.

We must be upright in trouble and anguish that come in our lives. And we must faithfully follow the righteous and faithful word of the Lord. And we must love the Lord's words, which are very pure. Then we can live (v. 144).

Wanting to make the word of God more and more for my delight when there is trouble and anguish,

James Kim

(In pursuit of uprightness, faithfulness, and love)

# **Cry out to the Lord!**

## **[Psalms 119:145-152]**

If there is a spiritual giant in the Christian's spiritual life that is indispensable to the prayer life, then he is probably George Muller. He was a man of prayer with the nickname of a man whose prayers had been answered more than 50,000 times. This is what he said about his faith: 'My faith is like that of all believers. It is faith that walks in the path of the Lord and grows little by little every day. My faith is by no means a special faith' (Internet). Because we cry out to God with faith that grows little by little every day, we must become people of prayer like George Muller, a man of prayer who has received answers to prayer more than 50,000 times. We must be people who pray in faith.

If we look at Psalms 119:145, the psalmist said: "I cried with all my heart; answer me, O LORD! I will observe Your statutes." I would like to receive lessons from the Lord by meditating on prayer in three ways under the heading "Cry out to the Lord!"

### **First, how are we supposed to pray? (Prayer method)**

In Psalms 119:145 we can see that the psalmist cried out to the Lord with all his heart. Like the psalmist, the more dangers we are in, the more we must devote ourselves to faith and prayer than to worry and anxious (Park). What was the dangerous situation that the psalmist faced? Look at verse 150: "Those who follow after wickedness draw near; They are far from Your law." The situation facing the psalmist was that the people who didn't obey the Lord's law but pursue evil drew near. Because the psalmist loved the law of the Lord, the wicked people who hated His law approached him. Why did the wicked come near to the psalmist who loved the Lord's law? The reason was because they tried to make the psalmist turn away from the Lord's law. Rather, in this situation, the psalmist cried out to God with all his heart, believing that the Lord was near (v. 151). And he meditated on the words of the Lord day and night (v. 148). He held onto the word of truth and cried out to the Lord with all his heart. The psalmist cried out to the Lord, relying on the Lord's lovingkindness (v. 149). Like the psalmist, when the wicked come near to us, we must go near to the Lord with all our heart in prayer. And when we draw near to the Lord in prayer, we must cry out to the Lord in His lovingkindness. And we must hold onto the word of the Lord's truth with faith and cry out to the Lord with all our hearts.

### **Second, what are we to pray for? (Prayer content)**

This is what Psalms 119:146 regarding the content of the psalmist's cry out to God: "I cried to You; save me And I shall keep Your testimonies." In a word, the psalmist cried out to God for his salvation. He pleaded with God to save him from the wicked who were far from the Lord's law. What was the purpose of this prayer for God's salvation? Its purpose was to keep God's word well. Look at Psalms 119:145b, 146b: "... O LORD! I will observe Your statutes. ... And I shall keep Your testimonies." This is what Dr. Park said: 'The purpose of the believer's salvation from trouble isn't to live long in this world, but to keep God's word better' (Park). The purpose of asking God for salvation is to keep God's word better. With this right purpose, we must ask God for salvation.

### **Third and last, when should we pray? (Prayer time)**

In Psalms 119:147, the psalmist said that he cried out to God before the dawn. He offered to God an urgent and earnest prayer to the point of crying out to God before dawn. To that extent, he longed for the Lord's salvation (v. 146) and the Lord's word (v.147). With this earnestness, we must go to a quiet place in the early morning and cry out to God like Jesus. d

We must cry out to the Lord with all our hearts. We must cry out to the Lord by relying on the Lord's lovingkindness. And we must cry out to the Lord according to the word of the Lord. We must pray for the Lord's salvation. In order to keep the word of God more and more, we must seek God's salvation with all our hearts. And, like the psalmist and like Jesus, we must cry out to God before dawn. Then we will realize that the Lord is near to us (v. 151). And we will have no choice but to confess that all of the Lord's commandments are truth (v. 151). And we will stand firmly on the word of the Lord, which is the eternal foundation, and live by keeping it.

Want to be a man of payer,

James Kim

(While praying for more enjoyment of the word meditation and prayer in the Lord during the early Morning Prayer)

## “Revive me according to Your word”

### [Psalms 119:153-160]

Is it pleasant or painful to recall the past for you? Many people seem to suffer rather than rejoice as they look back on the past. The reason is because there are worse past memories than good memories. People with many bad memories don't want to recall the past, so keep them in their minds. Then, when something bad happens in the present life, many bad memories of the past come back to life, making them more painful and disappointed. Those who live in such anguish and despair may even feel more despondent and despair as they see themselves filled with regrets for the past, old guilt, and old resentment. What should we do? We must be wary of discouragement.

In Psalms 119:154, 156, 159, the psalmist prayed, “Revive me”. I would like to meditate on Psalms 119:153-160 in two ways on guarding against discouragement under the heading “Revive me according to Your word”. May the grace God be with us.

#### **First, what makes us discourage?**

There are two things:

##### (1) It is “my affliction” that discourages us.

Look at Psalms 119:153 – “Look upon my affliction and rescue me, For I do not forget Your law.” The affliction that came upon the psalmist was the suffering of “the wicked” (v. 155), those who persecuted him, and his adversaries (v. 157). The psalmist was persecuted by these wicked men who didn't seek the Lord's statutes (v. 155), and these deceitful men who didn't keep the Lord's words (v. 158). Because of their persecution, the psalmist who sought the statutes of the Lord kept it. And because he loved the word of the Lord, he was suffering, and such sufferings could lead him to discouragement. In this situation, he pleaded with the Lord three times to ‘revive me’ (vv. 154, 156, 159).

##### (2) It is “my cause” that discourages us.

Look at Psalms 119:154 – “Plead my cause and redeem me; Revive me according to Your word.” The psalmist pleaded with God for his resentment when suffering unjustly came upon him, because the wicked oppressed him for nothing wrong. We can be discouraged when we have resentment. What should we do when we are so discouraged?

## **Second and last, how can we overcome discouragement?**

We can overcome discouragement through prayer and the word. The psalmist had two choices when he was in the midst of the persecution of the wicked: Either he let affliction to discourage his soul, or he could more actively engaged in a life of word of God and prayer. The psalmist's choice was the latter. He prayed and spoke more actively in the midst of affliction. See his prayer: “rescue me” (v.153), “Revive me” (vv. 154, 156, 159). He didn't become discouraged in affliction, but looked to the Lord and prayed to the Lord for salvation and restoration (revival). Also, when he was in distress, he didn't forget the law of the Lord (v. 153) and didn't turn aside from the Lord's testimonies (v. 157). He held the word of the Lord more and more. So the psalmist cried out to the Lord, “Revive me according to Your word” (v. 154) and “Revive me according to Your ordinances” (v.156). In order not to be discouraged in our affliction, we must pray according to the word of the Lord. In other words, we must hold onto the word of the Lord and cry out to Him in faith. Our hearts must be drawn by the word of the Lord. And we must be governed by His word. Otherwise, we are prone to discouragement in our hardships.

We can be discouraged by suffering and unjust resentment in our lives. In that case, we must hold onto the word of God and pray to Him. We must trust in the Lord's lovingkindness and ask, “Revive me according to Your word”. Then the Lord will listen to our prayers and will revive our hearts. The Lord will deliver us from our discouragement because He makes us hope and yearn for Him. And He will go further and deliver us from the wicked and the persecutors. I hope and pray that we will be able to experience this work of God's salvation.

Longing for the Lord who is my hope in the midst of discouragement and despair,

James Kim

(Living today because of my Lord who is my hope)

## Do Your commandments!

### [Psalms 119:161-168]

If we love God, we must obey God's commandments (Jn. 14:21). When we obey His commandments, we must keep the least of His commandments and not break one of them (Mt. 5:19). When we look at Psalms 119:166, this is what the psalmist said: "I hope for Your salvation, O LORD, And do Your commandments." Focusing on this verse, I would like to think about three things under the heading "Do Your commandments!": (1) What must we do to do the commandments of God? (2) How should we do God's commandments? (3) What is the result of doing God's commandments?

#### **First, what must we do to do the commandments of God?**

Psalms 119:161-168 teaches us three things:

(1) In order for us to do God's commandments, we must stand in awe of the words of God.

Look at Psalms 119:161 – "Princes persecute me without cause, But my heart stands in awe of Your words." The psalmist was not afraid of the princes who persecuted him in the midst of innocent persecution, but he feared only the words of the Lord. When we have reverence for His words, we can do God's commandments like the psalmist. If there is no reverence for God's commandments, we are afraid of those who persecute us. Then we have no choice but to commit the sin of disobedience for not doing His commandments.

(2) In order for us to do God's commandments, we must rejoice in the word of the Lord.

Look at Psalms 119:162 – "I rejoice at Your word, As one who finds great spoil." The psalmist not only stands in awe of the word of God, but also rejoiced in it. He rejoiced in His word, but rejoiced as if he had found great spoil. Like the psalmist, we must rejoice in the word of God in our sufferings. We should rejoice in the word of God as if we have found great spoil. Just as a person makes no effort and rejoices with the stolen water obtained when he is unqualified, so in the midst of suffering, we don't simply deserve to receive it, but we must greatly rejoice at the word of promise given.

(3) In order for us to do God's commandments, we must love the word of the Lord.

Look at Psalms 119:163 – “I hate and despise falsehood, But I love Your law.” In order for us to do God's commandments, we must love God's word like the psalmist. And in order to love His word, we must hate and despise falsehood. We must not tolerate even small lies. Accepting that lies are small is evidence that we don't love the word of God that much. Those who love the word of truth hate and despise even small lies. And because they love the word of God, they do the commandments of God.

### **Second, how should we do God's commandments?**

Look at Psalms 119:166 – “I hope for Your salvation, O LORD, And do Your commandments.” The psalmist did God's commandments, hoping for the Lord's salvation. In other words, this means that there is liable to be misunderstood to hope for salvation without doing the commandments of God. Of course, salvation belongs only to God. But there is a problem in praying for salvation without obeying His word, which is human responsibility. We must hope for God's salvation in obedience to His word, which is our responsibility. We must do God's commandments, hoping for God's salvation. Then God will deliver us from suffering.

### **Third and last, what is the result of doing God's commandments?**

It is to praise the Lord. Look at Psalms 119:164 – “Seven times a day I praise You, Because of Your righteous ordinances.” The psalmist praised the Lord seven times a day because of His righteous ordinances. Eventually, he came to praise God by doing God's commandments. Those who stand awe, rejoice, and love the word of God praise the Lord. Another result of doing God's commandments is great peace of mind. Look at Psalms 119:165 – “Those who love Your law have great peace, And nothing causes them to stumble.” Because we love the word of God, we will find great peace in our hearts for those who obey His word.

We must do God's commandments. In the midst of suffering, we must do His word. We must stand in awe of the word of God, rejoice in it, and do it with love. We must do God's commandments, hoping for God's salvation in our suffering. Then God will give us great peace. And He will make us to praise the Lord.

Wishing to be a doer of God's commandments,

James Kim

(Standing in awe of His word, rejoicing in it and desire to love it more and more)



## **“Let my soul live that it may praise You”**

### **[Psalms 119:169-176]**

God is our praise (Deut. 10:21, Jer. 17:14). The purpose of God's making us new creatures is to declare His praise (Isa. 43:21). If we look at Psalms 119:175, the psalmist said, “Let my soul live that it may praise You, And let Your ordinances help me.” Here the psalmist prayed that if the Lord would make his soul live, then he would praise Him. I would like to receive the grace given by meditating on three things about what we must do in order for our souls to live, under the heading “Let my soul live that it may praise You” based on Psalms 119:169-176. I hope and pray that our souls will live and praise the Lord.

#### **First, in order for our souls to live, we must be the souls of prayer.**

Look at Psalms 119:169a, 170a – “Let my cry come before You, O LORD ... Let my supplication come before You ....” The psalmist prayed to God for his soul to live, but asked for God's help (vv. 173, 175). Here, the help the psalmist sought from God was “Give me understanding according to Your word” (v. 169) internally, and deliverance (v. 170) or “Your salvation” (v. 174) externally.

#### **Second, in order for our souls to live, we must become souls whose delight is in the word of the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 119:174 – “I long for Your salvation, O LORD, And Your law is my delight.” The psalmist chose the word because he was delighted with the word of God in a situation where God's help was desperately needed. And as he was drawn to the word of God, he cried out to God. So he was sure that God would deliver him. In other words, the psalmist was convinced that he would receive help (vv. 173, 175) and be saved (v. 170) according to the word of the Lord (v. 170). Like the psalmist, we must have the assurance of salvation. In order to do this, we must be led by the word of God. We must be taught by it (v. 171). And we must understand and know His word (v. 169). We must rejoice in the word of God (v. 174).

#### **Third and last, in order for our souls to live, we must become souls like lost sheep.**

Look at Psalms 119:176 – “I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant, For I do not forget Your commandments.” Here, the lost sheep-like soul refers to the soul who admits that he is a sinner. Surprisingly, the psalmist confessed that he was like a lost sheep even though he had not forgotten the commandments of the Lord (v.

176). This confession means that we cannot deny that we are sinners because we have not forgotten His word, rather than commit a sin even if we forget the word. In order for our souls to live, we must have a good habit of always looking at ourselves with the words of God that we never forget, like the psalmist. In such a situation, we need the humility to recognize our sins and acknowledge that we are sinners before God and His word. When we pray to God in such humility, God will answer our prayers.

In order for us to praise the Lord, our souls must live. In order for our soul to live, we must pray to God. And we must rejoice in the word of the Lord. Our souls can live by prayer and the word of God. And in order for our souls to live, we must become souls like lost sheep. In other words, we must admit that we are sinners. Therefore, we pray that our souls will live so that we can praise our Lord.

“Since Christ my soul from sin set free, This world has been a Heaven to me; And 'mid earth's sorrows and its woe, 'Tis heaven my Jesus here to know. O hallelujah, yes, 'tis heaven 'Tis heaven to know my sins forgiven; On land or sea, what matters where? Where Jesus is, 'tis Heaven there” (Hymn “Since Christ My Soul From Sin Set Free”, verse 1 and chorus),

James Kim

(With the desire to become a person who prays and diligently reflects on myself with the word of God)

## “I am for peace”

### [Psalms 120]

These days, my wife and I often laugh because of my youngest daughter, Yeun. Not long ago, when I went to church, Yeun asked me in the car what “patience” is. So I told her that patience is waiting. At that time, my wife, who was sitting in the seat next to me, told Yeun that patience is ‘waiting nicely’. At that time, Yeun asked me jokingly what ‘waiting nicely’ was. So I said “w” “a” “i” “t” “i” “n” “g” “n” “i” “c” “e” “l” “y”. Then Yeun briefly answered “O” “M” “G”. Hahaha. Here, “O.M.G” means “oh my gosh”. Hahaha. At that time, I laughed a lot with my wife. Even now, when I think about that moment, I am laughing. Haha. Meanwhile, during the Thanksgiving holiday last week, my family went to my father-in-law and my mother-in-law’s house. As we almost came back home, my son Dillon and another daughter Yeri were sleeping and Yeun kept on talking to my wife and I because we were talking to each other and I guesses Yeun felt left out. At that time, Yeun asked my wife and I to guess what she wanted and gave a hint that what she wanted started with “R”. At that time, my wife asked if Yeun wanted to eat. And she said ‘No.’ She said that it was drinking that she wanted. At that time, when I thought about what drink starts with the letter “R”. And I remembered Yerun said “Manu” (I have no idea what this mean) for “water” when she was little kid. So I thought that she wanted to drink water now. So even though I know that water doesn't start with “R”, I answered her “water”. Ten Yeun yelled excitedly that “You are right”, that is, I was right. Haha. At that time, my wife and I laughed because it was absurd. But nowadays, when Yeun often mutters on her own, she memorizes ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men’ (Lk. 2:14) and also brags to us. Maybe Yeun is memorizing this bible verse for a play on Christmas Eve at Children Sunday School. I say often these days to Yeun, ‘Let us make a happy family’. I’m trying to teach her that in order to make a happy family, we can't frown, cry, get angry, etc.. When I think of our church, I also recommend this: “Let's work hard to make a happy church.” What must we do to do that?

When we look at Psalms 120:7, this is what the psalmist said: “I am for peace, but when I speak, They are for war.” As believers in Jesus, we must want peace like the psalmist. Then our church can be a happy church. This is what Jesus said: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Mt. 5:9). The Bible tells us that we are peacemakers. Therefore, we ought to want peace as sons and daughters of God and live a life of peace. But why are there quarrels and conflicts among us? Why are there quarrels and conflicts in the church? The apostle James says that the cause is our “desires that battles within us (Jam. 4:1). When quarrels and conflicts arise in the church because of our desires that battle within us, there is inevitably “disorder and every evil practice” (3:16). Therefore, the apostle James exhorts us like this: “But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts,

do not boast about it or deny the truth” (v. 14).

In Psalms 120, even though the psalmist dwelled with those who hated peace for a long time (v. 6) and wanted peace among them, those who hated peace loved quarreling and enjoying lie to others (v. 5, Park). Therefore, he was suffering. In the midst of this, we see the psalmist praying to God like this: “In my trouble I cried to the LORD, And He answered me. Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, From a deceitful tongue” (vv. 1-2). Like the psalmist, we must also offer this prayer to God. The psalmist was suffering from the false lips and deceitful tongues of those who hated peace (v. 6). So he prayed to God for Him to rescue him from them. Therefore, when we are suffering from the false lips and deceitful tongues of those who hate peace in the church, we must pray to God for Him to deliver him “from lying lips, From a deceitful tongue” like the psalmist (v. 2). But if we find in us a sinful lust that hates peace, we should control our own lips (tongue) not to tell lies against the truth, and repent of the sinful lust that hates peace within us. We must ask God to deliver ourselves from that sinful lust. While praying like this, what we need to be wary of for peace is lying lips and the deceitful tongue (v. 2). As the apostle James puts it, we must not let praise and cursing come out of the same mouth (Jam. 3:10). If we aren’t careful about our tongues and break the peace of the church by using lying lips and the deceitful tongue like those who hate the peace in Psalms 120, the psalmist says: “What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to you, You deceitful tongue? Sharp arrows of the warrior, With the burning coals of the broom tree” (vv. 3-4). The Bible says that the Lord will bring on His disaster on us. The Lord is saying that sudden fatal tribulation comes upon the owner of such a false tongue, like the sharp arrow of the warrior that pierces into the body (Park). And the Bible tells us that the Lord brings disaster to the owner of lying lips, as if an unquenchable fire like the charcoal of a rodem wood hits the body (Park).

Therefore, we must not break the peace of the church by using lying lips and the deceitful tongue like those who hate peace with a heart that fears the Lord's disaster. Rather, we should be those who want peace like the psalmist. In other words, we must be peace-loving and peace-makers. In order to do that, we must pray to God. Of course, if there are members of our church who are quarreling, we should pray for them. But if we find desires to quarrel and fight within us, we must pray to God to rescue us from that desires. In the midst of that, we need to control our lips. We must not tell lies against the truth. And, like Jesus, who is our peace (Eph. 2:14), we must preach peace (v. 17) and do the work of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18). Therefore, we pray for all of us to be praised by our neighbors and glorify God by keeping the unity in the midst of diversity of the church.

Want peace,

James Kim (As I rejoice in the birthday of Jesus, the King of Peace)

## God who helps me

### [Psalms 121]

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

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

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

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

who are following Him, derail from the truth. I think one of the causes is a negative attitude toward the suffering of the righteous. The reason I think this way is that the psalmist Asaph's feet came close to stumbling because of the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous (Ps. 73).

What do you think? Do you think that the negative attitude of the suffering of the righteous is one of the reasons why we derail from the truth? If you think "yes," what do you think we should do to have a positive attitude toward suffering? I find the answer in Philippians 1:29 – “For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” If we know and be thankful that it is God's grace that we suffer for Jesus Christ, we will not derail from the truth. Let's pray for this. Let's pray that God will give us grace so that we may know that suffering for Christ's sake is God's grace and blessing and that we will not derail from the truth. When we pray in this way, let's pray by believing in the fact that God will not allow our foot to slip (Ps. 121:3).

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

How does God keep us?

### (1) God keeps us will neither slumber nor sleep.

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

### (2) God is our shade and keeps us from harmful things.

Look at Psalms 121:5-6: “The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun will not smite you by day, Nor the moon by night.” When I was meditating on the God's word, “The LORD is your shade on your right hand” (v. 5), this thought came into mind: ‘If the sunlight continues to shine on me in the desert, what will happen to me? But the Bible says God is my shade and I am comforted by this truth.’ During the summer when the sun is so hot, we tend to look for the shadow. So when we find a big tree, we go

under the big tree because there is big shadow. Likewise, there is a time when we would like to go to him in the shadow of our Father in heaven, when we are exhausted by these and other things in this world. When we are living in the desert-like world, we are comforted by the truth that God is our shade and protects us from harmful things of this world. Also God, who is our shield, protects us from all dangers in this world as we are heading toward Heaven. Therefore, we can confess, as David did in Psalms 23:4, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”

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

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

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

When I feel helpless, I love to sing the hymn “Take Me as I Am.” This hymn was written by Scottish Eliza H. Hamilton and composed by a well-known pastor named D. Sankey. Pastor Ira D. Sanky recalled in the ‘Story of the Gospel Song of Sankey’, published after his blindness (Internet): “Years ago, while revival meetings were being held in one of the large towns in Scotland, a young girl became anxious about her spiritual condition. Returning from one of the meetings, she went to her own minister and asked him how she might be saved. Ah, lassie, he said, don’t be alarmed! Just read your Bible and say your prayers, and you will be all right. But the poor, illiterate girl cried out: ‘O Minister, I canna read, I canna pray! Lord Jesus, take me as I am!’ So the girl prayed like this: ‘Lord Jesus Take me as I am!’ In this way the girl became a follower of Christ; and a lady who heard of the girl’s experience wrote this hymn .” “A minister in England writes to me about a Christian woman, a shoemaker’s wife,

who had a lodger that was an obstinate unbeliever. The good woman often tried to induce him to go to meetings, but in vain. Tracts which she placed on the table in his room she found crushed on the floor. She would smooth them out and again place them so as to attract his attention, but he would read nothing but his novels and newspapers. One spring the old man fell ill with bronchitis. The good woman acted as his nurse, for he had no relatives who cared for him. She used the opportunity, often speaking to him about his soul and reading the Word of God; but she could make no impression upon him. One day she was reading the hymn Jesus, my Lord, to Thee I cry, and when she came to the refrain, the old man called out to her sharply: That's not in the book! The woman answered, Why yes, it is. He declared again that he did not believe it was in the book. The good woman told him that he could read it for himself. He asked for his glasses, and read with wonder and amazement, again and again, My only plea — Christ died for me! oh, take me as I am. A few weeks afterward he said to the woman one morning, I am going home to-day, and I am so happy, so happy! In an hour or two he passed away, repeating those words to the last" (Internet).

As I seek the Lord's help,

James Kim

(With thanksgiving heart because the Lord is protecting us without slumber and sleeping)



## Who keeps my soul?

**“The LORD will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul.” (Psalms 121:7)**

It is the Lord God who keeps our souls (Ps. 121:5). But the question arises is "Isn't there my responsibility?" I think of this when I think of the gasoline incident in my car yesterday. I thought about whether it makes sense if I prayed to God to go to my destination, which was church, without going to a gas station when there was only little gasoline in the car. Apparently, the car would have stopped on the side of the road as before (the church car was standing on the side of the road because there was no gasoline as I was coming to the church morning prayer meeting). Although it is common sense, there are so many things that we ask of God without taking our human responsibilities.

In Psalms 121:7, if we ask God, who protects our souls, to protect our souls while our spiritual fuel isn't filled, then we will fall into the temptation of evil Satan. We can't boldly say that we will not commit sin against God when we fall into Satan's temptation. Our responsibility is to make the word our possession in the life of obeying the word of God (119:56). It is our responsibility to keep the word of God in our hearts and not commit sin against Him (v. 11). That is, in order to protect our souls, our responsibility is to fill our spiritual fuel tank with spiritual fuel. Just as we know that gasoline of the car has run out when we see it fuel gauge, we must realize that our spiritual life has run out of spiritual fuel. Then we must listen to God's voice in the desert (Hos. 2:14) and be supplied with spiritual fuel.

Now many Christians are serving the church unprotected against the forces of the evil spirits of Satan who are trying to destroy our souls. Even though we are spiritually dry inwardly, we may well be shining on the saints outwardly as if we are standing firmly like cedars. I think we have to continue driving a car despite our dying souls due to lack of spiritual fuel being supplied to us. Why can't we experience the work of reviving our souls even though we pray to God? Why can't we experience the supply of spiritual fuel even though we hear so many sermons? I know the word to love, but why can't we love others? The reason is because we don't prioritize the protection of our souls and do our best to reach the fullness of Christ. We aren't protecting our souls because we aren't making the word of God our possession by not obeying His word, which is the spiritual fuel, in order to protect our souls. As we ask God to protect our souls, I hope and pray that we become a wise racer of faith who always has enough spiritual fuel to protect our souls.

With gratitude for the grace of God who protects my soul without sleeping,

James Kim

(As I strive to bring my spiritual fuel tank to the fullness of Christ through the spiritual fuel purification work in this morning)

## **Those who love the church are prosperous.**

### **[Psalms 122]**

One of the books by Philip Yancey is “Church: Why Bother?” In the book, Philip Yancey said of the community in the church : ‘The fundamental foundation of the Christian community, the reconciling love of God, transcends all nations, races, classes, ages and genders in the world. Community comes first. The conflict and problems that separate us are later.’ Although the church is a community of various people, the church of God's family must seek unity in that diversity. ‘How beautiful is the church when everything is different but the same is united into a community!’ (Yancey). I personally dream of such a beautiful community. I am dreaming of the church that faithfully keeps on the unity of the Holy Spirit in diversity, not division.

In Psalms 122: 6, this is what the psalmist David said: “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you.” Here “Jerusalem” symbolizes the church (Park). That is to say, those who love the church will be prosperous. That's right. Those who love the church are prosperous because God is with them. Then, what do those who love the church do? I would like to take two lessons from Psalms 122.

### **First, those who love the church are happy to go to church.**

Look at Psalms 122:1 – “I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD.” The psalmist David was glad when he was invited by his friends to go to the house of the Lord that is the temple of the Lord. What was the reason?

(1) The first reason is because of what was previously ruined in the temple of the Lord was now repaired (Park).

Look at Psalms 122:2, 3: “Our feet are standing Within your gates, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that is built As a city that is compact together.” What does it mean? The psalmist David saw the Jerusalem temple being rebuilt, which had been destroyed. That was why he rejoiced and rejoiced. This should be our joy. Those who love the church should rejoice and rejoice when the fallen church repents and is beautifully restored (Park). Isn't this our joy that the church is cleansed and renewed by the true reformation of the fallen church? In the meantime, how joyful it will be when the church, which is the body of the Lord, becomes the clean bride-like church well-prepared to welcome Jesus, the Bridegroom, by the work of the Lord.

(2) The second reason why the psalmist David was happy to go up to the temple of God was because he wanted to worship God with thanksgiving.

Look at Psalms 122:4 – “To which the tribes go up, even the tribes of the LORD-- An ordinance for Israel-- To give thanks to the name of the LORD.” When David saw the rebuilt holy city of God with the good hand of God (Neh. 2:18), he was happy to go up to the temple of God and worship Him with thanksgiving in his heart. In addition, when David saw many people in the city of Jerusalem (Ps. 122:3) and righteous politics were practicing (v. 5), he rejoiced and gave thanks to God (Park).

This should be our mind and our heart. As we experience the Lord's cleansing and rebuilding of the church, we must rejoice in worshiping God with thanksgiving as we go up to the temple of the Lord. In addition, as we see the Lord makes His church to grow and to practice the right church politic by bringing revival to His church, we must be happy to go up to His church and worship God with thanksgiving in our heart. Only those who love the church and those who taste the work of what God is doing in our church will be able to go up to the temple of the Lord with joy and thanksgiving and will worship God. In the midst of the joy of worship, we will love the church more than before.

**Second and last, those who love the church seek the peace and prosperity of the church.**

Look at Psalms 122:6-8: “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you. 'May peace be within your walls, And prosperity within your palaces.' For the sake of my brothers and my friends, I will now say, 'May peace be within you.'” The psalmist David blessed Jerusalem because he loved Jerusalem. And that blessing was Jerusalem's peace and prosperity. Here, “peace” refers to peace between God and man and peace between man and man. In other words, those who love Jerusalem prayed for peace in Jerusalem. Those who love Jerusalem sought the blessing of peace, while the psalmist David also longed for the God's blessing of prosperity.

If we love the church, we must bless it. We who love His church must bless the church and seek God's peace of the church. Peace is the hallmark of the church, which is the Lord's body that He is with us and He builds (Park). There must be spiritual peace in the church. There should be peace not only in our relationship with God, but also in our relationship with our fellow church members. In the meantime, the body of the Lord should be prosperous because the Lord Emmanuel is with us.

This is what the hymn “I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord” says in verses 1 through 3: (v. 1) “I love Thy Kingdom, Lord, The house of Thine abode, The Church our blest Redeemer saved With His own precious blood,” (v. 2) “I love Thy Church, O God; Her walls before Thee stand, Dear as the apple of Thine eye, And graven on Thy hand” and (v. 3) “For her my tears shall fall, For her my prayers ascend; To her my cares and toils be given, Till toils and

cares shall end.” We who love His church must rejoice and rejoice that the church is transformed into a clean and purified church as the bride of Jesus, the Bridegroom. When we witness the Lord's establishing work in His church, we cannot help but to go up to the temple of the Lord with joy and worship God with thanksgiving in our heart. We must also seek the peace of our church that we love. In seeking God's peace, we too should seek peace in our relationship with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. In the meantime, we must seek their blessing for the church (v. 9). May our church be filled with the blessings of peace and prosperity of God.

Wanting to love the church even more,

James Kim

(Remembering God's faithful grace in this new day and new morning)

## Our eyes look to the Lord our God

### [Psalms 123]

In our life of faith, there are times when we have no choice but to come to the Lord and cry out. At such times, as we look at the situation we are in, we go quietly before the Lord and cry out to Him with our oppressed heart, a truly heavy and distressed heart. In such a prayer, the Holy Spirit works to pour out our heavy and distressed hearts before Heavenly Father. The Holy Spirit reminds us of the word of God, and through it, He convicts us of our sins and also makes us repent. In such work of the Holy Spirit, we must ask God for forgiveness of our sins. Also, the Holy Spirit embodies the heart of our Heavenly Father and makes us to ask Heavenly Father with His heart. And He helps us to seek His will. Therefore, the distressing and difficult situations in our lives are a precious opportunity to cry out to Him as we look to the Lord.

