

IOUC 国际网络联合教会

【ROMANS】 SERMON

Sunday Sermons

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1.Resource of gospel 【Romans 1:1-3】

Introduction

Last week we finished with the Book of Acts, and today we begin with the Book of Romans. There is no doubt that Romans is a great book. Paul, who wrote the book of Romans, was also an apostle who was highly used by God, which is admirable! However, my attitude is to look at every book of the Bible, including Romans, with a pious and normal heart. This core value will help us think about the Bible and the people who wrote it. Let's look at the first point:

Apostolic preaching

Paul's identity as an apostle was controversial at the time. However, when the letters written by Paul were chosen by God to be included in the Bible, Paul's status as an apostle was confirmed. First, the nature of an apostle is that of a servant. From an ecclesiological perspective, the apostles began with the twelve apostles appointed by Jesus. Whether it was Matthias who replaced Judas, or later Paul, Barnabas, James, Silas, Andronicus and Junia, it was all because of the church's mission of the gospel, their coordination and service, and their Servant leadership is motivational. Simply put, it is to imitate the pattern of a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. The identity authentication of the apostles was the screening principle for the operation of the early church and had historical significance. However, apostleship, as a gift to serve the church, demonstrates or expresses the nature of an apostolic servant.

Secondly, the origin of apostles is calling. The word apostle sounds very authoritative and majestic. Therefore, the name of the apostle has been full of temptation since ancient times, causing many people to flock to it. In fact, the identity of an apostle is only related to God's calling and relationship. Therefore, when the early church set the qualification standards for apostles, the first thing that they needed to bear the brunt of was that the people called apostles must have seen the resurrected Lord Jesus with their own eyes. As it is written, "So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection. (Acts 1:21-22)"

Lastly, the mission of the apostles is the gospel. The reason why Paul was questioned was that he did not seem to spend much time with the apostles. However, Paul did meet the resurrected Lord on the Damascus road, and it was with a gospel mission. The Bible says: "But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. (Acts 9:15)" Because Paul had persecuted the church in the past, people still doubted his apostleship. So Paul himself had to defend himself, saying: "Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead. (Galatians 1:1)" Paul's life of preaching the gospel after he was called confirmed his identity as an apostle, there is no doubt about it! Let's look at the second point:

Prophetic promise

What Paul is saying is that the gospel did not appear suddenly, nor is it unique to the New Testament. It is just as God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him. First, the Law and the Prophets. The Law refers to Pentateuch, known as the Torah. The prophets refer to the seventeen books of the major and minor prophets, and the rest are books of history and wisdom. What Jews usually refer to as the Law and the Prophets refers to the entire Old Testament. For example, Genesis 3:15 says: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. (Gen. 3:15)” How do you know this verse points to the gospel? This is the incarnation of Christ Jesus, the sacrifice of his life on the cross, and his resurrection from the dead. In this way, the Old and New Testaments corroborate each other and are integrated.

Secondly, it is recorded in the Bible. Whether it was Moses or Paul, when they wrote the Pentateuch and Paul’s letters, they did not know that what they wrote would be chosen by God to be included in the Bible. Once selected into the Bible, it means that these words were spoken by God Himself. We know that: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)” This is why people should not falsely claim to be prophets! Why? Because of one who has prophetic status, what they said will be recorded in the Bible, so watch and pray lest you take the name of the Lord in vain.

Finally, faithfulness lies in the promise. The standard for distinguishing true and false prophets is whether what they say is true and whether their prophecies are fulfilled afterwards and are true and reliable. Especially regarding Jesus Christ, He is true and reliable as prophesied in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament. The identity and mission of the Messiah cannot be defined by humans. Most importantly, the gospel cannot be invented by humans and must be inspired by God. Why? Because it took God about 1,650 years to complete the Old and New Testaments with the gospel as the theme, and it took more than two thousand years of church history to verify the authenticity of the Bible. It can be said that God’s faithfulness lies entirely in His true and reliable promises. Let’s look at the third point:

Descendants of David

How could David be pulled out? Paul said: “concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh.” What does it mean? First, Christ Jesus is our Lord. Christ is the Messiah, the one who has been prophesied and prepared in the Old Testament and will be incarnate. He is called the Son of God in the Bible and is called the Lord by us. Christ becoming Jesus is the highest wisdom designed by God in His creation, that is, God becoming human. God Himself walked into human history and came among us. John testified to this, saying: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” This is our core value: Jesus is the Christ, the Lord, and the King who created heaven and earth!

Secondly, the two natures of God and man are expressed. Jesus is the Christ and the Lord, expressing the absolute authority of Christ Jesus. But what kind of God is He? The New Testament mentions Jesus Christ as the son of David many times. What does the Bible mean? From the genealogy in Matthew Chapter 1 and Luke Chapter 3, we can see that Jesus is a descendant of David, whether on the paternal or maternal line. In fact, the Bible tries its best to explain a simple fact: Christ Jesus is not only the Son of God, but also the Son of man. He has human life and nature. The conclusion drawn from the two natures of God and man is that He is the most qualified to stand in the position of man, accept God's judgment on behalf of man, and die on the cross to achieve God's salvation.

Finally, the genealogy of David serves as background. The last little point I want to express is the vastness of God's faithfulness! In order to prepare the divine and human nature of Christ Jesus, God even entered history and maintained continuous observation and control over the genealogical history of Mary and Joseph until they both became contemporaries in the same era. Not only that, God also caused the two of them to be engaged, and the engagement was almost broken because of Mary's conception of the Holy Spirit. In the end, Joseph was called a righteous man and took Mary home by faith, completing a wonderful story about God becoming a human being. It's amazing to think about it. God made King David the common ancestor of a couple a thousand years later. In fact, God even used a king to become a landscape and a background for "the divine and human natures of Christ." I can hardly help but say: Oh God, You are so great!

Conclusion

The opening word of Romans is the source of the gospel: first preached by the apostles, and what was preached was the faithfulness of the prophets' promises through the Scriptures. Not only that, God even made King David's genealogy a landscape of "the divine and human natures of Christ."

Let us pray.....

(Romans 1:1-3)

1:1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

1:2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,

1:3 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh.

2.Essence of gospel 【Romans 1:4-7】

Introduction

The Bible emphasizes that Jesus is a descendant of David, “descended from David,” which shows that Christ became flesh and became a human being. However, from the perspective of the completeness of the truth, this is an unfinished sentence. Because the complete Christology is His “two natures of God and man” , and He is fully human and fully God! Let’s look at the first point:

Power of resurrection

The resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead is the highest form of expression of the divinity of Christ. If Christ has not been resurrected, our faith is in vain. First, from conception by the Holy Spirit. We are all descendants of Adam, except Jesus Christ. Why? This is because the child that Mary conceived was not from Joseph, but was conceived by the Holy Spirit. The Bible declares this: “she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:18)” God made Christ come into the world as a human being, and from the beginning he was sanctified by the Holy Spirit and showed the holy nature of the Son of God. The divinity of Christ is very important. First, it shows that He is sinless so that He can save sinful people. Let the sinless take the place of the guilty, and the righteous take the place of the unjust (1 Peter 3:18). In addition to being sinless, He must also be able to save sinners. This is what is necessary as the Son of God, to bear and take away people’s sins before God (1 Peter 2:24).

Secondly, it lies in the resurrection from the dead. Resurrection from the dead is the most amazing thing in the world, do you agree? This is the most important truth that the gospel of Christ Jesus brings us, right? Just imagine, if Christ did not come, there was no incarnation of Jesus in the world, and He was not resurrected from the dead, then what kind of world would this be? Humanity is still in a cradle-to-grave situation. What is this situation? This is a desperate situation! Because no matter how you live, you are still living with the word despair, right? You made all the wealth in the world, won over all the people in the world, defeated all the countries in the world, and finally, you died! Does it make sense? Death has devoured all human values and meanings, and swallowed up all ideals and futures in the world. The meaning of resurrection is to defeat death. This is the core value of the gospel!

Finally, the Son of God is revealed. As the Son of man, Jesus Christ can bear the punishment we deserve and understand all our pain. As the Son of God, because of His sinlessness, death was powerless against Him! At the same time, because He is the Son of God, He has the power to turn things around, pass from death to life, and rise from the dead. This is the evidence that Jesus Christ shows his power as the Son of God! How to say this? Because since the beginning of human history, no one has ever conquered the power of death. But, Christ did it! Jesus Christ is the only one in human history who passed through death and came out of death.

Because of this, those of us who follow Him have a hope of eternal life. Let's look at the second point:

Spread to all people

The essence of the gospel is life, eternal life, and the power of resurrection from the dead! The essence of the gospel is also the transformation from life to mission, which is to spread this great news to all people. First, salvation is by grace. From God's perspective, the relationship between man and the gospel is a free grace. And, we all receive kindness through Jesus Christ. The original text of the word kindness is grace, but it has two meanings: one is obedience and faith, and the other is that grace and joy come from the same root. The subtleties here actually speak to the core values of the mission. After a person believes in the Lord and goes to preach the gospel, how should he preach? Of course, it is inevitable to pass it on orally, but in fact it is passed on with life. After we believe in the Lord, do we have a spiritual character of obedience in our lives? Is there joy on our faces? Is there peace in our family relationships? Otherwise, where would the testimony come from that would bring glory to God?

Secondly, the ministry of the gospel. When Paul wrote Romans, apostleship in the church was still the main expression. With the evolution of church history, apostleship has gradually transformed into the gift of the apostle. However, the essence of the apostleship has never changed, which is the ministry of the gospel. This is also Paul's own testimony of living out his apostleship. In fact, Paul did not care about the special spiritual identity of his apostleship. Instead, he emphasized that he was an apostle who preached the gospel to the Gentiles, and his emphasis was on the gospel. It is also a bit like the various weird things circulating in the public today. Some ministers care about the title of pastor, or put their own name in front of the name of the evangelistic meeting.

Finally, the obedience of faith. When we go out to preach the gospel today, who do we preach to? Where to share it? How to pass it on? When we encounter problems like this, we are more likely to be influenced by our own traditional cultural concepts, and even narrow nationalism. As a Chinese, I should of course first, or even only preach the gospel to the Chinese people. Is this right? Is there any biblical basis for this? Paul says in the second half of verse 5: "to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, (Romans 1:5b)" "All the nations" refers to all countries, regardless of which country they belong to! The Great Commission says the same thing. The scope of our evangelism is all nations and the target is all peoples. Let's look at the third point:

God's great love

The book of Romans was written by Paul in Corinth three years ago. When Paul arrived in Rome, the brothers and sisters in Rome ran dozens of miles to greet Paul as soon as they heard that Paul was coming. First, we are all called together. The gospel must create new relationships that the world does not recognize. Paul sends greetings to his brothers and sisters in Rome who have come from afar through faith in Jesus Christ. He said our relationship is based on our spiritual identity as fellow-called people! Once you become a called person, you have a new belonging identity. From now on, we belong to Christ Jesus! From the day we believe in the

Lord, Christ is our Lord. Let all things be done in the name of Jesus Christ. From now on, Jesus Christ is the only, exclusive, and first in our lives! All relationships must be viewed through Jesus Christ.

Second, receive God's great love together. Paul said, "To all those in Rome who are loved by God." It means that God's love transcends time and space, not only in Corinth but also in Rome. We are the same receiving God's great love. This is the result of the nature of the gospel. What does it mean? The love revealed in the Bible is not the love of man, but the great love of Christ. It is not we who love, but God who loves us first! God's new command to us is to love one another! Why? Because when we love one another, people will know that we are children of God. Of course, God also received the glory He deserved.

Finally, enjoy the grace and peace together. Paul's last greeting is definitely not simple. He is painting a portrait of God's children. We may not be able to control our youthful appearance when we are eighteen years old, because that is mostly due to our parents. However, a person's appearance after the age of forty is the mark of his life. God has given us grace and peace through the gospel, but, has the appearance of the gospel left any trace in your life? The Bible says that we should not judge a person by his appearance. It refers to the appearance, wealth and poverty of clothing. Grace and peace are spiritual qualities lived from within and cannot be concealed.

Conclusion

Hudson Taylor has a famous saying: "If I have a thousand pounds of gold, China can withdraw it all; if I have a thousand lives, I will never leave any of them to China." As soon as we Chinese heard this, we said yes! It turns out that we still have thousands of pounds of gold because of our faith in Christ! Very nice! We may be secretly happy, aren't we? Who would have known that he still had the second half of the sentence? He continued: "No, it is not China, but Christ." This is the essence of the gospel!

Let us pray.....

(Romans 1:4-7)

1:4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

1:5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,

1:6 including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

1:7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Life of the gospel 【Romans 1:8-10】

Introduction

Paul talked about the source and essence of the gospel, and today he started to talk about the life of the gospel. What does Paul mean by the life of the gospel? The life of the gospel he talks about is the experience and thinking, prayer and inspiration, look up to and hope he left behind when he preached the gospel. Let's look at the first point:

Your faith is proclaimed in all the world

What must the life of the gospel be related to? The gospel is truth, life is people, and the bridge from the gospel to people is faith. This is why Paul mentions faith. First of all, when preaching, you should rely on the Lord. The word "preaching" is actually not simple. It cannot be determined by any name, method, or ability that a man thinks is clever. I have a pastor friend who told me more than 20 years ago that he grew a church from 135 people to 531 people in five years. There are also photos to prove it and it is conclusive. When I asked why, the answer was: It's all because I have the ability! When I went home and read the Bible, I found that Paul relied on Jesus Christ to preach. This is a warning to each of us, lest we fall into temptation. Over the years, there has been a lot of confusion about preaching, as if there are other "ways" besides "relying on Jesus Christ." In fact, preaching can be very simple, just rely on the Lord! This is also a standard by which we can often reflect on ourselves: Am I relying on the Lord?