In Psalms 123:2, we see the psalmist looking to God in a distressing situation. What was the distressing situation the psalmist was facing? It was the situation of ridicule and contempt (v. 4). Here, those who were at ease refers to people who lived safely without any realization of God's warnings (Park). These are the proud people who had no reverence for God. In other words, the psalmist was suffering because of the ridicule and contempt of these people who were at ease and “the proud” (v. 4). In this distressing situation, he looked only at the Lord. I want to meditate on how the psalmist looked at the Lord in these distressing situations and receive lessons from it. I hope and pray that we can also overcome the distressing situations with the grace of God as we look only at the Lord.

#### **First, we must lift up our eyes and look at the Lord in the heavens.**

Look at Psalms 123:1 – “To You I lift up my eyes, O You who are enthroned in the heavens!” We will face endless hardships and difficulties while living on this earth. Therefore, our hearts will be heavy and difficult. In that case, what is the first thing we should do? It is to lift our eyes and look at God in heaven. What should we do when there is nowhere to help us in the midst of the many hardships and challenges that we encounter on this earth? We must lift our eyes to the mountains (121:1-2). This is because our help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth (v.2). Never let us be content to gaze at anything on earth and get help. Rather, knowing that only the salvation of God the Most High is true salvation, let us lift our eyes and long for the salvation of God in heaven (Park).

Personally, I am empowered by Jonah 2:4 – “So I said, ‘I have been expelled from Your sight Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy temple.’” The reason I like this word is because even though I myself, like

Jonah, disobeyed the Lord's words and was discouraged for sin, as if my soul fell into a deep swamp, I would find comfort and strength through this word of Jonah 2:4. In other words, I like Jonah 2:4 because this word makes me to look at the Lord again just as Jonah looked at the temple of the Lord again. In Psalms 123, the psalmist didn't direct his gaze to the distressing and difficult situation he was facing. Rather than looking at the situation, he lifted his eyes and looked at God in heaven. Like the psalmist, let's lift our eyes and look at the Lord in heaven. Although we can see difficult and hard situations with our physical eyes, let our spiritual eyes only look at the God of salvation who can deliver us from those distressing and difficult situations. The God of our salvation will deliver us. The just God will defeat those who are at ease and the proud ones who afflict us. Surely God will help and strengthen us.

### **Second, we must look to the Lord with servant attitude.**

Look at Psalms 123:2 – “Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, So our eyes look to the LORD our God, Until He is gracious to us.” What does it mean to look to the Lord “as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master? This means that the psalmist's act of looking to the Lord was considered as a calling (Park). What does it mean by calling? Calling is like a mission in this earth from heaven (Internet). Are we really thinking of looking at the Lord as a calling? Yes. The calling on earth that God in heaven has given us is to look to the Lord. Then, what should be the attitude of servants when we look at the Lord as our calling on earth in the midst of the ridicule and contempt of the proud? We must be humble. Those who know that looking at the Lord is their calling don't resent slowness of the Lord's salvation when they look to Him in distressed situations. They don't even know how to resent it (Park). And even if the Lord doesn't save servants like us, if we look only at Him, we will continue to serve Him. The servants acknowledge the Lord's sovereignty. How dare we, His servants, to complain about the Lord's sovereign work?

While living on this earth, we must go up to the high places as we look only at the Lord. The Bible teaches that this is our attitude as servants of the Lord. While living on this earth, we must look to God who is our Lord as we believe that suffering for the Lord is an essential subject of grace. Especially when our hearts overflow with the ridicule and contempt of those who are at ease and the proud, we must rely on the mighty hand of the Lord. The right hand of his power will grasp our hand and deliver us from our deep swamps. He alone is our Savior. In the midst of that, let's not resent the slowness of the Lord's salvation. Let's just look at the Lord with faith and go forward with patience.

### **Third and last, we must look to the Lord until God is gracious to us.**

Look at Psalms 123:2b, 3 – “... So our eyes look to the LORD our God, Until He is gracious to us. Be gracious to us, O LORD, be gracious to us, For we are greatly filled with contempt.” The psalmist didn't stop looking at the Lord and prayed until God was gracious to him. In other words, he was determined not to stop

looking at God until God was gracious to him. This word reminds me of Jacob's determination as he wrestled with the angel in Genesis 32:25 – “When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him.” The psalmist didn't stop looking at the Lord and prayed until the Lord showed him mercy and grace. This is what Dr. Park said: ‘Therefore, he cries out to God. In this way, prayer is a saint's weapon. He overcomes all difficulties with prayer. Although the environment may change by prayer, the prayer's heart is changed and thus he is able to endure all difficulties’ (Park). It is one of two whether the distressing situation given to us changes by looking at the Lord and praying, or whether we, as prayers, are changed and can overcome the distressing situation.

In times of distressing, we must pray to the Lord, remembering four things, constantly asking for God's mercy and grace (Park): (1) We must remember that it was because of the Lord that we encountered the distressing situation, (2) We must remember that God gives us the strength to endure the distressing situation, (3) We must remember that God blesses us even in such distressing situation, and (4) We have to remember that later on, God will guide us away from that distressing situation.

There is a Korean gospel song I used to love to sing. It is “Yearning for God's Love”: (v. 1) When you've been longing for God's unfailing love/ When you've been yearning for God's perfect peace/ God, our Lord, the Creator of heaven and earth, we know/ Is the One who loves you so. (v. 2) When we worship and lift up our praise to the Lord/ When we pursue His goodness and to be more like Him/ God, our Lord the Creator of heaven and earth, we know/ Is the One who calls you His own. (Chorus) Our God keeps His eyes upon you/ He's always watching over you, His children/ God shed His blood to redeem you and me/ Day and night, He inclines His ear to us/ He has shone the light in the darkness/ He has heard your faintest moaning, then/ Wherever you are, lift your eyes to the Lord/ Look up to the Lord, to the Lord alone/ Look up to the Lord, to the Lord alone.

Let's lift our eyes and look to the Lord in heaven. Let us cry out to Him humbly, relying on the right hand of His power. Let us ask God until He is gracious to us and delivers us from our distressing situation.

Thinking the grace of God who helped me in my weakness and made my heart to pour out to Heavenly Father,

James Kim

(With gratitude for God's saving grace)



## **If God was not on our side ...**

### **[Psalms 124]**

What do you think when you look back on the past? When we look back on the past, we often say 'I still liked that time...' and miss the past. This longing seems to have been more especially when we now are in a difficult and hard situation. If we are living a peaceful life now, what do we think as we look back on the past? Will we be grateful for remembering the grace God has given us in the past? If we can remember the abundant grace that God has given us in the past, we can look to God's help in our present suffering and hardship. But we live in too many times forgetting the abundant grace that God has already given us. As a result, there are times when we cannot see the Lord amidst the adversities we face in our lives today and cannot get out of that difficult environment. Then, after a while, we look at the Lord again and cry out, thinking about the grace God gave us at that time. We once again go up to the Lord's temple and long for God's grace, seeking His help. And while we pray, we wait humbly and in faith for God to deliver us from the painful circumstances we face. As we wait, God answers our prayers and delivers us quickly and reveals His glory. We must think about this at least once after we experience this saving grace of God. In other words, we must think about 'What if God didn't show me His abundant grace at that time, what would I be like now...?', 'What would have happened to me if God didn't help me at that time...' etc..

In Psalms 124:1-2, the psalmist urged the Israelites to ask this question as they go up to the temple. The question was, "Had it not been the Lord who was on our side ...." He encouraged them to remember the grace that God had saved them in the past by being on the side of the Israelites when they were unjustly oppressed. Often, we people think that it is our habit to be ungrateful even when we receive the help of God in danger (Park). When I think about why we have this ungrateful habit, I think the cause is because of our unthankful heart that too quickly forgets the abundant grace that God has given us. Of course, when we are delivered from hard and difficult adversity by God, we give thanks to Him thinking "God has answered my prayers". But the problem is that our grateful heart doesn't last long. We must continue to live our lives with heart of gratitude to God. But when other hardships and difficulties arise, we seem to seek God in the heart of wanting to escape from that difficult and hard situation rather than give thanks to God. There seems to be too many times when we cannot expect by faith that there is God's grace in it.

The psalmist exhorts us to ask the same question that the Israelites did: "Had it not been the LORD who was on our side" (vv.1, 2). What would have happened if God wasn't on the side of the Israelites at the time of

danger? (v.2) That is, if God had not been with the Israelites when the enemies of Israel rose up against them, what would happen to the Israelites? Look at Psalms 124:3-5: “Then they would have swallowed us alive, When their anger was kindled against us; Then the waters would have engulfed us, The stream would have swept over our soul; Then the raging waters would have swept over our soul.” He said, ‘If God had not been with the Israelites, then their enemies would have swallowed them alive (v. 3), the waters would have engulfed them (v. 4) and the stream would have swept over their souls (vv. 4, 5). These words all show that the Israelites were in their very incompetent situation in the extreme tribulation (Park). In other words, the psalmist urged them to remember that when the Israelites in the past cried out to God in a situation where they felt their incompetence in extreme tribulation, God was on their side and helped them.

These words apply to the church. The reason is because the church is truly Israel. Since the Lord, who is the head of the church, is on the side of the church, no matter what kind of tribulation and persecution the church faces, the church is saved (delivered) with the help of the Lord. The Lord is on the side of the church that is the body of the Lord and protects and preserves the church. So what should we do when we consider the grace of the Lord Immanuel who is always on our side? We should give thanks to God. And we should praise God. Look at Psalms 124:6 – “Praise be to the LORD, who has not let us be torn by their teeth.” Why did the psalmist exhort the Israelites to praise God? This is what the psalmist said: “We have escaped like a bird out of the fowler's snare; the snare has been broken, and we have escaped. He urged the Israelites to praise God because God delivered them from their cruel enemies and gave them freedom. We have the reason to praise God forever. The reason is that God redeemed us by making Jesus His only begotten Son who is the propitiation for our sins (Isa. 43:1; 1 Jn. 2:2). And God has given us eternal freedom (free from sin). When we think of this grace, we have no choice but to praise the greatness of the Lord as much as possible until we die.

In Psalms 124:8, the psalmist conclusively confessed “Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.” The God on our side is the God who helps us. The God who helps us is the God of salvation who delivered us, His church, from the enemy, the devil and his power. Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross for our salvation and eternal freedom, as if our souls are escaped like a bird out of the fowler’s snare (v. 7). Therefore, we must praise God. Until we die, we should praise the greatness of the Lord as much as possible.

Remembering those who praised the greatness of the Lord and the love of God until they died,

James Kim

(With the help of the Lord, Immanuel and Ebenezer, who is on our side)

## **“Those who trust in the Lord”**

### **[Psalms 125]**

One day, I meditated on who are the happiest people in the world, centering on Romans 4:1-8. The Bible says that a sinner who has done nothing good and has no merit and who believes in Jesus Christ, is justified by God through God's complete grace is the happiest person in the world. What is our happiness to be regarded as righteous by God without any merit? Look at Romans 4:7-8: “Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.” In a word, our happiness is that all our sins are forgiven. What sins have we been forgiven in Jesus Christ? All rebellious sins openly committed [“transgressions” (v. 7)], all sins committed by weakness, which don’t conform to God's will [“sins” (v. 7)], and all ethical sins that don’t follow the degree of life [“sin” (v. 8)] (Park) are all forgiven in Jesus Christ. All our sins have been put away [“forgiven” (v. 7) and “are covered” (v. 7)], and our sins have been blotted out, not even God regarded them as sins (v. 8)]. All of our sins have been put away by the precious blood Jesus shed on the cross. All our sins have been covered up. God has blotted out all our sins. Therefore, the Bible tells us that those who believe in Jesus Christ with God's complete grace and have forgiven all their sins with the precious blood He shed on the cross are the happiest people in the world.

Are you happy? One of the characteristics of a happy person is the one who trusts in God even when he or she goes through hard times as the years pass by. Usually, as children grow up, they try to do everything themselves independently of their parents. But the more we who believe in Jesus grow up in faith, more and more we trust in God instead of more we become independent from Him. Especially happy people rely more on God in realizing how weak and small their faith is when they face with difficult things. Therefore, those who are happy ask God for help in the darkness and in danger of life. Are you more and more happy to trust in God as the years go by?

When we look at Psalms 125:1, this is what the psalmist said: “Those who trust in the LORD Are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abides forever.” That is, those who trust in God will not be shaken like Mount Zion and will be forever. Here, ‘mountain’ is a symbol of immortality and rest (Park). Those who trust in God will stand firmly and unshakable despite any troubles and adversities like a mountain, and will enjoy the peace and rest that God gives forever. How is this possible? How can we enjoy peace and rest without being shaken in this sinful world of sorrow, hardship and death like the mountain? It is because God protects those who trust in Him. Look at verse 2: “As the mountains surround Jerusalem, So the LORD surrounds His people From this time forth and forever.” It is said that Jerusalem is geographically surrounded by many mountains (Park). As so many mountains surround Jerusalem, God surrounds those who trust in Him. Just as the mountains in their immovable posture

surround Jerusalem from a distance, God is firmly protecting and keeping those who trust in Him. Therefore, those who trust in God are forever before Him and are protected by God forever.

But there is one thing we need to keep in mind. That is, because they trust in God, there may be troubles even for those who live in God's protection. Look at Psalms 125:3 – “For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest upon the land of the righteous, So that the righteous will not put forth their hands to do wrong.” God sometimes gives power to the wicked to afflict the righteous (saints) in order to awaken them (Park). In other words, even in the lives of those who trust in God, there may be distressing things caused by the wicked. I wonder why God will allow these things into our lives of trusting God. The reason is to awaken us. Also, some might say that God allows such sufferings to train us. I think that the reason is to make us to trust in God more and more which is His good, pleasing, and perfect will. In other words, when we live by trusting in God, we are more dependent on God because of our suffering and difficulties due to evil people. Therefore, the harder and more difficult we are, the more we cry out to God.

So, what is the prayer topic of those who trust in God? The psalmist speaks two prayer topics in Psalms 125:4-5.

**The first prayer topic is written in Psalm 125:4 – “Do good, O LORD, to those who are good And to those who are upright in their hearts.”**

Here, the words “those who are good” or “upright in their hearts” refer to a person who doesn’t lie but trusts in God sincerely, and strives for righteousness, that is, saints (Park). In other words, it is the word that teaches us that we must sincerely trust God and strive for righteousness as believers. If we are true believers, we will live by trusting in God. And if we are living with true trust in God and we will not be false, but we will be striving for righteousness by trusting in God truthfully. How can God turn away the prayers that we offered to God in our life of manifesting His goodness? What we need to realize here is that the prayer content is important, but the prayer person is more important. If we don't live the life of a prayer who is worthy in God's sight while praying to God because we trust in Him, we have to ask ourselves how God can listen to our prayer. Those who trust in God and pray to Him to do good are upright in their hearts. They are truthful. And they are those who know God's good will and strive to fulfill it. When those upright people with such upright heart pray to God, “Do good to us,” they steadfastly believe in Romans 8:28 and pray to God, “Do good to us”: “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

**The second prayer topic is written in Psalms 125:5 – “But as for those who turn aside to their crooked ways, The LORD will lead them away with the doers of iniquity Peace be upon Israel.”**

Here, “those who turn aside to their crooked ways” refers to the apostate who departs from the truth of God (Park). God is saying that these apostates will be treated like unrepentant unbelievers (“the doers of iniquity”) to the end. That is destruction. The psalmist prayed to God to do good to the upright people with their upright hearts in their petition. And he prayed to God that apostates from God's truth would go along with those doers of iniquity who were unrepentant of their sins. In the midst of that, he asked God for peace to be upon Israel.

We must trust in God more and more especially these days of difficulties due to the recent economic recession. If we have violated the word of Jesus that we cannot serve God and wealth together (Mt. 6:24) and have lived with more effort in serving wealth than God, we must confess our sins to God and repent. And we must trust in God more and more, and not in wealth. We must be upright in heart and be truthful. And we must discern the good will of God and strive to fulfill His will. In the midst of that, we must ask God to 'do us good'. In doing so, we can stand firmly without shaking. God will protect and preserve those who trust in Him.

He who has no choice but to trust in God more and more as time passes,

James Kim

(As I taste God's goodness)

## **“We were like those who dream”**

### **[Psalms 126]**

Last Friday around 4:20 am I woke up after laughing too loud in my dream. In my dream, I met the late Pastor Chang-hyuk Kim, joked with joy, had a pleasant conversation, and laughed loudly and then woke up. It's been about a year since the pastor Kim left us, so I was happy to see him even in my dream. Would you believe if it was a reality, not a dream? No one will ever believe. I know that I can no longer see him in this world. I have no hope of seeing him again in this world. Only when I leave this world and go before the Lord, I will meet the pastor Kim again in Heaven. I have this sure hope. But if God resurrected the pastor Kim and sent him before me, so that I could meet the pastor again in this world, then I would certainly be surprised and amazed by the unbelievable thing. Is it like a reality or a dream? I'm going to pinch myself. What do you really want to see a miracle happening in your life? In other words, what is the desperate hope you have dreamed of?

If we look at Psalms 126:1, the psalmist confessed, “We were like those who dream.” Is he telling us that something incredible has happened in the past that it was as if we were dreaming? The incredible miracle that happened in the past refers to the fact that God brought the Israelites who had been captive in Babylon back to Judea (Park). Considering this great work of salvation, the psalmist and the Israelites who returned from captivity to the land of Judea were hard to believe. Particularly in captivity, in the midst of sorrow and tears, in the midst of longing for God's salvation (vv. 5-6), when answers to prayers were frustrated, discouraged, and in despair due to slowness, they who used to live in captivity was liberated and became free bodies because of God's dramatic work of salvation. What an incredible miracle must have been for them? That is why the psalmist confessed that we were dreaming of God's work of salvation in the past.

Last January, I saw several black grandmothers cry while watching the inauguration of Barak Obama, America's first black president. I think they and many black citizens must have been dreaming. It is because something they can't even imagine and believe happened. Especially in the old days, when black people were slaves and served white people as masters, who would have dreamed that black people (whether black or white) would become president? I don't think we need to go to the age of black slaves. In the 1960s, I think no one would have dared to dream that a black man would become president of United State of America. However, at the inauguration of President Obama last month, many black people believed what Reverend Martin Luther King said, that is “I have a dream” speech when a crowd of 250,000 people gathered in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC on August 28, 1963. At that time, Reverend King delivered a speech in front of a crowd of 250,000

people, telling him of his dream: 'Someday in the Red Hills of Georgia, the children of former slaves and the children of slave owners will sit at a table in fraternity. It is a dream that one day the racists in Alabama will withdraw, where my young sons and daughters will live hand in hand as white sons and daughters and brothers and sisters' (Internet). Look at this America now. Of course, when we see Pastor King's dream come true, and now we see a black man become president of the United States, this will be an incredible dream, especially for black people. Now we can dream as Asians too. In my children's generation, where is the law that says that there should be no Asian president?

In Psalms 126, the psalmist recalled the dream-like thing, the return of the Israelites to Judea with the great work of God's salvation from Babylonian captivity: "Then our mouth was filled with laughter And our tongue with joyful shouting; Then they said among the nations, 'The LORD has done great things for them.' The LORD has done great things for us; We are glad" (Ps. 126:2-3). As he thought of the thing that seemed to be dreaming, he was soaked in the laughter and joy that was full of it. And at that time, that is, when God did great things (v. 3), the psalmist revived the memory of praising God together in the joy (of salvation) that God gave him. The psalmist reminded that when the psalmist praised God for the great grace of salvation that God had given his, the Gentiles among the nations also heard the voice that "The Lord has done great things for them" (the Israelites) (v. 2). In the midst of that, we can see that he is still praying for his fellow countrymen who have not returned to the land of Judea (Park): "Restore our captivity, O LORD, As the streams in the South" (v. 4). Here, the phrase "As the streams in the South" means that the psalmist prayed that all the captives of the Israelites would return to their home country as the streams overflowed after a rainy season (Park). In this prayer, the psalmist had assurance of his prayer. We can know this in verses 5-6: "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him." Although the psalmist prayed for his fellow Israelites who were still in captivity, and shed tears amid the painful captivity, he had assurance that God who made the great work of salvation even in the past of the slavery of the captive Israelites and returned to Judea, God would save rest of the Israelites who were still living in captivity just as He had brought them back to return to Judea with joy.

When we pray with tears, the day will surely come to praise God with joy. Really dreamlike things will happen in our lives. The reason is because our God is a God who can make it happen in His will, even if it may be like a dream. He is the God who sees the tears of our prayers and answers our prayers. God is the God who hears our earnest prayer and accomplishes great work of salvation. Our God is the God who turns our mourning into joy. He is the God who brings us salvation and makes us rejoice and praise. I hope and pray that we can all dream of seeing in faith the God of salvation.

Dreaming in the Lord,

James Kim

(Before I come up to the Lord's house in the early morning and pray for my loved ones)



## **Unless the Lord builds the house, it's in vain.**

### **[Psalms 127]**

The prayer of Moses written in Psalms 90:10 of the Bible says, “As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, Or if due to strength, eighty years, Yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; For soon it is gone and we fly away.” When I think about the days of our seventy or eighty years and their pride is labor and sorrow, I also meditated on the words of Ecclesiastes 1:2 - “‘Vanity of vanities,’ says the Preacher, ‘Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.’” It is a world of labor and sorrow for a lifetime, a life that goes too quickly to finish after doing nothing but vain and vain. So I ask again the question, “How should I live?” In the meantime, I thought about the teachings of Psalms 127. As a result, I have to acknowledge and confess that a truly meaningful life is possible only in the Lord. Any work or labor outside of the Lord is meaningless. In other words, all our labor outside the Lord is in vain and vanity of vanities. Only when the Lord is with us and He works in and through us, that labor is never in vain.

This is what the psalmist said in Psalms 127:1 – “Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.” Solomon, as we know it, is the king who built the Jerusalem Temple (2 Chron. 2:1-5:1). His father, King David, wanted to build the temple, but God refused and told him that his son, King Solomon, would build the temple in Jerusalem. Solomon, who had such experience in building the temple, said in Psalms 127:1 that “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain” is a meaningful confession. The reason is because when we build a temple and dedicate it to the Lord, there are a lot of difficulties when we listen to what the church members say, mainly pastors and building committees. Building the temple has never been so easy. Also, as we have heard and known, how many churches have been put to the test due to the building of the church, and disputes have arisen within the church. Listening to the news on Friday last week, I saw the groups of people who lived in two low-income apartments near owned by a big church and six Korean Town Labor Solidarities holding press conferences after all legal procedures for demolition were completed. At the press conference, when the church's attempt to demolish the two low-income apartments and expand the church's parking lot, the tenants of those two apartments, who would lose their right to live, opposed the demolition of the apartments. Of course, these difficulties can be called external factors. But internal problems and conflicts are more serious in church construction. Therefore, building a church cannot be done without God's help. In Psalms 127:1, King Solomon said, “Unless the Lord builds the house ....” Here, “the house” refers to “the temple” (Park). Therefore, we have no choice but to admit that unless the God of King Solomon builds the temple, the labors of those who build it are in vain. The church is the Lord's church. It is absolutely not a single individual or group church. Therefore, the Lord's church must be established by the Lord as in Matthew 16:18, the word of

promise that we are holding onto. We are the Lord's tools as simply “builders”. Just as architects use tools when building houses, when the Lord builds up the church that is the body of the Lord, we are just His tools. Therefore, we just need to obey the word of the Lord who builds His church. If the Lord tells us to do this, we just need to say “Yes” and do so.

Solomon not only built the temple in Jerusalem, he was also a great king who ruled the nation of Israel wisely and well. The reason why he didn't ask God for riches and honor but for wisdom was to rule God's people well. So God gave him not only wisdom, but riches and honor. Therefore, King Solomon did a great job of completing the temple in 7 years and the palace in 13 years with the wisdom that God gave him. For such a large construction business, wood and stone have been imported from outside through international diplomacy. But contact with the Gentiles ended up allowing him to import the Gentile religions. Not only that, but the excessive mobilization of national labor and tax collection has made people and their subordinates resentful (Internet). As a result, as we know, King Solomon violated the word of God and committed the sin of idolatry, serving the gods of the Gentiles. This King Solomon said, “... Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain” (v. 1). This word means that the rise and fall of the country will only be made according to God's will (Park). God is the God who builds and destroys the kingdom (Jere. 1:11). This God established the kingdom of Israel in the days of King David and King Solomon. But he tore it to Israel in the north and Judah in the south during the time of Rehoboam, because of King Solomon's sin. Only when this God is the true watchman and protects and guards His church and His kingdom, can the church and the kingdom stand firmly. Without this work of the Lord, our human labor is in vain (Ps. 127:1).

Look at Psalms 127:2 – “It is vain for you to rise up early, To retire late, To eat the bread of painful labors; For He gives to His beloved even in his sleep.” Here, King Solomon is saying that no matter how hard a person doesn't pray with a heart of trusting in God and obey His words, no matter how hard, day and night, painstakingly labor, business and work, he will not achieve true success (Park). Therefore, he recommends that we must work with full trust in God and obey His word so that we are not in vain in our labor day and night. In other words, we must work with faith. Those who work with faith are those whom God loves, and God gives them sleep. Here, Dr. Park says that the word that God gives to His beloved even in his sleep can be interpreted in three ways: (1) The first interpretation is that God gives physical sleep to His beloved. (2) The second interpretation is that it refers to the spirit of trust and rest in God. (3) The third interpretation is that those who trust God and love Him, God will accomplish their plan even while they are sleeping. I think all three interpretations are valid. God gives not only physical sleep to those whom He builds, but also rest for their souls. In addition, God allows our plan work while we are asleep. Also, God gives blessings of children to those whom He loves. Look at verse 3: “Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.”

In recent news, there is still news about Nadia Schulman, who has become a global hot topic for the birth of

8 twins. In addition to 8 twins, she already has 6 more children who had been born through in vitro fertilization (IVF). She is a single mother who divorced in January last year, has no financial power, and is living with government support. She is now asking for \$2 million to sell her story as a book to raise 14 children (Internet). The last news I heard was that the house of her parents, where she lived, could also be foreclosure. At first, everyone was surprised to hear that she had eight twins. But the more they learn about the twins' mother through the news, the more they were surprised. In addition to being single, she already gave birth to six children by means of in vitro fertilization. And the reason why she gave birth to eight twins was because she loved babies so much. I wonder if this can be referred to as a blessing of children. The blessing of children mentioned in Psalms 127:3 is the a reward that God gives to the family. This is the saying that God gives children by grace to the married couple He establishes. We don't receive children from God because we deserve it. It was received as a gift through the grace of God. Also, Solomon said that the children of the young are like arrows in the hand of a warrior (v. 4). The children born to young parents reach their peak when their parents grow older. They can naturally help parents and be a shield to protect their homes when their parents begin to weaken. The children well-bred by the parents are like arrows. So the parents, together with their grown-up children, protect their homes from enemies. Homes with many healthy children are not easily destroyed by external enemies. In this respect, a family with many healthy children is a happy family. The children give their parents sense of security, like arrows filled in a quiver. These parents have nothing to fear like the warrior with enough arrows (Internet). Also, these parents will not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate (v. 5).

The lesson God teaches us in Psalms 127 is that our physical home or spiritual home, the church, or nation, is in vain unless the Lord builds it. Also, it teaches us that as the Lord builds it, God must give the gift of children as the reward, not through human strength. The truly blessed family, the blessed church, and the blessed kingdom are the family, the church and the kingdom that the Lord builds. May our family, our church we serve, and the United States and our home country South Korea be the truly blessed family, church and nations.

Wanting to participate in the Lord's building ministry of Victory Presbyterian Church,

James Kim

(Looking at the Lord-centered family and the church with faith)

## The man who fears the Lord

### [Psalms 128]

As we meditated on the words of Psalms 127 during the Wednesday prayer meeting last week, we learned that unless God builds our family, our church, and our country, the labor of those who builds it is in vain (Ps. 127:1). In other words, we have learned the truth that all the hard work done without believing in God is in vain (v. 2). But in Psalms 128:1-2, the Bible says, “How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, Who walks in His ways. When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, You will be happy and it will be well with you.” In other words, in Psalms 128, the psalmist tells us that the labors of those who fear God will surely reap the blessings. Here we can see that Psalms 127 and 128 are interrelated. Psalms 127 encourages us to labor while trusting in God, and Psalms 128 teaches us to labor in fear of God. In doing so, our labors are not in vain and we can receive blessings from God.

In Psalms 128, it is said that the labor of those who fear God reaps blessings. What blessings does the Bible teach us that God gives to those who fear Him? Three things are taught in Psalms 128.

#### **First, God blesses the industry of those who fear Him.**

Look at Psalms 128:2 – “When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, You will be happy and it will be well with you.” Last Thursday, I meditated on Deuteronomy 8:18 at the morning prayer meeting: “But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.” This is a part of Moses' message of warning to the Israelites, remembering that the land of Canaan that the Israelites would enter in the future is “a good land” (v. 7) and they would not lack anything (v. 9). The message of warning was when the Israelites entered the land of Canaan, where there was no shortage, and when the Israelites had eaten and were satisfied, and had built good house, and lived in them, and when their herds and flocks multiplied, and their silver and gold multiplied and that they had multiplied (vv. 12-13), then their heart should not become proud (v. 14). When they become proud, the Israelites will forget the saving grace of God, who delivered them from Egypt, and will no longer listen to God's word, along with all the grace that He has fed, protected, and guided in the wilderness for 40 years. So Moses urged them not to become proud and forget the Lord their God (v. 14). This was Moses' concern. He was worried that somehow, when the Israelites went into Canaan, a land filled with salt and honey, and lived with full and abundant grace, they would forget the God of salvation and the God who led them in the wilderness, and think that they were now living in such abundance. In other words, Moses was afraid that the he Israelites might say in their hearts, “My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth” (v. 17). So Moses told the Israelites, “you shall remember the LORD

your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth” (v. 18). We must believe that God gives us the power to make wealth. We must keep in mind that we don’t have power to make ourselves wealth. Only when God gives us the power to obtain riches, we can get riches and have abundant life. And when we enjoy the abundance through God’s grace, we must look forward to and yearn for heaven, a more and more truly abundant country. When we enjoy abundance, we must never mistake this world for our home. We must wisely enjoy the blessings of God in this world (v. 16) while looking to a better home, that is heaven.

In Psalms 128:1-2, the psalmist says that in order to receive the blessing of material or industry, we must fear God. Looking at the words of Psalms 112:1, the psalmist says: “Praise the LORD! How blessed is the man who fears the LORD, Who greatly delights in His commandments.” In other words, those who fear God greatly delight in God’s commandments. Those who fear God keep God’s commandments. And the psalmist says that those who greatly delight and keep His commandments are blessed. One of the blessings they receive is wealth and riches. Look at Psalms 112:3 – “Wealth and riches are in his house, And his righteousness endures forever.” Those who fear God and keep His commandments receive material blessings. In other words, those who keep God’s commandments are truly rich. And the true rich people may not have a lot of wealth, but they always feel satisfied and give relief because they own God as an inheritance. If we aren’t satisfied with a lot of wealth, such people are slaves of greed, vainness, and stinginess, but never rich (Park). Because the saints who fear God walk in the Lord’s ways (128:1) and work diligently and hard (v. 2), God blesses their industries.

### **Second, God blesses the families of those who fear Him.**

Look at Psalms 128:3 – “Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine Within your house, Your children like olive plants Around your table.” The blessings God gives to the families of those who fear Him are wives and children. Here, a wife, a blessing from God, refers to the wife who works in the house without knowingly while relying on her husband by being gentle and quiet, which can be said to be the duty of a woman (Park). The word that this wife is “like a fruitful vine” refers to producing many children and nurturing them well (Park). Such a wife is truly a wife with noble character (Prov. 31:10-31) (Park). God grants such wife as a blessing to those who fear Him. That’s why the Bible says in Proverbs 18:22 – “He who finds a wife finds a good thing And obtains favor from the LORD.” Of course, the “wife” here refers to “an excellent wife” (12:4), “a prudent wife” (19:14) and “a wife of noble character” (31:10). It is God’s blessing that God has made such a woman a wife. What are we to do with this blessing? This is what Ecclesiastes 9:9 says: “Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun.” Also, God blesses His children to those who fear Him. Psalms 128:3 says, “... Your children like olive plants Around your table.” Olive plants are big, beautiful and grow powerfully. The children like young olive plants, which are the blessing given to those who fear God, make us to think that young children in our families enjoy the joy of being around the table and have a good family life (Park). It is a truly beautiful family.

As we dream such beautiful, God-blessed family, we must fear God. Then truly we will be able to praise the hymn “All Year in Our Home the Spring Breezes Blow” with our heart and thanksgiving: “One household, working till all work is done, Morning and ev'ning in love and good cheer; One table, with food and drink shar'd as one, This is our Garden of Eden right here!”

### **Third and last, God blesses the church, a group of those who fear Him.**

Look at Psalms 128:5 – “The LORD bless you from Zion, And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.” The psalmist prayed for God to bless those who fear God in Zion. Here, “Zion” refers to the church (Park). It means that the blessings that came to the group (church) called Zion bring blessings to the individual believers within that church. This means that believers are also blessed because the church to which they belong is blessed by God first. Therefore, as believers, we must pray for the church to be blessed by God (Park). In other words, we must ask for the blessings of the church, the body of the Lord. The reason is because when the church is blessed, we are also blessed. In this way, God blesses those who fear Him. Not only He blesses their industries and families, but also their businesses and families by blessing their gathering, the church. Because the church is blessed by God, we want to see the children of our children (v. 6). We pray that we can see our children and descendants grow up in the church while the church and family is blessed with the industry by fearing God.

How should we live in a world where there are so many difficult and suffering people amidst the economic recession? We must labor while trusting in God (Ps. 127). And we must work hard while fearing God (Ps. 128). When we do so, God promises to give us the blessing of the industry, the family, and the church. I hope and pray that you may receive these precious blessings from the Lord.

Wanting not to labor in vain while I am living in this world,

James Kim

(With a heart that wishes to trust in God and fear Him)

## **“Yet they have not prevailed against me”**

### **[Psalms 129]**

I am sure some of you heard the news last week about an accident in which a pastor who was in charge of and serving a church in the Redondo Beach area was stabbed in the lower body by his mentally ill son. After reading the news in the newspaper, I looked for more internet news. But it seemed that the pastor was in a very difficult and distressed situation due to his ministry and now he was killed by his own son. It was sad to hear this news. How do you feel when you hear this news? It must be a world filled with sorrow, hardship, trouble, and a lot of mortality. I meditated on the words of Deuteronomy 31 during the early Morning Prayer meeting on Friday before I heard this news. I meditated on the words of Moses' last will, which he spoke to the Israelites, Joshua, and also the Levites priests and all the elders of Israel, before death. According to those words, Moses urged the Israelites and his successor Joshua to be strong and courageous because God was with us. In particular, in Deuteronomy 31:6, Moses said to the Israelites, “Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you He will not fail you or forsake you.” Then he heard God's voice in God's presence. In other words, God said to Moses, ‘If the Israelites enter the land of Canaan flowing with milk and honey, and have eaten, and are satisfied and become prosperous, then they will turn to other gods and serve them’ (v. 20) and would break the covenant with God. At that time, God was angry with the Israelites, hiding His face from them and told them that “many evil and troubles have come upon them” (vv. 17, 21). God told Moses that the Israelites would be consumed by a Gentile nation (v. 17). Only then God told Moses that the Israelites would say, “Is it not because our God is not among us that these evils have come upon us?” (v. 17) The reason why God wasn't with the Israelites and hid His face from them was because of the sins of the Israelites. As a result, the Israelites were forced to suffer calamity and tribulation. The Israelites were punished by God for their sins and persecuted by the Gentile nation.

That is the background of Psalms 129. In other words, the Israelites had been persecuted by the strong enemies of the Gentile nation since they were in Egypt. I think this is the history of Israel. Israel has been persecuted by the surrounding Gentile nations from the beginning of the construction of the nation of Israel, and even now Israel is being persecuted by surrounding nations. This is called ‘the history of the persecution of the chosen people’ (Park). The psalmist who was in the history of the persecution of the chosen people said in Psalms 129:2 – “Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up; Yet they have not prevailed against me.” The Israel's history has been and is still a history of repeated suffering from enemy Gentile nations. In the Old Testament, starting from Egypt (Moses' time), the Israelites suffered from time to time due to the invasion and

persecution of these Gentile nations such as Moab, Edom, Midian, Philistine, Assyria, Babylon, and Rome. How about now? Although now Israel is said to be a strong country with nuclear weapons, how much is Israel suffering amid the conflict between the Palestinians and Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Iran, etc. who are around Israel? That is why the psalmist repeatedly said in Psalms 129:1 and 2: “Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up” (2x). The lesson that these words teach us is that we, the holy people of God, the church as the body of the Lord are always persecuted by our enemies.

This fact can be known not only through the history of Israel, but also through the history of the church. One of them is the case of the Roman Emperor Nero persecuting Christians (64AD) (first persecution). In the summer of 64 AD during the Apostolic Era, a fire broke out in the city of Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire, which no one could have imagined. In 6 days, a powerful flame was said to have completely destroyed 10 of the cities divided into 14 districts. At that time, a rumor spread among people that the Emperor Nero set fire to the city of Rome in order to rebuild Rome according to his will. It is said that the rumor spread and expanded, and later developed into a rumor that Emperor Nero sang a harp while Rome was burning. The citizens' anger was then directed towards Nero, so Nero sought a scapegoat to escape his crisis and the target was Christians. Nero announced that Christians burned Roman poetry and persecuted them. Tacitus relatively detailed the persecution of Christians under Nero at this time as follows: ‘Nero used it for entertainment for the citizens before killing the Christians. Some of the believers covered their fur coats to tear the dogs to death. Others were crucified. Others set fires to light them like lanterns at night. Nero opened up his petition to direct such a show, and he dressed as a chariot racer and directed the spectacle in the amphitheater by walking around in the chariot. For this reason, the citizens also felt compassion for these people who deserved punishment. Because they died not for the good of ordinary people, but to satisfy a human being's cruelty’ (Internet). In addition to the persecution of Christians by Emperor Nero, the history of the church includes the persecution of Christians by Emperor Domitian (81-96 AD) (second persecution) and the persecution of Emperor Diocletian (284-305) in 303. In particular, it is said to have been the worst persecution of Christians by Emperor Diocletian. At this time, churches were destroyed, the Bible was burned, all Christian rights were suspended, and Christians were said to have become victims of pagan gods (Internet). After all, God's people will continue to suffer tribulation and persecution from the time of the psalmist, to the time of the early church, to the present and to the second coming of the Lord.

To what extent, then, were the Israelites persecuted by their enemies? In Psalms 129:3, the psalmist describes it like this: “The plowers plowed upon my back; They lengthened their furrows.” This refers to the fact that those who persecuted Israel in the words of a parable made Israel into ruins and persecuted them without any doubt, as if they were plowing it (Park). According to Roberts, in Palestine, it is a common term for those who are persecuted to refer to the persecutors, ‘they have plowed me (Park). This is, in a word, that the Israelites were persecuted by their enemies and fell to extreme misery (Park). But the important thing is that God saved the Israelites, who had fallen to such extreme misery. Look at verse 4: “The LORD is righteous; He has cut in two the



cords of the wicked.” God broke the cords used by the enemies of Israel while oppressing the Israelites, and delivered the people He loved from the hands of the enemies. As a bird escaped from a hunter's snare (124:7), God saved the Israelites by breaking the cords like that snare. Therefore, the psalmist confessed with confidence: ““Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up; Yet they have not prevailed against me” (129:2). In other words, the enemies of Israel afflicted Israel many times, but each time God caused them to fail in the end, so that the Israelites were victorious. With this triumphant experience and conviction, the psalmist wrote a song of ascent in Psalms 129. When we ascend to the Lord's temple, we must come up with the confidence of victory as well as the experience of winning through God's help in the spiritual battle in this world.

The psalmist, who recalled this saving grace, prayed: “May all who hate Zion Be put to shame and turned backward; Let them be like grass upon the housetops, Which withers before it grows up” (vv.5-6). He prayed to just God, that God would shame their enemies who hate the Israelites, and also to be punished. That is what the word “Let them be like grass upon the housetops” means (v. 6). The grass upon the housetops doesn't have deep roots, so it grows for a while and then dries out (Park). The psalmist prayed to God that the enemies of the Israelites would be like that. He prayed to God that the enemies of the Israelites would be like grass which wait for a while and quickly dries up and disappear. And he said that no one would bless the enemies of Israel, the enemies of God (v. 8). The reason is because they were outside the right of God's blessing (Park).

This is what 2 Timothy 3:12 says: “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” The saints are persecuted a lot in this world. There will be a lot of suffering, persecution, and pain. But let us walk by faith with the assurance of God's salvation and the assurance of victory. Let's hold unto the John 16:33b – “... In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

Wanting to go forward boldly by trusting in Jesus who overcame the world,

James Kim

(Praying that in assurance of victory, face the spiritual battle and sing the praise of victory through God's grace)

# Waiting

## [Psalms 130]

One of the shortcomings that I realized when I looked at myself is "impatience." And because of my impatience, I think I sometimes hurt others with quick words and/or actions. Moreover, I got things wrong because I was impatient. In the midst of that, the word God gave me to meditate on was 2 Timothy 3:4 – “treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God--.” The Bible says when there will be terrible times in the last days (v. 1), people will be “rash” (v. 4). Why do we get rash? Why do we get impatient? It seems that we become impatient when we fall into the thought that we can't wait any longer and almost at the same time we give up patience. Then we do what we want. This impatience leads to the inability to wait for God's will, creating wrong plans and methods, and eventually with terrible results. Impatience leads us to adopt a worldly and carnal plan and course of action. For example, we take Abraham and Sarah. Despite receiving the word of promise from God, she gave up patience in faith and became preoccupied with impatience. In the end, Sarah encouraged her husband, Abram, to sleep with her maidservant Hagar, the Egyptian (Gen. 16:1-2). Abram accepted her counsel and slept with Hagar, and eventually they had a son named Ishmael. But, as we know, Ishmael wasn't the seed of promise. Isaac was the seed of promise. The terrible consequence of impatience is giving up faith and patience (Internet). So I guess there is a saying that waiting is a virtue. Waiting is an essential element in our life of faith.

This is what Psalms 62:1, 5 says: “My soul waits in silence for God only; From Him is my salvation. ... My soul, wait in silence for God only, For my hope is from Him.” Through these words, we have been taught that we must trust exclusively in God, who is our salvation, our hope, the rock and the fortress. The reason is because it is our strength to trust in God quietly and completely (Isa.30:15). We must wait in silence for God only because our hope in from Him (Ps. 65:5). Surely the God of salvation will deliver us.

In Psalms 130:6, the psalmist compared his waiting as follow: “My soul waits for the Lord More than the watchmen for the morning; Indeed, more than the watchmen for the morning.” The psalmist spoke of his waiting compared to the watchmen waiting for the morning. By comparison he was confessing that his soul waited for the Lord more than the watchmen waited for the morning. Who were “the watchmen”? The watchmen were people who stand on the wall all night to protect their own people on the wall, in case the enemy might invade. In other words, the watchmen were the ones who guarded the wall to see if the enemy had invaded without sleeping. What did these watchmen wait for the most? It was “the morning”. They looked forward to the brightness of the night (Park). With this earnest anticipation, the psalmist was waiting for the Lord. The psalmist was waiting eagerly for

the Lord with more earnest wait than the watchmen waited for the morning. In such an earnest wait, the psalmist was going up to the temple as he was singing Psalms 130.

What was the psalmist so eagerly waiting for the Lord? It was the word of God. Look at Psalms 130:5 – “I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, And in His word do I hope.” The word of God that the psalmist was waiting for was God's forgiveness and salvation according to the revealed word (Park). Here we can guess that the psalmist sinned against God and was in a painful situation due to God's discipline. What was that painful situation? Look at verse 1: “Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD.” The depths that the psalmist was laid in because of his sin means an intense tribulation that made him appear drowned in water and suffocates (Park). Although like Jonah who disobeyed God (Jon. 1:2-3) and went into the depth, trapped in a big fish (v. 17) that was the deep waters under the sea and cried out to God (Ch. 2), the psalmist earnestly cry out to Him. Look at Psalms 130:1-2: “Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD. Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive To the voice of my supplications.” In the midst of such earnest prayer, the psalmist knew that if the Lord didn't condone all of his sins from the past to the present, but condemned (Park), then there would be no one standing before the Lord. So he said, “If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?” (v. 3) If God doesn't forgive our sins and records all our past, present, and future sins, there is no one in this world who dares to stand before the holy Lord. He couldn't dare to stand before the Holy Lord as a sinner. Nevertheless, the psalmist believed in God's pardon and humbly and in fear of God (v. 4) prayed to Him for forgiveness of his sin. Then he was waiting for God's words of forgiveness. How long could he wait for this? After committing a sin, when we look to God in a deep depression due to God's discipline and pray earnestly for His forgiveness, we will eagerly wait for God to say this after that prayer: ‘I have wiped out all of your sins and erased them. I don't even remember your sins anymore.’ If we could hear that voice of God, how could we not dance and praise and worship God in freedom and liberation?

After praying earnestly for God to forgive him, the psalmist waited silently in faith before God because he longed to hear the words of God's forgiveness. In the midst of that, the psalmist prayed earnestly and waited for God to deliver him as evidence that God had forgiven his sins from the depths of the painful situation that came to him due to his sin. In other words, he prayed, looked forward to, and waited for God's saving grace. How was the psalmist able to wait and pray for the saving grace of God? I found the answer in verses 7-8: “O Israel, hope in the LORD; For with the LORD there is lovingkindness, And with Him is abundant redemption. And He will redeem Israel From all his iniquities.” Because the psalmist believed in God's lovingkindness and abundant redemption, he was able to pray, expect, and wait for the grace of salvation and forgiveness of sin. Do you really believe in God's lovingkindness and abundant redemption? Do you believe that God is the redeemer of all your sins?

Are any of you lying deep like the psalmist? Are we not in the midst of extreme trouble, as if we are drowning and sinking deeper and deeper? Maybe the reason is because of our sins. Then, like the psalmist, let's look and hope in God's lovingkindness and abundant redemption with faith, praying earnestly, expecting, and

waiting with longing for the forgiveness of sins and the grace of God's salvation. Let's wait for the Lord more than the watchman waits for the morning. Surely God will forgive us for all our sins and deliver us even in the midst of the extreme trouble we face.

Longing for freedom and the joy of salvation from sin,

James Kim

(Relying on the abundant lovingkindness of God who waits more earnestly for those who eagerly wait for the word of God)

## How to be still and quiet my soul

### [Psalms 131]

I vaguely remember the song I learned in elementary school: ‘Plop, plop, plop, plop/ Come on throw a stone/ Secretly now Come on throw a stone ....’ When I was a little kid, I learned this song hard without knowing why I should throw stones. The reason I remembered this children song is because it helped me understand Psalms 131:1-3. When my soul was calm, I thought about what is the “stone” that breaks stillness and quietness. I am sure there are several stones. I think those stones can be difficult circumstances, people’s criticism, difficult relationships, economic problems, stress, etc. that can break stillness and quietness of our souls. But I think the most destructive "stone" is ourselves. In other words, there is a "stone" in us that destroys the stillness and quietness of the soul from God. That "stone" is nothing but proud (Ps. 131:1). In another word David says that proud is ‘My eyes are haughty’ (v. 1). A person with haughty eyes is the person who strives for great matters or things that are too wonderful for him (v. 1). It can be said that he is the person who forgets himself, thinks higher than himself, and puts effort into it. For example, I think it indicates that a person who has received one talent from the Lord raises his haughty eyes and tries to do his job with envy for the person who receives two or five talents. In doing so, he loses stillness and quietness of his soul.

As a pastor, reading a Christian newspaper, I lost stillness and quietness of my soul for a moment. As I saw the various wonderful pastors and their ministries in the newspapers and in writing and photographs, I felt my own soul's stillness and quietness broken. When I thought about why this was the case, I think it is because I raised my haughty eyes like the words of Psalms 131:1. That is, proud has penetrated into my heart. That's why I thought bigger than my true self while comparing myself to those pastors. It is Satan's terrifying weapon that makes him forget his true self before God in a sense of competition, especially this proud that makes him look bigger. So the way I did it was I stopped reading the newspaper and also told my soul to bless those pastors.

Therefore, in order to still and quiet our souls, the first thing we must do is fight proud. We shouldn't concern ourselves with great matters or things too wonderful for us (v. 1). We only need to know the talents God has given us, be humble and faithful, and do our job well. We must not be greedy for a position or success or work that we cannot reach. We must tolerate and love ourselves with the love of God, who accepts and loves us. In doing so, we will not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith (Rom. 12:3).

We must hope in the Lord while fighting “proud” (Ps. 131:3). Then we will be able to still and quiet our souls (v. 2). David teaches us that our hearts that hope in God should be the center of the weaned child. Scholars say that in Old Testament Hebrew mothers weaning was about two to three years after the baby was born. Then it seems that the weaned child’s age is about my second daughter, Yeun (1 year old) or my first daughter, Yeri (3 years old). In particular, while thinking of Yeun, the weaned child’s soul was in the arms of her mother, and the appearance of her face was very calm when she fell asleep (v. 2). At that time, Yeun expressed by hand that she didn’t need a dad, or foods, no toys. All the child needs is a mother. Psalms 131:2 comes closer to my heart when I think of Yeun, who fell asleep quietly in the arms of her mother. David turned away from proud and went to the Lord as the weaned child. He wrote this song of ascent to the temple with the desire to be in the arms of Heavenly Father. If so, we must go up to the church on the Lord’s Day, longing for Heavenly Father’s arms like David. In order to get true peace in the arms of that love, we must self-reflect to see if our hearts are humble like the weaned child. If we are proud, we must repent and receive the guidance of the Holy Spirit even before the throne of God’s grace. We must put our souls in His arms as we praise and worship the God of salvation before the throne of His grace. Then our souls will be able to enjoy stillness and quietness.

Always longing for the arms of Heavenly Father who gives true rest to my soul,

James Kim

(Thanking God for reminding me of my pride through the words of Psalms 131 during the early Morning Prayer meeting on Friday and for making me yearn for the heart of the weaned child)

## **My heart that is like a weaned child**

### **[Psalms 131]**

We know that God looks more on the heart than our appearance (1 Sam. 16:7). The basis for this fact is the Bible story when God abandoned King Saul and sent Samuel to the house of Jesse, David's father, to make David king (1 Sam. 16). When Samuel arrived at Jesse's house, looking for a king to whom God would anoint, he saw Eliab, the first son of Jesse's eight sons, and said, "Surely the LORD'S anointed is before Him" (v. 6). At that time, God said to Samuel, "... Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (v. 7). Considering this truth that we humans see appearances, but God sees the heart, I am taught that we should focus on 'the heart' that God sees rather than the appearance. What, then, should be our hearts? I find the answer to this question in the heart of David, a man after's God's own heart (Acts 13:22). The heart of David, the man after God's own heart, was, in a word, 'the heart that is like a weaned child' (Ps .131:2).

Look at Psalms 131:2 – "But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me." In order to understand the saying, "like a weaned child is my soul within me," we need to think about the stages of growth of the Hebrew children. We see that growth stage as five stages (commentary): (1) The first stage of growth is "suckling" stage. This stage refers to about 30 days from birth. (2) The second stage of growth is the "weaned one" that we are talking about in Psalms 131:2. This phase seems to point to a month to a five-year period. It is said that Hebrew children were weaned only when they were 3-4 years old. (3) The third stage of growth is the "toddler" stage. It is said that this stage refers to the age of 5 to 20 years old. (4) The fourth stage of growth is puberty. This stage is said to be called "elem or almah" in Hebrew. It refers to a sexually mature young person. Perhaps this step refers to 20 years of age or older. (5) The next stage is probably the stage of adulthood and aging. Reflecting on this stage of growth when the psalmist David said that he was like the weaned child, it reminded me of the weaned child in his mother's arms. I imagined a child who was satisfied with seeing the mother's face while crying for no more breastfeeding and being held in her arms. This is exactly what David compared to the child who was weaned. In other words, the reason David compared his heart to the weaned child was as if the weaned child didn't cry for more milk and was satisfied with the fact that he just owned the mother (Park), the psalmist was satisfied with only the Lord.

When we look at the lyrics of the gospel song 'I am satisfied with only the Lord,' it says: 'I am satisfied with only the Lord. Praise the Lord, who is my everything. Jesus, who is my eternal life, raise your voice and

praise the great love of the Lord. Praise my strength and my power the Lord who has changed all my life. Praise the love of the great Lord.’ This song is said to be written based on the Bible in 2 Corinthians 3:5 – “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God” (KJV). That's right. Our satisfaction comes only from God. David, who knew this, was satisfied with only Heavenly Father, like the weaned child. Our hearts must be like this. In other words, our hearts should be like the weaned child like David. We must be completely satisfied with the Lord alone. However, many times we are not satisfied with God alone. Often our eyes are no longer focused on God alone and look at other people or other things. One of the reasons is because of the ‘a jealous eye’ in 1 Samuel 18:9 – “And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.” “And from that time,” that is, when David killed Goliath the Philistine and returned, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing (v. 6), and said “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands” (v. 7). Saul was very angry and said, “They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom” (v. 8). “And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David” (v. 9). These sinful eyes of jealousy eventually make us look at other people and other things besides God alone. How must we overcome this sinful jealousy? I found the secret in Psalms 73. The psalmist Asaph overcame the worldly, lustful, and devilish jealousy when he came into the sanctuary of God and realized the end of the wicked (vv. 17-20) and the end of the righteous that “Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth” (v. 25). In other words, when we look only at the Lord with God's jealous eyes, we can overcome the sinful jealousy of Saul. Then, like the apostle Paul, even though we have thorns in the flesh, we can live with satisfaction with the sufficient grace of God (2 Cor. 12:9).

What does it mean to be satisfied with the Lord alone? Look at Psalms 131:1 – “My heart is not proud, O LORD, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me.” The heart like the weaned child who is completely satisfied with the Lord alone is not only proud, but also it cannot. In other words, the weaned child-like heart is humble. As for how to know it, David's eyes weren't haughty. In other words, David didn't admire the glory of the world (Park). Why didn't he do that? The reason is because his eyes were always looking at the Most High Lord. What will be higher than the Lord to those who are satisfied with only the Most High Lord? David didn't look to the world as the proud ones, but looked to God who is the Most High Lord (Park). Therefore, he was not interested in or related to the great matters or things too wonderful for him (v. 1). In other words, David proudly didn't try to do something big with vain, that wasn't his mission (Park). Like David, we shouldn't be drawn to this world by vain greed. We must not seek vain glory in the world. In other words, we must be wary of vanity. Like David, there is stillness and quietness in the heart of those who are satisfied with the Lord alone. In other words, since the heart like the weaned child is satisfied with only God, there is stillness and quietness in that heart. This stillness and quietness is a life acquired by quitting all ambitions and other hot turmoils that arise in one's heart and looking only at God (Park). The reason why David was able to live such a still and quiet life was because he was satisfied with the Lord alone, and he wasn't proud of his heart (Park). He wasn't



drawn to the greed of the world. But because he believed and obeyed the word of God, he enjoyed still and quiet heart. Therefore, he exhorted the Israelites as well as us: “O Israel, put your hope in the LORD both now and forevermore” (v. 3). Why should we look to God from now to eternity? This is because the Lord is our Shepherd, and we shall not in want (23:1). Let us all be satisfied with the Lord alone with the same heart as the weaned child. Let’s never be driven by greed to pursue the things of the world because it can never satisfy our souls. Let’s not be proud in our hearts, but humble ourselves before the Lord. Then God will still and quiet our souls.

Wanting to live with satisfaction with the Lord alone,

James Kim

(As I pursue the wean child-like heart)

## **The soul that is like a weaned child**

**"But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me." (Psalms 131:2)**

We are hearing news that the death toll of more than 100,000 people is due to the earthquake and tsunami called the catastrophe in Asia. It is said that now there is epidemic. It can be really scary. And there is a possibility of another earthquake soon. We feel once again, even indirectly, of our human beings that we cannot help the forces of nature. Yesterday I saw in the news a very big wave covering the hotel pool. I have heard that there are many children who died from the waves. In particular, many children were killed by the big waves while picking up fish that were scattered on the sandy beach. It is very unfortunate that this happened. When I hear the word "wave," I remember what a former elder of my church said long time ago. Although the waves may hit the sea shore, the pearl shells will continue to make pearls under the sea that are still. On the surface, the waves may hit hard, but the bottom of the sea is calm and still. Many people were killed by the big wave this time, but I heard news that a woman wasn't dead because she was scuba diving under the sea.

There are many kinds of "waves" on the path of our lives. We are anxious, afraid, and hurt by those waves. In the meantime, what we don't learn well yet is to keep the soul's still and quite like under the waves of the sea. In Psalms 131:2, the psalmist referred to a still soul and a quiet soul as 'a soul like a weaned child.' Why is he saying 'a soul like a weaned child'? At that time, a Jewish mother was said to have weaned their babies 2-3 years after they were born. It may vary now, but now it seems a mother weans a baby about a year. I thought of my youngest child, Yeun when she was one year old after weaning. In particular, I thought about Yeun's being in her mother's arms and resting her head on her shoulder. I think that such a weaned child-like soul is a soul in Heavenly Father's arms. Imagine how still and quite the soul will be. I wonder what it would be like for my soul to fall asleep slowly while listening to the sound of Father God's heart in the arms of my loving Heavenly Father and listening to the lullaby in His soft voice. I wonder what I will be like when my soul hear the voice of my Father God who embraces me with one arm and gently strokes my back with the other hand.

In the city we live in, there are many factors that lose stillness and quietness of the soul in the midst of so busyness. There are so many words of human beings, so many words of the world, and so many times especially the words of our emotions and thoughts that make waves in our souls. Therefore, our souls aren't creating a beautiful 'masterpiece' that pleases God like a shell that makes a pearl. We need to be still and know that God is God. But our souls are not like the weaned child and seem to be trying to grow too big. It seems like a long time ago that we

have forgotten the stillness and the quietness of our souls, like a youth who doesn't miss Heavenly Father's arms but tries to challenge the world's storms at his will, and is swept away by the storms.

We must restore the stillness and quietness of our souls. Our souls must return to the weaned child and be embraced by our Heavenly Father. The path of faith that we walk in His arms will keep our souls still and quite in any storm.

“When peace, like a river, attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, ‘It is well, it is well with my soul.’  
It is well with my soul; It is well, it is well with my soul.”

(Hymn “When Peace, Like a River, Attendeth My Way”, verse 1)

Missing the happy child in the arms of the Lord of Peace,

James Kim

(This morning with a longing for the Lord)

## The Lord who will not turn back

### [Psalms 132]

One of the most important words in the Bible is “covenant”. This word is an important topic flowing throughout the whole Bible. The covenant refers to the relationship between God and His people, and God directs and defines the covenant relationship. The word “covenant” is used about 296 times in the Bible. In the Old Testament, the word “covenant” is pronounced as ‘berit’ in Hebrew. It means ‘a pledge, an alliance, an alliance made by passing through the pieces of a split beast’ (Internet).

In Psalms 132, the word ‘swear’ appears twice in verses 2 and 11. The first word ‘swear’ is what David swore to the Lord (v. 2) and the second word ‘swear’ was what God swore to David (v. 11). Interestingly, the word “A truth” doesn’t appear in the word that David swore to God (v. 2), but appears in the word that God swore to David (v. 11). One thing that is clear here is that even though we cannot faithfully keep our oath to God in the covenant we have made with Him, our God is the faithful God who faithfully keeps His oath to us in the covenant He made with us. Therefore, we must pray in faith to God who is faithful to the covenant.