Secondly, be grateful for everything. After Paul finished speaking about relying on the Lord, he immediately changed the subject and said: "I thank my God for all of you" Isn't it a little strange? The crowd Paul mentioned should refer to the Roman church that had been established by Peter (according to early church tradition) at that time. Therefore, being thankful for the church is the duty of a child of God. This is especially true for churches established for other churches other than your own. The strange thing here is that Paul says to "give thanks to my God" for the church in Rome! Isn't it "our God"? In fact, Paul was "throwing stones to ask for directions." Paul was asking: Do we believe in the same God? This is what we need to do when looking for a new church, right?

Finally, faith takes the road to heaven. Paul wrote to ask the church, and of course the church was asking Paul: How did you find us? In other words, why did you come to us? So, Paul explained this and showed his "trump card"! Paul said: "Because your faith has spread throughout the world." That is to say, Paul had heard about the brothers and sisters in the Roman church three years ago in Corinth. The faith with morals mentioned here means faith in the original text. The Union Version translated the original meaning of faith into faith with morals. First, it was influenced by Catholicism, and second, it was influenced by the moralism of traditional Chinese culture. Our understanding of the word faith with morals today can be

based on faith as the standard. Faith is not only the core value of the Roman church, but also Paul's observation point for the church. Let's look at the second point:

Witness and serve God

Paul's self-recommendation was needed by the Roman church. You understand the church, and the church needs to understand you too! And we should also take the initiative to let the church know you. This is the courtesy and virtue of a believer, do you agree? First, the gospel of the Son of God. Have you ever thought about who will come to testify for us when we meet the Lord one day? Paul tells us here that the gospel we preached can bear witness for us. In other words, it would be a bit embarrassing if we had never preached the gospel. Because when we meet the Lord, there will be no one to testify for us. At that time, will the Lord say: I don't know you? Or is it that what we preach is not the true gospel, but heresy, extreme, or even a cult? The standard given by Paul is "the gospel of the Son of God," for there is no other name by which we are saved except by Him. Today's era is dangerous. People who take the Lord's name in vain, rob God's glory, stay away from God's words, set other standards, false prophets, apostles, antichrist representatives, etc. have appeared in the world!

Secondly, what the spirit serves. The church can see whether your testimony is true or false. However, as an individual, you can also self-examine. Paul said that the standard for self-examination is "God served with the spirit." Of course, the premise is that you must truly believe in God, not just believe in the existence of God. Those who believe in God can worship God with sincerity in spirit and examine what is God's pure and pleasing will. If you simply believe in the existence of God, you may be in company with the secular world, with Satan, and with the old humanistic self. It is not difficult to believe in the existence of God. The Bible says that demons also believe in it. It is nothing more than treating God as part of knowledge and manipulating it in one's own hands. The result is that they have no care for God, indifferent to the church, and no interest in the mission, all because they have no connection with the Holy Spirit.

Finally, without ceasing I mention you. It is not difficult to pray once, but it is difficult to pray without ceasing! Whether we continue to pray for people and the church is not up to you. It is the gospel we preach and the God whom our hearts serve that has the final say. Paul said, "without ceasing I mention you, the church of Rome." This was not a simple statement! Because if you are not careful, you may bear false witness or even take the Lord's name in vain! It's not difficult to say it in one sentence, but what's difficult is that it's not easy to prove one's innocence in the future. Even if you are powerful, talented and capable in this life, you can get away with it. However, one day the truth will come out. Paul said that he constantly mentioned the Roman church in his prayers, which is enough to serve as an example and role model for us. Let's look at the third point:

Prayer is the way

When Paul wrote Romans in Corinth, God revealed to us an important truth through him, which is that prayer has become the channel of fellowship among God's children. First, prayer is a norm. There are two words related to prayer here. One is a daily state and a state of prayer.

Another word is a request to God in prayer, or a request for intercession. That is, we cannot just raise prayer requests without having a daily prayer life. Some people usually don't pray, but when something goes wrong, they burst into tears and shout at the top of their lungs. This is also the reason why there must be a church prayer meeting. This is the normal state of prayer in the church. Between this church prayer meeting and the next church prayer meeting, everyone can come before God and pray frequently. God accepts our prayers and hears our prayers. Of course, that also includes not listening to our prayers!

Second, pray according to God's will. What it says here is: "asking that somehow by God's will". Is there anyone who doesn't pray according to God's will? Don't tell me, it really will happen. Especially when people's faith in God is impure and they even use God as a tool for their use, right? If you can't find a job, can't have children, have a bleak future, etc., of course you can pray, and you should pray! However, if our prayers do not first seek His kingdom, His righteousness, or even things not related to God's gospel mission, do you think God will still listen to your prayers? Therefore, praying according to God's will is a possibility, not a necessity, in our spiritual life. Only when we are always in the Lord and He is always in us, can we always pray in the Lord!

Finally, pray for a prosperous journey. As the saying goes, nine times out of ten things will go wrong in life. We often use this sentence to comfort others, right? But is this sentence correct? Over time, we have become accustomed to things not going our way. Either the tire will blow out today, or the house will be burned down tomorrow. What's more, there are countless bad things happening every day! In fact, God is still willing to give us "a prosperous journey in the end" in Christ. Paul's prayer had been uttered three years before in Corinth. In the days that followed, Paul experienced many chains and tribulations, and was even almost killed by the Jews in Jerusalem. However, God finally gave Paul a smooth journey to Rome.

Conclusion

The gospel is lived out with life, and the gospel is spread with life! Because Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, the gospel is transformed into the Great Commission by imitating the Lord's life.

Let us pray.....

(Romans 1:8-10)

1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.

1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you

1:10 always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you.

4. Effect of the gospel 【Romans 1:11-13】

Introduction

Gospel life refers to the vitality generated by people's encounter with the gospel, leaving behind testimonies and prayers. As spiritual life continues to move forward, it will inevitably bear fruit in life. Let's look at the first point:

Spiritual gifts

As long as people come to the church, they will definitely experience the spiritual gifts assigned to each person by God. Because the essence of serving the church and serving God is the interaction of God's gifts in people's life. First, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Paul was in Corinth, but in his letter to the Romans he said to the brothers and sisters in the Roman church: "I long to see you." Why? Where does this love come from? Even after exhausting our search in the disjunctive limb of logic, we cannot find a reasonable explanation for human phenomena. This can only be done by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, there is no other choice. This is the letter to Romans that Paul wrote during his third missionary journey, and was written together with 1 and 2 Corinthians. Judging from the contents of these three books, Paul at this time was already at a high level in terms of his serving experience and spiritual gifts. Then, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to go to Rome to help the brothers and sisters grow in Christ.

Secondly, the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. The inspiration of the Holy Spirit must have a meaning in Christ and must be consistent with biblical truth. Paul said that his purpose in going to Rome was to "impart to you some spiritual gift." How are spiritual gifts imparted? Is it a little strange? Judging from Paul's subsequent interactions with brothers and sisters when he went to Rome, Paul should have told the Roman church about his own experience of serving God through testimony sharing for the church's reference. Then the Roman church needed to pray, ask God, pray to God, and wait for God's time until God would send down the gift. That gifts come from God, not from men, is a core value of the Bible. If you don't be cautious, there will be cracks left, which will become an opportunity for Satan to deceive people and destroy the church.

Finally, the ministry of the Holy Spirit. What is the ministry of the Holy Spirit? To put it simply, it is the scope of the Holy Spirit's work in the church. So, according to the Bible, what are the ministries of the gifts of the Holy Spirit? Generally speaking, they include preaching, missionary work, faith, personal evangelism, gospel preparatory work, leading people back to the church, prayer, teaching, management, reconciliation, sympathy, healing, exorcising demons, serving, offering, helping people, encourage people, comfort people, blame people, etc. What Paul refers to in the text is "that you may be strengthened." From a human perspective, it seems that through Paul's teachings, the faith of the Roman church was strengthened. But from the perspective of the Holy Spirit, it is actually just the work of the Holy Spirit Himself, and humans

have nothing to boast about. Let's look at the second point:

Mutual faith

Faith operates in the church and is used by God through men of God who receive gifts. When God gives His gift, the next step is the coordination between people. The basis of mutual coordination is mutual faith, trust, and faithfulness in life. First, the grace of dwelling together. As the saying goes, it is easier to meet than to live with. Why? It's very simple. When meeting each other for a short time, time goes by in a flash. But if they live together and get along with each other, each other's weaknesses and shortcomings will be exposed. The next step is the choice of tolerance or rejection. Without the power of the Holy Spirit, people have no tolerance. So on the other hand, the fact that Paul was able to live among the brothers and sisters in Rome and love each other showed that they had the gift of the Holy Spirit among each other. This is the grace of living together. That is to say, the harmony and love between us have little to do with our character, and personality, but are due to the grace of living together given by the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, the test of unity. The gospel is the power of God to save everyone who believes. What power? How to embody the power of the gospel? The Bible says that the effect of the gospel on people's hearts emanates from everyone's heart, especially in relationships between people. Among the many mentalities, faith in God and trust between members are the primary concerns. Paul came all the way from Jerusalem, walked the waterway for several months, and experienced many risks before entering the territory of Rome. When the brothers and sisters heard that Paul was coming, they met him on the way. It turns out that this was all prepared in advance in Paul's letter three years ago. We have to say that God's eternal power and divinity are clearly known and cannot be refuted.

Finally, mutually encouraged. When Paul said that they were unified in fellowship and loved one another, it showed that the work of the Holy Spirit was among them. We may not know the reason when a person is comforted, but when the entire church is comforted together, it is definitely the work of the Holy Spirit. Sister Fangfang's operation was successful and she was discharged from the hospital on Thursday. I am grateful, rejoiced, and comforted together with other members of the church. I saw a painting drawn by Sister Lina on Facebook, which showed the Lord Jesus holding a little girl. I knew that Lina had found comfort from the Lord Jesus. She was comforted, and the church was comforted with her. At the same time, we also received assurance of faith in the Holy Spirit. Let's look at the third point:

Fruit of the gospel

It turns out that the effect of the gospel is caused by spiritual gifts and the fruit of the gospel is produced through mutual faith. First of all, keep going. The Great Commission scripture says: Therefore go! This is the premise of the gospel, which is to preach the gospel! You can't just talk but be unwilling to go out and remain at the point of talking empty words. Paul just kept going. After going to Asia, he still wanted to go. We go to Northern Europe every year, and we still will go there. Paul went to Troas several times. When he was preaching, a young man was sitting upstairs and fell asleep. Then he fell and died. Paul prayed for him, and he rose

from the dead. For those who obey the Great Commission, signs and wonders will follow them. Before Paul left, he had made up his mind, and had decided to go to Rome to visit the brothers and sisters.

Second, the desire to bear fruit. To bear fruit, of course, is to bear the fruit of the gospel. The question is, do you really want to bear the fruit of the gospel? How much do you desire? The prophet Jeremiah said: “If I say, “I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,” there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot. (Jeremiah 20:9)” That is to say, our first thought or intention when meeting everyone is to preach the gospel to him! Why? Because this is our destiny in life! Paul said: “For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! (1 Cor. 9:16)”

Finally, thus far have been prevented. Paul’s obstacles at that time were firstly the persecution and secondly the need to bring the donations collected from various places back to Jerusalem. From the time he arrived in Macedonia, he was constantly told that he would be bound in Jerusalem. But Paul still held on to the mission he received when he was called, so he encouraged himself: “For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. (1 Cor. 9:17)” Because if he goes to preach the gospel, there will definitely be obstacles. However, a person with a mission will not be hindered by difficulties! If there is an obstacle today, then go tomorrow! You don’t have to do anything great, just do what you normally do, as Paul said: “as well as among the rest of the Gentiles.” Ordinary people keep an ordinary mind and do ordinary things.

Conclusion

Thank the Lord! The effectiveness of the gospel is in the heart, not in the outward appearance. Gifts are used to serve God and the church, not to show off to fall to the ground or cry and laugh. A normal heart refers to faith, faith in God. The fruit of the gospel is lived out, not shown off. Most importantly, the fruit of the gospel must be accounted to God.

Let us pray……

(Romans 1:11-13)

1:11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—
1:12 that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.
1:13 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles.

5.Strategy of the Gospel 【Romans 1:14-17】

Introduction

In fact, I didn't want to use "gospel strategy" as the sermon title today, because the word strategy can easily cause people to misunderstand and associate it with concepts such as plot. Using the "gospel method" is a bit thin and superficial. Using "gospel wisdom" doesn't seem to get the meaning. Well, in the face of the limitations of human language, the decay of Chinese culture, and the shortcomings in translation, let us use the word strategy to express today's message. Let's look at the first point:

Gospel debt owed

God's wisdom always comes from the heart in humans, and only God has such power. Through Paul, He reveals to us that the essence of the relationship between God and man is that man is unworthy before God. First, we all owe a debt to the gospel. Please tell me, who owes whom the gospel debt? I live in Dallas, so why should I be said to be in debt to you New Yorkers? While Paul was still in Corinth, he wrote to the Romans, saying, I owe you a debt for the gospel. This world cannot understand this truth! This is why Paul mentioned the Hellenists, the Greeks. The Greeks, because of their philosophers, made everyone who spoke Greek great and proud. It seems that everyone is Plato, everyone has the ability of Aristotle, plus Socrates, there is simply no one who can compare!

Second, use all the strength. From an ethnographic perspective, Paul is not a Greek, but a so-called outsider! However, Paul's Greek proficiency was excellent, he was considered a Hellenist at that time, and he was considered a wise man. Therefore, Paul knew the people of that time very well. This is why he has the confidence to say that he is "willing to do my best" to preach the gospel. Paul knew that the world's little cleverness could not understand the mystery of God's gospel. Let alone understand man's debt to God, especially Paul's debt to everyone for the gospel. For us, this is also the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which is to preach the gospel to everyone and do our best.

Finally, the gospel reached Rome. Missions must always be implemented, and visions must have a direction. From the beginning of his third missionary journey, the Holy Spirit began to inspire Paul to go to Rome and preach the gospel to the Romans. Of course, Romans is Paul's letter of self-recommendation to missionary work in the Roman church, and it is also the guidance of the Holy Spirit to Paul. It can be said that the closing chapters of Acts are basically the Holy Spirit leading Paul's gospel on a journey to Rome. Just as God led Hudson Taylor to spread the gospel to mainland China and led Timothy Richard to the coastal cities, it is the same reason. Today, for Europe, where there are many churches and the gospel once flourished, it is already a "post-gospel era." Therefore, it is urgent to resume farming in Europe. Let's look at the second point:

The power of God given

When a person makes up his mind, God will give him strength and demonstrate His power. First, overcome shame. How can there be any shame? This is the first feeling and behavior of human beings after they sin. Adam heard Jehovah God walking in the garden and asked, “Where are you?” The Bible says, the man hid, and became afraid! Peter was asked in the court of the high priest: Do you know this man? After being asked three times in a row, Peter was frightened by shame and ran away! I remember when I first became a believer, I didn’t dare to pray in restaurants or in public places for fear of being heard. When I first started preaching on the streets, it was difficult to say the words “Jesus loves you.” Until one day, when a Chinese restaurant owner’s wife threatened to beat me with a broom and drive me away, I was no longer afraid!

Second, rely on God’s power. No one can imagine that people grow from weakness to courage through persecution. Paul’s situation was somewhat different. He went from persecuting the gospel to feeling ashamed and afraid to preach the gospel, and finally embarked on the path of courageously preaching the gospel. His sentence “I am not ashamed of the gospel” contains many bitter tears and hard steps. Unless he truly experiences the power of God personally, he cannot say, “This gospel is the power of God.” A person who has experienced the power of the gospel must be full of faith. One thing that must be pointed out is that relying on the power of God does not mean that this person has any special powers. In other words, people who claim to have some kind of power are often relying on the power of the old self, the world, or even Satan.

Finally, follow God’s order. Why must it be “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”? What is the significance of God’s gospel order? This begins with God’s promise to Abraham, extends to the Davidic Covenant, and ends with Jesus Christ’s conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus Christ himself said: “For salvation is from the Jews. (John 4:22)” This gospel sequence essentially demonstrates God’s faithfulness. When He decrees it, it happens! The promises He made to Abraham were fulfilled one by one in history. Even the Lord Jesus Himself chose to be born among the Jews. The Jews rebelled against Him, but God remained faithful to His chosen people. Let’s look at the third point:

The righteous are justified by faith

Justification by faith is a theme in the Bible, but few people explain it clearly. First, because of God’s righteousness. God’s love and mercy are to satisfy God’s righteousness. John says in Revelation, “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. (Revelation 22:12-13)” What does it mean? That is to say, the God we believe in is the God who exists from eternity! God has been there since the beginning of all things. At the end of all things, God will be there and still in control. The order of all things in the universe is established by Him. He is the standard and measure of all things and cannot be challenged.

Second, the gospel is righteousness. The reason the gospel appears is because of man’s sin.

The reason why people sin is because Satan wants to challenge the order established by God. God said, in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die. This is the righteousness of God. He said, and it was so. Adam and Eve fell into sin and entered death. Jesus came to tell people that His death replaced the death of sinners! This is the gospel, and the gospel is the righteousness of God! The atonement designed by God is the propitiation established by God through the death of Christ for all those who believe in Him. This is why the gospel is good news. While we were still sinners, He died for us, God's love fully satisfies His righteousness.

Finally, believing in God is righteousness. Because Abraham believed God, God counted him as righteousness. Therefore, Faith is grace that reveals the two sides of God's righteousness, It is also the only way to express the relationship between man and God. As Paul said: "and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith. (Philippians 3:9)" Faith is the direction in which people strive toward God, and Christ is the benchmark toward which faith points. The key is that belief in God is righteousness and will affect the testimony of our lives. This will have a profound impact on everything we say and do. Faith is not an empty word, but a guide for our lives that satisfies God's righteousness.

Conclusion

When we realize that we are in debt to the gospel, life will have direction. If we rely on God's power, we will follow God's order. If we understand the truth of justification by faith, we will let faith become our testimony of glorifying God and benefiting others.

Let us pray.....

(Romans 1:14-17)

1:14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.

1:15 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

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.

1:17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

6.The Gospel revealed 【Romans 1:18-20】

Introduction

What is the gospel? At first glance, it seems like there is no answer because we can't see or touch it, right? When the book of Mark introduces what the gospel is, it says: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (Mark 1:1)" When Paul introduced the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15, he said: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve." However, in Romans, when Paul introduces the gospel, he introduces it in a way that the gospel is revealed. Let's look at the first point:

Revealed against sinners

This is an obvious phenomenon that we can observe, because there is no shortage of sinners in the world. First, God's wrath. What is wrath? It is nothing more than an emotion, especially when people feel wronged and unfair, they may easily get extremely angry, evil thoughts will arise. God's wrath is divine, not necessarily emotional, and completely justified. Judging from the revelations in the Old and New Testaments, God's wrath is the righteous anger expressed against mankind's sins, disobedience, and unwillingness to repent. For example, when the Israelites left Egypt and worshiped idols on the wilderness road, God even caused a large opening in the ground to devour the rebellious people. The conversation between the rich man and Lazarus mentioned by Jesus in the New Testament shows us the rich man's despair in the wrath of God. However, the gospel tells us that God's wrath is taken away because of the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, the ungodliness and unrighteousness. Ungodly refers to a contemptuous attitude towards God, neither respecting nor worshipping nor believing in God! In addition to being contemptuous of God, having no sense of God's grace that is ungratefulness. Unrighteousness means doing things wrong in the way of life, or even deliberately doing things that are wrong in the eyes of God. The difference is that he never admits his mistakes or has any regrets about what he has done. He treats them as normal and continues to let his mistakes keep piling up. The greatest ungodliness in life is disrespect for Christ, and the greatest unrighteousness is unbelief in God. What to do? Paul's advice or solution to us is "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, (Philippians 1:27a)" That means doing everything in the name of the Lord!

Finally, suppress the truth. When people come to the point of suppressing the truth, they have reached the stage where Judas betrayed the Lord and sought glory. Judas was also a brother who served God at the beginning. He gained the Lord's trust in the church and even managed the church's finances. This shows that the Lord Jesus valued him and appreciated him. Judas

may have been ungodly and unrighteous towards the Lord for a long time deep in his heart, but he just did not act out. Judah's Self-Righteous Zealot Party Platform made his "Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. (James 1:15)" A person who chooses death, goes to death, and embraces death will inevitably become a person who does unrighteousness and suppresses the truth. Let's look at the second point:

Shown to people's heart

The gospel is evident to sinners. However, what God cares about most is revealed in people's hearts. Because the results of a person's life are produced by the heart. First, what can be known. What can one know? Have you ever thought about this? Philosophers, scientists, inventors, etc. since ancient times have all been discussing this question, that is, what can people know? According to our understanding of the truth, human cognitive abilities are not unlimited, but are limited by God's revelation to humans. When the incarnate Lord died on the cross for us, we knew that God is love. This is the foundation for our acceptance of the gospel and the assurance of faith. On the one hand, we know only so much that we must be humble. On the other hand, based on what we know about God, we can believe in Him. In particular, people's ability to accept the gospel is extraordinary and wonderful!

Secondly, revealed in people's hearts. Have you ever thought about why people believe in Jesus Christ? Is it because the pastor or whoever preached the gospel very clearly? Then why don't others believe it? Therefore, the essence of a man's belief in God is nothing more than an expression of God's choice of man. "Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. (Eph. 1:4)" In fact, according to what we know, there is still more we don't know. Why did Paul believe in Jesus? Isn't he someone highly valued by the high priest? Didn't Mark become a deserter? Why did he turn around and rejoin the mission work? It's as if God's hand is always at work in our hearts to achieve His goal.

Finally, God has shown. This sentence, "God has shown it to them." is the foundation of our faith before God. Why do I say that? God's plan for our lives, including the so-called laws that guide our lives, does not require us to grasp, concern, or worry. Because God has shown it to us! If someone tells you that believing in Jesus also includes mastering God's rules for people, it's because they don't really know God or His power. Isn't it enough to have the Bible, the Holy Spirit, Christ, and the Father? Who are you that you want to grasp God's laws for man? Either they have not studied theology, or they are confused and arrogant, and they think they can point the way for everyone. Let's look at the third point:

Revealed in the things created

The gospel is manifested in God's creation, and it is abundant, filling all things in the universe, and omnipresent. First, since the creation of the world. The starting point of the gospel is the declaration that God is a Creator. God created all things, including humans, also including time and space "since the creation of the world." Time is established by Him, space is arranged by Him, and order is controlled by Him. Cosmology puts forward the proposition of the first cause, but due to the limitations of its philosophy, it stops at the revelation of God. As God said to Job:

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. (Job 38:4)” Facing the vast world created by God, how wonderful and glorious it is! How can humans not give all glory and praise to God?

Secondly, God’s eternal power and divine nature. Whether it is mountains and seas, grass, or even dust, they all demonstrate the power of God and His attributes. As soon as a human being is born, he can breathe, cry to express Adam’s debt to God, and even have breast milk for feeding and comfort. People have the ability to learn, accumulate experience through experiencing worldly things, grow through thinking, change through reflection, and worship and praise God through prayer, supplication and thanksgiving. People choose goodness because the God who created us is good. Although humans fall short of the glory of God because of sin, we can still know the goodness of God deep in our hearts. This is why Paul says that we have the desire to do what is right. That’s because inside of us lives the Lord who created us.

Finally, without excuse. Although we are unwilling to accept the truth and admit our transgressions because of Adam’s denial. But we all know that what we do is often evil that we don’t like. Our need for the gospel is something we accept without excuse to deny. No one can overcome the sin in his own heart by himself. It is easy to fall when temptation comes, and to give up and throw in the towel when a challenge comes. When you are alone at night and face yourself honestly, it is not difficult to feel that you are unworthy, unable, ignorant, and unwilling. Unless we rely on the Lord, the Lord who gives the gospel, who will deliver us from this body of death?

Conclusion

The revelation of the gospel is a profound theme of God’s revelation. While we were still sinners, the Lord laid down his life for us. God has carved the mark of salvation on our hearts, so that we no longer rely on our own whims and rely on ourselves to dig out God’s laws to brag about our abilities. Because God has used the things He created to show us that there is no need to increase or decrease! That is precisely the gospel: there is no salvation except in Him!

Let us pray……

(Romans 1:18-20)

1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

1:19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

1:20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world,[a] in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

7. Resistance of the Gospel 【Romans 1:21-25】

Introduction

After Paul explained the gospel in detail, including the source, essence, life, strategy, and revelation of the gospel, he raised the issue of gospel resistance in today's passage. This is the first thing that happens when the gospel meets the world. Just as when we preach the gospel, we will inevitably be rejected, despised, and even persecuted by others. Therefore, the problem of how to face gospel resistance becomes a challenge that we must face. Let's look at the first point:

Knowingly and intentionally

Some people say that when an avalanche occurs, no snowflake is innocent. Likewise, all those who reject the gospel have no reason or basis to deny the existence and salvation of God. First, the disobedience of knowing but not knowing. The Bible says: "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. (Romans 1:19)" Therefore, whether people know or not depends on God's revelation to people. Even atheists, attribute the origin of all things to a so-called "law" to excuse themselves and self-deceived. In fact, everyone knows that there is God, a power that transcends humans and controls everything in the universe, including humans. Whether it is the vastness of the universe, the wonder of life, the mystery of particles, etc., all of them lead people into the thinking and imagination of God's creation of heaven and earth. Because of pride, people even want to rob God's glory and are unwilling to give God the glory He deserves!

Secondly, unknowing moves forward towards ignorance. People can be not knowing, but they cannot be ignorant. In the past, we were deceived and brainwashed in the kingdom of atheism and even antichrist, so that we did not know things about God. When God's time is satisfied, the gospel comes into our lives. He allows preachers to come into us, allows God's Word to enter our ears, and causes our minds to begin to connect with the gospel and even accept the gospel. However, when people hear the gospel but have no feelings, read the Bible but have no desire, come to the church but do not serve or grow. What to do? Looking at people from God's perspective is "For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Romans 1:21)"

Finally, the foolishness of self-righteousness. Since claiming no god, then man sees himself as a god! The Bible says: "Claiming to be wise, they became fools," It is clear that people are helpless in the face of Category 14 typhoons and powerless in the face of earthquakes, but they still claim that humans can conquer nature! People haven't figured out everything in their own family yet, but they still want to point the way to the world. They even said that when they meet gods, they kill gods, when they meet Buddhas, they kill Buddhas, and when they meet

Japanese, they kill them without mercy. As a result, terrorist attacks occurred one after another. For example, in Shenzhen, a 48-year-old man stabbed a 10-year-old Japanese boy to death. How ignorant does a person have to be to do such a thing! His head has been washed to pieces, his thoughts have been emptied out, and his head is completely blank except for hatred. Let's look at the second point:

Worshipping idols

The Bible says, "How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? (Proverbs 1:22)" The greatest foolishness of mankind is not to regard God as God. First, idolatry. Have you ever thought about why God doesn't like people worshipping idols? Exodus 20:1-8 says: I am the Lord your God! This is a declaration, a declaration of truth! It was I who brought you out of Egypt! Have you forgotten the suffering you have endured for 430 years? Have you forgotten your prayers for 430 years? Counting from Jacob, God has given the Israelites at least more than ten generations of memory! Moreover, idolatry must produce greed! Paul said: "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and 'covetousness, which is idolatry. (Colossians 3:5)"

Second, God gave them up. When people are addicted to idol worship, unable to extricate themselves, and unwilling to extricate themselves, God will give them up. The Greek word "give up" and the Hebrew word "hardness" have the same meaning. It means that a person's disobedience to God has reached the point of being unrepentant and stubborn to the end. For example, when God sent ten plagues to the Pharaoh of Egypt, He gave Pharaoh ten opportunities to repent. But Pharaoh didn't cherish it until the eldest sons of Egypt were killed. What Paul means is, when people "exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. (Romans 1:23)" At this time, God's indulgence came. God may even skip discipline or even "turn a blind eye" to their evil deeds.