In Psalms 132:11, the psalmist Solomon says: “The LORD has sworn to David A truth from which He will not turn back: "Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne.” Solomon steadfastly held on to the word of God's promise to his father David, the oath that He made to David that He would allow his sons to continue his kingdom. So Solomon prayed to God, relying on the unchanging faithfulness of God. That's why he was talking about God's covenant (“My covenant”) (v. 12). What was the Lord’s covenant here? It is what God made with David and includes God's promise and David's responsibility. The reason why Solomon held onto His covenant and prayed was because he had the house of God and the house of David in his heart. In other words, Solomon, knowing his father David's earnest wish for God's temple, held on to the promise God gave to David and prayed to Him. That was why he prayed in Psalms 132:1 – “Remember, O LORD, on David's behalf, All his affliction.” Solomon prayed before God that he would remember David's earnest wish for God, that was, his earnest wish for God's temple (vv. 1-5) (Park). In the midst of this, Solomon, knowing David's earnest prayer, held on to the word of the promise God had pledged faithfully to David, and prayed to the unchanging and faithful God (v. 11). In a word, the psalmist Solomon held onto the covenant of God and went up to His temple and prayed to Him.

If we look at Psalms 132:2, 11 about this covenant, we see David and God swore to each other. See David's oath to God: “He swore an oath to the LORD and made a vow to the Mighty One of Jacob.” Solomon asked

God to remember all his father David's hardships that he endured for the temple of God (v. 1). In particular, Solomon held on to his father David's oath to God and prayed to him (v. 2). David's oath and vows was not to enter his house or to go to his bed (v. 3) and not to allow no sleep to his eyes and no slumber to his eyelids (v. 4) until "I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob" (v. 5). In other words, David's oath and vow was God's temple. David so eagerly wanted to build His temple because there was no God's temple to put the ark of God while he was living in his royal palace that was built with cedar. So he swore and vowed that he would not enter his house and sleep in peace until God's temple was built. As such, David longed for God's presence and wanted to build His temple to serve Him. In the midst of that, David found the ark that symbolized God's presence (v. 6), so he received renewed strength in his faith and worshiped God (vv. 7, 8). And he cried out to the priests to be clothed with righteousness and to sing for joy (v. 9) (Park). The psalmist Solomon, who worked hard to fulfill the oath and vows of his father David, proclaimed to God and prayed to God on the basis of his father David's zeal for the house of the Lord (69:9): "For the sake of David your servant, do not reject your anointed one" (132:10). This was a Solomon's prayer not to reject him, the Lord's anointed, "For the sake of David" his father (v. 10). This wish was not prayed to God based on Solomon's self-interest, but was prayed based on a covenant given by God (Park).

Then, what did God swear to David? Look at Psalms 132:11 – "The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke: "One of your own descendants I will place on your throne." God's promise to David that he would fulfill His oath can be summed up in five ways:

**First, God promised to give the David's throne to his descendants for ever and ever.**

Look at Psalms 132:12 – "if your sons keep my covenant and the statutes I teach them, then their sons will sit on your throne for ever and ever." This is the word of promise based on 2 Samuel 7:12, and God told David, "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom." Of course, there was David and his descendants' responsibility in this promise. It is to keep God's commandments.

**Second, God chose Zion and promised to be there forever.**

Look at Psalms 132:13-14: "For the LORD has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his dwelling: 'This is my resting place for ever and ever; here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it.'" Here, "Zion" refers to the chosen country by God. In other words, God's promise was to be with His people forever.

**Third, God promised to give abundant food to the chosen Zion.**

Look at Psalms 132:15 – "I will bless her with abundant provisions; her poor will I satisfy with food." This

word of promise was that God would give His people abundant material blessings.

**Fourth, God promised to make the saints rejoice in salvation.**

Look at Psalms 132:16 – “I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints will ever sing for joy.” This word is a promise that God would give spiritual blessings to His people (Park).

**Fifth and last, he promised David that a horn, that is Christ, would be born.**

Look at Psalms 132:17-18: “Here I will make a horn grow for David and set up a lamp for my anointed one. I will clothe his enemies with shame, but the crown on his head will be resplendent.” Here God promised David that he would have “a horn”, and the “horn” refers to Christ, and “a lamp” refers to revelation through Christ.

Thus, the psalmist Solomon held on to the word of promise that God gave to his father, David, and went up to the temple of God and prayed. And he wanted God to hear his prayer for two reasons: (1) The first reason was that he prayed based on what his father, David, swore to God in hardships (v. 2), and (2) The second reason was that he prayed based on what God had sworn to David (v. 11).

Our covenant God is the God who faithfully fulfills the word He has promised us. Although we are unfaithful, our God is faithful God who fulfills what He has sworn to us. Although we may change, our God never changes. We must trust in this unchanging and faithful God and pray for His promises to come true. We must go to God and proclaim His promise given to us by trusting in His unchanging divine character.

With gratitude for the unchanging love of the Lord,

James Kim

(As I hold onto the word of God's promise)

## The unity of the church

### [Psalms 133]

Jesus didn't say "the light of the church" to those who believe and follow Him, but "the light of the world" (Mt. 5:14). Therefore, if we are Christians who believe in Jesus, we shouldn't only concentrate on the church life and neglect our life in the world. We must live concretely as Christians in the world. Hee-hwan Ahn, the pastor of True Love Church, said that the churches had many good roles in the world. First example is blood donation. The Korean Institute for Religious and Social Ethics compared blood donation by religion from 1998 to 2001, with 81.79% of Protestant blood donations. Protestant blood donation rates are overwhelmingly high, considering that Catholic, Won Buddhism, Buddhism were only 10.54%, 0.55% and 0.86%, respectively. Second example is organ donation or bone marrow donation. In the case of bone marrow donation, the records of 2000-June 2002 also showed that Protestant was overwhelmingly high at 38%. Third example is social welfare facilities. Fourth example is homeless support groups, etc. Nevertheless, the evaluation of the church in the world is not so friendly but rather hostile. Obviously, the church has its own role of light and salt in the world, and despite its extensiveness, there is more to blame than praise to the church. What are some reasons? Pastor Ahn talks about six reasons and two of them are ugly figures of fallen pastors, especially those big church pastors, and division within the churches (Internet). Anti-Christian activity is growing rapidly because of the ugly nature of the church. We see many anti-Christians who are systematically determined, invading each site, and devoting themselves to scratching the Protestant churches. An organization called the Anti-Christian Citizen's Union even collecting fees. Their goal is to eradicate Christianity. In this situation, we Christians need to be the true churchy as we repent and return to God. The world will get darker and darker. And the world will get uglier. The more the world is like this, the more our church must shine the light of Jesus Christ in this dark world, and the more and more the church must shine its beauty to the ugly world.

What is the beauty of a true church? The beauty of the true church is that brothers and sisters in Christ live together in the Lord. Look at Psalms 133:1 – "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity!" In Isaiah 53:2, the Bible says of the Messiah (Christ) as follow: "For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him." Jesus has no stately form or majesty, He has no beauty to adore, Jesus has no fine appearance, so that the people of the world are not attracted to Jesus. I think this is the present reality of the church. The world does not care about the church. Why is that? It is because in their eyes the church has no attractive beauty. Are there any beauties that we Christians look upon when they see our church? I think "No." When we looked at our church, it lost its attractiveness. There is no beauty to adore. Why did the

church become like this? Why does the church lack beauty to be seen by the world or even to our eyes? The reason is because we don't obey Jesus, who is the Head of the Church. But we must keep in mind that Jesus is beautiful in God's eyes even though there is nothing beautiful in the worldly perspective or in our eyes. Why is Jesus beautiful in God's eyes? This is because Jesus obeyed His Father till He died on the cross to fulfill the Father's will (Phil. 2:8). In other words, the image of Jesus, the Son who obeys Heavenly Father, is beautiful in God's sight. This is the beauty of the Lord's church and our beauty. It is to obey the word of the Lord. The church that obeys the word of the Lord is beautiful in God's eyes.

Where is the goodness of the church if the beauty of the church is in obedience to the Lord's commandments? I find the answer in Romans 8:28 and Ephesians 2:10. Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." In other words, the goodness of the church is the manifestation of the goodness of God. In order to do this, the church must continue to taste the goodness of God as Psalm 34:8 says. Not only that, but the church must taste the goodness of God fully. Then the church can show the goodness of the church to the world by doing good deeds since we are "created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph. 2:10). Look at Matthew 5:16 – "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

In Psalm 133, the psalmist David writes this song ascending to the temple and says how good and beautiful it is for brothers to dwell together in unity. This doesn't mean that the God's people, the Israelites were not united by the blood of the pedigree brothers (Park). Rather, it means the spiritual unity of the people of God. In short, this refers to the unity of the Lord's church. How beautiful it is to God when the church of the Lord obeys His commandment to love God and to love one another with God's love and to reconcile and keep the unity of the church? The people of the world will not criticize the church if they see the unity of the church. Rather, they will be attracted to the church. As we Christians also obey the word of the Lord and love one another, we will see the beautiful image of Jesus in the church as we progress toward the unity of the church. Therefore, we must listen to God's words about the unity of the church. Ephesians 1:10 tells us that God saved His chosen people by the ransom death of Jesus Christ so that they would be one in Christ. Therefore, the church must make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). The church, the body of the Lord, must be built up itself in love (v. 16).

In Psalms 133:2-3, David compares the goodness and beauty of the brothers to dwell together in unity to two things:

**David says, "It is like the precious oil upon the head, Coming down upon the beard, Even Aaron's beard, Coming down upon the edge of his robes" (v. 2).**



This means that the oil poured on Aaron's head is fragrant, glossy, and has tendency to spread. And as the oil runs down on the beard when it is poured on Aaron's head, the brotherly love is the love that spreads to others when God pours out (Park). The Bible says "God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us", who are justified by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:5). We must practice this love of God. In other words, there must be this spreading love of God in the church. With this spreading love of God we must love one another. Then the church can keep its unity. Therefore, we can manifest the goodness and beauty of the church to this world.

**David says, "It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion" (v. 3a).**

According to Pastor John MacArthur, Mount Hermon is 9,200 feet high and is located north of Palestine. It is said that the snow at the top evaporates and goes up to the south, giving dew to Judah (Park). That is why dew is important to Judah. Without dew, the rice straw cannot live. Therefore, the psalmist David said that the goodness and beauty of living together in the unity of the church, the people of God, was as if the dew of Hermon fell on the mountains of Zion, just as the high dew spreads down from Mount Hermon. And from "there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore" (v. 3b). This means that God has commanded the blessing of eternal life where God's love is (Park). That's right. When there is God's love in the church, the church can enjoy the blessings of eternal life.

The psalmist David is saying: "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!" The goodness and beauty of the Lord's Church is that brothers and sisters live together in unity. God's love has been poured into our hearts. I hope and pray that the church can keep the unity of the church in the Lord by spreading the love of God to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Therefore, I pray that we can reflect the beauty of the church to this world.

Wanting to keep the unity of the Holy Spirit with love,

James Kim

(In pursuit of unity in diversity)

## “Praise the Lord”

### [Psalms 134]

I thought about God's sufficient grace based on 2 Corinthians 12:9 – “And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.” This was what the Lord told Paul when Paul asked the Lord three times to that his thorn of flesh might leave him (vv. 7-8). Paul, who received this word of the Lord, was greatly pleased because he realized that God's power was perfected in his weakness by the grace of God. Think about it. When he asked God three times to remove the thorn in his flesh, he didn't receive the answer of his prayers, but God said, "My grace is sufficient for you." How could Paul able to rejoice greatly even when he had the thorns in his flesh? It was because of God's sufficient grace. The reason why I thought about God's sufficient grace again was because my father-in-law, who had not received surgery last Thursday, was greatly pleased with God's sufficient grace in his life and make that confession in front of his pastor and elder who came to visit him and they were thankful to God together. Although I didn't know fully, but I couldn't help but confess that our God is a good because how could you give thanks to God and be greatly pleased in that kind of circumstance. In the meantime, I remembered the gospel song “God is so good”: “God is so good, God is so good, God is so good, He so good to me.” God's sufficient grace that enabled Paul and Silas to praise God even when they could be executed the next day in prison can make us to praise God whatever circumstance that we may be in.

In Psalms 134, the psalmist repeatedly says, "Praise the Lord" twice in verses 1 and 2. What does the word “praise” mean here? The Bible has many words for “praise”. There are three of the most common terms. These three words illuminate the meaning of praise in different perspectives and contexts (Internet).

(1) The first word is "hillel".

The word “hillel” is the most common word in the Old Testament, which means praise and its' basic meaning is ‘to boast’ and ‘praise’. This verse is used both in praise of man (Gen. 12:15; 2 Sam.14:25; Prov. 12:8) and in praise of God. On the other hand, the New Testament Greek verb “aineo” is used only in praise of God.

Praise ministry is the work of boasting and exalting God. It is to realize how wonderful God is, how wonderful He has been, and to express our amazement or wonder. So praise begins with an interest in God's character and works and is expressed with amazement about it. Praise is accompanied by admiration,

excitement, emotion, pride, and joy as our personality encounters God's character and deeds.

(2) The second word is “hodah”.

It is often translated “thanksgiving,” but its basic meaning is “confession.” The Greek New Testament word “homologeō” also means ‘confession.’ The meaning of the word “hodah” is totally different from “thank you,” which is a reaction in our society to someone who gave us something good or did something good to us. Rather, the word “hodah” and its’ noun “toda” are often associated with tribulation, as in Psalms 50:14, 15 and 2 Chronicles 20:21. In other words, “hodah” is praising God, remembering that in a difficult situation, a good and faithful God rules the world, protects and cares for His children. Praising God in tribulation means seeing God's authority, power, and wonderful plan beyond tribulation and trusting God even if the situation is incomprehensible. Praise ministry is the ministry of enabling those who are praising God to trust God while they are looking at the authority and power of God.

(3) The third word is “berek”, which is used in Psalms 134.

In the Korean Bible, the word is translated into three words according to subject and object. When God "break" a man, it is translated as God is blessing him. When the man "break" another man, it is translated as he is blessing another man. And finally, when man "break" God, it is translated as he is praising God. Here, ‘praising’ means acknowledging or testifying that God is God rather than to bless God. While “hodah”, mentioned earlier, focuses on two things that is God's nature and God's deeds, “break” is a testimony of God's actions, especially God's grace and blessing. Also, while “hodah” confesses and remembers God's character during tribulation, “break” is a confession of gratitude for overcoming difficulties with God's help.

In Psalms 134, that is a song going up to the temple, the psalmist exhorts “all you servants of the Lord” to give God praise, a confession of gratitude for overcoming difficulties with God's help (v. 1). Here, ‘the servants of the Lord’ refer to the Levites (priests) who served the God's people in the sanctuary. These Levites (priests) refer to the faithful servants of the Lord who were even serving at night in His sanctuary. The psalmist exhorts all these faithful servants of the Lord to “praise the Lord” (vv. 1, 2). The psalmist is urging these faithful servants of the Lord who had been faithfully serving in His sanctuary with His faithful help to praise the Lord. The psalmist exhorted them to praise the Lord as they lift up their hands in the sanctuary (v. 2). This means to lift up your heart, that is, to praise God with all your heart (Park). What does God do to these people? The Lord will bless them. Look at verse 3: “May the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth, bless you from Zion.” The psalmist not only exhorted all of the Lord's servants who faithfully serve in the Lord's sanctuary at night but he also blessed them. In particular, the reason why he prayed that “the LORD, the Maker of heaven and the earth” to blessed them was because he wanted to let them know that God had unlimited power to bless His faithful servants (Park). This God, who is capable of

blessing this blessing, blesses all His faithful servants.

God blesses all of His faithful servants who praise Him. I hope and pray that whatever circumstance we may be in, we will be able to give thanks to God and praise Him for His sufficient grace to us.

Desire to praise the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth, all the days of my life,

James Kim

(Wishing to be a worthy worshiper in the sight of the Lord)

## Praise the Lord!

### [Psalms 135]

We already meditated on Psalms 134 under the heading, “Praise the Lord.” We received the God’s word that God’s faithful servants who live a victorious life with God’s faithful help are told to praise God with confession of thanksgiving. Then, as I meditated on Nehemiah 8, I saw Ezra and the Israelites praising God in the revival of God’s Word. Why did they praise God? It was because the great God rebuilt the great wall of Jerusalem in 52 days with His great power. What lesson do these words give us? The lesson is we must praise God. Our God is worthy to be praised. We must praise God as we consider the salvation work that God has done in our lives, in the past, in the present and also in the future.

In Psalms 135: 1-3, the psalmist said ‘Praise the Lord’ four times. Why did he exhort us to praise the Lord four times? The reason is given in verse 3: “Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; sing praise to his name, for that is pleasant.” The psalmist encourages us to praise the Lord because He is good. In other words, we are instructed to praise the Lord because of who He is (more than what He does). And the psalmist confessed that it is pleasant to praise this good God (v. 3). Are we enjoying praising God because God is good and because we taste His goodness? Although we don’t understand all of God’s work in our lives, we must believe that God is good and He will accomplish His good will in the midst of all the things that we go through, and we must sing praises to God by relying only God and His goodness.

In Psalms 135:4, the psalmist tells us more specifically why we should praise God. He gives us four reasons (Park). I hope that we realize God’s goodness and taste the joy of singing God through these four reasons.

#### **First, we must praise God because He has chosen us to be His own possession.**

Look at Psalms 135:4 – “For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His own possession.” The psalmist tells us that God chose Israel for His own possession “for Himself.” How could He choose the harden-hearted and sinful people like the Israelites “for Himself” for His own possession? In order to answer this question, we should not look to the Israelites, the chosen ones. Only when we look to God who chosen them can we know the meaning of “for Himself”. Why did God choose such people like the Israelites “for Himself”? The reason was because God loved them. Look at Deuteronomy 7:6-8: “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the

peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you ....” God chose us because God loves us. God chose us as to be His own possession because He loves us. Here, the word “His own possession” means “a treasured possession” (Deut. 26:18). Therefore we must praise God. We, who have been chosen by God as His own treasured possession in His love, must praise God.

**Second, we must praise God because we are enjoying the natural grace that God gives.**

Look at Psalms 135:6 – “Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.” The great God who created the heaven and the earth (v. 5) is God who moves everything in nature. God is in control of all the great and small things of the natural world as He pleases (v. 6). God is in motion to preside over His own treasured people whom He chooses to live on earth. For example, in the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15, God caused “a severe famine” in the county in where the prodigal son was living after he squandered his estate with loose living so that he might return to his father (Lk. 15:13-20). Another example is in the book of Exodus, God brought plagues such as hail, darkness and other plagues to Pharaoh and the Egyptians and delivered the Israelites from Pharaoh. In this way, God moved the nature and He still does in our lives. Of course, God makes or allows us to live in abundance through abundant crops, but He also makes or allows us to dwell in need through drought in our lives. Like God didn’t send rain when Ahab was sinning and made it rain again when He listened to Elijah's prayer, sometimes God moves the nature to bring down the rain that we need and other times He stops the rain. What is important here is that we must acknowledge by faith that there is sovereign work of God in all of these. And we must praise God because we are thankful for enjoying natural grace that God gives us in His sovereign will.

**Third, we must praise God because God has given us special grace of salvation.**

Look at Psalms 135:12 – “And He gave their land as a heritage, A heritage to Israel His people.” God's grace can be divided into two. One is general grace (also called natural grace) and another is special grace. General grace is God's free grace that brings rain and cultivation to all mankind, even to the wicked. However, special grace is God's grace that is poured out only on God's chosen people. What is this special grace of God? It is salvation. We must praise God as those who are saved by God’s special grace. In Psalms 135:8-14, the psalmist writes of God's great works of salvation of the Israelites, whom God loved and chose and delivered them from Egypt during the Exodus. The psalmist began first with God's tenth plague among the ten plagues (v. 9) that is He smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast (v. 8). Then in verses 10-11, he talked about when the Israelites entered Canaan, the Promised Land, God defeated the Canaanites with His power. And in verse 12, the psalmist talked about God giving the Canaan, the Promised Land, as an inheritance to the Israelites. And in verses 13-14, the psalmist says that God's work of salvation must be communicated for generations. The reason is because it is a sign of God's love for Israel (Park). Therefore, if we love God, we must share God's special grace of salvation with others. In addition, we must

be able to be sure of God's salvation not only in our lives now, but also in the difficulties we may face in the future, without forgetting and remembering and sharing God's saving grace in our past lives. With that conviction and assurance, we must praise God in faith.

**Fourth and last, we must praise God because our God is true God, unlike all idols.**

Look at Psalms 135:15-17: “The idols of the nations are but silver and gold, The work of man's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; They have eyes, but they do not see; They have ears, but they do not hear, Nor is there any breath at all in their mouths.” Here the psalmist tells us why we should praise God as God's chosen people who believe in the God of salvation and as His treasured possession. That is, the psalmist says that only our God of salvation is the true God (Park). The false idols don't speak with their mouths, don't see with their eyes, and don't hear with their ears (vv. 16-17). All of these dead gods who cannot breathe are false. Hence, the psalmist says in verse 18: “Those who make them will be like them, Yes, everyone who trusts in them.” Because worshiping idols is a lie, it serves only as suffering for those who worship (Park). But God who loves us and chose us as His treasured possession saved us. Because of the covenant made in Jesus Christ, we have eternal inheritance, eternal life, as God's covenant people. He is our God and we are His people. Therefore, we must praise the true Savior God.

The psalmist said ‘Praise the Lord’ four times not only in Psalms 135:1-3 but also in verses 19 and 20 as well. Look at Psalms 135:19-20: “O house of Israel, praise the LORD; O house of Aaron, praise the LORD; O house of Levi, praise the LORD; you who fear him, praise the LORD.” In both the beginning and the ending of the Psalms 135, the psalmist exhorts us four times to ‘Praise the Lord’. He exhorts us to praise the Lord because He chose us as His own treasured possession, not only to give us natural grace but also to give us the special grace, the grace of salvation. He exhorts to praise the Lord because He is true God who gives us the grace of salvation. And he concludes this psalms by making this confession in verse 21: “Praise be to the LORD from Zion, to him who dwells in Jerusalem. Praise the LORD.” May we be able to taste and experience the joy of praising God for His goodness.

After praising the Lord's greatness,

James Kim

(Wanting to praise the Lord until my last breath in this earth)

## “Give thanks to the Lord”

### [Psalms 136]

Last week, during the early Morning Prayer service on Saturday, I thought about the ‘spiritual filter.’ The reason I thought about it was because I heard through someone who came to fix the water purifier in the church that the problem of our church water purifier was the filter. Just as the water purifier filter had a problem and the drinking water didn’t come out well, I thought that there was a problem with the church spiritual filter that wasn’t properly expressed. In particular, this thought was based on the words of Ephesians 5:15-21. Here, “the spiritual filter” refers to “wisdom.” In other words, our church has been taught that with the wisdom of God, with spiritual discernment, we must accept what we suppose to accept, and not accept what we shouldn’t accept. Therefore, we have learned to save time and understand the will of the Lord to live a life filled with the Holy Spirit. And we have learned that such a life filled with the Holy Spirit is expressed in three ways. They are praise/worship and thanksgiving and obedience. In other words, those who are filled with the Holy Spirit praise and worship God, always give thanks to Heavenly Father in their hearts, and submit to each other in the fear of Christ (vv. 19-21). Are we really living a life filled with the Holy Spirit?

At last week's Wednesday prayer meeting, we were urged to “Praise the Lord” based on Psalms 135. In the meantime, in Psalms 136:1, the psalmist exhorts us: “Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.” The reason the psalmist exhorts us to give thanks to God is because God is good. In Psalms 135, the psalmist exhorted us to praise the Lord because He is good. But in Psalms 136, he exhorts us to give thanks to Him. In Psalms 136, he exhorts us to give thanks to God, repeatedly saying 26 times in each verse, “For His lovingkindness is everlasting.” The reason why we should give thanks to God is because our God shows us His goodness by loving us with His eternal love. In the past and now, God revealed and is revealing to us His goodness. And in the future, our God will reveal His goodness to us. Why is our God showing us His goodness in this way? The reason is because God loves us with His everlasting love.

In the meantime, the psalmist gives four more specific reasons why we should give thanks to God in Psalms 136:

#### **The first reason is because God is great (Ps. 136:1-3).**

Look at Psalms 136:2-3: “Give thanks to the God of gods, For His lovingkindness is everlasting. Give thanks to the Lord of lords, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.” The psalmist says that we must give thanks to



the Lord because He is a God who excels in all gods and all lords, that is, our God is the true God among the gods and the true Lord among the lords. In other words, he is saying that we should give thanks to God for being who He is, that is God. I remembered the Korean Gospel song “Oh His name is one we raise above all names”: “Oh His name is one we raise above all names/ Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Lord/ Let us all now kneel down and glorify the King/ Jesus is lord of everything/ Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Lord/ Let all the universe join in/ To praise and sing, to glorify the king/ Jesus, Jesus, Jesus is Lord.” The reason we should give thanks, praise, and worship God is because our God is the superior God and Lord of all lords. This great and good God is still loving us with His everlasting love. Therefore, we must give thanks to our great God.

**The second reason is because of the great wonders that God made heavens and the earth (Ps. 136:4-9).**

Look at Psalms 136:4 – “To Him who alone does great wonders, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.” While meditating on the words of Psalms 135 during the Wednesday prayer meeting last week, we learned that the second specific reason why we should praise God is because of God's natural grace (135:6-7). The great God who created the heavens and the earth (v. 5) is the God who moves everything in nature. God is still in charge of all things big and small in the natural world according to His pleasing will (v. 6). God is also moving to bring the precious people He has chosen to live on this earth. Therefore, we have been taught that we must sing praises to God for this natural grace of God. In Psalms 136:4-9, the psalmist is telling us to give thanks to God for the great wonders that God created the heavens and the earth. He says that the first reason to give thanks to God is because He is who He is, that is God(vv. 1-3). And here in verse 4 he says to give thanks to God because of the great wonders that He alone does. Here what are God's great wonders that He does alone? The psalmist is talking about the great wonders in verses 5-9. The great wonders that God did alone is that He made the heavens with skill (v. 5), spread out the earth above the waters (v. 6), made the great lights (v. 7), made the sun to rule by day (v. 8) and the moon and stars to rule by night (v. 9). He says that we should give thanks to God for the great wonders of God who made the heavens and the earth. Almighty God, who created the heavens and the earth, is revealing to us His greatness through all things He created. Therefore, we must give thanks to God for seeing His greatness through the heavens and earth that He created. I remember the Korean gospel song “Great Is The Lord, And Greatly To Be Praised”: “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, In the city of our God, In the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation the joy of the whole earth, Is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, The city of the great King. Sing Hallelujah! Sing Hallelujah! Sing Hallelujah! The city of the great King.” We should give thanks to God because the great Lord has accomplished great works and revealed His great glory.

**The third reason is because God has redeemed us (Ps. 136:10-22).**

The psalmist said in Psalms 136:10-22 to give thanks to God because God delivered the Israelites from

Egypt and performed great wonders (v. 4) in the wilderness at the time of the Exodus. He told them to give thanks to God because God struck the firstborn of Egypt (v. 10) with His strong hand and an outstretched arm (v. 12), so that he brought the Israelites out of Egypt (v. 11) and divided the Red Sea (v. 13). After letting them pass through like land (v. 14), Pharaoh and his army fell prostrate in the sea of the Red Sea (v. 15), made Israel pass through the midst of it (v. 16), smote great kings (v. 17), mighty kings (v. 18), Og, king of Bashan (v. 20), and gave their land as a heritage to Israel (vv. 21-22). This speaks of a special grace that God gave to His beloved chosen people, His own possession for Himself (135:4). In other words, the reason why we should praise and give thanks to God is because of God's saving grace. Since we who have received God's special grace, we must give thanks to God again and again. God, who loved us and chose us and delivered us from the kingdom of Satan like Egypt is leading us in this world like the wilderness. Because God who gave us eternal inheritance and eternal life, we must give thanks to God as those who have received the grace of salvation.

#### **The fourth and last reason is because of God's providence (Ps. 136:23-26).**

In His providence, God works in the lives of His people to reveal His glory by protecting, guiding, and supplying His people whom He loved and chose. God's providence, which can be seen in Psalms 136:23, is the fact that God allows the Israelites to be "in our low estate". Here, "our low estate" refers to the Israelites being taken captive to Babylon. Why did God allow the Israelites to be in that low estate? The reason was because of the sins of the Israelites. When the Israelites sinned and then didn't repent, God put them in the low estate as a result of their sins. As a result, the Israelites convicted of their sins in the low estate and repented. At that time, how did God respond? God delivered the Israelites from their enemies (v. 24). God, who used Babylon to discipline the Israelites, His beloved children, when they sinned against God without repentance, eventually struck Babylon and rescued the Israelites from their hands and brought the Israelites back to the land of Judea. And then God gave food to all of them (v. 25). We should be grateful to God for giving us our daily bread. We must be grateful for the lovingkindness of God who gives us our daily bread. We must give thanks to the God of heaven (v. 26). Why? The reason is because of God's lovingkindness is everlasting (v. 26).

In order to know the measure of our faith, we can see how often the confession of thanks to God comes out of our mouths. If we simply give thanks to God while experiencing God's grace and love, then we are truly mature believers. However, if we complain with our mouths, then we are immature believers. Let us all give thanks to God. The reason is because God is God. Also, let us give thanks to God for the great wonders of God's creation of heaven and earth and His grace of salvation. Also, let us give thanks to God for God's providence. Let us give thanks to God for putting us in a low estate and delivering us again and giving us our daily breads.

I have no choice but to give thanks to God,

James Kim

(As I trust God's providence)

## **Give thanks to God!**

**“Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.” (Psalms 136:1)**

How should we spend Thanksgiving? Especially as we celebrate Thanksgiving Sunday today, what should we do? We should give thanks to God. What do you thank God for?

Looking back this year, I want all of us to give thanks to God for this Thanksgiving Sunday. Although there were many difficulties not only in the United States but also in the world this year, and still are, let us all look to God and give thanks to Him even in such circumstances. Why should we give thanks to God? There are two reasons for this:

### **The first reason is because God is good.**

Do you believe that God is good? If you answered “yes” or “amen,” do you believe that God is always good? If you are struggling now, can you still confess that God is good? Looking back this year, I believe that God has shown His goodness to our church members. Because God is good, He has no choice but to do good to us. So, I believe that God has worked together to achieve goodness through even our difficult circumstances that we have been this year, and that God is still working on it to accomplish His good, perfect and pleasing will. Therefore, let us all give thanks to God by believing in His goodness. God is good, All the times!