Finally, do filth. If people don't repent after reaching this point, God's indulgence will escalate. We will see that the Antichrist will "in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, (Romans 1:24)" Such as betraying the Lord for glory, betraying one's brothers and collaborating with the Antichrist. Even now, refusing to explain his crimes to the church and still acts as if nothing happened. Secretly introducing the connections and influence of the Three-Self Church into overseas churches and betraying the situation of overseas churches to the antiChrist regime. They think that there is no authority over them, and they can do whatever they want and be lawless. Little do they know that after giving them up is not discipline, but punishment. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! Let's look at the third point:

False life

Who is resisting the gospel? Or what is it that resists the gospel? Simply put, it is false life that resists life! The essence of false life is not believing that Jesus came in the flesh, so that it cannot be commensurate with the gospel believed in. First, the truth becomes a lie. Satan is

the liar and has been lying from the beginning. God said to Adam, “You may eat from every tree in the garden. But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day you eat from it you will surely die. Satan confused Adam with doubts and said, “Did God really say that you are not allowed to eat from any tree in the garden?” Don’ t underestimate it. Satan changed the punctuation mark and replaced the period with a question mark. Adam also changed from certainty to doubt, right? The same is true for us about the truth of the Bible. The Bible says not to stop gathering. Sometimes there are reasons why you cannot attend, right?

Second, serve the creature. Our core value is that apart from Jesus Christ, everything else is dispensable. Agree? Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, and Satan said, “Aren’ t you the Son of God? You can turn these stones into food!” Jesus’ answer was: Man does not live by food alone! As for us, some people say: Food is the most important thing for the people. Or others would say, money is not everything, but without money, it is absolutely impossible! The human heart is more deceitful than all things, and it challenges God’ s bottom line in every possible way. “Worshiped and derived the creature rather than the Creator.”

Finally, blaspheme the Creator. When people use their own illusions as the driving force of life, God’ s truth is no longer in our hearts. The word of God is the lamp in the hearts of God’ s children and the light in the path. However, if a person does not usually read the Bible, does not pray, worship, or serve God on Sundays, it is no different than blaspheming God. The essence of blaspheming God is not giving God the glory he deserves. What is even worse is that in our deeds, and when we make decisions, we do not serve the name of the Lord in everything. These people tell lies when they open their mouths, and when they shut up. They have no mercy in their hearts, their flesh is filled with emotions, and they live a life that does not glorify God or benefit others. Judging from its essence, it is because in the beginning, their life of believing in the Lord was not real and the old self was still in charge.

Conclusion

Well, thank the Lord! Whether it’ s gospel resistance, or resistance to the gospel, it’ s all about our hearts. Human ignorance causes people to fall into the trap of knowingly committing sins. The reason for worshiping idols is because people have inner uneasiness and regard all things created by God as the ultimate concern of life. Little do people know that a false life cannot carry the life of Christ. Only man who has the Son of God has life. Without the Son of God, there is no life.

Let us pray……

(Romans 1:21-25)

1:21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

1:22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools,

1:23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

1:24 therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,

1:25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and derived the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

8.The end of eternal death 【Romans 1:26-32】

Introduction

When we understand the gospel, we must not be biased and think that the gospel is the power of God, which can only save all those who believe, but can do nothing to those who do not believe. In fact, after Paul said that the gospel is the power of God, he then said in 1:18: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (Romans 1:18)” It turns out that God has prepared eternal death for unbelievers. Let’s look at the first point:

Indulge in shameful passions

When people are trapped in the worldly vortex, they will definitely not have the heart to love God. When a person does not love God, he will be bound by “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” First, indulge in shameful passions. Lust is a wild run that goes against the law of God, like a wild horse that runs wild and is unruly. Shameful lust refers to thoughts, words and deeds that live in darkness, dare not see the light, and are contrary to God’s creation and will. There is also an attitude issue here, which is indulgence. If you recognize your mistakes, confess and correct them, or at least stop adding mistakes on top of each other, you will not be indulgent. Once a person reaches the point of indulgence, he will lose the motivation and ability to repent. Song Binbin, who died recently at the age of 77, was renamed Song Yaowu by Mao Zedong. He had unshirkable responsibility for the death of Bian Zhongyun, the vice principal of the Girls’ High School Affiliated to Beijing Normal University. He has never dared to go to Principal Bian’s house to apologize or greet Principal Bian’s husband, Wang Jingyao.

Second, activate God’s wrath of giving them up. When people continue to refuse to admit their mistakes, or even refuse to repent, to the point of indulgence, God’s wrath of giving them up will be activated. Because we are obsessed with sin, we fear God’s discipline. But, do you know, those whom God disciplines are the children He loves? “For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives. (Hebrews 12:6)” He disciplines those who are sons, and gives them up if they are not sons or illegitimate sons. Giving up means not caring. God no longer cares whether you are right or wrong. In the past, you might have told a lie and felt uneasy in your heart. You might have heard the Holy Spirit’s rebuke and felt guilty. However, when there are too many sins and time goes by, you no longer feel the need to confess and repent.

Finally, receive the due penalty for their error. God cannot be mocked, do you believe that? Since ancient times, all antichristian superiors have oppressed God’s people, exercised domineering power, and are arrogant. However, the Bible asks us to pay attention to their endings, and none of them will not receive the retribution they deserve for their actions. The

Egyptian Pharaoh was so stubborn that the bones of the Egyptian army still lay under the Red Sea. Because of the disobedience and idolatry of the elects, God caused the northern and southern kingdoms to be destroyed, and the people were scattered all over the world. Jesus Christ became flesh, was born in Bethlehem, grew up in Galilee, preached in every city and village, and was crucified on the cross of Calvary in Jerusalem. Looking at the experience of the Israelites over the past thousands of years, can God be mocked? Let's look at the second point:

Do those unreasonable things

The man who belongs to God goes from honesty in spirit to behavior; the man who belongs to the world goes from lust to behavior. Since it is based on lust, it lacks rationality and is almost irrational. First, rebel against God's creation. The so-called reasonable means that it is consistent with the principles of God's creation of heaven and earth! Homosexuality as mentioned in the scriptures is something unreasonable. Because the marriage relationship designed by God is between a man and a woman, for a lifetime. Today's world has gone very far away from God's original intention of creation. Men and men, women and women, fall short of the glory of God by practicing abominable things. Today, homosexuality has become commonplace all over the world, and the six-colored flag has been flying in the hearts of people both inside and outside. AIDS and other viruses are already prevalent in the world, and they are getting worse and worse. What is even more sad is that people have regarded all kinds of shame as their own rights to pursue and persist.

Secondly, it is full of all unrighteousness. Unrighteous things originate from the evil Satan. From the very beginning, he has tempted greed for God's glory, robbed God of His authority, and had malicious intentions in order to instigate the relationship between God and man and seduce the first ancestors to sin. The root cause is that Satan is jealous of God's glory and sets another bright-eyed standard. The first bad result after man sinned was that Cain killed Abel. From then on, murder entered the world, making it full of strife, deceit, and hatred, and it was out of control. The upcoming war between Israel and Iran may trigger World War III. Since Hamas attacked Israel on October 7 last year, Lebanon's Hezbollah, Yemen, Iran, North Korea, Russia, and China have formed a new antiChrist axis to fight against God.

Finally, it shows low character. If you deviate from God's creation and do many unrighteous things, how can you not kill yourself? The so-called self-inflicted evil will not lead to life! Slanderers, in the original text, are rumor-mongering people, those who tell lies when they open their mouths and lies when they shut up. Those who talk behind someone's back are not those who say good things, but those who aim to slander and slander others and who make it a habit to spread gossip. Those who resent God are like the Israelites who came out of Egypt. They complained that God prevented them from eating the fish, shrimps, fruits and vegetables of Egypt. Little did they know that God let them eat manna in the wilderness for forty years to teach them the importance of living a simple life and focusing on God. However, they paid no attention to Moses who was still on the mountain asking for the tablets of the Ten Commandments, and even shamefully made a golden calf. Moses came down the mountain and saw them reveling around the idols! Let's look at the third point:

Things that harm others and are not beneficial to oneself

Indulging in lust and acting unreasonably will lead to the path of fools. A wicked person behaves knowingly that he is benefiting himself at the expense of others, but he still gets some benefit. However, what a fool does is harmful to others and not self-interested. First, Portrayed by pride. Pride is the chromosome of post-Adam humans, and everything they say or do is full of arrogance. He always thinks that he has some skills, so he can talk nonsense and make arbitrary judgments. It wasn't until he got into trouble that he realized he wasn't that great after all. There was originally a brotherly relationship, but because he wanted to please the boss of the Antichrist, he fabricated evil things to frame the brother and wrote critical articles to add insult to injury. Continuing this nature, this kind of people think they can speak nonsense at gatherings of God's people, feel free to criticize God's servants. Then, God uses righteous methods to discipline. Please note that this is still a time when the Lord can be sought. Because God disciplines those he loves. Of course, the prerequisite is repentance.

Secondly, ignorance as essence. The greatest ignorance of people is that they do not repent and carry their ignorance to the end. The Israelites crucified Jesus because of their ignorance. As a result, they do not repent, and the result is that God's wrath is always upon them. If you have ever framed a brother, you have also colluded with the Three-Self, United Front Work Department, National Security and other anti-Christ departments, lurked, and destroyed overseas churches. It's nothing special, just repent! No sin is greater than the power of Jesus Christ to forgive sins, nor is it greater than the abundant grace of God. It is a pity that when the fear deep in people's hearts becomes so great that they want to grasp ignorance and carry it out to the end. Then, the nature formed by ignorance will accompany him to meet Satan.

Finally, be satisfied with doing evil. What does it mean to be satisfied with doing evil? This refers to a person's motivation and purpose when doing evil. Doing evil on your own may be due to temporary weakness or helplessness. However, if you not only do evil yourself, but also like others to do evil with you, you are in league with Satan. Unfortunately, since Adam sinned, this kind of seducing character has become the norm in the world. Because people who do evil often feel lonely inside. They must always recruit some people to support them. Even if they go to hell in the future, there will be someone to accompany them. This mentality comes from Satan, who has the loneliest mentality in the world and always competes with God for human hearts. Its greatest satisfaction is that the door to hell is wide and many people go there.

Conclusion

Well, thank the Lord! The Bible says: "And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:17)" God's creation established reasonable standards in the world. Knowing God is the beginning of wisdom, which enables us to stay away from foolishness and fear God!

Let us pray.....

(Romans 1:26-32)

1:26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged

natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;

1:27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

1:28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

1:29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness.

1:30 They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,

1:31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

1:32 Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they do not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

9. Judge According to Truth 【Romans 2:1-4】

Introduction

When people enter the end of eternal death, they face the judgment of God. God's judgment is based on the standards and principles of biblical truth, and is judged in the ultimate and detailed aspects of human life. Let's look at the first point:

Judgment is the judgment of the person who judges

We have a myth about judgment, probably all influenced by the way the court is held. It's as if the method of judgment is just the style of a courtroom. In fact, the very existence of truth possesses the authority to judge. In other words, the judgment has already begun. First, rob God of His glory. When the first ancestors were in the darkness of Satan and mistakenly thought that their eyes were bright, they began their journey to snatch the glory of God. Even God's creation can be judged by people, so judging people is out of the question. Ever since, judgment has become a topic of conversation among people after dinner, and it has become more and more interesting. Over time, one who judges has become a proper noun. Since then, a group of people have developed in the world, as if those who specialize in judging people have become a profession, or even professionals who judge people. In fact, those who judge people can also hide in the city and live among the crowd. Usually you can't find them, but when something happens, you will hear obscene words coming from a certain corner to rob God of His glory.

Secondly, one condemned himself. In fact, most of those who judge others are those who have been judged by others. People who are judged feel condemned. Maybe they think, why should I be judged by you? Can't I judge you? Emotions coupled with the desire for revenge. If they hear a few provocative words, they will become a professional judge. Whether it is those who judge others or those who are judged by others, in the eyes of God, they are nothing more than those who condemn others or condemn themselves. This is a derivative of sin due to human ignorance, because ignorance itself is sin. In fact, the reason is very simple. What people know is limited, and based on what they know, they still don't know. A person who is not humble and adds a little arrogance will condemn himself.