### **The second reason is because God's lovingkindness is everlasting.**

The economic hardships and other hardships we face are at most seventy or eighty years. Of course it won't be that long. But God's love for us is by no means seventy or eighty years. God's love is eternal. He loves us with His everlasting love. God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world because He loved us (Eph. 1:4). And God has given us precious faith as gift of grace (2:8). And God made us to believe and accept Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord. Therefore, God has given us eternal life as a gift (Rom. 6:23). How can we not give thanks to God if we know a little bit of this eternal love of God? In particular, when I look back on this year, the reason I want to give thanks to God is because of the love God has revealed to us in and through His Word. In other words, I am giving thanks to God because I have been experiencing God's love through the word of God. I am sure you also have God's grace that He has given you as you read, hear, meditate and study His word throughout this year of meditating the word of God. I have briefly summarized the love of God I experienced through that grace in three

ways: (1) God gave me strength through His word. In particular, God added strength by adding faith to me with the words of Romans. (2) God guided me with His word. Especially God led me through the words of the psalms that made me to pray with faith that God is God. (3) God gave us hope by letting us hear the best news of Jesus Christ through His word. God not only revitalized my soul with His word, but also gave me hope because He made me to meditate on Jesus Christ more deeply with His word.

How do you look back this year? Let us all give thanks to God as we remember God's grace given in meditating on the word of God.

Our God is good. God's lovingkindness toward us is everlasting. Therefore, let us all praise and worship God with thanksgiving.

“Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting” (Ps. 136:1).

With gratitude to God,

James Kim

(Relying on God's goodness and lovingkindness)

## When we think of the church

### [Psalms 137]

On May 14, 2009, I read the article under the title of ‘300 Church Personnel, Emergency Declaration for Self-Promotion of Korean Churches.’ Under the heading ‘Declaration for Pastoral Evangelism and Self-purification,’ eight things were declared: (1) Repent of being unfaithful to evangelical values, (2) Reflect on failure to love one another and of the church division and conflict, (3) Reflect on the moral hazards of pastors, and maintain a higher level of morality, (4) Realize the problem of the church's capture of growing supremacy, resulting in cross-church polarization, (5) Endeavor to be the authority of spirituality more than the degrees and honors of the world, (6) Strive to exert personal piety and socially healthy influences, (7) Accomplish the clean church politics on an evangelical basis, (8) The church will endeavor to be the light and salt of society (Internet). As I read these eight emergency declarations, I thought they were precious. If the churches live according to this declaration, the church will be able to glorify the Lord. In particular, I think the first of the eight declarations is the key. In other words, we must repent of being unfaithful to the evangelical values. A more specific statement of this first declaration is: ‘Preach the gospel of salvation that was accomplished by the blood of Jesus Christ that the apostles handed down to us and continue the Reformed tradition of the Reformers in martyrdom. The church, built on this gospel, is a soul-saving hospital and a school of learning God. However, we are committed to have deep self-reflections about whether we have focused more on worldly success than on the value of the gospel, whether we have pursued higher moral and ethical lives, and whether we have done our best to love our brothers and care for our neighbors. Through this, we commit ourselves to live faithfully according to evangelical values’(Internet). It is a declaration that I cannot disagree with. In particular, I agree that we must repent that the church has focused more on worldly success than on the value of the gospel. What do you think we Christians should do when we think of the church? What should we do when we think of the church?

### **First, we must weep when we think of the church.**

Look at Psalms 137:1 – “By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.” The psalmist wept with the Israelites who were captivated by the Babylonians and who sat by the rivers of Babylon when he remembered Zion that was destroyed by the Babylonians. Why did he weep remembering Zion? The reason is because he longed for the grace of God's restoration (Park). When the Israelites sinned against God, God told them that they would be in their low estate, that is, captives to Babylon (136:23). Eventually, the Israelites were taken captive to Babylon because of their crimes, where the psalmist wrote this poem (Ps. 137). How sad was their

Babylonian captivity. The psalmist says that when the captors, the Babylonians, demanded him and the Israelites to sing them one of the songs of Zion, they hung their harps on the poplars in order not to obey their command (vv. 2-3). The reason is that the psalmist didn't want to use holy songs for entertainment to the Gentiles (Park). How did it feel when the God's holy people were taken captive by the Gentiles, oppressed there, and were forced to sing God's holy songs for entertainment? Hence, the psalmist lamented in verse 4: "How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?" In this lament, the psalmist felt lonely in Babylonian captivity and thought about Zion on the banks of the Babylonian river and he wept. I think of his tears into two ways:

(1) The tears of the psalmist may have been tears of repentance prayer.

The psalmist's cry would have been the mourning of repentance. When he thought of the lost grace of God, he might have no choice but to think about the saints' sins and thus repented in contrite heart (Park). When I think about "the lost grace of God", I remember how I was before last Wednesday night prayer meeting. When I am full of grace, I can feel my heart full of thanks, peace, and joy. But when I forget God's grace, I am filled with heaviness, anxiety, and worry. In the midst of that, God revealed my sin and challenged me to live a life that was cut off from sin by confessing my sin. The next day Thursday, after the early morning prayer meeting, tears were in my eyes when I prayed with a piece of Kentucky Fried Chicken bread left over from the yesterday Wednesday night prayer meeting. The reason is that I remembered the words of my sermon that I preached at the prayer meeting. I was grateful for God's providence for providing daily food. When we think of ourselves, of our families, especially our church, we must shed tears of repentance. What is the reason? This is because the church has forgotten the grace of God. When the church of the Lord has forgotten the grace of God, the church has no choice but to sin against God. Therefore, our church must repent to God. Then, in repentance, true restoration, reconciliation, reform, and revival can occur in the church.

(2) The tears that the psalmist shed were probably the tears of prayer in remembering God's saving grace.

Since we know that there is only one Savior God in the heart of those who truly repent, we cannot but plead with God to save us. As the psalmist was taken captive and lived with the Israelites in captivity in Babylon, he realized and repented of their sins and asked God for mercy and grace and deliverance from the Babylonian captivity and to lead them and guide them to their home land of Judah. As Jonah looked back to the Lord in the belly of a large fish and confessed, "Salvation is from the Lord" (Jon. 2:9), the psalmist longed for the grace of God's salvation, knowing that only God could save the Israelites. When we think of the church, the Lord's body, we must truly repent and ask God for His saving grace. We must pray for deliverance from all our dirty and ugly sins. We need to ask God to be born again as the holy and clean

bride of Jesus, the Bridegroom. In the meantime, we should be a church preparing for the Lord's return. I hope and pray that we can shed tears of repentance and tears of prayer for God's grace of salvation when we think of the church

### **Second, we must make it the highest joy when we think of the church.**

Look at Psalms 137:6 – “May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.” The psalmist confessed that although he lived captive in the nation of Babylon, he considered Jerusalem his highest joy. In other words, he made Jerusalem his greatest joy. This shows the psalmist's God-centered godly life. Although he lived in captivity in the foreign nation Babylon, the psalmist cried, remembering Zion, and longing for God. It seems as though the psalmist missed Jerusalem as a captive in Babylon, just as a child who left home missed his parents and his home more than before. He longed for Jerusalem to be rebuilt and flourished as before, because the city of God, Jerusalem, was destroyed by Babylon (Calvin).

This should be our earnest prayer. In other words, we must pray for the Lord to rebuild the ruined church and to prosper like the early church. I think the early church was in its heyday in the history of the church. In the days when the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and boldly proclaimed the gospel, the power of the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit appeared. The Lord added to the early church's number daily those who were being saved and His loving community was built. That should be our church. We must pray for this true prosperity of our church. And as we look to the church of our time, as the psalmist shed tears of repentance and tears of prayer for the grace of God's salvation, we should ask the Lord to raise our church and to reform it. Why should we pray like this when we think of the church? The reason is because our church is our highest joy. Because the Lord who is the head of the church is our highest joy, the church of His body is also our highest joy. As the Westminster Short Catechism Question 1 says “What is the chief end of man?” and its answer says “Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever” we should enjoy the Lord forever. And he who rejoices in the Lord forever rejoices in His church as well. Then how can we enjoy the church as our highest joy? Like the psalmist, we must first remember and weep for the Lord's church. We must see the desolation of the church with our spiritual eyes because of our sins and weep tears of repentance. Without these tears of true repentance, we cannot taste the true joy of the Lord's work of rebuilding our church. So if we want to make the Lord's church our highest joy, we must shed tears of repentance. In the meantime, we must ask the Lord to save His church. Our earnest prayer should be for the Lord to rebuild His church. And when the Lord rebuilds His church, we must come to our highest joy, our Lord God and praise and worship Him with the songs of Zion. This is the life of those who rejoice, considering the Lord's church as their highest joy.

### **Third and last, we must pray to God when we think of the church.**

Look at Psalms 137:7-9: ” Remember, O LORD, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell. ‘Tear it



down,' they cried, 'tear it down to its foundations!' O Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction, happy is he who repays you for what you have done to us - he who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks." The psalmist prayed to God for God's punishment for Babylon, the Israel's adversary and enemy. He asked God, "Remember, O Lord, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell" (v. 7). Of course, the Edomites weren't the Babylonians. Rather, the Edomites rejoiced when the Babylonians struck Jerusalem (Job 10-16). Although they were originally brothers with the Israelites, they were Israeli enemies and were the object of God's wrath (Park). Then the Edomites and the Babylonians had something in common: they were the object of God's wrath (Ps. 137:7-9). The reason was because they oppressed the God's people, the Israelites. The psalmist, who remembered Zion at the rivers of Babylon, prayed to God to tear it down the Edomites, who were compared to the Babylonians who desolated Jerusalem.

As we pray to God, we must pray for God's wrath to come to Satan, the enemy of the Church, and his wicked servants. Of course, we may not be used to this kind of prayer. But while we pray for our salvation as God's people, it is a bit unbalanced not to pray for the judgment of the wicked. This is because in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, God's salvation and God's judgment usually go together. In other words, God saves His people (the Church) by judging His people's enemies. Therefore, we must pray for the salvation of the church and the destruction of its enemies. We must pray for God's righteous judgment. We must pray that God will punish the enemies of His Church. I think of two things when I think of the church as the body of the Lord. The words of the Lord's promise, Matthew 16:18 that the Lord will build His church and the hymn "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord". This was because in 2003, when I attended the church renewal annual retreat, the Lord gave me that promised of Matthew 16:18 and the indwelling Holy Spirit made me to shed tears of longing for His church, Victory Presbyterian Church. I still remember that I shed tears in thinking of our church in longing and in love. I pray that the Lord to build His church so that we can grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, we can confesses who Jesus is and lives according to that confession. I also pray that the Lord will build our church on the solid rock. I sincerely pray that our church will be built as a true church that will fight against ourselves, the world, sin, and Satan and death and be victorious.

Thinking of Victory Presbyterian Church,

James Kim

(In the pastoral room of the Church that the Lord is building)

## **“my chief joy”**

**“May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth If I do not remember you, If I do not exalt Jerusalem Above my chief joy.” (Psalms 137:6)**

I grabbed Henry Nowen's book again and started reading. There was a word that came to my mind as I read it. That word was "Self-rejection". Perhaps the reason this word came to my mind was because I had a life of faith that confuses 'self-denial' and 'self-rejection'. Too many times I have experienced my soul being hurt by self-refusal. I wasn't able to live the life the Lord wanted because I misunderstood that it was humility that I refused myself. I think that was why I couldn't help myself but to pay attention to this word “Self-rejection”.

I think refusing oneself is like not knowing how to love oneself with the love of the Lord. Too many times it seems that we tend to consider sinful when we love ourselves with the love of the Lord. We hear so much about the love of God and love of our neighbors, but we seem to think that it is quite selfish for some reason to love ourselves with the love of the Lord. Therefore, our ego is not healthy but rather is sick.

I remember seeing the title of the Korean book 'Christian's Self-Love'. But such a book doesn't seem to be popular to us. As a result, we have not learned to love ourselves with the love of the Lord. Therefore, we are trying to love God and our neighbors as 'Self deformed child'. How can we love God and our neighbor with an unhealthy self. How could that be possible? Maybe it's the ability of hypocrisy (?).

Too many Christians suffer from guilt. We are sick of various guilt feelings from the guilt of hypocritical life. Furthermore, we are living a life of faith as we believe and misunderstand that it is humility to abuse ourselves when we commit sin. I think about how poor children we are in God's eyes. I wonder if this is the life of the children who are pleased with God?

The challenge we receive through the words of Psalms 137:6 is that the psalmist confesses that he is more pleased with the Lord than his chief joy. How could he make this confession? I think it's because he had a healthy self. In other words, because the psalmist knows that God is his chief joy, I think that even in his life, Heavenly Father was more joyful than the chief joy of this world. I remember one gospel song. It is a song that confesses that God cannot overcome joy toward us. I think those who can view God as joy more than the chief joy in this world know that God cannot overcome joy toward them. Those who are full of that joy and love are those who know how to love God and their neighbors with their healthy selves because they love themselves with the love of the Lord.

With gratitude for the grace of God who loves such sinner like me and regards me as His chief joy,

James Kim

(As I earnestly pray that I may love the Lord who is more joyful than my chief joy in this world.)

# The reasons why I am giving the Lord thanks with all my heart

## [Psalms 138]

Last Sunday, I meditated on the slaves of sin and the slave of obedience (slaves of righteousness) centering on Romans 6:15-23. In that meditation I learned to thank God (v. 17). Why should we thank God? It is because we are no longer slaves of sin. Since we have been justified by the grace of God and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and now we have become slaves of righteousness, we must thank God. When I thought about the fruit that the slaves of righteousness bears, I thought of two things. It is none other than “thanksgiving” and “obedience”.

If we look at Psalms 138:1, the psalmist David said: “I will give You thanks with all my heart; I will sing praises to You before the gods.” Why did David say that he would give thanks and praise the Lord with all his heart? The reason was because “Your lovingkindness and Your truth” (v. 2). What was God's lovingkindness and truth that David experienced? Look at verse 2: “I will bow down toward Your holy temple And give thanks to Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word according to all Your name.” The Lord's lovingkindness and truth that David experienced was that the Lord enlarged the Lord's word (Park). The word that the Lord enlarged His word here means that the Lord had fulfilled what He promised David. Therefore, because David experienced the Lord's lovingkindness and truth, he decided to give thanks and praise to the Lord with all his heart (v. 1). More specifically, in Psalms 138, we can think of four reasons why David decided to give thanks and praise the Lord with all his heart, namely, the Lord's lovingkindness and truth he experienced.

**The first reason is because the Lord made David bold with strength in his soul when He answered his prayer.**

Look at Psalms 138:3 – “On the day I called, You answered me; You made me bold with strength in my soul.” Looking back on our past lives, we will be compelled to confess that the God of Ebenezer has helped and guided us to this point. How did God really help us get here? God answered our prayers and made us bold with strengthen in our souls so that we can come thus far. As we look back on David's life, we see David praying to God like this: “Turn to me, and be gracious to me; Oh grant Your strength to Your servant, ...” (86:16). How much strength do we need from the Lord as we live in this world? When David asked the Lord for strength, not only did the Lord give him strength, but the Lord became his strength. That was why David confessed like this in Psalms 18:1 – “I love You, O LORD, my strength.” Dr. Park said: ‘God wants to renew our hearts first, rather than renewing our environment. Our hearts must receive grace first above all else (Phil. 4:23). ... “(He) strengthened in

my soul" means that God not only gave David a good thing, but also strengthened his soul so that he could take charge of it" (Park). Our Lord is the God who gives us strength. He is not the Lord who entrusts us with a mission and neglects us. He provides us with the power we need to fulfill that mission. Therefore, we must pray to God like David. E. M. Bounds said in his book "Essences of Prayer," "For as prayer brings the answer, so the answer brings forth gratitude and praise. As prayer sets God to work, so answered prayer sets thanksgiving to work" (Bounds). I remember the lyrics of the Korean gospel song 'Blessed man': 'You are God's blessed man who is strengthened by the Lord and has the highway of Zion in your heart. The Lord is so pleased with you ....' Let's pray to our Lord when we feel weak and helpless. Surely our Lord will make us bold with strength in our souls, not only to David, but also to us who cry out to Him. I hope and pray that all of us who praise and give thanks to the Lord with all our hearts as we are made bold with strengthen in our souls.

### **The second reason is because all the kings of the earth gave thanks to the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 138:4-5: "All the kings of the earth will give thanks to You, O LORD, When they have heard the words of Your mouth. And they will sing of the ways of the LORD, For great is the glory of the LORD." Why did the kings of the earth give thanks to the Lord and praise Him like David did? This was because the Lord's glory is great. God's glory was revealed not only to David, but also through David to the kings of the Gentile nations. How did the glory of God reveal to the kings of the Gentile nations through David? It revealed through the word of the Lord. In other words, God gave the word of promise to David, whom He loved, and by fulfilling the promise, God revealed His glory to the nations. This is what the prophet Isaiah said: "Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth And deep darkness the peoples; But the LORD will rise upon you And His glory will appear upon you. Nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising" (Isa. 60:1-3). Because the glory of God is revealed in the whole world, not only that we see His glory, but also the kings of the nations come to the light of the Lord. The Lord revealed His glory through David, and the kings of the nations also saw that glory and gave thanks and praised the Lord. I hope and pray that God reveals His great glory to this dark world through us so that all the people may see His great glory and will give thanks and praise God. Then, like David, we will be compelled to thank and praise God.

### **The third reason is because David believed that the Lord would save him who was humble.**

Look at Psalms 138:6-7: "For though the LORD is exalted, Yet He regards the lowly, But the haughty He knows from afar. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me; You will stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, And Your right hand will save me." Even though our God is exalted, He regards the lowly. Here, "He regards the lowly" means that the Lord is seeing the lowly with special love. But the question

is, are we lowly, that is, are we humble? One thing is certain: God sees us with His special love because of our humble Jesus. What a wonderful grace this is? This grace of God was revealed more specially when the humble David was in trouble. It is none other than God reviving David who was in trouble. Look at Psalms 71:20 – “You who have shown me many troubles and distresses Will revive me again, And will bring me up again from the depths of the earth.” And with His powerful right hand, the Lord struck (judged) David’s enemies, the proud ones, and delivered (saved) David from the hand of his enemies (138:7). We must believe in the lovingkindness and truth of God, who sees us with special love like David, especially when we are in trouble. Our God is by no means a God who leaves us alone when we are in trouble. Obviously, our God is the God who revives us with His promised word when we are in trouble. And God strengthens our hearts with His word. Therefore, He is the God who makes us endure even in the midst of trouble and persecution, and finally defeats our enemies, the proud ones, and saves us from their hands. David thanked and praised God for believing and relying on this God. In other words, he looked to the God of salvation with faith even though he was in trouble, and praised God with the assurance of salvation. This should be what we are. No matter what kind of trouble and difficulties we face, we must give thanks to God and praise Him in faith with the assurance of salvation.

**The fourth and last reason is because David believed that the Lord would fulfill His purpose for David.**

Look at Psalms 138:8 – “The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your love, O LORD, endures forever-- do not abandon the works of your hands.” One thing we need to point out here is that in Hebrew, the original Bible, there is no word “His purpose”. Therefore, if we translate this verse literally, it should be translated like this: “The Lord will complete for me”. So what is it that the Lord would do for David here? In other words, what is the Lord’s purpose toward David? It was the promise of 2 Samuel 7, the word of God’s promise to David. In other words, God promised to make David ruler of His people Israel (v. 8), make him a great name (v. 9), would also appoint a place for His people Israel and would plant them (v. 10), would give him rest from all his enemies (v. 11), would build the house of God through David’s descendants, and would build the house of David and the kingdom forever (vv. 12-13). Therefore, David prayed: “Now therefore, O LORD God, the word that You have spoken concerning Your servant and his house, confirm it forever, and do as You have spoken” (v. 25). This promise of God is to send the Messiah who will come through David’s descendants, and through that Messiah the kingdom of God, that is, the building of true Israel. How, then, do these words of David’s promise apply to us, the New Testament’s believers? In other words, what will the Lord perfect for us? It is our salvation. Look at Romans 8:30 – “and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.” That is why Paul says in 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.” This is

the completion of our salvation. In other words, it is the completion of salvation that our lowly bodies and we will become like the body of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must praise the Lord with thanksgiving with this hope of salvation. Also, while living on this earth, we must rely on the faithful Lord who gave us this word of promise. In addition, we must have the same conviction as Paul and lead a life of faith without doubt: “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

We must give thanks to God and praise Him with all our hearts for His lovingkindness and truth. The more specific reason is because the Lord answers our prayers and makes us bold with strength in our souls. Another specific reasons are because all the kings of the earth will give thanks to God and praise Him, believe that the Lord will save us who are lowly (vv. 6-7), and that He will fulfill His purpose for us. Therefore, let us give thanks to God and praise Him.

Wanting to give thanks to the Lord with all my heart,

James Kim

(As I live day by day because of the Lord’s lovingkindness and His faithfulness)

## **O Lord, strengthen my soul!**

**"On the day I called, You answered me; You made me bold with strength in my soul." (Psalms 138:3)**

Yesterday, a brother in Christ came to my house. Later, I found out through my wife that he came to my house because he was hurt a little at the church he was attending. There were 20 churches gathered to have a sport competition, so he worked hard to prepare it. But I think his church coach asked him to see the next opportunity. However, through an e-mail going around, he learned that he couldn't participate in the sport competition because his church coach recruited someone who was good at sports from another church. That was why he got hurt. So the brother came to my house yesterday Friday without going to his church meeting. After he left our house, as I talked with my wife, I thought that our church members because they could also get hurt in our church too. So I urged my wife to put people more important than events and programs while serving in the English Ministry of our church. I encouraged my wife to be a team with me who encourages English Ministry team leaders to comfort and encourage each other and to use the gifts they received.

We, like this brother who visited my house, are easy to get hurt in the church. The psalmist confesses in Psalm 143:4, 7 that "my spirit is overwhelmed within me" (v. 4) and "my spirit fails" (v. 7). He was hurt and tired because "the enemy has persecuted my soul" (v. 3). In other words, because he dwelled in dark places (v. 3), the psalmist's spirit was overwhelmed and failed. I think about what makes my soul overwhelms and fails. I think it is our haughty eyes as Psalms 131:1 says. It is because we involve ourselves in great matters or in things too difficult for us. Knowing and acknowledging who I am, I just need to serve faithfully according to the gift given to me. But sometimes the temptation to look at other gifted pastors makes my soul fail within me. So, sometimes I don't want to see the Christian newspapers that come to our church. So I don't read them. This spiritual condition can never be considered healthy. Just as a healthy self is important, a healthy soul is essential to our Christian life. God wants to give us such healthy soul. Indeed, I would like to meditate on how God strengthens our souls, focusing on Psalms 138.

### **First, God strengthens our souls through praise and worship.**

Look at Psalms 138:1-2: "I will give You thanks with all my heart; I will sing praises to You before the gods. I will bow down toward Your holy temple ...." The psalmist says that praise and worship should be offered to God, but with whole heart and thanksgiving. Why should we give thanks to God with all our hearts? The reason



is because the Lord's lovingkindness and His truth (v. 6). When I was thinking about what "Your lovingkindness" is, verse 6 came to my mind: "For though the LORD is exalted, Yet He regards the lowly ...." Yesterday I went home and walked a little with my youngest daughter, Yeun. Yeun was only 1 year old. So I walked with her by holding her hand. But to hold the child's hand, I had to bend over. My back hurt a little, but I was happy to see Yeun, who likes to walk while holding her father's hand. Here, I looked back at my heart as a dad for my daughter. I was able to feel the love of God when I thought that Heavenly Father is walking with such lowly one like me. I meditated on the word "Your truth" (v. 2) or His faithfulness in connection with the word of verse 7: "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me; You will stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, And Your right hand will save me." For example, yesterday, while holding Yeun's hand, I took my hand out of her hand several times in order to make her to exercise walking. Each time Yeun fell and cried, she stretched out her hand to me. In this way, even if we are stumbled in times of trouble, the Lord is the faithful God who stretches His hand and saves us. The reason we can believe that the Lord who saved us in the past, who has saved us in the present, and who will save us in the future, is because that Lord is a faithful God. David praised and worshiped God because he gave thanks to God with all his heart for His lovingkindness and faithfulness. Then God strengthened his soul.

### **Second, God strengthens our souls through His word.**

Look at Psalms 138:2b, 4a – "... For You have magnified Your word according to all Your name. ... When they have heard the words of Your mouth." God is the God who strengthens our souls through His promised word. He is the God who magnifies His word through the fulfillment of the promised word. The words of the great God revived David even though he was in trouble: "This is my comfort in my affliction, That Your word has revived me." O Lord, revive our souls according to Your word! David's soul was strengthened by the word of God.

### **Third and last, God strengthens our souls through prayer.**

Look at Psalms 138:3 – "On the day I called, You answered me; You made me bold with strength in my soul." Through answering prayers, David became bold and his soul was strengthened. How did he pray to God? He gave thanks to the Lord with all his heart (v. 1), relying on the Lord's lovingkindness and faithfulness (v. 2), holding onto the word of the Lord (vv. 2, 4), with the assurance of salvation (v. 7), and praying in faith, "The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me" (v. 8). David was strengthened by the power of prayer.

There seems to be a lot of tendency to focus too much on the outwardly things in the life of faith. We are driven by words, actions, habits, programs, events, church numbers, and so on. Psalms 138 tells us that our souls must be strengthened by God. God strengthens our souls through praise and worship, through the word of the Lord, and through prayer. O Lord, strengthen my soul!

With my gratitude to God who strengthens my soul as I prepare for the church revival meeting with prayer,

James Kim

(After my soul had been strengthened through the early Morning Prayer meeting and the leader's Bible study time)

## The Lord who searches me and knows me

### [Psalms 139]

On Monday evening, before going to sleep, I went into the children's room. All three of the children were reading books, and the youngest Yeun was reading hard on the bed while making voice. So I first stroked my first daughter Yeri's head first and told her she was good and encouraged her to read her book hard. Then Yeri paid attention to the book and read hard without looking at me. Then I went to my youngest kid, Yeun, stroked her head, told her she was good, and told her to read her book hard. Then Yeun didn't even look at me too. So I came to my room and read the Bible. But after a while, Yeun came to my room with a water bottle in her mouth. And when she looked at a Christian book on the table next to my bed and asked me if I was reading it. So I said to her that I read that book once a while but now I am reading my Bible. Then Yeun opened the Christian book and saw that there were lines and asked me why I drew lines in the book. So I told her that the part that I think is important I draw line. At the same time, I showed her my Bible that I was holding and told her that I also draw a line on the sentences that I think are important. Then Yeun pointed to the Christian book and said that I can draw the line in this book, but I shouldn't draw the line in the Bible. So I thought about how to explain to her about drawing lines in the Bible. At the same time, I need to explain to her not to scribble in the Bible. As I was thinking about it, I asked Yeun to come next to me and sit down. And I show her Isaiah 8:17 that I was reading and told her to read because there was line under that Bible verse: "I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob. I will put my trust in him." When Yeun read it, she saw the word "the Lord" and said that it is okay for me to draw the line because it is important. Haha. So I asked Yeun, 'Do you trust in the Lord?' since that Bible verse of Isaiah 8:17 mentions it. Then Yeun answered "Yes". I would like to ask you the same question: 'Do you trust in the Lord?' If you answered "Yes", I may ask, 'Why are you trusting in the Lord?' As we meditate on the words of Psalms 139, I hope and pray that we all become more dependent and trusting in our Lord while learning what kind of God is the God we trust.

In Psalms 139:1, the psalmist David confesses about God: "O LORD, You have searched me and known me." In a word, the God we depend on and trust is the God who searches us and knows us. I hope and pray that we will all rely more and trust in God and live by faith because God is searching us and knows us.

**First, the God who searches and knows us knows all our ways and existence (Ps. 139:1-4).**

In Psalms 139:1-4, David said that God knew “when I sit down and when I rise up”, his thoughts (v. 2), and all his ways (v. 3), there was nothing God didn’t know a word on his tongue (v. 4). In a word, David confessed that God was an all-knowing God. How could the all-knowing God know all of David's words, ways or actions, and movements? The reason is because God made him. In other words, Creator God knew everything about David because He made David. Look at verse 13: “For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb.” Therefore, David gave thanks to God (v. 14). The reason is because David was fearfully and wonderfully made (v. 14). In other words, David gave thanks to God because “Wonderful are Your works” and David’s soul knew it very well (v. 14).

Yesterday, while reading the Book of Job, I had a moment to meditate on Job 7:17-20. The reason is because I thought it was a word that was so related to Psalms 139: “What is man that You magnify him, And that You are concerned about him, That You examine him every morning And try him every moment? Will You never turn Your gaze away from me, Nor let me alone until I swallow my spittle? Have I sinned? What have I done to You, O watcher of men? ...” (Job 7:17-20a). Job confessed to the Lord that he referred to the Lord as “watcher of men” as to what generosity the Lord regarded so much that He was concerned about him, examined him every morning and paid great attention to him, and that He didn’t turn away in His attention to us even for a moment. This God knows not only our sitting and standing, but also our thoughts and all our actions. And even before we speak, He knows what we are going to say. The reason is because Creator God made us. Because we are fearfully and wonderfully made by God, God knows all of us best. We must trust in our all-knowing God, God who watches over us and knows all our ways and existence.

### **Second, we cannot hide from God who searches and knows us (Ps. 139:5-12).**

Look at Psalms 139:7 – “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?” Here David is speaking of God's omnipresence. In other words, God can be anywhere at the same time as He isn’t bound by time or place. This God is with us as the all-knowing God who knows us best wherever we are. Therefore, we cannot escape from Him (Jere. 23:23, 24; Am 9:2). We cannot escape the surveillance of God. As David said, because God has surrounded David or us, we cannot escape His surveillance. And because God's hand is always holding us, we cannot escape from His jurisdiction (v. 5, Park). This is because David knew this fact a little bit, so he confessed: “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it” (v. 6). He confessed that he could not escape and hide from the omnipresent God, whether in heaven, in Sheol, in the remotest part of the sea, and in the darkness (vv. 8-12). That’s why he said, “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?” (v. 7)

We must listen to the prophet Isaiah: “Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the LORD, And whose deeds are done in a dark place, And they say, ‘Who sees us?’ or ‘Who knows us?’” (Isa. 29:15) If we, like

the Israelites, honor God with our lips, but our hearts are far away from Him (v. 13), and commit sins in the dark and say, “Who see us?” or “Who knows us?”, then the Bible says there is woe to us (v. 15). We cannot hide from God's omniscience and God's omnipresence. God knows every step of the way and He is the God who is with us wherever we are. This God is our Immanuel God. The God who is always with us is the God who is with us wherever we are. It is blessing for us to live in His omnipresence. The blessing is, for example, as Psalms 121 says, God protects and keeps us without sleeping or slumbering. God will not allow our foot to slip (v. 3). In this God, we must rely and trust.