Finally, sin of discord between words and deeds. This is also the most common phenomenon for us, that is, people's words and deeds are inconsistent. This phenomenon seems a bit funny when it occurs among the "judgmental people". The Pharisees of Jesus' day were people whose words and deeds were inconsistent. The sanctimoniousness of the Pharisees made people think that they were really moral models. Because they were familiar with the law, they severely criticized the Jews. However, paper cannot contain fire. One day people will discover that the Pharisees "acted just like others." That is to say, what you rebuke others is the same as what you do yourself. Therefore, judgment can occur in self-judgment. Let's look at the

second point:

Truth is the seat of judge

Before writing this sermon, I had never imagined that truth would be the judge's seat. To put it simply, it means that only God has the authority to judge. First, the everlasting God. Moses met God on Mount Sinai, and of course he was curious about God. So he asked, who are You? At that time, Moses' knowledge of God was limited to the legends of the Israelites and the data in the Egyptian library. This time because he committed murder and fled into the wilderness, he saw a vision, which was a bush that burned but was not destroyed. God satisfied his curiosity and said: I AM WHO I AM. In the original Hebrew text, there is only one word: "I am (אהיה)". Jesus Christ used seven "I am" words in the Gospel of John, which are the same root words in Hebrew. Of course, the meaning of Hebrew is richer, including pre-existing existence, existence that does not depend on any other existence.

Secondly, the standard for judging all things. Paul said: "We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. (Romans 2:2)" What does it mean? One is the Bible as the standard. That is to say, comparing what a person does with the Bible, the difference revealed is the basis for judgment. The second is objective fact. What happened? Keeping detailed records of what happened can be used as evidence in court. The third is the recognition of this matter by Christ and His church, which is the guidance of the Holy Spirit to the church. Today's scripture particularly emphasizes the consistency of words and deeds, because what a person says may be his judgment, and what he does may be his true life.

Finally, all people receive judgment. As the saying goes, the same rice feeds all kinds of people, everyone in the world is different. But no matter who you are, you cannot escape God's judgment. Because God's judgment is universal, completely covering, and without exception. Sin came into the world because of one man, and everyone in the world sinned and fell short of the glory of God. In addition to the universality of judgment, the Bible also emphasizes the comprehensiveness of judgment on people, leaving out no one. We often say that people should not expose or accuse someone's thoughts or intentions. Only God's judgment on man will judge words, deeds, and hearts. On that day, when we come to God's great white throne to accept His judgment, everything we say, do, and think in this life will be revealed and spread out in front of God's throne, allowing God and angels and all the saints came to watch together. Let's look at the third point:

Only mercy triumphs over judgment

This is an option of grace, not something we deserve. James said: "For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. (James 2:13)" First, the attitude towards grace. Life is a lifetime, grass grows in one spring. and what is shown is nothing more than a sign of grace. However, different lives have different attitudes towards grace. Some people repay their kindness and regard it as a universal value. There are also some people who are ungrateful, but they also think they are noble and different. When it comes to the relationship between God and man, it is based on faith. The Bible says, by grace you are saved through faith! Not because of behavior, not because of fame, fortune, merit, or

anything else to boast about. The ultimate attitude towards grace is in Christ alone and to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Second, the purpose of grace is repentance. Why do I say that? Is repentance really that important? Jesus says, “ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. (Luke 15:7)” Repentance first begins with a person’s thoughts. However, repentance cannot be just rhetorical talk, but must come from the heart, be expressed in words, and be based on deeds. You are not required to be perfect, but you must have a change in your life. In other words, if your life has been the same for decades and your life has not changed, don’t boast that you have truly repented. If you are willing to admit this, there is still hope and you will not fall into the trap of self-deception.

Lastly, mercy triumphs over judgment. When a person reaches this point, there is hope in life. Start by receiving mercy and become a person who is grateful in everything. Understand the meaning of mercy, imitate the Lord who gives mercy, and gradually understand that mercy is a gift that can be lived out. It manifests itself in always speaking kind words, speaking less harsh words, encouraging more, judging less, smiling often and frowning less. Over time, your life will bear witness to the quality of mercy. Especially when we see others making mistakes, We are not reacting to our flesh or emotions, but first responding to God’s tolerant love and self-examination. Driven by empathy, speak the truth in love to restore the sinning body.

Conclusion

In fact, only God has the authority and position to judge. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Believe in Jesus and get eternal life; the ones don’t believe in Jesus and get eternal death! On the day of final judgment, the Lord will judge us according to the truth of the Bible, according to each of our thoughts, words, and deeds!

Let us pray.....

(Romans 2:1–4)

2:1 Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you , the judge, practice the very same things.

2:2 we know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.

2:3 Do you suppose, O man— you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself— that you will escape the judgment of God?

2:4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

10. Judge With Righteousness 【Romans 2:5-11】

Introduction

Judgment is God's theme, expressing the ultimate return of the relationship between God and man. The Bible says: "And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment. (Hebrews 9:27)" The core of judging according to truth is to judge according to righteousness, because righteousness is the most important attribute of God. Let's look at the first point:

Store up wrath for oneself

God's judgment is a manifestation of the interaction between God and man, and it also reveals the consequences of man's sin. First, be stubborn and unrepentant. God's grace is sufficient for us, why? Because when we confess our sins, God is righteous and holy and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The weak spot of the church is the repentance of brothers and sisters. Of course, if a person is hardened and unwilling to repent, God will use the binding of the church to complete His binding in heaven. A person who is bound in the church, no matter where he goes, the ropes that bind him will remain with him until he repents. Of course, he can also walk the path of sin with the bondage on him, and receive God's discipline or punishment when the Lord returns. May God help us to have a soft heart towards the Lord.

Secondly, show God's righteousness. God's righteousness will appear as mercy and love to those who truly repent. On the contrary, God's righteousness appears as God's wrath in the face of hardened and unrepentant people. Every time a person refuses to repent, he is storing up God's wrath for himself. As the scripture says: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. (John 3:36)" In fact, you know God's righteousness, right? But even if you think you are lucky, you feel that God's justice is still far away and will not reach you. Little did you know that God's righteousness would come to visit you tonight, either through prostate cancer, cervical cancer, or other natural or man-made disasters. God will not be mocked!

Finally, repay according to deeds. This is a truth that we tend to overlook! Paul said: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph. 2:8-9)" We tend to focus on the salvation part and ignore the judgment part. One may think to himself, since salvation is by grace through faith and not by works, that's great! From now on, I have confidence! Behavior is not important, so just do whatever I want! As a result, churches are filled with people who "wear new shoes and walk in the same old ways." However, today's scripture says: "He will render to each one according to his works." Let's look at the second point:

Repay them with eternal life

In the Chinese context, the word retribution mostly expresses negative connotations. But the original meaning is a neutral word, which means repayment. First, repay them with eternal life. What Paul says is somewhat confusing, as if he is saying that there is a way to be justified by works. In fact, Paul used flashbacks to gradually reason out that without faith, one cannot please God. Furthermore, it is said in 2:7: “to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. (Romans 2:7)” It is also aimed at the kingdom of God. It is not difficult to be kind, but perseverance is difficult. Seeking honor may be accomplished, but glory must be in Christ. Immortal blessing refers to the way of eternal life. What else could it be but the way of faith? If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; all things have become new.

Second, repay them with wrath. Of course, if people do not practice the truth and head straight for hell, eternal death awaits them. The scripture says: “but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. (Romans 2:8)” People who form cliques must have no sense of security. Always thinking that there is someone who agrees with me, supports me, and leans towards me. Once you are popular, you will feel that the one who wins the hearts of the people will win the world. How can you still care about what the truth is? If you don't care about the truth and don't understand justice, instead obey unjust things, it becomes a high probability. But At this time, it would make sense for God to retaliate against them with wrath and anger, right?

Finally, the direction of retribution is eternal life. How to say this? Because the Bible says: “who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:4)” Peter even said: “not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)” This follows from the core values of the Bible. There is a sheep still in the wilderness, and the shepherd has to leave the ninety-nine sheep at home to find this lost sheep. The prodigal son went out to eat pig food, and his father was far away on the road waiting for the prodigal son to return home. Of course, the prodigal son's attitude must be to confess his sins and repent, saying: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. (Luke 15:21)” Let's look at the third point:

For God shows no partiality

We will remember more that “for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16)” and may overlook today's balancing scripture. First, so is the order of suffering. God's chosen people have God's grace, even extraordinary grace. Jesus Christ came into the world as a human, choosing to be born in Bethlehem and grow up in Galilee. When he went out to preach, he also traveled through all the cities and villages in the Promised Land, and even died on Golgotha in Jerusalem. When God's righteousness executes judgment, he will not be lenient just because he is God's chosen people. God will “There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek. (Romans 2:9)” God scattered His people around the world for thousands of years and even allowed Hitler to kill six million Jews. To this day, the Israelites still have no peace.

Secondly, the order of peace is the same. That is, “but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. (Romans 2:10)” Obviously, if a person does good deeds, he is consistent with God’s nature and thus is accepted by God. When Jacob wrestled with God at the ford of Jabbok, he just acted coquettishly and asked God to bless him. God even changed his name from Jacob to Israel to commemorate his desire and pursuit of God. Not only that, God also allowed him to survive Esau’s pursuit safely, and even paid off the brotherly debt of more than 20 years. Moreover, it can be seen that the destinations of Jacob and Esau are respectively inside and outside the Promised Land.

Finally, for God shows no partiality. God is the ruler and the rule maker. He has ordained that whether good or bad, it shall be for the Jews first and then for the Gentiles. When He says something, it happens, and when He commands it, it happens. He is the real Chrysostom! He will not leave his words unanswered or change things midway. For Jews, don’t do whatever you want and be unruly just because you are God’s chosen people. If you Israelites have done evil, God will also be the first to settle accounts with you. Of course, if you do good deeds, God’s blessings will first come to God’s chosen people. As a Gentile, we should be more alert and pray, lest we destroy ourselves through pride. Paul’s exhortation to us is: “So do not become proud, but fear. (Romans 11:20b)

Conclusion

When God judges righteously, we should be alert so as not to store up wrath for ourselves! Justification is by faith, not by works. However, God will repay each one according to his deeds.

Let us pray.....

(Romans 2:5-11)

2: 5 But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.

2:6 He will render to each one according to his works

2:7 to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life

2:8 but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury

2:9 There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek

2:10 but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek

2:11 for God shows no partiality.

11. Judge According to Law 【Romans 2:12-15】

Introduction

We talked about judging according to truth and righteousness before. Why do we talk about judging according to the law today? Regardless of the establishment of the law, the history of the law, and the function of history, there are many topics that can be discussed. But the core meaning is because the goal of the law is Christ. Let's look at the first point:

Taking the law as the criterion

Paul starts here with the actual relationship between the law and us, which means that the law affects our daily life and becomes the yardstick of our lives. First, be judged according to the law. The law is a rule, and once it is set, it must be obeyed, otherwise it will affect the establishment of righteousness and the operation of truth. In the Garden of Eden, God said, you must not eat from the tree! This is the rule, this is the law! If Adam obeyed, everything would be fine. Eve ate it and gave it to Adam to eat, and Adam also ate it, and the consequences of death came to the world. Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, disobeyed the Lord and offered unauthorized fire without permission, and were devoured by God's fire. Eli's two sons also thought that God could be mocked, so they took away the sacrificial meat of the sacrificer and seized the fat of the offering made by fire as a fragrant aroma to the Lord, and they died on the same day.

Secondly, the ones without laws do not need to accept God's judgment. The human heart is deceitful above all things. Who can understand it? It is as if the Gentiles do not need to accept God's judgment because they do not have the Law of Moses. This is because we do not have a clear understanding of God's judgment and think that God's judgment is a bad thing. As everyone knows, the judgment is based on truth, righteousness, and the law. Is there anything to be worried about? After David sinned, he said, I would rather fall into the hands of God than into the hands of the Philistines. Why? Isn't it because God is merciful? Think about it again, if there is no discipline or judgment from God, isn't it just God's abandonment? A person who has neither law nor judgment will eventually become an outcast in the kingdom of God.

Finally, there are laws governing life and death. The law is divided into explicit and implicit, visible and invisible. The Bible says: "ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse." God's law is in God's creation, who can deny it? God's creation every day says there is evening and there is morning. The order of time and space itself is one of the expressions of the law. Although people cannot see Christ, the purpose of all creation is to reveal the glory of Christ. The message that the gospel brings us: "Believe in Jesus and you will have eternal life; if you don't believe in Jesus, you will have eternal death!" It refers to the gospel judgment based on the law. Let's look at the second point:

The doers of the law who will be justified

Justification by faith is the core of our faith, but no one can deny that the actions that arise from faith are proof of the unity of faith and its two sides. First, listen to the beginning of the law. In order for God's people to hear the law, God began to prepare it with Abraham. After the selection of three generations of Isaac and Jacob, they entered Egypt and waited for 430 years of suffering. In order to prepare Moses, God spent eighty years honing his character. When the time was fulfilled, from the seventy people who entered Egypt to the approximately two million people who came out of Egypt, they came to Mount Sinai in great numbers to hear the law of God, the Ten Commandments, the general outline of the law. It was the time, God's elect were still in the initial stage of understanding. Moses asked for stone tablets on the mountain, but they cast a golden calf at the foot of the mountain. God is patient and disciplines, and of course he also judges. Moses broke the stone tablets and God killed three thousand people at once.

Secondly, the progression of knowledge of the law. Three months after leaving Egypt, God made a covenant with the Israelites on Mount Sinai. Why? Because God's people hear the law and know that the essence of the law is to make a covenant with God. At the same time, it is also an invitation. God invites us to obey His words, keep His covenants, and be His people. This process is a gradual revelation, allowing people of God to go from not knowing to knowing a little, to knowing more and more about God. God asked Moses to tell the Israelites: "and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. (Exodus 19:6)" Just like today, even though we believe in Jesus Christ, we gradually understand why we need to pray, supplicate and give thanks in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in everything we do, right?

Lastly, the doers of the law who will be justified. For those of us who have been justified by faith, when we hear even the Bible says: "but the doers of the law who will be justified." There will be a conditioned reflex, and you will ask: Doesn't it mean that one is justified by faith? In fact, the Bible not only talks about justification by faith, but also has scriptures that mention justification by works of the law. In fact, there is no contradiction between the two, it is just a cognitive perspective. Without faith, one cannot please God. We are saved by grace through faith. Not by works, lest anyone should boast. However, James said: "So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (James 2:17)" Therefore, simply hearing the gospel and knowing the gospel cannot be justified. Only by practicing the gospel according to the law can one be justified. Let's look at the third point:

Demonstrate the function of the law

Revealing the essence of the function of the law is that the Holy Spirit testifies with our hearts that we are children of God. First, the law is written on the heart. To be engraved in the heart is to become an integral part of life. The function of the law, in the original text, is the instinct to distinguish between good and evil. The original ancestors, Adam and Eve, were still in a so-called "dream-like ignorance" in their initial stages of creation. Therefore, the poet exhorts us: "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. (Psalm 119:11)" Moses taught us to take God's Word: "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.(Deut. 6:8)" Even "You shall teach them diligently to your

children, 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. (Deut. 6:7)” This is why our church encourages brothers and sisters to practice devotion, pray, read the Bible, recite scriptures, and sing hymns every day and every week.

Next, conscience also bears witness. As soon as we are born into the world, we have a sense of right and wrong, which is our conscience. Everyone, no matter good or bad, rich or poor, is born with a conscience. Conscience is given by God and exists in our lives, but it is independent of our judgment on morality and ethics, right and wrong, relationship with God, and the degree of knowledge of God. Conscience has been polluted due to sin and cannot be used as a standard for judgment. However, the law is still good and perfect. Jesus also said that until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law. If a person is not saved, he does not have the Holy Spirit in his heart. Without the Holy Spirit, one cannot know the true meaning of the law, and one lacks the heart to distinguish right from wrong.

Lastly, conflicting thoughts. The thoughts here refer to reason, which together with human nature and conscience constitute the function of the law. Under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, traces of mutual competition were left. Being enlightened by God to reason can produce civilization and testimony that are in line with God’s will, allowing God to receive the glory He deserves. Antichrists, false Christs, and non-Christ representatives will leave strife, greed, war, plague, famine, deceit, lies, deception, etc. in the world. At this time, the law became the only standard of judgment.

Conclusion

Thank you Lord! I will hide your word in my heart and your law in my mind, so that I will not sin against you! May God help, may God bless, and may God strengthen us. When your day of judgment comes, all your people will come to judge this world with you.

Let us pray.....

(Romans 2:12-15)

2:12 For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law

2:13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.

2:14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.

2:15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.

12. Judgement of the Jews 【Romans 2:16-29】

Introduction

If the first three “Judgements” are metaphysical descriptions, then today’s “Judgment of the Jews” is a physical description. From the judgment of the truth, righteousness and law, it defines the principles and standards for God’s judgment. The judgment of the Jews is a clue that follows the context of the law. Let’s look at the first point:

Taking the law as the criterion

Paul’s starting point is the attitude of the Jews. In particular, the explicit and implicit aspects of the law serve as the structure of the discussion, bringing the gospel into the scene of judgment. First, the attitude towards judgment. Verse 16: “On that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. (Romans 2:16)” What is Paul talking about? He talks about it from a new perspective, the perspective of the gospel. This is a concept foreign to the Jews! Furthermore, even from a perspective of the law, there is the issue of judgment for hidden sin. This is also a question that is unfamiliar and unwilling to the Jews. Because the Pharisees were the pinnacle of obedience to the law, they could also be examples of hypocrisy. Jesus Christ hated this deeply and severely rebuked it many times! Therefore, if we take obedience to the law as the criterion, we cannot just stop at the superficial provisions of the law.

Secondly, expectations of distinguishing between right and wrong. In fact, Paul never denied or despised the law. In Paul’s writing, Paul emphasizes those who practice the law. He said: “But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God. (Romans 2:17)” From Moses to the return from captivity, God’s chosen people deeply understood the consequences of not obeying the law. Therefore, the Jews will “Therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. (Deut. 11:18)” Even so, it may be superficial and of no use. Daily devotional prayers are nothing more than a weapon to judge others. Knowing a little bit about the Bible, one will use it to attack others. As if he were the standard of the law.

Finally, the challenge of practicing what you preach. This sense of superiority is actually rooted in one’s identity as God’s elect, thinking that one has learned lessons from the law, assuming that one knows God’s will, and even believing that one has the ability to distinguish right from wrong. Therefore, a self-centered court was set up to judge anyone who could not stand it. Since the ones are God’s chosen people, they are qualified to lead the way for the blind and even be the light for those in darkness. There is no need to talk about evidence, just make their own decision, and they can use their own feelings as the standard of judgment, and feel free to expose or criticize people’s thoughts or intentions. Paul said this, indicating that a similar situation also occurred in the church at that time. Does our church today also have this phenomenon? Blaming others at will, jumping to conclusions easily, without grace in one’s

mouth, and has no direction in his heart. He has nothing to offer, but draws conclusions that are greater than others. Let's look at the second point:

Justification by the works of the law

This is based on the proposition put forward in the previous chapter 2, verse 13, that is, "For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. (Romans 2:13)" What is Paul talking about? Isn't it justified by faith? What is going on? First, the relationship between law and people. The law came from God, and the Israelites received it through Moses on Mount Sinai, with the purpose of passing it on to God's people. The essence of the law is the covenant between God and man, and what the covenant expresses is the relationship between God and man. Before anyone knows the law, he is like a sheep that has gone astray, turning to his own way, and is a fool. Therefore, because people know God, they enter the beginning of wisdom. As the scripture says, "For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. (Romans 2:25)" In this way, a circumcised Israelite may not necessarily be an Israelite. On the contrary, those who are justified by faith, keep the way of the Lord, and obey the law become the new Israelites.

Second, living the law is key. Since the Israelites received the law, they should be "an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth. (Romans 2:20)" This is not only a Jewish problem, but also a problem for all mankind, which is that they always like to be the master of others. James said: "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. (James 3:1)" The deeper reason is that people don't mind listening. They prefer to talk, but they don't like to live out the law according to the truth. Once a person wants to live out the law, he must guard his mouth, not criticize or judge others, and he must speak the truth in love and imitate the Lord's style.

Finally, inability to keep the law. The Bible says that, "For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out." What to do? Blushing one's face and pretending to be fat will be an option, so saying one thing and doing another becomes a choice for many people. Tell others not to steal, but steal yourself. Telling others not to commit adultery, yet he commits adultery himself. They say they hate idols, but they keep or place idol objects in their homes. There is such a thing as the law, if you break one rule, you break all the rules. As long as people admit it, there is no need to pretend, there is still hope. The most terrifying thing is that you are also a sinner, but you have to judge other sinners. Pretending to be a judge, speaking evil words, wearing a priest's robe, sitting on the judge's seat, and pronouncing the judge's verdict. Let's look at the third point:

Demonstrate the function of the law

The basic function of the law is to make people confess, repent, and turn away from sin. Its purpose is to lead people to come to Christ and return to Christ. First, confession is the direction of the law. The law itself is not the gospel and cannot save people. However, as soon as a person reads the law, he immediately knows that he is a sinner. The provisions of the

law quickly let people know what kind of sin they have committed, how guilty they are, and how they have provoked God's wrath. The law points out man's inability and illustrates his inability to achieve the righteousness required by the law. This points to the limitation of human beings, who have to be humble before God and run in the direction of the gospel. Therefore, the law became a teacher, teaching God's people the way to heaven. Once a person reaches the height of confession, he will trigger God's forgiveness and mercy, and He will also cleanse us of all unrighteousness!

Secondly, repentance is a rebuke of the law. The law alone cannot complete the function of repentance, it must be done by the Holy Spirit! The Bible says that the law is for the unrighteous (1 Timothy 1:9). Without the inspiration and reminder of the Holy Spirit, sinners will not spontaneously repent of their sins. The discipline and punishment caused by the law make people repent toward Christ. Of course, the logical disjunction also includes facing the reproach of the law without any remorse, thus entering the judgment of the law. Judgment will begin from the house of God, and whatever the church binds, the Lord Jesus will bind in heaven. On the contrary, whatever the church releases, the Lord Jesus will release in heaven. I encourage brothers and sisters not to despise God and think that if you sin, you can just change to another church.

Finally, staying away from sin is the distance from the law. Taking the road to heaven is towards the distance, but it is also close at hand! God looks at the heart, not the appearance. As the Bible says: "But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God. (Romans 2:29)" He who comes from God no longer sins, does not continue to sin, does not increase sin, and no longer wants to sin. This is a process, and it may be a long process. What seems to be in the unknown in the distance will happen one day under the control of God. We bear witness to what God has done, and it is done.

Conclusion

In fact, the judgment against the Jews is the judgment against ourselves. God's judgment on the elect is a shadow or pattern of what we will experience in life. The salvation of the whole family of Israel as defined by God is grace that includes us, the new Israelites. May God help us obey the law and stay away from legalism. Not he who hears the law is justified, but he who does the law is justified, that is, he is justified by faith.

Let us pray.....

(Romans 2:16-29)

2:16 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

2:17 But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God

2:18 and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law;

2:19 and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,

2:20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—

2:21 you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal?

2:22 You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

2:23 You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.

2:24 For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

2:25 For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision.

2:26 So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded[b] as circumcision?

2:27 Then he who is physically[c] uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code[d] and circumcision but break the law.

2:28 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical.

2:29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

13. God's faith and Man's Unbelief 【Romans 3:1-4】

Introduction

Today's scripture brings up two important concepts, namely God's faith and man's unbelief. Obviously, handling the relationship between God's faith and man's unbelief is the foundation of the relationship between God and man. Let's look at the first point:

God's faith comes from the oracles of God

Usually when we talk about faith, we keep it in our pocket and think of ourselves as the owners of it. However, the root of faith comes from the word of God. First, the entrustment of the oracles of God. Paul explains the theme from the Jewish background. When Paul wrote Romans, he was in Corinth. During his missionary journey, he was often harassed by the Jews and even persecuted to the point of life and death. I believe the situation in the church in Rome is similar. Therefore, Paul encouraged the brothers and sisters to put aside their hatred and look at things from God's perspective amid persecution. Is there anything to cherish about the arrogant and unreasonable Jews who seem to boast only of being circumcised? Paul said, yes, the mere fact that "the oracles of God were entrusted to them" deserves our respect. Just as we treat pastors and ministers today, we must also respect them because of the work they do, which is to spread the word of God. This is not what I say, but what the Bible commands.

Secondly, faith and the oracles of God. What does faith have to do with the oracles of God and the Bible? Paul said: "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. (Hebrews 11:3)" That is to say, people must receive God's creation and salvation, as well as His message of judgment, through faith. Without faith, we cannot understand the words of the Bible, and we cannot understand that we and the world we live in were created by God. In the eyes of unbelievers, they cannot see, hear, or think about the heaven and earth created by God.

Finally, faith still speaks. Faith is an indescribable spiritual experience, a wonderful feeling that cannot be separated from the courage to move forward. The Bible says: "By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. (Hebrews 11:4)" Abel's life was short, and he didn't seem to do anything big. According to the records in the Old Testament, he offered a sacrifice once and was killed by Cain. But the New Testament brings a perfect ending to Abel's life: "And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks." Dear brothers and sisters, our faith can speak! Even if we die one day, our faith will still speak and continue to be a beautiful witness for the Lord! Let us testify to God both before and after our lives! Let's look at the second point:

Their faithlessness cannot nullify the faithfulness of God

For more than two thousand years, many people have been confused: Why do the Israelites not believe in Jesus? This was also the practical problem that Paul had to face back then. Jesus has become flesh, so why don't you believe it yet? First, keep your faith boundaries. This principle is not easy to explain, and it's not appropriate to be biased. The basic level of faith is your own spiritual experience. You can share your testimony, but it cannot replace the decisions of others. When Paul went to preach the gospel, the Jews in Greece and Rome refused to believe, which inevitably made his co-workers frustrated. At this time, Paul said: "What if some were unfaithful?" Paul's point is not that it doesn't matter, but don't worry about it. Paul was addressing things rather than people, people's belief or unbelief, not believers or unbelievers. That is, don't be depressed or worried because of other people's unbelief, and continue to maintain your enthusiasm for preaching the gospel without changing!

Second, face the unbelievers calmly. In fact, since ancient times, the majority of people do not believe in God. Why do we feel uneasy because so few people believe in God? In 1987, when I first arrived in Norway, I heard that 95% of Norwegians were Christians. When I believed in the Lord in 1990, I also felt very comforted. Wow, there are so many Christians around me! By the time I left Norway for Hong Kong in 1995, the seminaries in Norway were already discussing whether to accept gay pastors to serve in the church! On the way back to the United States from Stockholm on the 11th of this month, there was a Swede sitting next to me. He told me that now about 95% of people in Northern Europe no longer believe in Jesus. At first I felt sad when I heard it, but I felt relieved after praying!