**Third and last, the God who searches and knows us is most concerned in us (Ps. 139:17-18).**

Look at Psalms 139:17-18: “How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand When I awake, I am still with You.” The psalmist David, who knew that all-knowing and omnipresence God knew him the best and loved him the most and thus was most concerned in him, confessed, “How precious also are Your thoughts to me” because he knows that God's precious thoughts to him cannot be counted and they outnumber the sand. Also, what about David's heart when he woke up and realized that the omnipresent God was with him and His thoughts toward him were so many? David's heart was grateful because he realized that all God's attention and focus were on him, and for the precious love of God (v. 14). In such gratitude, David had assurance. That assurance was that God loved David the most and that God would destroy David's enemies. In addition to this assurance, David was convinced that God would save him by judging the wicked. And this assurance was based on God's omniscience, God's omnipotence, and especially God's lovingkindness. In other words, David knew that God knew him the best and loved him the most, so he was sure that God would save him by judging the wicked.

Personally, I love Psalms 139. The reason is because I can feel God's love for me. Whenever I thought about the fact that God loves me so much that His thoughts toward me cannot be counted like the grains of sand on a sandy beach, I get encouraged and I am grateful. No matter how much I think about it, I have no choice but to be grateful for God's great love and great concern and has countless thoughts for such person like me who doesn't deserve His love. We must trust this God.

We cannot hide from God who knows us best and loves us the most. Therefore, as David prayed, we must also say this prayer to God: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way” (vv. 23-24). We who live by experiencing the great love of God, we must pray that God would search us and know us. And we should pray that God would test us and know our anxious thoughts. Like David, we must pray that our hearts and wills are worthy of God's sight before God of love who is omniscient and omnipresent. Let us pray earnestly to God that there is no

offensive way in us.

With gratitude to the God who searches me, knows me the best, and loves me the most,

James Kim

(Looking at Heavenly Father who cares such sinner like me the most)

## The Lord who maintains the cause of the afflicted

### [Psalms 140]

When I searched the news on the Internet last Friday, I read an interesting article about ‘the Christian lawyers who resolve disputes in Korean churches in America. Looking at the content of the article, it is said that four Korean Christian lawyers in Southern California and one pastor gathered to establish the ‘Korean Dispute Mediation Committee’ to emphasize the two roles of church dispute resolution and prevention education. In other words, when a dispute arises and the parties request mediation, the purpose of this organization is to help mediate or negotiate to resolve the issue before going to court, and to provide conflict prevention education to prevent and resolve disputes in advance. Attorney Seo, who has been serving the community for 20 to 30 years as a legal person on this committee, said this in a special lecture: One of the judges in the LA district court said, ‘Why are only Koreans coming to the court without solving problems in the church?’ ... Upon entering the lawsuit, it will cost at least \$20,000 to complete the fact check. Why do you use the precious offerings that the saints gave?’ (Internet). Reading this article reminded me of my college friend. Now, as a lawyer, that friend goes to India with other lawyers once a year to defend the poor and powerless people who are being unfairly and unjustly treated. When I thought of this friend, I remembered the word of James 1:27 – “Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.” The Bible says that it is true religion and godliness to look back on powerless orphans and widows during their distress. That is why Asaph, the psalmist, also said, "Vindicate the weak and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and destitute" (Ps. 82:3). Vindication and doing justice for the orphans and widows, the poor and the afflicted, and the needy is the ministry of service that we Christians must do. Why is that so? The reason is because it is God's command and also God's heart, God's actions.

In Psalms 140:12, the psalmist David said about God: “I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted And justice for the poor.” In a word, David confessed that God is a God who secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy. In the midst of faith in this God, we see David praying to God in Psalms 140. I would like to think of his prayer in two ways.

#### **First, David prayed to God for himself.**

What did David pray to God for himself? It was God's deliverance (salvation) and protection (vv. 1-5). Look at Psalms 140:1 – “Rescue me, O LORD, from evil men; Preserve me from violent men.” David asked God to deliver him from the wicked and from the violent men (v. 1), and to protect him from them. The reason was because

his enemies were so wicked that they wanted to hurt David in their hearts. Not only did they gather every day to devise evil things in their hearts and stir up wars against David (v. 2), but also they wanted to kill him with poison of a viper (v. 3). So David cried out to God, “Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; Preserve me from violent men ...” (v. 4). This is because these wicked purposed to trip up David's feet. This is the work of Satan. Satan is still working to overthrow us who believe in Jesus anyway possible. The Satan's purpose is to make us to turn our back on Jesus and leave Him on the path of apostasy. So Satan is meeting with his evil servants every day to try to hurt us. This is what Psalms 140:5 says: “The proud have hidden a trap for me, and cords; They have spread a net by the wayside; They have set snares for me. Selah.” In this way, through his proud servants, Satan has created a trap by throwing a snare and a net to try not only to hurt David but also to us. Therefore, if we are little bit vigilant, then we will fall into that trap and have no choice but to sin against God. Therefore, in order not to fall into this satanic trap, we must be armed with the word of God and be sober spirit for the purpose of prayer (1 Pet. 4:7).

### **Second and last, David cried out to God about his enemies.**

The contents of his cry out can be summarized in two ways (MacArthur):

#### **(1) David prayed that God would disturb his enemies (Ps. 140:6-8).**

Look at Psalms 140:8 – “Do not grant, O LORD, the desires of the wicked; Do not promote his evil device, that they not be exalted. Selah.” David pleaded with God to prevent the wicked from gathering daily and carrying out the wicked scheme that seeks to hurt him. And he had a clear conviction and faith in God in this prayer. Look at Psalms 140:6-7: “I said to the LORD, “You are my God; Give ear, O LORD, to the voice of my supplications. O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle.” Since David experienced the work of God's protection and deliverance in the past (e.g., God defeated Ahithophel's counsel and made Absalom to listen to Hushai's counsel so that He protected David and finally saved him), he was convinced that He would protect and save him in the present. In this conviction, he prayed by faith that God would disturb his enemies.

#### **(2) David prayed that God would punish his enemies (Ps. 140:9-11).**

Look at Psalms 140:9-11: “As for the head of those who surround me, May the mischief of their lips cover them. May burning coals fall upon them; May they be cast into the fire, Into deep pits from which they cannot rise. May a slanderer not be established in the earth; May evil hunt the violent man speedily.” Here David cried out to God to bring disaster in punishing his enemies so that they would never arise again. He pleaded with God that God would destroy his enemies so that they would not stand firm in the world again. This should also be our prayer. We must pray that God will oppose our enemies, the enemies of God. We must pray for their own destruction by interfering their devices.



Through the news, we sometimes hear stories of people in this world who are unjustly accused and are in jail and released as a result of a DNA test. When I see those who don't have money and who can't buy a lawyer, so when I see the people who are freed after living in jail for decades after being framed, how can they get back their years in jail? In the midst of that, I think there are still people who are unjustly living in prison. The reason is because these days there are severe sinful deeds of wrapping lies in truth rather than truth is courts. Also, I think the prosecution accidentally puts innocent people into jail, while lawyers in particular enjoy receiving a lot of money by claiming innocence of criminals and help them to escape punishment in the legal world. What should we do to live in this reality? Like David in Psalms 140, we must pray to God who maintains the cause of the afflicted and justice for the poor. And we must ask God for His saving grace and protection. But we can't stop there. We must pray to God for defeating our enemies and punishing them. Therefore, I hope and pray that we will give thanks to God as we experience God's salvation of the righteous through His wicked judgment.

Praying for God's salvation, protection, and judgment of the wicked,

James Kim

(Victory with Word and Prayer!)

## **But Lord, my eyes are toward You.**

### **[Psalms 141]**

What do you do when you face with challenge in your life? What do you do when it's too hard for you to handle that challenge no matter what you do? I remember the words of Psalm 62:1, 5 that I meditated on at the Morning Prayer meeting last week: "My soul waits in silence for God only; From Him is my salvation. ... My soul, wait in silence for God only, For my hope is from Him." How can we silently look to God when we face with difficulties? The reason is because "In quietness and trust is your strength" (Isa. 30:15). Why should we silently trust in God in our troubles? The reason is because our salvation comes only from the Lord (Ps. 62:1, 5).

In Psalms 141:7, 9, 10, we can see that the psalmist David was in difficulties because of his wicked enemies. Not only David was in difficulties by his enemies, but also his companions were violated by David's enemies as well (v. 7, Park). Those wicked enemies tried to kill David (v. 7) somehow by laying snares, traps, and nets (vv. 9-10). What did David do in the face of these difficulties? I would like to learn five lessons from Psalms 141:

#### **First, David's eyes were fixed on the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 141:8 – "But my eyes are fixed on you, O Sovereign LORD; in you I take refuge--do not give me over to death." In such a difficult situation, David confessed, "But my eyes are fixed on you, O Sovereign Lord ...." This refers to the expectation of God's help (Park). Since it is miracle to look to God instead of being discouraged in suffering, how can it not be done as we believe (Park). That's right. It is miracle that we aren't discouraged during our hardships and are looking at the Lord who can deliver and help us in difficult situations instead of looking at our difficult situations.

When I thought about David's eyes that were fixed on the Lord, I remembered the words of Hebrews 12:2 – "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith ...." When we are in adversity and trouble, our gaze should be fixed on the Lord, who is the author and perfecter of our faith. Never should we complain like the Israelites who were in front of the Red Sea at the time of the Exodus who complained and grumbled in fear while looking at the Red Sea and the Egyptian army that followed. Like Moses, we must raise our eyes and look up to the Lord. We must lift our eyes and look to God who made heaven and earth (Ps. 121:1,2).

#### **Second, David's hands were lifted up to the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 141:2 – “May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.” When David was in trouble, his eyes turned to the Lord and his hands were lifted to Him. Here, the saying that David's hands were lifted up to the Lord means that David prayed earnestly to God while offering his heart to God in trouble (Park). We can take see how earnestly David prayed to God while offering his heart in verse 1: “O LORD, I call to you; come quickly to me. Hear my voice when I call to you.” Looking at this prayer of David, we can see that when we see the word “quickly,” his prayer is making urgent demands to God. It was the urgent situation. In one word, David's prayer was prayed in longing for God's urgent salvation. So he prayed to God, “do not give me over to death” (v. 8). He prayed for God's protection (v. 9), for the judgment of the wicked, and “I pass by in safety” (v. 10). David, who offered this urgent prayer to God, prayed while offering his heart to Him. And he decided to pray “still” (v. 5). And he wanted God to receive such prayers as joyfully as a sacrifice like an evening sacrifice (Park).

What is a prayer that is like an evening sacrifice that God is pleased to receive? I remember Psalms 51:17 – “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.” Prayers like the evening sacrifices that our God gladly receives are prayers offered to God with a broken and a contrite heart. God is pleased with the prayers offered with conviction, confession and repentance of sin. God is pleased with the prayer that is offered with a clean and pure heart.

### **Third, David's heart didn't incline to any evil thing.**

Look at Psalms 141:4 – “Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, To practice deeds of wickedness With men who do iniquity; And do not let me eat of their delicacies.” When we face difficulties and when we don't turn our eyes to the Lord and pray, the spiritual resistance of our hearts is lost, and it is easy for us to fall into Satan's temptation and sin against God. Eventually, if our eyes and hands aren't turned to the Lord, we become spiritually vulnerable and it is easy for our hearts to be leaned toward evil (sinful things). Dr. Park said: ‘Human beings are easy to assimilate with evildoers by changing the integrity of their faith in difficult times. Therefore, in those times, we must make up our minds and pray that it may not happen. Even if we die, we must not join in the ways of such ones’ (Park). I think it's one of the two. In other words, whether we give glory to God by becoming more spiritually trained in the midst of difficulties, or whether we are spiritually vulnerable and sin against God. Either we become stronger spiritually through the path of suffering and live a holy life that is more and more separated from the world and sin, or we are weakened spiritually in the path of suffering and live in harmony with the world and sin, assimilation with the evildoers and lead a worse life than the unbelievers. I think it is one of the two. Somehow, at least on the surface, I worry that we Christians are living worse lives than unbelievers. What is the cause? This is because our hearts become vulnerable amidst difficulties and adversities, and are inclined to evil things. What should we believers do?

In Psalms 141, David turned his eyes to the Lord, his hand was lifted to Him. Also, he made a decision and prayed to God so that his heart would not be inclined to wicked things and committed sin. Even though the food that the wicked eat may seem like “their delicacies”, David’s eyes were only directed to the Lord, and his heart wasn’t overcome by the temptation of the lust of the eyes. In addition, his hands were pursuing cleanliness and purity while praying to God, so he could not participate in the evildeeds of those who do evil. Like David, even though there are many temptations in the midst of difficulties, we must focus our gaze on the Lord, raise our hands to the Lord, and devote ourselves to prayer, so that we can guard our hearts.

#### **Fourth, David set a guard over his mouth.**

Look at Psalms 141:3 – “Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.” We need to spare our words when we are in distress, in pain and adversity. The reason is because there is a lot of danger of sinning against God with our lips in pain and adversity. Especially when we are spiritually vulnerable, we need to spare our words more and more. Indeed, in the work of Satan, Satan makes us fix our gaze in difficult situations of suffering, prevents us from praying, and also makes our hearts lean towards sinful things. In the midst of that, Satan makes our lips sin before God. For example, the words of Job’s wife in Job 2:9 may be cited: “... Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!” After hearing this, Job said to his wife: “... You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips” (v. 10). Job didn’t sin against God with his lips despite the sufferings he was going through.

Like David, we must pray to God, to set a guard over our mouths and to keep the door of our lips. Particularly, when we are suffering from those who make us difficult and afflicted, we must keep our eyes on God and pray and keep our hearts and make up our minds so that we don’t sin against God with our lips. Meanwhile, like David, our words must be pleasant for people to hear (Ps. 141:6). Our words should make the other person pleasant. I remember the words of the apostle Paul in Colossians 4:6 – “Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, ...” I hope and pray that the other person can feel the grace through the words that come out of our mouths.

#### **Fifth and last, David’s head didn’t refuse rebuke of a righteous man.**

Look at Psalms 141:5 – “Let a righteous man strike me--it is a kindness; let him rebuke me--it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it. ...” In the midst of his hardships, David not only didn’t refuse the rebuke of the righteous, but he regarded it as grace. How can we view the rebuke of the righteous as grace in our face of trouble? When we are in trouble, we want to be comforted by our beloved brothers and sisters in Christ. I am sure no one wants to be rebuked. If we are rebuked, we will have a harder heart in the midst of hardship. However, I wonder how David didn’t refuse the rebuke of the righteous in the midst of difficulties, but rather regarded it as grace. I think we can summarize the secret in two words: humility and wisdom. First, humility refers to lowering David’s

heart in front of God in prayer while his eyes were fixed toward the Lord through hardships, suffering, and adversity. This humility was with David. So David could not reject the rebuke of the righteous and regard it as grace. Second, David had wisdom. This is what Solomon said in Proverbs 9:8 – “Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, Reprove a wise man and he will love you.” This word is real and experienced in our lives. No matter how lovingly we rebuke those who are proud, they don’t listen. Even if we rebuke carefully and indirectly, they will not hear. Rather they will hate us. That is why we avoid rebuking the proud. However, even if we rebuke directly, not indirectly, to the wise, they will listen and will be thankful and will try to correct themselves. Of course, at the very first moment of hearing rebuke, they can feel offended. But later, when they see my sincere gratitude, I truly experience the truth of God's words, "Reprove a wise man and he will love you" (v.8). Because David had such humility and wisdom, he could not refuse the rebuke, not the comfort of the righteous, and regarded it as grace. May we have such humility and wisdom.

Whatever difficulties and adversities we are in, our eyes must turn to the Lord. And we must gaze on the Lord. We must cry out to the Lord. We must raise our hands of prayer to the Lord. Also, we must guard our hearts and refrain from inclining to evil. Let us all set the guard on our lips. Even if we are rebuked, let us not refuse it, but regard it as grace. The Lord will hear our prayers and save us.

As I want to proclaim His word ad my heart is connected with the heart of God who listens to my prayers and whose eyes are upon such sinner like me,

James Kim

(As the preached word came back to me and rebuked my heart)

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

### **[Psalms 142]**

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

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

God had been working in David's life so that he might pour out his broken heart and the contrite spirit into prayer only to God. Look at Psalms 142:1-2: "I cry aloud with my voice to the LORD; I make supplication with my voice to the LORD. I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare my trouble before Him." In his humble state, David wasn't discouraged. Rather in hope, he poured out all the things in prayer before God without hiding (Park Yun-sun). Look at verse 3: "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, You knew my path In the way where I walk They have hidden a trap for me." David was pouring out his heart to God in prayer. The reason was because his heart was broken. David's heart was hollow (v. 2) and his heart was injured. Then he poured out his heart to God in his heart. Because he had complaint, his heart was broken. That was why he was pouring out his heart to God.

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

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

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

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

Look at Psalms 142:6 – "Give heed to my cry, For I am brought very low; Deliver me from my persecutors, For they are too strong for me." David, in his very lowly state, cried out to God to save him from King Saul. The reason why he had to cry out to God in this way is because King Saul and his people who were persecuting him were much stronger than him. Because David was severely weakened by their persecution, he took refuge in God and cried out to Him, asking for Almighty God's grace of salvation. I often think of the gospel song "You are my all in all" in the fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ who are in the midst of struggling and suffering: "You are my strength when I am weak You are the treasure that I seek You are my all in all ...." Maybe the reason I remembered this gospel song is because I see a glimpse how God is making them to realize their weaknesses

through their struggles and sufferings. Also, God allows me to see little bit how He is strengthening them when they cried out to God in their weaknesses. And I am grateful for God's work of deliverance when I see a glimpse of their strong inner man through the power of God. I firmly believe that God has strengthened them and I am grateful. Therefore, we don't have to be afraid of getting very weak. Rather, when we are severely weakened, we must make it an opportunity to desire the grace of God's salvation. When we are weak, we must ask Him for His strength. In doing so, God will rescue us from our weaknesses.

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

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

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

Experiencing the grace of God's deliverance as I pray to Him in trust even when my spirit was overwhelmed within me,

James Kim

(As I think about the moment when I thanked God for giving a first successful surgery for my father-in-law)



## A dismayed heart

### [Psalms 143]

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

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

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

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

Look at Psalms 143:5 – “I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done.” As I continued to meditate on the Book of Psalms, I often saw the pattern of the Psalmist's prayer. One of the patterns of prayer is to remember the past work of the Lord in prayer. I am personally learning to look back on my past and trying to remember what God's had done in my life as I pray to God. Before I meditate on the Book of Psalms and learn to remember what God had done in my life when I pray to God, I used to focus on my sinful memories and bad memories of my past. But now the Spirit has changed the focus while meditating on the Book of Psalms. Now, when I pray the Holy Spirit in me enable me to look back on the past and focus on God's actions on how He delivered me when I was going through difficult time in my life. The grace that is given to me as I was doing so, the Spirit enabled me to focus on who God is more than what He had done in my life.

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

situation, and must celebrate God's salvation and deliverance in the midst of our present difficult situation. God who answered our prayers and delivered us from the past difficult circumstance is able to deliver us whatever difficult circumstances we are in now. I hope and pray that the Lord gives us assurance of salvation as we meditate on God's deliverance in the past.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Look at Psalms 143:8 – "Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul." In the midst of his spirit growing faint and his heart dismayed, David prayed to God as he relied on God's faithfulness and righteousness. As he was

doing so, David asked God to let him hear the Lord's word of unfailing love. Why did David want to hear His Word of unfailing love? The reason was because he wanted to be led by His Word. In other words, David wanted to hear the Lord's Word of His unfailing love because he wanted to learn His will and do His will (v. 10). That was why he prayed "Show me the way I should go" (v. 8).

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

(3) David asked God to save him.

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

(4) David asked God to judge his enemies.

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

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

Remembering and praying,

James Kim

(Seeking God's salvation)

## **A situation recreated in our lives**

**“I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done.” (Psalms 143:5)**

Why does a similar situation reappear in our lives? It seems like we have encountered the similar situation before, but why are we dealing with such the similar situation now and again? Of course, if it's a difficult and painful situation, we'll be mindless and we wouldn't think we've encountered the similar situation before at that moment. However, if we wake up a little and think about the situation objectively and quietly, we may think that we were in the similar situation in the past. So how should we think of this similar situation? Should we say it was just a coincidence? It is by no means coincidence. It can't be coincidence. There can never be coincidence in God. In the sovereign providence of God, there is a clear purpose of recreating the similar situation in our lives. What is its purpose?

**First, God's purpose of recreating the similar situation in our lives is to make us to meditate and long for the God's work of salvation in the past.**

In Psalms 143:5, David remembered his old days and meditated on the “all” the works of the Lord in a dire situation where Absalom's persecution threatened his life. At that time, David must have thought of God's saving grace, delivered from King Saul's persecution before becoming king, the background of Psalms 142. One of the reasons I think this is because the two events are similar. Both in Psalms 142, when David was persecuted by King Saul, and in Psalms 143, when he was persecuted by Absalom after he became king and sinned, David's spirit grew faint within him (142:3; 143:4). Why were these similar situations recreated in David's life? The reason is because God made David to remember (meditate) the work of salvation that God delivered him when he was persecuted by King Saul, so that he could long for the grace of God's salvation even in the persecution of Absalom, the background of Psalms 143. So David said, “I spread out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land” (v. 6). He prayed for God to answer his prayers quickly in the urgent situation (v. 7).

**Second and last, God's purpose in recreating the similar situation in our lives is to reveal our sins, so that we can repent and do the will of the Lord again.**

Although David was in the similar situation in both Psalms 143 and Psalms 142, there was a difference. And the difference was that when David was being persecuted by King Saul, it wasn't because he committed a sin

(Ps. 142). Rather, it was because King Saul was jealous of David because the women cheered David more than King Saul after David defeated Goliath in the name of God. On the other hand, in Psalms 143, David was persecuted by his son Absalom for the sin of deliberately killing Bathsheba's husband, the faithful soldier Uriah, in an attempt to cover up the sin of adultery with Bathsheba. That was why David wanted to do the will of the Lord by being taught by His word in Psalms 143:8, 10. When I saw David turning from his sins and now wanting to do the will of the Lord, I remembered the story of Peter in John 21:9 and below. According to the story, when Jesus appeared to His disciples at the sea of Tiberias after his resurrection from the dead, Jesus asked Peter three times, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me (more than these people)?' (vv. 15, 16, 17). At that time, the situation was very similar to when Peter denied Jesus three times. How do we know the similarity when Peter denied Jesus three times, or when resurrected Jesus asked Peter three times, 'Do you love me?'. We know it by "a fire" in both situations. Do you remember? When Peter denied Jesus three times, this is what the author Luke said in Luke 22:55 – "After they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them." I am sure Peter remembered his sin of denying Jesus three times when Jesus asked him 'Do you love me?' three times in front of "a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread" (Jn. 21:9). In the end, Jesus wanted to rescue Peter from his guilt by reproducing the similar situation in the past. Also Jesus wanted to give him the mission to fulfill. What a wonderful love and providence of God?

As we live, when a similar situation is recreated in our lives, let us take a moment to quietly think before God. And if the Holy Spirit reminds us that there was the similar situation in the past, let us remember and meditate on the work of God's salvation in the similar circumstance in our past. In the midst of such circumstance, let's look to the God of salvation and pray to Him. As we remember and meditate the grace of God's salvation in the past, let's have the assurance of salvation by the indwelling Holy Spirit and boldly go to the God of salvation and pray to Him. And while we remember and meditate, if we remember the unrepentant sins revealed by the Holy Spirit, let's confess and repent our sins to the holy God, who is rich in mercy, grace and love as we rely on the blood of the cross of Jesus Christ. Let us put all our will on the cross and devote ourselves in doing the will of the Lord. Then, through the situations that the Lord recreates in our lives, He will accomplish His will and will be glorified alone.

Wanting to celebrate God's work of salvation in a present situation by remembering His work of salvation in the past,

James Kim

(Rather than being led by the situation that hurts my heart, wanting to know the will of God who is in control of that situation)

## **“Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love”**

**“Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.”  
(Psalms 143:8)**

The psalmist David said, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity!” (Ps. 133:1). It is truly beautiful that brothers and sisters in Christ become one in the Lord and serve Him with one heart and one will. What should we do to keep our church unity of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:3)? We need ears to hear. We must be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to be angry (Jam. 1:19). The children of God who promote the unity of the church have ears to hear for the peace and reconciliation of the church. So, what should we listen to? Like the psalmist in Psalms 143:8, we must listen to the word of God’s unfailing love. The reason he wanted to hear the word of the Lord’s unfailing love in the morning is because he wanted to hear the voice of the Lord and walk the path the Lord wanted. So he prayed to God, “Teach me the way in which I should walk” (v. 8). In other words, the psalmist wanted to learn the will of the Lord. So he prayed like this: “Teach me to do Your will, For You are my God ...” (v. 10). Like the psalmist, we should also go up to the Lord’s house in the morning and pray to God, ‘I trust in You, O Lord, this morning. Please let me listen to Your words of unfailing love.’ While praying, we must humbly listen to God’s loving voice by the Holy Spirit while meditating on the word of God. And, like the psalmist, we should be delighted to hear the voice of the Lord and do His will.

The word of unfailing love that the Lord spoke to me this morning was Psalms 141:5 – “Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me; It is oil upon the head; Do not let my head refuse it, ....” How can we view people’s rebuke as grace? Usually we don’t feel very good when we hear people’s rebuke. That’s why we lose our temper and speak out bluntly. We aren’t careful with our mouths without faring God. When we hear people’s rebuke in this way, we speak quickly without guarding our mouths. Why is that so? The reason is because we didn’t hear the Lord’s word of unfailing love in the morning. And even if we have heard the word of His unfailing love, it is because we don’t obey the word. The reason we disobey in this way is because we try to do our will rather than do the will of the Lord. However, the believers who want to hear the Lord’s word of unfailing love and do the Lord’s will feel God’s faithful grace and unfailing love through the voice of people’s rebuke. Through people’s rebuke, we see ourselves with the word of God we heard once again and realize God’s grace of revealing our sins more and more thoroughly. For example, God reveals our unfaithfulness, allowing us to experience God’s faithful grace. When we experience that faithful grace of God, we feel God’s unfailing faithful love for us, rather than



feeling hated (despite its love, not hate). Therefore, we consider grace even the rebuke of love.

In order for our church to keep unity in diversity, we must hear the Lord's word of unfailing love. Even when diverse people gather and express their thoughts in words, our spiritual ears must be inclined to the Lord's word of unfailing love. In such a situation, our heart attitude should be humble and strive to glorify God by doing the will of the Lord. Even if the Lord's word of unfailing love reveal our sins more and more clearly even through the words of people, we must consider what the Lord's will is and fulfill it. If we live with this attitude of heart, we will be able to regard even the curse of our enemies as grace in addition to the rebuke of our beloved brothers and sisters in Christ. As David fled from the royal palace and headed toward the wilderness, he humbly heard even the curse of a man named Simeon of the tribe of Benjamin. Likewise, we will be able to hear humbly even slander, gossips and even condemnation if we eat the Lord's word of unfailing love in the wilderness and are spiritually healthy. And it doesn't end with listening, but we will hear the voice of the Lord more clearly even in the midst of our words and write it down on the heart by obeying it, so that we will be able to live a life of personifying His word. Therefore, we will be able to sincerely praise God by confessing, 'There is no more joy except to hear the voice of the Lord.

Wanting to hear the Lord's word of unfailing love among the various words of this world and people,

James Kim

(With the desire to confess that there is no more joy except to hear the voice of the Lord)

## **These people are blessed.**

### **[Psalms 144]**

What is “blessing”? We say ‘blessing’, ‘blessing’, and ‘blessing’ but what is the blessing in the Bible? The Bible speaks about all the blessings such as the blessing of children, the blessing of material things and so on. However, the blessing of being blessed is to draw close to the Lord who is the source of blessing. This is based on Psalms 73:28. When the psalmist Asaph saw the prosperity of the wicked, he was envious of the arrogant and his steps had almost slipped (Ps. 73 2-3). But only when he entered the sanctuary of God, he perceived the end of the wicked (vv. 17-20), the end of the righteous (v. 24), and himself, who was envious of the prosperity of the wicked, that he “was senseless and ignorant ... like a beast before You” (v. 22). One of his confessions was, “But as for me, the nearness of God is my good ...” (v. 28). In other words, the nearness of God is our blessing. But the true blessing is that God, who is the source of blessing, is with us. Are we living by knowing and enjoying this blessing?

If we look at Psalms 144:15, the Bible says, “How blessed are the people whose God is the Lord!” The meaning of this word is that those who trust in God are blessed (Park). Why does the psalmist David say that those who trust in God are blessed? If we summarize the reason in one word, it is because God gives the saving grace to those who trust in Him. He said, “How blessed are the people whose God is the Lord!” because he believed in God, and because he experienced the grace of God's salvation. David, who trusted in God and experienced the grace of God's salvation, describes the God of salvation in three ways in Psalms 144. David's description of God teaches us what kind of God we should trust and live by faith. May we all be blessed by receiving these instructions humbly and live accordingly by faith.

**First, David described the God he trusted and therefore experienced the grace of salvation as ‘the God of victory.’**

Look at Psalms 144:1 – “Blessed be the LORD, my rock, Who trains my hands for war, And my fingers for battle.” Here David said, “Blessed be the Lord, my rock” because God trained his hands and his fingers for war, so that he could have won the war. Isn't it interesting how he portrays God as a God who trains him to win the war? If we look at the LXX or Vulgate, and the Ethiopian or Arabida translations, they say, ‘A poem that is about David defeating Goliath’ (Park). If this is true, then the psalmist David wrote this Psalms 144:1 as he was thinking about the story of 1 Samuel 17. David said that God had trained him for his hands and fingers, so “He took his stick in his hand and chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in the shepherd's bag which he had,

even in his pouch, and his sling was in his hand; and he approached the Philistine” (1 Sam. 17:40). And then he went to Goliath “in the name of the Lord of hosts” (v. 45), running quickly toward Goliath who was coming and drawing near to meet him (v. 48), and “put his hand into his bag and took from it a stone and slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead” (v. 49). “Thus David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and he struck the Philistine and killed him” (v. 50). David said that it was the Lord who overcame Goliath at that time, and that He trained his hands and fingers so that he was able to defeat Goliath by putting his hand in his pocket and taking a stone and throwing it to Goliath with a sling. What is the intention? I think 1 Samuel 17:47 is the right answer: “and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the LORD’S and He will give you into our hands.” Isn’t it surprising that God who taught David’s hands and fingers to overcome Goliath (v. 4), a champion whose height was 6 cubits and a span (v. 4), who came out with the shaft of his spear that was like a weavers’ beam and the head of his spear weighted 600 shekels of iron (v. 7), with just a stone and sling? When I think about why God did this, I think it was to teach the Israelites the truth that the victory of the war belongs to God. But I think there was another reason. That reason was because the Israelites might say “My own power has delivered me” (us) (Judg. 7:2) and be boastful, He used the shepherd David, among many Israeli soldiers, and his hands and fingers to defeat Goliath and the Philistine soldiers. This God is our God. How can we not trust the God who wins the war? I hope and pray that we all experience God’s saving grace as we trust in the triumphant God who overcame Goliath by teaching David’s hands and fingers as we meditate on God’s word every day and think about spiritual battles within us.