Finally, truly believe in God. In fact, our hearts must be aligned with the Lord, and we must have the mind of Christ! The Bible says: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Cor. 5:17)" So where is the new? In fact, what is new is whether we can truly believe in God? He is the omniscient, omnipresent, and almighty God, and He deserves our exclusive, first, and only attention to Him! We truly believe that "everything comes from God" in our daily lives! Including people's belief or unbelief, He knows it all, He controls it all, and He judges it all! We just need to focus on "He reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." Leave the rest to the Lord! Let's look at the third point:

Reality reveals the truth

Reality reveals the truth, and it is not an easy life to live out. Reality includes the occurrence of facts, the expression of facts, and the verification of facts. First, awareness of the facts. People usually pay more attention to their own emotions or feelings, and tend to ignore objective facts. Why? It may be easier to capture your feelings, but more difficult to record something. In addition to witnesses, there must also be physical evidence. From an absolute perspective, humans are unable to record a "pure fact." The reason is simple, because in the process of recording facts, it is difficult for people to separate subjective judgments and motives. But we cannot not record the facts because of this, because recording the facts itself is a reverence for the truth. A person who can understand this truth and carry it throughout his life is a wise man.

Secondly, the explanation of facts. Perhaps we ourselves would not have thought that in

addition to our inability to record “pure facts”, we also do not have the ability to explain the facts completely objectively. Why? For the heart is deceitful above all things, and who can know it? The nature we inherited from Adam is to say that we are right and others are wrong. Do you agree? Because we are all sinners, we cannot believe in our ability to correct our own mistakes. You say it is possible, but the problem is that someone must believe it! What to do? It requires supervision by many people, hearings, and careful thinking and judgment! If you believe in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit will bear witness with our hearts, and the church, the Body of Christ, will watch over our lives. In fact, in some countries in the world that are influenced by the Bible, it would be helpful to adopt the three-power approach.

Finally, to give an account with facts. One day, we will come before God’s throne to receive His judgment. God will reveal everything we did in life one by one on the big screen in heaven. Only then will we understand why today’s scripture says: “Let God be true though every one were a liar.” It turns out that God’s standard is: “That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.” This sentence is what we long for in life! It is difficult, but it is our pursuit in life! May God help us and give us His mercy. In the process of learning the facts, understand the difficulties in understanding the truth and the humility we should have.

Conclusion

After I finished writing the sermon, I realized that God’s truth is so rich and profound that I really didn’t dare to cut corners, hide it, or not speak it all! Because one day, I will have to give an account to the Lord! Faith comes from God, and it is given to people, and becomes a vessel of grace. Without faith, one cannot please God!

Let us pray.....

(Romans 3:1-4)

3:1 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?

3:2 Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

3:3 What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?

3:4 By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, “That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.”

14. God's Righteousness and Man's Unrighteousness 【Romans 3:5-8】

Introduction

Today's message will talk about two important concepts, one is God's righteousness, and the other is man's unrighteousness. It is easier to understand human unrighteousness, because humans are born with unrighteousness, and everything they think, think, say, and do every day is full of unrighteousness. Unrighteousness is wrong, it is sin, it is evil. But, what about righteousness? It seems a bit abstract, right? We can say that righteousness is the opposite of unrighteousness, but we do not know its extent and measure. Therefore, we cannot do without God's revelation. Look at the first point:

God's righteousness is revealed in unrighteousness

Paul's logic is the same, facing the understanding of God's righteousness. He offers a special perspective to help us understand God's justice. First, righteousness is revealed in unrighteousness. John received revelation from God and said: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:5)" God is light and there is no darkness at all in Him! The incarnation of Jesus Christ is God's righteousness coming among unrighteous people to demonstrate God's righteousness. When we preach the gospel, we are also bringing light into darkness and bringing God's righteousness into an unrighteous world. Every detail of the daily life of God's children is a testimony for the Lord. Every one of our testimonies is looking to our Lord Jesus Christ, our author and finisher. This testimony transcends human life and death and still speaks by faith. Just as God's righteousness exists in man's unrighteousness, the gospel of God's righteousness is spoken in order to save the world.

Secondly, people are speechless in righteousness. In God's righteousness, people can't say anything except thanks and praise! What's this? This is why we worship and praise! Why should we sing and praise every Sunday during worship? Because apart from praise, people are speechless before God's justice. When the twenty-four elders in Revelation worship with the four living creatures, the Bible says: "And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great. (Revelation 19:5)" Therefore, being speechless is the highest form of worship and praise to God! Here, I also encourage our brothers and sisters in the International Online United Church to stand and praise God during weekly worship!

Finally, God reigns in judgment. When God's righteousness is revealed in man's unrighteousness, God is in control. The encounter between righteousness and unrighteousness is judgment! The standard of judgment is in the Bible, the words spoken by God. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. Whether you are saved or perished depends on a word from God's mouth. When the Lord taught his disciples to pray, He said: "For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen. (Matthew 6:13)" The

sovereignty of our Lord is the basis of our faith. No matter what happens to us, we will not be afraid. For the Lord who loved us reigns and has the first place in the end of life, and has the final say. Although I don't know what will happen tomorrow, the Lord we believe in does control tomorrow. Let's look at the second point:

God's righteousness is based on righteousness

This sentence is a bit confusing. God's righteousness is based on righteousness, which means that God is the God who exists from eternity! He is the Lord of righteousness, and His righteousness needs no explanation, no argument, no doubt! First of all, it is based on faith and leads to faith. If even faith comes from God, what else do people have to boast about? Paul said: "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith. (Romans 1:17)" For God's children, believing in Jesus is a matter of course and there is nothing to boast about. God's righteousness shows that He is the only Lord worthy of glory and praise, and directing our faith towards Him shows that this is the right thing to do. In the eyes of those who believe, faith is a matter of course and completely righteous. In the eyes of unbelievers, it is something out of place. Even a weird thing. For those who are blind, deaf, or spiritually ignorant of course cannot know God!

Second, glory will prevail over lies. Glory belongs to God alone, but is coveted by the world. In Paul's logical selection, people even tried to use human lies to more and more reveal the glory of God. The absurdity seems to be saying, you see, every time I tell a lie, I reveal God's righteousness, so that God is glorified. It doesn't matter if I don't get the glory, then I'll settle for the next best thing and seek honor. As a result, many honorary titles have appeared in the world, such as honorary chairman, honorary general manager, honorary doctorate, and even Pastor Emeritus have entered churches and people's hearts. But, so what? Once a person robs God of His glory, it is like eating a mouthful of rice that is full of sand and difficult to swallow.

Finally, the sinner will be justified by faith. It is easier to return to God's righteousness and act according to God's law of faith. Wise people simplify complex things, while fools complicate simple things. Faith comes from God and is the only way God gives to man. People may have many different reasons or experiences when they believe in the Lord, but in essence it is because of God's righteousness. Therefore, believing in the Lord is the way of the wise! The simpler your faith is, the more grace you will receive. How blessed are those who hear and believe! After Thomas touched the Lord's nail-marked hands, Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. (John 20:29)" From then on, Thomas became a wise man and was faithful to death in preaching the gospel. Let's look at the third point:

Man's unrighteousness stems from sin

Man's unrighteousness stems from sin, which is the core of biblical revelation. Because the wages of sin is death, man is powerless in the face of sin. Therefore, God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to become flesh and specifically come to cleanse us from our sins. First, ignorance is the cause of sin. How does ignorance drive sin? The Bible says: "For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in

their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Romans 1:21)” Adam and Eve knew that God is their Creator, but they knew God’s command and deliberately turned against God. Solomon was the same, knowing that his father David’s relationship with God was better than anything else in the world. Therefore, he sought wisdom from God that is better than the glory and wealth of the world. However, he could not withstand the temptations of the world, followed the customs of far and near, worshiped idols, stayed away from God, and fell into ignorance.

Secondly, judgment is due to righteousness. Judging all things is God’s ultimate mission, and it is also determined by God’s own righteousness. In the revelation that John received on the Island of Patmos, God said to him: “Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.” (Revelation 22:11)” This person is saved and that person is perished, everything comes from God! As long as God’s righteousness exists, God will “keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation. (Exodus 34:7)” It’s not that God doesn’t want to repay it, it’s that the time has not come yet. We don’t have to feel resentful because the wicked are still at large.

Finally, the end of injustice is destruction. One of the great pains in life is to see the wicked doing evil things, but there seems to be no retribution. David also said: “I have seen a wicked, ruthless man, spreading himself like a green laurel tree. (Psalms 37:35)” Especially when we see that the Antichrist and his followers are still showing off their power in the world today, and it seems that they are still continuing to be arrogant. Will we feel grievance? One day, these evil people will be removed by God, and they will be seen by us. Maybe one day, when we are still thinking about those evil people in our hearts, we pass by and find that the evil people are gone! Where did they go? We don’t know, and we don’t need to know! Because even if we look for them, we can’t find them. The reason is simple: the end of injustice is destruction.

Conclusion

Well, dear brothers and sisters, the greatest righteousness of God is that Christ laid down his life for sinners! The greatest unrighteousness of man is not believing in the great salvation that God has accomplished for man. May God help us and give His mercy to us so that we can associate with God’s righteousness and walk with God in humility!

Let us pray.....

(Romans 3:5-8)

3:5 But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.)

3:6 By no means! For then how could God judge the world?

3:7 But if through my lie God’s truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner?

3:8 And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with

saying. Their condemnation is just.

15.All have sinned 【Romans 3:9-20】

Introduction

The description of sin in the Bible is rich and three-dimensional, and the Book of Romans expresses more profoundly that “all have sinned.” This gives us a better understanding of the nature of sin. Let’s look at the first point:

None is righteous

People often think of them as good or bad, noble or commoner, black or white, rich or poor, men or women, etc. But the Bible’s standard for viewing people is whether they are sinners or righteous. This is a topic that is not easy for us to think clearly about. First of all, strong or weak in life. In this world where the weak are bullied and annexed by the strong, everyone abides by the law of the jungle. Maybe everyone makes comparisons consciously or unconsciously to see how they or their family, nation, or country ranks in the world. For example, when choosing a university, you will check the ranking of the school. I heard that if you don’t graduate from a school ranked among the top 100 in the world, you can no longer find a job in China. The same is true in the United States. Employers will also rush to get graduates from private Ivy League schools, public Ivy League schools, or those who graduate within the top 50. Not to mention economic and military strength, which also forms the basis for comparison, wrestling, competition, and war between countries. Since the beginning of human history, competitiveness has been the basic background of human interaction.

Secondly, everyone is guilty without exception. Paul said: “For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin. (Romans 3:9)” The word “charge” in the text is a verb used in debate in Greek, which means that through debate, it is possible to “charge in advance” that both Jews and Greeks are under sin. Expressed in Chinese, there are some twists and turns. But it is a debate term in Greek logic, not a proof of scientific rationality. Paul preached to both Gentile believers who spoke Greek and to Jewish believers who spoke Hebrew (and perhaps Greek). Paul meant, Isn’t it? Ask your own hearts whether you are willing to accept the questioning of the Holy Spirit? Who is not a sinner?

Finally, the reason for the incarnation. We might as well assume that some people in the world are born righteous, and some people are born sinners. Then, we don’t need the salvation of Jesus Christ! Just like today, some people are trying to extend human life and even live forever through scientific methods. Today’s AI, bionic robots, especially future humans who combine computers and neuroscience, are like the Tower of Babel back then. People want to do ridiculous things that are higher and greater than what God has done! I think that maybe one day God will confuse people’s accents again and restore people to the right path of salvation through faith in Christ Jesus alone. Let’s look at the second point:

Going one's own way

In fact, God is also watching to see if it is necessary to send His only begotten Son to sacrifice his life on the cross. After all, this is a difficult thing! Right? First, there is not even a righteous person. There is no righteous person in the world, it is the incarnation of Christ that is necessary for salvation! Likewise, there is no righteous country in the world, not even one. In this year's U.S. election, the American people finally chose Trump as the 47th President of the United States. Many people place the future of the United States on Trump, as if Trump has truly become the savior of the United States! Because even Trump is a sinner, how can he save the American people? If everyone is a sinner, how can there be a righteous nation? In some places in the United States, children go to school in the morning and have their gender changed when they come back at night. Elon Musk's son came home from school and found his genitals missing! It can be said that it's difficult to write them all down!

Secondly, there is not even one who does good. Today's era is already a post-Christian era. People have long lost their good obedience to the Bible and Christ. Even among Christians in the church, not many truly understand God, know God, and seek God. But everything that deviates from God's will is full of interest and expectation. People don't pay attention to church worship, they rarely take notes when listening to sermons, they don't ask questions or participate in Sunday school, they don't sing hymns during worship, they don't have the same heart when praying, and they even turn on their mobile phones while doing other things. The most important thing is that over time, people may not be able to tell whether they still believe in Christ Jesus or not.

Lastly, not even a word of kindness. It is not only a habit but also a result of sin that people find it difficult to speak kind words. We might as well ask ourselves, when was the last time we uttered words of grace? On the contrary, the Bible says that our throats are open graves. That is, not speaking words of encouragement and edification, our mouths are full of complaints, deceitful tongues, gossips, baseless, and lies. Not to mention this, Paul said that these people have the venom of asps which is under their lips. and their mouths are full of curses and bitterness. It seems that in these people's life dictionary, there is no word of grace at all. Saying a word of grace is even harder than reaching heaven! If you control your mouth and restrain your tongue, it will not be difficult to bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Let's look at the third point:

Without awe

The effects of a person's life come from the heart. Often a person's words will inadvertently betray his own motives and behavior. First, being quick to do evil. Before making decisions, people can wait, pray, and seek God's will. Then, you won't do things in a hurry. Making decisions too quickly often results from not having time to seek God's will first. Before he even learned to walk, he started running very fast. Most of the things we do without serious prayer are based on our flesh and our old self. So, is there a right way to go? Paul said: "In their paths are ruin and misery," How about we learn from now on to seek God's kingdom and God's righteousness first before doing things, and then act based on faith and according to biblical principles, and give all glory and praise to God.