## **Second, David described the God he trusted and therefore experienced the grace of salvation as ‘the God of love.’**

Look at Psalms 144:2 – “He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me.” In addition to the Goliaths and the Philistines, David had many experiences that God enabled him to win in many wars. When we consider the saving graces, David confessed that God was God (v. 2). At the beginning of that confession, David confessed, “He is my loving God” (v. 2). When he thought the grace of salvation that God, who was David’s fortress, stronghold, shield and refuge who delivered him, he had no choice but to confess “He is my loving God” (v. 2) because he felt His love. He reacted like this when he felt the love of God: “O LORD, what is man that you care for him, the son of man that you think of him? Man is like a breath; his days are like a fleeting shadow” (vv. 3-4). The more we feel the love of God, the more we don’t understand what is men and women He cares for us and think of us. Especially when we realize that we are truly insignificant, like a passing shadow, we cannot understand God’s love for us more and more. In this ignorance, while meditating on Psalms 144:2-4, I thought about these verses in connection with Psalms 8:4 and 18:1-2. The reason is because these three psalms have similarities. For example, Psalms 144:2 reminds me of Psalms 18:1-2: “I love You, O LORD, my strength.’ The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My

God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” And Psalms 144:3-4 is almost the same as Psalms 8:4 – “What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him?” When I think of this similarity, the question is, ‘Who am I that God loves me this much?’ I cannot but confess that I cannot fully understand God’s grace and love in being my strength, my rock, my fortress, my stronghold, my shield, my refuge and my salvation for such person like me, who is just like a passing shadow. That is why we confess, as David confessed in Psalms 18:1, “I love You, O Lord, my strength.”

### **Third, David described the God he trusted and therefore experienced the grace of salvation as ‘the God who answers my prayers.’**

In Psalms 144:5-11, we can see David praying to the God of salvation. The content of that prayer was a prayer that he wanted to be saved from his enemies (Park). As we have already meditated in Psalms 142 and 143, David's enemies were King Saul and Absalom. I am sure David had more enemies than just King Saul and Absalom because he shed a lot of blood. And in Psalms 144, wasn't Goliath an David's enemy too? David particularly described his enemies in Psalms 144:8, 11: “whose mouths are full of lies, whose right hands are deceitful ... Deliver me and rescue me from the hands of foreigners whose mouths are full of lies, whose right hands are deceitful.” He spoke of his enemies that their mouths were full of lies and that he said twice that their hands were “the hand of foreigners” “whose right hands are deceitful.” This enemy's deceitful right hands were contrasted with David's own hand (“my hand”) (v. 1). And that enemy's deceitful right hands couldn't overcome the David's hands since God trained David's hands for war. Therefore, what kind of God was David praying for salvation in Psalms 144:5-7, He was “the heavenly warrior who comes to fight on earth on behalf of David against God's enemies” (MacArthur). So he used the figurative language in verses 5-7 to describe God, the warrior of heaven (MacArthur). He prayed to that God to “Send forth lightning and scatter {the enemies}; shoot your arrows and rout them” (v. 6). Also, in verse 10, we see that David prayed “to the One who gives victory to kings, who delivers his servant David from the deadly sword.” David offered this prayer to God, the Heavenly Warrior, and he made up his mind in verse 9: “I will sing a new song to you, O God; on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you.” David was determined to praise the Lord with a new song that praised God's saving grace. He was able to determine to do this because he was confident that God would answer his prayers and save him. It is as if Paul and Silas experienced the grace of salvation when they prayed and praised God in prison. Therefore, let us praise God with faith with the assurance of salvation as we also pray God for the grace of salvation. Then we will experience the truth that “Salvation is from the Lord” in our life (Jonah 2:9). Let us not give up praying to the God of salvation. The work of salvation will take place in His time, in His will and in His way.

What kind of blessings are those who trust in God receive? The psalmist David said three things in Psalms 144:12-14 about the blessings of those who make the Lord their God.

(1) The blessing that those who trust in God receive and enjoy is blessing of children.

Look at Psalms 144:12 – “Then our sons in their youth will be like well-nurtured plants, and our daughters will be like pillars carved to adorn a palace.”

(2) The blessing that those who trust in God receive and enjoy is material blessing.

Look at Psalms 144:13-14a – “Our barns will be filled with every kind of provision. Our sheep will increase by thousands, by tens of thousands in our fields; our oxen will draw heavy loads. ....”

(3) The blessing that those who trust in God receive and enjoy is peace.

Look at Psalms 144:14b – “... There will be no breaching of walls, no going into captivity, no cry of distress in our streets.”

I hope and pray that all of us who trust in God can enjoy these precious blessings in the Lord.

Wanting to be satisfied with The Giver of Gifts, Jesus Christ,

James Kim

(As I enjoy peace in relying on the God of victory, the God of love, and the God who answers my prayers)

## **O Lord, what is man that You think of him?**

**“O LORD, what is man that you care for him, the son of man that you think of him? Man is like a breath; his days are like a fleeting shadow.” (Psalms 144:3-4)**

Last Friday, in commemoration of the 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Victory Presbyterian Church, which I am serving, there was a revival meeting. God gave a message about “the grace of salvation” centered on Ephesians 1:3-14 through a guest speaker. After receiving the word, I remembered the word of Psalms 8:4 which I had previously meditated on while praying to God, thinking of the saving grace of the Holy Triune God: “What is man that You take thought of him ....” And I confessed to God: ‘God, what is man that You love him this much? God, who am I that You gave me the grace of salvation?’ Then, after proclaiming Psalms 144, which I meditated on last night, at this Morning Prayer meeting, I am meditating on verses 3-4 again today. Especially, I want to focus on verse 3b – “...the son of man that you think of him?”

In my opinion, no matter how much couple loves each other, I don't think they think about each other countless times in a day. I am not sure though. I wonder if they think about each other more than a thousand times a day. Even the couple who think about each other so many times a day, for sure they cannot think all day long. How can they think about each other when they sleep at night? For sure it is limited to think about each other when the couple loves each other even if the other spouse appears in a dream. But God's thinking for us is not limited. The reason is because God who loves us and who thinks about us doesn't sleep (121:4). Also, because God is an eternal God (Isa. 40:28), His thoughts toward us are eternal.

This is what Psalms 139:17-18 say about God's thoughts for us: “How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand When I awake, I am still with You.” The Bible tells us that the precious thoughts of the Lord, who loves us, to us outnumbers the sand. How can we count the sand? We will not even try to count the sand at all because they are so many. We can't even try to count the sand because human ability cannot count the number of sand. The Bible says that God's precious thoughts toward us are countless. However, what is even more surprising is that God has so many thoughts toward us who are “like a breath” and our days are “like a fleeting shadow” (144:4). As the sunlight fades, the shadows disappear and the breath disappears in an instant. Even though our days are “like grass”, why does the Lord think of us countless times? Isn't it because God love us? Our thoughts for God return to the dust when our spirit departs and in that very day our thoughts will perish (146:4). However, God's thoughts toward us, like breath

and shadows, never cease to exist. The reason is because our God is eternal.

I don't understand the fact that this eternal God loves us who are like a single breath and shadow, and thinks of us countless times, so that He sent His eternal Son Jesus to this earth to die on the cross in order to save us. I don't understand why Jesus, the eternal Son of God, came in human body and died on the cross to save such sinner like me. Therefore, I have no choice but to pray to God like this: 'O Lord, what is man that You care for me and think of me?'

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

James Kim

["Was it for crimes that I have done, He suffered on the tree? Amazing pity! grace unknown! And love beyond degree!"(verse 2)]

## **“I will extol You, my God, O King”**

### **[Psalms 145]**

I love to sing the Korean gospel song ‘The blessed man’. If we look at the chorus lyrics of that praise, it says ‘Your service is a beautiful praise/ Your devotion is a fragrant prayer/ Wherever you step on, the name of the Lord will be exalted.’ As I sing this song, especially in this chorus section, I think of the people who blessed my heart and pray that the name of the Lord may be exalted anywhere on the land they step on. When I think of these people, I often sing this song, thinking that their service is beautiful hymn and their devotion is fragrant prayer. In the midst of that, I hope and pray that all members of our Victory Presbyterian Church together with myself become God’s blessed people who exalt the name of the Lord no matter where we are, whatever we do and wherever we go. In fact, this is one of the three purposes of our church. In other words, the purpose of our church is to serve the Lord, to imitate the Lord and to exalt the Lord. Our church retired pastor has set these three purposes of the church and served Victory Presbyterian Church.

In Psalms 145:1, we can see that the psalmist David is devoted like this: “I will extol You, my God, O King, And I will bless Your name forever and ever.” What kind of the Lord did David, who dedicates himself in exalting the Lord and David who dedicates himself to bless (praise) the Lord’s name forever, want to exalt?

### **First, David wanted to exalt his God and his King.**

Look at Psalms 145:1 – “I will extol You, my God, O King, And I will bless Your name forever and ever.” There is a Korean gospel song “I bless you my God”. This is how it goes: “I bless you my God and my king/ I bless extol and adore/ forever my God I will praise/ extol your holy name.” This King our God is the God who rules His kingdom (v. 13). And the kingdom of the Lord, ruled by our King God, is everlasting (v. 13) and has splendor and glory (vv. 11, 12). We see and experience the power of the Lord in His kingdom of glorious splendor that ruled by our God and our King (vv. 11, 12). David, who experienced this splendor, glory, and power of the Lord, devoted himself to meditate on the work of his God and his King. Look at verse 5: “On the glorious splendor of Your majesty And on Your wonderful works, I will meditate.” Last week, at the church Vacation Bible School, I talked with our church education pastor and his friend pastor. In order for us to make the right decisions as ministers, I encouraged them to pause for a moment and look back on our individual lives and meditate on the hands of the Lord who is the potter. The reason is because when we meditate like that, we can make the right decisions in God’s eyes in our present situation. I think it’s really important to meditate and reflect on our experiences of God’s glory and power in our past life since our God and our King is in control of our lives and we are under His reign. The reason



is because when we meditate on the God's wonderful works that appeared in the past, we can be more certain that our God and our King is now in control of our lives. With this conviction, we will be able to exalt the Lord like David, no matter what circumstances we are in.

### **Second, David wanted to exalt his great God.**

Look at Psalms 145:3 – “Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised, And His greatness is unsearchable.” There is a gospel song “Great is the Lord”. This is the lyrics: “Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise, The city of our God, the holy place, The joy of the whole earth. Great is the Lord in whom we have the victory, He aids us against the enemy. We bow down on our knees. And Lord we want to lift Your Name on high, And Lord we want to thank you for the works You've done in our lives. And Lord we trust in Your unfailing love; For you alone are God eternal, Throughout earth and heaven above.” In Psalms 145:8, the psalmist said that the great God who is highly to be praised loves us with His great lovingkindness. How do we know this? Look at verse 14: “The LORD sustains all who fall And raises up all who are bowed down.” As I meditated on Isaiah 41:10 during the morning prayer meeting on Friday last week, I thought about God's words, “... surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” Even in a frightening and surprising situation, I learned that Immanuel God was with us, and because He was with us, He upheld our right hand (v. 13), and that He is the God who strengthens and raises us again. In Psalms 145:14, David said that with His great love, the great God sustains us who fall and raises us up when we fall into trouble and persecution. How can we know that the great God is loving us with His great lovingkindness? We can see in verses 18-19: “The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them.” Our great God loves us with His great lovingkindness, and “is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth” (v. 18). And as we pray in fear of Him, He hears our cry and saves us. And the great God protects all of us (v. 20) who love God by experiencing His great love [sustaining us (v. 14), answering our prayers (vv. 18-19)]. Therefore, like David, we must be devoted to praise God and to proclaim Him. Look at verses 3, 4, 6: “Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised, And His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise Your works to another, And shall declare Your mighty acts. ... Men shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts, And I will tell of Your greatness.” David was compelled to praise the great God and proclaim His greatness when he considered the great wonders of salvation performed by the great God through His great power. We must dedicate ourselves in giving great glory and praise to the great Lord when we experience God's great love and His great works of salvation in our lives,

### **Third and last, David wanted to exalt his gracious God.**

Look at Psalms 145:8 – “The LORD is gracious and merciful; Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness.” David had no choice but to give praise to God when he considered the greatness of God in his life while meditating

on God as King, because he realized the grace of God. As he meditated on how the great God and the King performed the great miracle of salvation in his life with His great love, he became more and more aware of God's abundant grace. In particular, he saw and experienced that the gracious God "is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works" (v. 9). He also saw and experienced that the gracious God satisfied the desire of every living thing (v. 16). Therefore, David confessed: "The LORD is righteous in all His ways And kind in all His deeds" (v. 17). He dedicated to celebrate this gracious God. Look at verse 7: "They will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness." God is the God who loves His people (children) with His great lovingkindness, is good to us, shows His mercies, and satisfies our desire. What can we do when we celebrate that grace now, remembering the great grace that God has given us in our lives in the past? Look at verse 10: "All Your works shall give thanks to You, O LORD, And Your godly ones shall bless You." We have no choice but to give thanks to God. And we have no choice but to express our gratitude to Him with praise. That's why David (re)dedicated his life in verse 21: "My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, And all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever."

We must live a life that exalts the Lord. The reason is because He is worthy to be exalted. He is our King. He is the God who rules over us and is dominion over us. He has honor, power, and glory. He is the great God. The great God loves us with His great lovingkindness. He is the God who sustains us and answers our prayers when we fall into trouble and persecution. Also, our God is gracious God. He is good to us and shows mercies. Therefore, as we meditate on the Lord's wonders in the past, we must celebrate the grace of God He has given us. Since we are grateful to our great God, we must go out and praise God with great praise. I hope and pray that all of us exalt the Lord.

He who failed to exalt the name of the Lord,

James Kim

(As I see my own disobedience, hypocrisy, arrogance, love, and inability to show grace)

## **Glory to the great Lord**

**“Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised, And His greatness is unsearchable.” (Psalms 145:3)**

The Korean youth soccer team is now playing against Brazil. I think many Korean soccer fans will be watching this soccer game, hoping that Joo-young Park will score a goal just like in Nigeria. Joo-young Park, who is a Christian, knows that he always kneels down and prays with goal ceremony. I remember seeing it on TV news before. As a Christian soccer player, I think it brings glory to God when Park kneels down and prays to God when many people are watching in person or on TV. However, not all of us are famous like Joo-young Park. Nevertheless, in each of our lives we have a responsibility to glorify the great Lord. Focusing on Psalms 145:3, I will try to apply the lessons we learn from Psalms 145 to our lives while meditating on how the psalmist David glorified the great Lord.

### **First, David celebrated the great grace of the Lord.**

Look at Psalms 145:7 – “They will celebrate your abundant goodness ....” David celebrated by remembering the great grace of the great Lord. We can glorify the great Lord by remembering and celebrating the great grace that the great Lord has bestowed upon each of us. However, too many times, we live with little or no oblivion of the great grace God has given us. Therefore, David sought wisdom to count God's grace. We need this kind of wisdom. We must celebrate God's great grace by looking back on our lives and reflecting on the footsteps of God's grace.

We must glorify the great God. In order to do that, we must first take time to look back on our lives. In the midst of that, we must remember God's great grace and celebrate.

### **Second, David praise the great God highly.**

Look at Psalms 145:3 – “Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised, ....” To praise God highly means to declare His great works and mighty acts (v. 4). Therefore, in order to praise God highly, we must meditate on the glorious splendor of His majesty and His wonderful works (v. 5). In particular, in meditating on the Lord's wonders, we must meditate on the goodness and mercies (v. 9) that God has given us. We would not have come thus far without His goodness and His great mercies. Furthermore, we must meditate on the righteousness and love of the Lord (v. 17). We must praise the great God greatly because He who upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down (v. 14) satisfies our desire (v. 16).

Pastor Seong-Geon Hong of Youth with Mission made a distinction between praise and worship. I remember that praise is praising what God has done in our lives. We must cultivate a good habit of looking back on life in a busy life with peace of mind. In the midst of that, we need to know how to see what God has done in our lives with our spiritual eyes. I think we can only acknowledge by faith. Then we will be compelled to praise the great Lord greatly. In worshiping God, we must first prepare our hearts in prayer based on the Word. While meditating on the great grace of God, remembering the great things that the Lord has done to us, we must greatly praise the great Lord with gratitude for that grace. However, if a loud voice of praise raised out of ignorance of not knowing what God has done in our lives is meaningless in the sight of God. Rather, we will only hurt God's ears. God will be glorified when we give thanks to Him in great praise as we remember God's great grace and the great things that He has done in our lives.

### **Third and last, David greatly proclaimed God's greatness.**

Look at Psalms 145:6 – “Men shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts, And I will tell of Your greatness.” David not only praise God's greatness with his lips alone, but he also proclaimed God's greatness through his life. I think this is our shortcoming. We seem to proclaim a great deal of God's greatness with our lips, but we are actually proclaiming too small God in our lives. We are confined in doubts that don't fully believe in the great God. And we are living in anxiety, worry, and fear, and thus showing a little God to non-believers around us. Therefore, we hear them say, 'Is that man's God so small?' We can tell just by looking at our 'small love'. We shout out love for our neighbor, but isn't our love for neighbor too small? If our love of neighbor is as great as the greatness of God, I wonder if our society will still be like this. Our lives are manifesting not a great God, but a God of fighting, separation, jealousy, envy, etc. to the world. We shouldn't be like this anymore. We must live a life proclaiming our great God like David. We must not conceal the great glory of God by minimizing Him to represent 'small God'.

While writing this meditation, I came across news that the Korean youth soccer team lost to Brazil. As I expected, there was no goal ceremony of Joo-young Park. On the Yahoo Internet News, I saw some of the comments in reply: ‘Why did you lose, Christians? It's a Christian national team, and all of them from the coach to the players are Christians. ’ Was it because of lack of your power of prayer compared to Brazil? The national team didn't lose, but the Jesus' team lost.’ What do you think about the phrase ‘The national team didn't lose, but the Jesus' team lost’? The people of the world are looking at all of us, Christians. We are God's children who have responsibility to bring great glory to the great God. How can we bring glory to the great God? Is it by scoring a goal like a soccer player? We must glorify the great God by celebrating His great grace. Also, we must glorify our great God by greatly praising Him. We must glorify God by proclaiming the greatness of God greatly through our lives.

Meditating on the great grace of the great Lord,

James Kim

(With heart of gratitude for the Lord's great grace in doing the great work of Two fish and Five loaves of bread miracle through a very small person like me)

## **Don't trust in man but trust in God.**

### **[Psalms 146]**

Have you ever been betrayed by a loved one you believed so much? Have you ever thought that you are betraying God? Yesterday I meditated on Jeremiah 11:15 at the Morning Prayer meeting: "What right has My beloved in My house When she has done many vile deeds? Can the sacrificial flesh take away from you your disaster, So that you can rejoice?" God said to the people of Judah, who had been committing prostitutes, who worshiped and served many idols, who came up to the God's temple and offered the sacrificial flesh maybe in order to cover up their sins: 'What is my beloved doing in my temple?' As I meditated on this word of God, I asked the question, 'What am I, my family, and my church doing in the house of God?' I wonder if, like the people of Judah, I respect God with my lips but my heart is far away from Him and worship idols, which are spiritual adultery, and go up to the temple of the Lord on Sunday with the offerings necessary for worship? God's voice is saying, 'What are you doing in My house?' In Jeremiah 11:9, the people of Judah's sin of idolatry is referred to as "conspiracy". As I thought about this word "conspiracy", I wondered if God would not have felt betrayed by the people of Judah. When we think of the Israelites who committed spiritual adultery by following idols, turning their backs against God, God must have felt betrayed by the rebellious Israelites. The thoughts that come to my mind during this meditation is, 'Can we really trust people? Can we really rely on them?' Furthermore, 'Am I really a person who can be trusted to the other people?' What do you think?

Psalms 146 is the first of the five "Hallelujah Psalms" (Ps. 146, 147, 148, 149, 150) (Park). That's why the psalmist starts Psalms 146 like this: "Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! I will praise the LORD while I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being" (vv. 1-2). The psalmist is telling us, "Hallelujah," that is, "Praise the Lord". He is telling us to praise the Lord together and while we live. What is the reason? Why should we all praise God in our lifetimes? The reason is because even people cannot be trusted, only God can be trusted forever (Park). So, the psalmist said in verse 3: "Do not trust in princes, In mortal man, in whom there is no salvation." In a word, he is advising us not to rely on people. More specifically, he urges us not to rely on "princes", that is, 'people who are influential in people's eyes' (Park) or "mortal man". What is the reason? Why shouldn't we trust in (other) people? The reason is because people have no power to help (v. 3). So, this is what the psalmist says about someone who has no power to help: "His spirit departs, he returns to the earth; In that very day his thoughts perish" (v. 4). When we die, our fragile humans have no choice but to return to the dust. How can we rely on such humans? Dr. Park said this about trusting people: 'Trusting people is an evil idea that blocks the way of trust in God. Therefore, this poet first forbids the sin of human trust in order to get others to go to the act of trusting in God'

(Park). Trusting those who have no power to help prevents trusting in God who is our true helper. Therefore, we must first stop trusting in people who have no power to help, as the psalmist advises. We must stop trusting people.

The psalmist is exhorting us like this: “How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, Whose hope is in the LORD his God” (v. 5). That's right. Those who have hope in God are blessed. Blessed are those whose help is God. Therefore, we should make God as our helper, not those who have no power to help. Blessed are such ones. So why is the psalmist exhorting us to make God as our helper and hope in Him? What are the reasons? I want to think about three reasons:

### **The first reason is because God is the true Almighty God who made heaven and earth.**

Look at Psalms 146:6a – “Who made heaven and earth, The sea and all that is in them; ....” Whom should we trust? Should we trust another creature or Creator God? We already know the answer. Of course, even though we know that we must trust in Creator God rather than creature, I don't really understand why we often trust in people rather than God. We must trust in Creator God. Why? The reason is because our Creator God is the true Almighty God who created heaven and earth. Only Almighty God can help us in the day of trouble. The lives that come to the dirt and return to the dirt have no strength to help us. Therefore, we must trust in the Creator God, who is the true God and the Almighty.

### **The second reason is because God is faithful.**

Look at Psalms 146:6b – “... the LORD, who remains faithful forever.” The ones we often trust in are not faithful and truthful. People are very cunning. We lie. But God is truthful and faithful God. God is eternally truthful and faithful in fulfilling the covenant He made with His people (Park). Even though we are unfaithful in our responsibilities in the covenant relationship with God, God is faithful and cannot deny Himself. He is faithful forever. Therefore, we must trust in the faithful and truthful God.

### **The third and final reason is because God loves the righteous.**

Look at Psalms 146:8 – “The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; The LORD raises up those who are bowed down; The LORD loves the righteous.” Because God loves us, we must make God our help. How does God really love us? He does justice to us (v. 7). Our God is a just God. That is why He is the God who saves us (v. 7) when we are oppressed by judging justly and by judging the wicked (v. 9). Therefore, we must trust in just God. Also, our God gives us daily food. That is, the God of love provides us with what we need (v. 7). The loving God, who gives food to the hungry (v. 7), sustains fatherless and widows (v. 9). In other words, our God is the God who supports orphans and widows. Therefore, we must trust in God who supports and sustains us. Also, the God of love

is the God who heals us (v. 8). Not only there are those who are physically blind but also spiritually blind. Therefore, when the psalmist says “the Lord gives sight to the blind” (v. 8) means not only that God heals those who are physically blind but also those who are spiritually blind. Therefore, we must trust in God who heals us. The God of love is the God who lifts up those who are bowed down (v. 8). Here, “those who are bowed down” refer to those who have become humble (Park). In other words, our God is a God who exalts the lowly. The God of love is the God who lifts these lowly people. Therefore, we must trust in God, who lifts us up when we become humble. The God of love is the God who protects His people (v. 9). Even when we live like strangers in this world of travelers, our God protects us. Therefore, we who have received His protection must trust in God.

We shouldn't trust in people who have no power to help. If we keep on trusting in people, we may need to be betrayed by people. That way we will no longer trust in people. In Psalms 146, the psalmist is telling us to trust in God alone. He is telling us to hope only in God. That is blessing. Why should we trust in God? The reason is because God is the true Almighty God who created heaven and earth. Also, the reason we should make God as our help is because God is faithful. Our God is faithful, so we must trust in Him. He will help us.

Trusting in God who is my help,

James Kim

["Jesus, My Lord to Thee I Cry ..."]



## How good and pleasant it is to sing praise to our God!

### [Psalms 147]

If we look at Psalms 147:1, the psalmist confesses: "Praise the LORD. How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him!" Why is he saying that it is good, pleasant and fitting to praise God? What is the reason? The reason is because the Lord builds up Jerusalem. Look at verse 2: "The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the exiles of Israel." Here, the word that the Lord builds up Jerusalem means that He is building God's people, that is, He is building the church. Why is the Lord building the church? The reason is because the Lord loves and is pleased with the church. Look at verses 10-11: "His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of a man; the LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love." The true church is a gathering of those who fear God and who put their hope in His unfailing love. Since the Lord is building such church, we must praise God.

Then, how is the Lord building the church? We can find the answer in Psalms 147 in five ways.

### **First, the Lord is building the church by gathering the outcasts and heals the brokenhearted.**

Look at Psalms 147:2-3: "The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted And binds up their wounds." This word can be understood better if we know the background of this poem a little more. The background of this poem is that the poem was written during the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, that is during the reconstruction of the city of Jerusalem, the temple, and the country after returning from captivity to Jerusalem (Babylon). Therefore, the word that God gathers the outcasts and heals the brokenhearted means that God would bring the Israelites who were living in captivity to return to Jerusalem again and restores them. This isn't difficult for God. So the psalmist says that the Lord counts the number of the stars and gives names to all of them (v. 4), and is great and abundant in strength and his understanding is infinite (v. 5). The Lord, who gathers all the outcasted Israelites is a great and powerful God who has nothing difficult. Our Lord gathers those who are scattered in building the church. And not only He gathers them, He heals those who have broken heart in building His church and binds their wounds (v. 3). When the Israelites were disciplined by God for their sins, they were taken captive to Babylon. And when they repented and turned to God, God gathered them back to Jerusalem and healed their brokenhearted and bound up their wounds. So the prophet Hosea also exhorted the Israelites: "'Come, let us return to the LORD For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us'" (Hos. 6:1). What

do you think? Indeed, do we see the Lord fulfilling the promise of Matthew 16:18 in building His church by gathering the scattered and healing the wounded? If we answer “Yes”, then we should praise God as those who taste God's goodness. Praising God like this is good and pleasant.

### **Second, the Lord is building the church by sustaining the humble.**

Look at Psalms 147:6 – “The LORD sustains the humble but casts the wicked to the ground.” The Israelites were humbled by God's discipline. Bound by God through Babylon, they humbled themselves before God. God sustained the humbled Israelites. I remember the words of Isaiah 41:10, 13 that I meditated on during the Morning Prayer meeting. God has promised to uphold us with His righteous right hand. And according to the promised word, the Lord is upholding our weak hands. God's righteous hand holds the church, and He is building His church. But if the church is proud before God, the Lord first breaks our pride and humbles us in building His church. The reason is because God shows grace to the humble. Therefore, our church must humble ourselves before God. In the meantime, we must experience with faith that the Lord is sustaining our weak hands. At that time, we have no choice but to praise God by singing “Hallelujah”. Praising God like this is good and pleasant.

### **Third, the Lord is building the church by providing us with what we need.**

Look at Psalms 147:8-9: “He covers the sky with clouds; he supplies the earth with rain and makes grass grow on the hills. He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call.” If Creator God gives the necessary things to the creatures He has made, how much more will He not give us who are made in His image the things we need? God supplies the earth with rain and provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call. So the psalmist says: “He ... satisfies you with the finest of wheat” (v. 14). God is the God who provides the church abundantly. However, one of the reasons why we become in need is, of course, our sins. One of them is a stewardship. We may become in need because we fail to wisely manage the abundant things God has provided. In Psalms 147, the psalmist teaches us that people have nothing to worry about with food problems (Park). If we look at Matthew 6:30b-33 of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is telling us like this: “... You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” Worrying about what we will eat, what to drink, what to wear doesn't solve the problem. But we are weak in faith and continue to worry about eating and living like unbelievers. It isn't only the individual or the family that we have these worries, but also the church as well. The psalmist's message is not to worry. The Lord is telling us that in building His church, He will supply and fill the needs of the church. Praising God while experiencing this truth through faith is good and pleasant.

### **Fourth, the Lord protects His church.**

Look at Psalms 147:13 – “for he strengthens the bars of your gates and blesses your people within you.” This means that God will safely protect the land of those who trust him (Park). When we apply this to the church, the Lord who is the head of the church safely protects the believers who trust Him. Looking at Psalms 146:9, which we have already meditated on, we are taught that God is a God who protects the alien. In addition, in Psalms 145:20, which we have already meditated on, God says that He watches over all who love Him. God, who protects the alien and all those who love Him, loves and protects the church, His people, whom He bought with the precious blood of His begotten Son Jesus Christ. As a result, the church enjoys peace through God’s protection (147:14). And the church that enjoys peace deserves to praise God. This is good and pleasant in the sight of God.

### **Fifth and last, the Lord is building the church by sending His word to the church.**

Look at Psalms 147:18-19: “He sends his word and melts them; he stirs up his breezes, and the waters flow. He has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel.” God is the God who not only sends His word to us, but also shows the word to us. In other words, the Lord speaks to us and also reveals His word to us. That was why Peter in Matthew 16 was asked by Jesus “who do you say that I am?” (v. 15) and he answered “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (v. 16) because Father God revealed this to him (v. 17). When we make the right confession of faith due to the revelation of His word, the church can be firmly built on the rock. The Lord is doing this building His church firmly. Therefore, we cannot help but praise God. This is good in God's sight.

It is good, pleasant, and fitting to praise God (Ps. 147:1). The reason is because God is building His church because He loves us and is pleased with us (v. 2). How is the Lord building His church? First, the Lord is building His church by gathering the outcasts and heals the brokenhearted (vv. 2-3). Second, the Lord is building the church by sustaining the humble (v. 6). Third, the Lord is building His church by providing us with what we need (vv. 8-9). Fourth, the Lord protects His church (v. 13). Fifth and last, the Lord is building the church by sending His word to the church. Therefore, it is fitting for us to praise God. Praising God is good and pleasant.

As I hold onto the word of promise that the Lord will build His church (Mt. 16:18),

James Kim

[Hymn “Hail to the Brightness of Zion’s Glad Morning”]

## **Praise the Lord!**

**“Praise the LORD. How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him!” (Psalms 147:1)**

At the early Morning Prayer service on Saturday, I sang the hymn “Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine.” While singing this song to God, I went to the chorus and looked at the phrase “This is my story, ...” and thought about it for a while. I thought about my story of 50 years and asked myself what my testimony is in my story. In particular, before the 25th birthday of Victory Presbyterian Church, I thought about my church’s 25 years story for a moment. I have a heart to pray for the 25th anniversary of my church that greatly praises the Lord, the faithful Lord, the gracious Lord, the Lord of mercy and compassion, the Lord of forgiveness, and the Lord of discipline and so on. With that heart, I proclaimed the words of Psalm 147:1-3 at this morning's prayer meeting. In particular, while reading verse 1 and focusing on these three words, “good”, “pleasant” and “fitting”, I meditated on three reasons why praising God is good, pleasant, and fitting. I think these three reasons are the Lord’s will toward Victory Presbyterian Church.

**First, the reason why praising the Lord is good is because the Lord is the Lord who builds His church.**

Look at Psalms 147:2 – “The LORD builds up Jerusalem; ....” Since the end of last year, Victory Presbyterian Church has been meditating on the book of Nehemiah every Sunday worship service. In the book of Nehemiah that we have already meditated on, we can see that God used Nehemiah and the Israelites to build the walls of Jerusalem. However, Nehemiah confessed, knowing that the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem was not done by himself and the Israelites, but through “the good hand of my God was on me” (Neh. 2:8, 18). Likewise, our church members should acknowledge and confess that the good hand of our Lord was on us that Victory Presbyterian Church is being built up according to His promised word of Matthew 16:18, “... I ... will build my church.” Therefore, we must experience the fact that praising the Lord is good. In the midst of offering such praise, we must participate in the good work that the Lord has built through the grace of His goodness. The church that the Lord builds, we must participate in building each other up as the Lord shows us our gaps and breaks us and rebuilds us. In particular, after the church's 25th anniversary service, we must more fully participate faithfully in the Lord’s work in building ourselves, our families and our church. If we fail to build ourselves we will never be able to build our families. Also, we cannot build the church if we cannot build our families. All of these things, like the word of

the Lord's promise in Matthew 16:18, the Lord Himself will build in His way and in His time according to His good will. I hope and pray that we can praise our Lord as we taste (experience) His goodness.

**Second, the reason why praising the Lord is pleasant is because the Lord gathers the scattered ones.**

Look at Psalms 147:2 – "... he gathers the exiles of Israel." In the Bible, there are scenes where the Lord scattered the Israelites when they didn't repent their sins. For example, in Deuteronomy 4:27-30, there is a scene where the Lord scattered the Israelites among the nations because of His punishment for their sins, so that there were not many remaining people. Then, in the midst of suffering and pain, the Israelites cried out to the Lord and met (experienced) Him. Eventually, in the end, the Lord made the Israelites return to Him and obey His word.

This pattern of the Lord's work is still happening in our days. The Lord is scattering us when the church, His people, don't repent our sins. When the Lord scatters due to our unrepented sins in the church, there are not many remaining in the church. But what is surprising is that we don't pray to God even in our suffering and pain. While the church isn't shining the light to the dark world, but rather is hiding God's glory and thus has become a mockery of the world, we aren't crying out to God in the midst of suffering and pain. Therefore, because we cannot meet (experience) God, we don't return to Him in repentance and obey His words. What is our responsibility? We must participate in the Lord's work of gathering the scattered people of God. Too many of Christians are wandering away from the church, living scattered because they were hurt in the church and for other reasons. The Lord wants to bring them back together and He wants to use us. Therefore, since we see beauty in God's providence of this scattering and gathering of His people, we must give our hearts a joyful effort in gathering His scattered people to His church. And we must praise the Lord with all our hearts because we see His beauty.

**Third and last, the reason why praising the Lord is fitting is because the Lord heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.**

Look at Psalms 147:3 – "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." Looking at the Lord's healing work here, we can see that the Lord first heals brokenhearted and then heals their external wounds. How appropriate is the Lord's healing ministry? But even more surprising than this, I believe that our Heavenly Father is "The Wounded Healer" (Nowen). The Lord Jesus, who was wounded on the cross and who still has those wounds in heaven, heals us and binds our wounds. But we are rejecting the Lord's hand and the healing and binding wounded Healer. At least in the days of Hosea, even though the prophet said to the Israelites "Come, let us return to the Lord" (Hos 6:1), who would heal them and bandage them, the Israelites ran far away from the Lord. I think one of the reasons is because they think that God has hurt them. Of course they don't say this. Rather, we see in ourselves the likeness of Jonah who gives up on God in resentment about why God hurts me even though He says

He loves me. But we are forgetting a very important truth here. Heavenly Father, who is the wounded healer, was still when He saw His only begotten Son Jesus was hurt on the cross by sinners, doesn't just watch us getting hurt. The Lord is the God who wants to heal and bind our hurts and wounds. Therefore, as we experience His proper healing and binding work, we must praise the Lord.

We should be compelled to praise the great Lord for His great grace (Ps. 145:3, 7). The reason why praising our great Lord is good, pleasant, and fitting is because He has built us and gathers the scattered ones and heals the brokenhearted and binds our wounds. After praising and worshiping God, we must participate in the three works of the Lord: the work of building, the work of gathering the scattered, and the work of healing and binding. Let us be faithful in doing the ministry of good, pleasant and fitting in the sight of God.

With gratitude to God for telling me through His word the ministries I should be faithful,

James Kim

(Wanting to be faithful to the ministry that the Lord entrusts to me)

## **It is good to praise our God.**

**“Praise the LORD. How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him!” (Psalms 147:1)**

At 6 o'clock on Wednesday evening, I had a privilege to lead a viewing service. About 1 year and 6 months ago, in the same place, in front of the same pulpit, I led the viewing service of my beloved third uncle pastor Andrew Kim. After the viewing service, as I watched the condolers trying to comfort the bereaved family members, I thought this and that. And one of the thoughts was Ecclesiastes 7:2 – “It is better to go to a house of mourning Than to go to a house of feasting, Because that is the end of every man, And the living takes it to heart.” I had deep thoughts about my own death since we will all die some day. After the bereaved family greeted all the visitors, we prayed together in front of the deceased's coffin. The children kept crying and it really broke my heart. Indeed, it was a time to reaffirm that the only hope in this earth is Jesus.

After the viewing service, I couldn't eat with the bereaved family and had to come to church because there was a Wednesday night prayer meeting. As I praised God during the prayer meeting, I sang ‘I love you, my Jesus.’ It was because I wanted to confess my love to Jesus who is my true hope, joy, and life. In the midst of that, when I began to proclaim the word of God, I stopped at Psalms 147, “Praise the LORD. How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him!” Although I meditated the whole chapter Psalms 147 and prepared my sermon on it, I was only able to meditate and preached on verse 1. I was blessed by just verse 1. And my soul was enriched by just verse 1. I meditated on three things regarding Psalms 147:1.

### **First, it is good to praise our God.**

Our God is good. The saints who taste and know the goodness of God (Ps. 34:8) cannot but praise God. In particular, as in Romans 8:28, the believers, who have experienced God causing all things to work together for good to those who love Him, those who are called according to His purpose, cannot help but praise God's goodness. That's why we sing the gospel song “God is so good”. Even if we look at the grief of our loved one's death, we still can praise God's goodness through the hopeful Lord. This is because I believe that God will reveal His goodness in all these things in His sovereign providence. Clearly, I believe that the good God will turn our sorrows into joy. Therefore, I praise God for His goodness.

### **Second, it is pleasant to praise our God.**

One day my wife came home from someone's funeral and said to me: 'I saw the glory of man.' It makes sense when I hear my wife's words that she saw the glory of man at the funeral but she saw the glory of God at my third uncle, Pastor Andrew Kim's funeral. If we live for the glory of God and die, then our death is very beautiful in the sight of the Lord. When we see the glory of God through such beautiful death, we cannot but praise the high and greatness of the Lord. When we see God's beauty through beautiful death, we cannot but praise God. Our God is beautiful. The saints who see the beauty of God with their spiritual eyes praise God. I remember the words of Psalms 27:4 – "One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD And to meditate in His temple." As we behold the beauty of the Lord, I hope and pray that we will praise Him forever in the house of the Lord.

### **Third and last, it is fitting to praise our God.**

Our God is worthy to be praised. The saints who experience His goodness and beauty are compelled to praise God. No matter how painful or difficult we may be, the saints who believe in a good and beautiful God praise Him. The reason is because no matter what situation they may be in, they know that it is fitting to praise God. Paul and Silas in Acts 16 did that. Although they were in prison, they prayed to God and praised Him (Acts 16:25). Praise is not driven by circumstances. Praise transcends circumstances and offers to God. Therefore, we praise God only by faith. We praise Him in faith because we know that it's fitting to praise God.

I still remember when I went to see my grandfather who was suffering from cancer, he was lying on a bed and then sat down and asked me to sing the hymn "O Thou, in Whose Presence". I just want to share two verses: (v. 1) "O Thou, in whose presence my soul takes delight, On whom in affliction I call, My comfort by day, and my song in the night, My hope, my salvation, my all! (5) "Dear Shepherd! I hear, and will follow Thy call; I know the sweet wound of Thy voice; Restore and defend me, for Thou art my all, And in Thee I will ever rejoice. A-men. I praise the Lord who is my joy, my life and my true hope. I want to praise God for His highness and greatness until I die. I want to praise God's great love until my last breath in this earth. The reason is because it is good, pleasant and fitting to praise God.

Praise the Lord, O my soul!,

James Kim

(As I remember that joyful moment of learning that God has been doing His work of salvation among the bereaved family after yesterday graveyard worship)



## **Praise the Lord from the heavens and the earth!**

### **[Psalms 148]**

During the Wednesday prayer meeting last week, we learned that praising God is good, pleasant and fitting because the Lord is building His church based on the words of Psalm 147 (v. 1). In building the true church, the saints who fear God and seek God's lovingkindness, the Lord (1) gathers the scattered and heals the wounded, (2) sustains the humble, and (3) provides the things we need, (4) protects us, and (5) sends and reveals His word to us. Therefore, we must praise God. We have learned that this is good, pleasant, and fitting in the sight of the Lord.

If we look at Psalms 148:1a, 7a, this is what the Bible says: "Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD from the heavens ... Praise the LORD from the earth." The Bible is saying that everything in the heavens or on the earth should praise God. Here, all things in the heavens (vv. 1-6) refer to "all his angels" and "all his heavenly hosts" (v. 2). In other words, the Bible is saying that all the Lord's angels in the heavens should praise God. Besides all His angels, the Bible is saying that "sun and moon" and "shining stars" should praise the Lord (v. 3) and "highest heavens" and "waters above the skies" should praise Him (v. 4). Here, "highest heavens" refers to 'the highest celestial world' and "waters above the skies" refers to 'water in the clouds' (Park). In a word, the Bible is saying that everything in the heavens, all beings in the heavens or in the skies or in the clouds should praise the Lord. We can imagine a little bit of all the angels praising God in heaven. Of course, the angels mentioned here don't refer to the fallen angels, Satan and his fallen angels. Of course they should also praise the Lord. But these fallen angels will never praise Him because they are against the Lord. All the Lord's angels and all His heavenly hosts mentioned in verse 2 are the angels without sins and they praise the Lord. When we imagine these angels are absorbed in in this praise, how excited we can be when we think about becoming like angels on the day of Jesus' return, wearing sinless spiritual and glorious bodies and giving praise to the holy God. In prayer and expectation, we are eagerly waiting for that day to come soon. But the hard part we can imagine is that the sun and moon, shining stars, highest heavens and waters above the skies are praising the Lord. Of course, since these are all creatures created by God, they should praise their Creator God. But it is true that I don't understand how these things can praise God. However, the thought that arose in my mind as I was reading Dr. Park's commentary on these verses is that sun, moon, stars and all of them are praising their Creator God through their existence. Of course, this isn't what we think of praising God with the mouth. We usually use pianos and instruments to open our mouths and sing out our praises to Him. But sun, moon, stars and so on cannot praise like that. Therefore, they praise God, unlike us, the humans. When we think about it from this point of view, I think we can understand the words that the sun, moon, and stars and so on praise God. The important thing is not how to sing, but that everything in the heavens should

praise God. Why is that so? What is the reason? Look at verse 5-6: “Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created. He set them in place for ever and ever; he gave a decree that will never pass away.” The reason why all things in the heavens should praise God is because God commanded them and they were created by Him. In other words, since God made all the things in the heavens, such as angels, sun, moon, stars, and so on by His Word, and set them in place for ever and ever, they must praise the Lord. The psalmist says that not only must all things in the heavens praise God, but also all things on the earth must praise God (vv. 7-14). He urges great sea creatures and all ocean depths (v. 7), lightening and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds (v. 8), mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars (v. 9), and wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds (v. 10) to praise the Lord. And he urges kings of the earth and all nations, princes and all rulers on earth (v. 11), and young men and maidens, old men and children (v. 12) to praise the Lord. This is to say that all creatures, people and all natural objects on the earth should praise the Lord. Here, the word that all natural objects on the earth should praise the Lord is same as sun, moon, and stars and so on to praise the Lord by just remaining as they are. Because they were created under the sovereignty of Creator God, they are praising the Lord and His greatness by inhabiting on this earth just as they are as God’s creations (Park). It seems like the psalmist is urging every human beings on the earth to praise the Lord since even those creations without reason are praising Him in their own way (Park). That is why all the believers or even nonbelievers should praise the Lord (Park). In particular, the psalmist is telling “his people” or “all his saints”, His chosen people who are close to His heart, to praise the Lord (v. 14). What is the reason? The reason is because “He has raised up for his people a horn” (v. 14). In other words, because God has saved all of us, all believers should praise God. We are saints saved by God. We are God's people and children who are close to His heart. We are God's people who have become new creation in Christ Jesus. Therefore, as the saved children of God, we must praise the Lord of salvation.

The psalmist exhorts, “Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens” (v. 13). Everything in the heavens or on the earth must praise Lord’s name. What is the reason? The reason is because His name alone is exalted. This is because His splendor is above the earth and the heavens. Let us all praise the greatness of the Lord.

Wanting to praise the greatness of the Lord as much as possible until my last breath on this earth,

James Kim

(Wishing to sing the praise of His salvation forever)

## **The Lord who beautifies the afflicted ones with salvation**

### **[Psalms 149]**

What do you life is? I think life is beautiful. So, one day (December 2007), I wrote an article under the heading “Life is Beautiful”

‘Life is beautiful.

Life is beautiful even in pain.

Life is beautiful because there are tears of prayer.

Life is beautiful because there is a family, that is a community of love.

Life is beautiful because there is restoration and transformation.

Life is beautiful because we can see Jesus in us.

Life is beautiful because we experience God's presence.

Life is beautiful because it reveals the glory of God.’

The reason I remember this article is because of Psalms 149:4 – “For the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation.” The psalmist says, ‘God will make the afflicted ones beautiful with His salvation.’ This word is eschatological. It refers to salvation coming to us in the end times. This salvation that will come to us in the last day will inevitably bring us to victory (vv. 6-9, Park). This victory is “an honor” that God will give us (v. 9). How does God give this honor and victory to us? Look at verses 6-9a: “Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand, To execute vengeance on the nations And punishment on the peoples, To bind their kings with chains And their nobles with fetters of iron, To execute on them the judgment written; ...” God will give us victory by making us to give praise, honor and glory to God through our mouths, and by giving us the word of God, a two-edged sword, in our hands, to inflict vengeance and punish the nations with this. However, we must not interpret these words as words of prophecy that will be unconditionally fulfilled in the end time. The reason is because the beautiful work of God's salvation in the future, which has not yet been fulfilled, is already partially being done in our lives. In other words, even though God will make the afflicted ones, the saints who are suffering on this earth, beautiful with salvation at the Second Coming of Jesus, even now in our lives, God beautifies us by delivering us from adversity and suffering. We are already experiencing, at least partially, the fullness of beautifying us with the salvation that has not yet been fulfilled. The reason is because about 2,000 years ago, Jesus died on the cross and resurrected and accomplished the work of salvation. We are already saved. As those who are united with Jesus in His death and resurrection, all our sins have

already been forgiven by His death on the cross, and we are justified by His resurrection. Therefore, we can say: 'God has already made us beautiful because He already united us to His death and resurrection.' Why does God beautify us with this saving grace? The reason is because God who made us (v. 2) takes delight in us, His people (v. 4).

How are we, who are partially experiencing the grace that makes us beautiful through the work of God's salvation, to live in response to His saving grace while we are living on this earth? In other words, not only that God has already made us beautiful with His salvation, but also in the future He will make us beautiful with the consummation of His salvation. We who live between this already and not yet time, how should we live so that our lives may be beautiful in the sight of God? In a word, we must praise God. We must sing for joy to our God (v. 5), who takes delight in us and makes us beautiful with His salvation. We must praise God, who gives honor to us (vv. 5, 9). Look at verses 1, 2, 3, 5: "Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints" (v. 1), "Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the people of Zion be glad in their King" (v. 2), "Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with tambourine and harp" (v. 3), "Let the saints rejoice in this honor and sing for joy on their beds" (v. 5). We should give thanks to God for the grace that God has already made us beautiful with His salvation in Jesus Christ, and should sing to the Lord with joy. And we must praise God with a new song as we experience the saving grace of God who rescues us and make us victorious in the pain and adversity of spiritual warfare in our daily lives. Furthermore, we must praise God with faith as we look to God's saving grace that will make us beautiful because of the glorious salvation that Jesus will grant us in His Second Coming. We should praise God until we die. It is beautiful to praise God.

After I wrote "Life is Beautiful" in December 2007, I wrote "Even Death is Beautiful" about two months later, in February 2008:

'Even death is beautiful.

Even death is beautiful in the midst of sorrows.

Even death is beautiful because there are tears of love.

Even death is beautiful because there is living hope of eternal meeting in heaven

in the midst of momentary separation.

Even death is beautiful because we lived a beautiful life.

Even death is beautiful because we see Jesus' beauty.

Even death is beautiful because we praise the greatness of the Lord together.

Even death is beautiful because God's great glory is being manifested even in death.

With gratitude for the grace of God who makes us beautiful with His salvation and makes us live beautifully in this ugly world,

James Kim

(Dedicated to praise the greatness of the Lord until I have breath)

## **Lord, please make me beautiful.**

**“For the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation.” (Psalms 149:4)**

In the morning of the New Year, even though I want to face hopeful New Year, I woke up early with heavy heart. My heart was more tired than my body. So I rolled around in bed because I didn't know what to do. Then my oldest son, Dillon came to me and told me that there was about 100 ants in the children's bathroom trash can. So I woke up quickly from the bed. And when I went to their bathroom with the ant killer spray, there were only about 10 ants in the trash can. Haha. I sprayed the ant-killer and put the trash in a bag. Then, after washing the trash can with water, putting it back in place, I lie down on my bed again. But I couldn't sleep and a lot of thought came to my mind. One of the thoughts that was in my mind was to go see grandma Park on our church at a nursing home. Since I had experienced being strengthened many times when I visited her, especially when my heavy heart felt light in tears when I stood before her and sang the hymn “Since Christ My Soul From Sin Set Free”, I arose from my bed and headed to the nursing home. When I arrived and went to her room, I was surprised to see an oxygen respirator in her mouth. I was worried because she didn't look so good. So I asked a working woman who was still helping another grandmother in the same room. And she said that she didn't know and told me to ask another person who was in charge of Grandma Park.

Looking at my beloved grandma Park, who didn't remember anything and was suffering with dementia, I thought about the memories I have with her from when she first came to our church. Among those memories, I remember two words that she said to me when I visited her before: ‘Victory Presbyterian Church is our church’ and ‘I suffered a lot’. When I recalled that memory, I could feel that she loved Victory Presbyterian Church very much and I should also love our church more like her. I remembered my grandparents as well. I remembered what my grandmother said when I visited her when she was in a hospital. She told me to ‘Take care of Victory Presbyterian Church’ and it sounded like her last will to me who was an assistant pastor at Victory Presbyterian Church. Also, when I remembered when grandma Park said to me, ‘I suffered a lot,’ I thought that I should devoted more and serve Victory Presbyterian Church. Among these thoughts, I remembered the words of Psalms 149:4 that I meditated on during the Morning Prayer meeting this Wednesday. And I prayed to God with my heart, ‘Lord, please make me beautiful.’ As I prayed to God, ‘Lord, please make me beautiful’ and as I experienced the Spirit delivering me from my heavy heart, I kept looking at beloved grandma Park. Although she had no memory due to dementia, I was comforted by the fact that God, who loves her, remembered her also remembered me. Meanwhile, a working woman in the same room was trying to feed something to another Korean grandmother sitting in a wheel chair. And

I heard the woman's sound 'Grandma, spit, spit out' in Korean. The moment I heard that, I thought about what to spit out from my heart. I found out after talking with the nurse in charge of Grandma Park that the reason why her lips were so swollen was because she kept vomiting out nutrients that entered her stomach through a hose. When I heard that reason, I also wanted to spit out and vomit all the thoughts in my mind that kept on tempting me. I kept praying to God with my heart. I prayed that God would allow me to spit out all the sinful thoughts so that I would not fall into temptations and sin against God. I asked God to deliver me from all those temptations and make me beautiful in His sight. In the midst of that, I remembered the words of Psalms 147:11 that the Lord delights in those who fear Him and who put their hope in His unfailing love. I longed for His unfailing love because I wanted to love fellow brothers and sisters in Christ with His unfailing love in this New Year. I hoped and prayed that this year could be a year of love and forgiveness.

After I met my beloved church grandma Park, I got into the car and turned on the CD player. And the Korean gospel song "Thank You, I Didn't Realize" came out. Among the lyrics, the word "precious" was first heard in my ears. I was comforted by the fact that I am so precious in the sight of God. And I drove to Victory Presbyterian Church. And on this first day of the New Year, in the pastoral room of Victory Presbyterian Church, which the Lord loved and gave the promise of 'I will build my church' (Mt. 16:18), I am meditating on the word of God and writing this quite time meditation incoherently. I am praying for comfort in my affliction (Ps. 119:49-50) while remembering the promises of God, when my heart is heavy and I cannot stand alone due to unexpected hardships in this New Year. The word of the Lord will save us. The Lord will make us hope. I hope and pray that we rejoice in that hope and better prepare for the Second Coming of the Lord. When He comes back, He will make us all the most beautiful.

With the heart of gratitude for God's grace in beautifying such weak and ugly man like me,

James Kim

(As I think about God's beautiful people)

## **“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord”**

### **[Psalms 150]**

Today, I finally started to meditate on the words of Psalms 150, the last chapter of the Book of Psalms. On Wednesday, September 21, 2005, after I started meditating on the words of Psalms chapter 1, 4 years and 9 days later (September 30, 2009), I am finally meditating on Psalms 150. About 3-4 weeks ago during the Saturday morning prayer, a thought came into my mind that these meditations of the Book of Psalms may be published in future. So I started to edit them from Psalms chapter 1 and I am still editing them these days too. Personally, I am very grateful to God. I am just grateful to God for allowing me to meditate on the words of the Psalms for about four years so that I can become a little bit like a psalmist without even me knowing. In particular, as I meditate on the psalms, I am grateful for the grace that God has made to imitate the psalmist's prayers. Among those prayers, I praised God's goodness as I start my personal prayer after I preached word of God at the Morning Prayer meeting yesterday. The Lord enabled me to praise the gospel song “God is so good” , “Heart and soul/ I never want anything” and who God is. Like the psalmist, and just as Paul and Silas prayed and praised in prison in Acts 16, I also enjoyed the time of praying and praising God. And I personally thank all of you. I am sure it wasn't easy for you to continue listening to my sermons and meditations from Psalms 1 to 150 through such lacking servant like me for 4 years. That's why I am grateful to all of you for having the time to faithfully listen to the messages of Psalms until the end.

Today I would like to meditate on Psalms 150, the last Psalms. Psalms 150 is the last Hallelujah psalms among the words of Psalms 146 to 150, which are “Hallelujah” psalms, and is the climax of Hallelujah (Psalms). In particular, in verse 6, the last verse of Psalms 150, the climax of Hallelujah was reached, and the psalmist said: “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.” Today, I would like to meditate on four things about praise under the heading, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord” (note: based on Pastor MacArthur's commentary).

### **The first thing I want to think about is the question of where should those who have breath praise God?**

Look at Psalms 150:1 – “Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.” The psalmist says that we should praise God “in his sanctuary” and “in his mighty heavens”. What does it mean? Here, “his sanctuary” refers to the temple in Jerusalem and “his mighty heavens” refers to heaven. In a word, it



means that those who have breath should praise God on the earth and in the heavens (148:1, 7) (MacArthur). In short, we must praise God by mobilizing all places to praise (Park). We must praise God everywhere. We must praise God forever, not only while we live on this earth, but also when we go to heaven.

### **The second thing I want to think about is the question of why should those who have breath praise God?**

Why is the psalmist encouraging everyone who has breath to praise the Lord? What are the reasons? There are two reasons:

(1) The first reason is because of what God has done.

Look at Psalms 150:2a – “Praise him for his acts of power ....” What are God's acts of power? For example, God's acts of power are sustain us, guiding us, and protecting us and so on. Especially when we talk about God's acts of power, the power of God's salvation cannot be left out. At the time of the Exodus, God revealed His power when He delivered the Israelites out of Egypt. He also revealed His power both in the wilderness and in the land of Canaan. We must praise God for His acts of power because we already experienced this power of God, we are experiencing it, and will experience it in the future as well.

(2) The second reason is because of who He is.

Look at Psalms 150:2b – “... praise him for his surpassing greatness.” Our God is great God. We must praise this great God. Especially when we consider the saving grace that our great God has shown us who are very little because He loves us with His great love, we must praise our great God. We must praise Him for His mighty actions and His greatness.

### **The third thing I want to think about is the question of how should those who have breath praise God?**

Look at Psalms 150:3-5: “Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals.” The psalmist urges us to praise God with trumpets, harp, lyre, tambourine, strings, flute and cymbals. What does it mean? In a word, it means to praise God by mobilizing all instruments that can be used to praise Him (Park).

### **The last and fourth thing I want to think about is the question of who should praise God.**

Look at Psalms 150:6 – “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.” This mean, in short, to praise God by mobilizing all those who will sing praises (Park). Not only we should praise God by mobilizing all the places and all instruments, we should also mobilize all those who will sing praise to Him. Everything in the heavens and on the earth must praise God. Not only the angels in the heavens, but all the breathing creatures on earth must praise Him.

At this time, let us stand and sing “Bless the Lord, Oh my soul” to our Lord.

“Bless the Lord, oh! my soul, Bless the Lord, oh! my soul,  
And all that is within me, Bless His holy Name.  
Worship the Lord, oh! my soul, Worship the Lord, oh! my soul,  
And all that is within me, Bless His holy Name.”

As I desire to praise the Lord until my last breath on this earth,

James Kim

(With gratitude for God's grace given through meditation on the words of the Psalms)

## Conclusion

The blessed person meditates on the word of God day and night. His delight is to hear His loving words in the morning. Therefore, he waits for the word of the Lord and runs toward it. And he obeys the word, walks the path of the righteous, and doesn't tremble and sin. He puts the word of God in his heart, so he doesn't sin and purifies his conduct. He wins the spiritual battle with the word of God. Therefore, he takes God's word as 'my possession'. The blessed person is a person who does the word of God.

The blessed person doesn't trust in humans despite any persecution and adversity, but only in the Lord, as he looks to Him alone. He quietly looks to God when no one can help him in a fearful situation. He leaves his burden to Him. And he cries out to the God of salvation who delivers him. He gives an urgent prayer to God, 'God, help me quickly.' He confesses, "But I am in prayer," and humbly offers his wish to the Lord. Then he devotes himself to prayer, saying, "I will awaken the dawn." He does that because he always hopes in the Lord. The reason is because he believes that God will listen and answer his prayers. Therefore, he determines, "But I am in prayer". He who is blessed by God, who realizes God's great love through the assurance of answering prayers, and who receive God's great grace even in the midst of his great sins, devotes his life to prayers.

The blessed person gives thanks to the Lord with all his heart. He gives thanks to God who cannot refuse the desires of his heart, but listens to the prayers of the humble one and delivers him and gives him the grace of salvation. He also give thanks to the Lord for raising his head and rewarding him according to his righteousness. He gives thanks to God for giving him strength and power. The reason he is so grateful to the Lord is because of His eternal love. He knows the Lord's thoughts toward him are countless. He gives thanks to God because the Lord makes sufferings profitable to him, strengths him even in weakness and sustains him in troubles. Such a blessed person who gives thanks to the Lord not only does not forget all His benefits, but cannot do so. Therefore he makes this confession to the Lord: "I love You, O LORD, my strength."

The blessed person makes God his greatest joy. For him, God is "my exceeding joy." He dwells in God's presence, communing with the God of his exceeding joy. And he is satisfied with Him alone and rejoices in Him because the Lord has placed him as head. The blessed person gives thanks to the Lord because of His eternal love, because of His countless thoughts toward him, because He rejoices in his prosperity, because He establishes his way, because He strengthens him and because He will guide him until death. Therefore, he praises God with thanksgiving in his heart. He is wholeheartedly grateful to God and dedicated to praise Him forever. The blessed person praises God until he has breath.