Secondly, knowingly committing a sin will be judged. Are you saying you don't know? In fact, this is not the case. We cannot deny it before God! It stands to reason that after we believe in the Lord, the Holy Spirit will live in our hearts and we will be able to experience inner peace. It's just when we stay away from God's will and measure the pace of our lives by worldly values. You will gradually lose peace and become increasingly unfamiliar with the way to peace. Once people do not have peace, they will lose awe. He is even less and less afraid of God! If you are not afraid of God, what are you afraid of? Afraid of stocks falling, afraid of losing business, afraid of losing jobs, afraid of not having food to eat! When people reach this point, they have actually fallen into the judgment of God! Knowing that there is a God, yet not giving God the glory and praise!

Finally, justification by faith and keeping the law. But it also depends on why you keep the law, do you agree? Is it right to keep the law? Of course! But it also depends on why you keep the law, do you agree? If it is for justification by works, there is no need to talk about it. Because no one can be justified by keeping the law, because the function of the law is to convict people of sin. Every sinner knows that he is a sinner and that he cannot be saved on his own. So, what to do? Be justified by faith! Without faith, one cannot please God! For whoever comes to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him. What is faith? Faith means placing your complete reliance on God unconditionally, continuing to believe with the courage inspired by the Holy Spirit, and carrying your faith to the end until the day when the Lord returns.

Conclusion

Okay, that's it for today's sermon. Everyone has sinned because there is not even a righteous person in the world. And everyone turns to his own way and does what is evil in the sight of God. On the day of judgment, God will search our hearts! May the Lord help us to come before God through prayer, supplication and thanksgiving in everything. Come before God, confess our sins and pray, and become a person acceptable to God!

Let us pray

(Romans 3:9-20)

3:9 What then? Are we Jews[a] any better off?[b] No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,

3:10 as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one;

3:11 no one understands; no one seeks for God.

3:12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

3:13 "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips."

3:14 "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."

3:15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood;

3:16 in their paths are ruin and misery,

3:17 and the way of peace they have not known.”

3:18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

3:19 Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

3:20 For by works of the law no human being[c] will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

16. Justification by faith 【Romans 3:21-31】

Instruction

Everyone has sinned, what should we do? Then use the law to judge! Is it okay? Sure! However, the purpose of God's justice is to satisfy God's love, God's mercy, and God's kindness. Therefore, God prepared faith for the world to achieve the purpose of salvation. Let's look at the first point:

Righteousness outside the law

Paul's proposal of righteousness outside the law was shocking to the Jews. Since Mount Sinai, the law has become the reliance and standard for God's chosen people. First, the function of the law. Paul said that the righteousness of God is revealed outside the law. This sentence is not easy to understand. What on earth is he talking about? What is revealed outside the law can only be human sin! This revelation is not only about sins that have been committed and plans to commit sins that have not yet been committed, but also sinful thoughts that may be triggered and stirred up. This is also an important function of the law. Of course, the function of the law in condemning sin is to satisfy God's justice. The law itself is a statute or regulation, which is "dead" there. But it's better not to be activated, as soon as people read it, their hearts are activated. When the officials read the law "No greed is allowed", another voice in their hearts asked: Why can't we be greedy?

Secondly, the need for faith. It seems that the law promulgated by God on Mount Sinai not only revealed God's will, but also revealed the despair of the elect. The despair is that people cannot be justified by observing the law. If we can no longer rely on the law, is there any other way out? Paul said: "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction. (Romans 3:22)" The righteousness of God means that man cannot rely on the law and feels hopeless. Then, in the fullness of His time, God gave us faith, that is, justification by faith, through the incarnation of Christ. What is unacceptable to Jews is that God will give salvation "through faith in Jesus Christ to everyone who believes, without distinction!"

Finally, righteousness is accomplished. Have you ever thought about why God does so many things, including salvation and incarnation? In fact, it is very simple, just to satisfy God's justice. In the face of God's righteousness, even God's mercy has become God's attribute or method. This is also very difficult to understand, like God's propitiation. Paul said, "whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. (Romans 3:25)" What we may find difficult to imagine is that God established Jesus as the propitiation sacrifice not to redeem sinners like us, but to avert God's own wrath. Understanding this is important and should not be taken lightly. Let's look at the second point:

Righteousness in redemption

God's righteousness enters redemption, and through the incarnation of Christ, God enters human history. First, it falls short of the glory of God. What is "fall short of"? It's missing, inadequate, and substandard! God has said what can be done and what cannot be done. If people follow it, they will achieve the standard. If you eat from the tree that God commanded not to eat, you will fall short of the glory of God. God says to love your neighbor as yourself, but people are divided, specializing in stirring up strife, creating divisions, betraying friends for glory, duplicity, double-talking, and doing things that are evil in the eyes of God. A deficit is not a total loss. It shows that the glory of God is still there, but not completely there. It is always a little less, lacking something, which can be said to be "a little less than the glory of God." It's like a rice bowl that was hit by a knife and had a small chip. The bowl may still be used, but it may hurt someone's lips.

Secondly, he who believes in Jesus is righteous. This is another basis for justification by faith, that is, people can only be justified by God. This is a major breakthrough in the New Testament, completely surpassing the "concept of election alone" in the Old Testament. This is also the confusion of the Jews. The key point is to understand that God is the Lord of all mankind and His intention is for all people to be saved. What Paul means is that when people come before God, they must believe that there is a God, and that He is a completely righteous God, a perfect God, with no darkness or shadow of turning in Him! When people understand the absolute righteousness of God, they will know that they cannot be justified by themselves, and of course they cannot be justified by works. This is the reason why God wants "to let people know that "he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

Finally, it is by the blood of Jesus. God does not use a "tyrannical" method to declare His righteousness; but "whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. (Romans 3:25)" This is the perfect integration of God's justice and God's mercy and love. In fact, it is also an important adjustment to our core values. In the past, when we understood that Christ Jesus laid down his life and shed His precious blood for us, most of us would understand it solely from the love of God who laid down His life for us. Of course it is, and it makes sense! However, everything God does is to demonstrate God's righteousness. Let's look at the third point:

Justified by faith alone

Paul is reasoning and making logical deductions and he wants to tell us that justification by faith is the only way to be saved! Because there is no other way to salvation in heaven or on earth except Jesus Christ. First, the relationship between law and faith. The law is the life program given by God to His people in order to become a guide for the daily conduct of God's children. So, what is faith? Faith is the path of salvation given by God along with selection before the creation of the world in the beginning, and is designed to satisfy God's will that man cannot please God without faith. Therefore, the law is a graceful opportunity to make people aware of their sins and inability to save themselves, and to lead them to Christ. When faith and law meet,

grace meets opportunity and they hit it off, achieving God's salvation. The law goes before us, not to lead, but to open the way for faith. Just like John the Baptist was in the wilderness to make straight the way to the Lord for Christ Jesus.

Secondly, God is Lord of all. If we regard Jesus Christ solely as the Lord or Savior of the nation of Israel, we will not be able to get rid of the bondage of the elect's mentality, and we will not be able to understand the essence and wonder of justification by faith. When Paul said: "Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, (Romans 3:29)" The Jewish people's hearts must be full of mixed feeling and tastelessness. They may treat God as their private property, or even hide it, unwilling to share it with others, thus affecting God's plan of the gospel. Likewise, we should make evangelism to the Jews a church priority today in our missionary plans.

Finally, faith strengthens the law. Beginning with Abraham, the Israelites took their circumcision as a sign of justification. Abraham was ninety-nine years old and still had to be circumcised according to God's command. Moses was uncircumcised before he served God, and God even wanted to kill him. However, when Jesus Christ came, he told both Jews and Gentiles the way to faith. Faith justifies the circumcised Jew as well as the uncircumcised Gentile. Faith makes Jew and Gentile one through Jesus Christ. Therefore, faith not only does not abolish the law, but actually strengthens the law. We obey the law because we believe that God is our Lord, the Lord who transcends history, and the Lord who overcomes death!

Conclusion

Well, thank the Lord! Justification by faith allows us to see the righteousness outside the law and understand the righteousness in redemption. It is all because of the justification by faith that God has given us through Jesus Christ!

Let us pray.....

(Romans 3:21-31)

3:21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—

3:22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:

3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

3:24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

3:26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

3:27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.

3:28 For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

3:29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,

3:30 since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

3:31 Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

17.The connection between faith and righteousness 【Romans 4:1-8】

Introduction

Although faith is the breakthrough of the New Testament, Paul still strives to draw a thread of grace from the Old Testament. In the testimony of Abraham, faith is a simple motivation and unconditional acceptance of the risks and challenges of life. Let's look at the first point:

The core of faith

Since it is a motive, it must be connected with the fruits of faith. First, what was gained according to flesh? What is flesh? The flesh is the steps that run counter to the spirit, the traces that go against God. Flesh is essentially the life of Adam, or the value system that continues the life of Adam's old self. Under this principle, it doesn't matter who it is, not even Abraham. What Paul means is that everyone must face the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. If Abraham relied solely on God's choice of him, then Paul would ask: "What did our ancestors gain through the flesh?" When we decided to pray and believe in the Lord, we seemed to have entered a big spiritual family. The same proposition is before us, "What can we gain according to flesh?"

Secondly, there is nothing to brag about. We boast because we seem to think we have something to boast about, right? When people complete something, they will inevitably have a sense of expectation to see how others evaluate themselves, right? Especially when you get recognition or praise from others, you will feel happy in your heart, right? This actually gives rise to the so-called temptation of "something to boast about", which is often hidden deep in the heart and not easily revealed to others. The essence of this "boast" is that the beginning of our justification by works emerges. Especially when we are still expecting others to say a few words of what we desire in our hearts, we have already fallen into the trap. Of course, it is not easy to realize that we have nothing to boast about before God.

Finally, faith is accounted for righteousness. It's a difficult question, right? It is our nature to be praised or to boast, but it is really difficult to live without boasting before God. What to do? At this time, Paul also quoted scriptures. He said: "What does the scripture say? It says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." What does it mean to be "accounted" to him as righteousness? The word "count" in the original language means to keep accounts, which means that Abraham's faith was remembered by God and deposited into the ledger. In the kingdom of God, once a person's faith is credited to God's account, it is credited as righteousness. Of course, faith itself is not righteousness, nor is it a worthy act. However, faith is the source of righteousness and the basis for justification by faith. Let's look at the second point:

The connection of faith

For faith to be connected to God's righteousness, there needs to be grace as a bridge. So, what is the nature of grace? The core of grace is that you get it for free without paying the price. First, the origin of grace. Grace is provided for the forgiveness of sins. Why? Because salvation is by grace, and of course by faith. So, what is not called grace? Paul said, "Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due." No matter what we do, once we feel that we deserve it, we are far away from God's grace. Once you leave God's grace, you will lose whatever you have gained. Since it is grace, you cannot rely on what you have. Therefore, if a person wants to gain life, he must first give up his life. It is the life of the old self, the life of Adam, the life of inevitable destruction.

Second, justify the sinner. Paul said, "But to him who does not work but believes in God who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness." What does that mean? God's great saving work is to justify sinners. From God's perspective, the rhythm of justifying sinners began when He sent Christ Jesus to become flesh, sacrifice his life on the cross, and rise from the dead three days later. When a sinner is saved, the angels and hosts in heaven cheer and praise God's grace. It may be difficult for the world to understand why God justifies sinners. What's so great about it? The core of it is that because people are unworthy and full of sins, how can they be called righteous? Even Satan doesn't understand, jumping up and down to accuse God's children! But it's no use!

Lastly, faith accounted for righteousness. Being counted righteous by God is a unilateral act of God. This is our salvation. It is entirely a matter of grace and is not something anyone can boast about. There is only one thing people should do, and that is to believe! Whom to believe? Believe in God! What kind of God do you believe in? Paul said very carefully that it is faith, and faith alone, in God who justifies the ungodly. We are justified by God, not earned by ourselves. Only in this case will man's faith be counted as righteousness by God. Therefore, justifying sinners is not only an act of God, but also the content of man's belief. Of course, faith is not just knowing, but loving the Lord our God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength! To put it more vividly, it means to believe in God. Let's look at the third point:

The essence of faith

When it comes to the reality of life, the essence of faith is that people want to be blessed in the presence of God. First, blessed are those who are justified by God. Connecting faith with blessing is a great revelation in the New Testament. Especially in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talked about eight conditions of blessed people. No matter what kind of blessing it is, it must be based on faith. Why should we say that the poor in spirit are blessed, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them. If you want to get the kingdom of heaven, you must first believe that there is a kingdom of heaven! Blessed are the pure in heart because they will see God. Likewise, anyone who comes before God must first believe that there is God! And you must only believe in God who justifies sinners, right? On the contrary, what if people don't believe it? Then it would be impossible to understand the guidance of the Holy Spirit, let alone believe that Christ came in the flesh, and he would not be a blessed person.

Second, blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven. David had a deep understanding

of God's forgiveness. After he and Bathsheba slept together, he went even further and indirectly killed Bathsheba's husband Uriah on the battlefield. The prophet Nathan came to rebuke him, and he repented! David said to God in prayer: "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. (Psalm 51:4)" The reason why David became a man who pleased God was because he was devoted to God wholeheartedly and without any reservation. We can easily see from the Psalms written by David that he was dedicated, unique, and first to God.

Lastly, blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin. Frankly speaking, are there any people in the world who have no sin, or who have never sinned? However, if God calls us righteous, it means that our sins are not counted as sins. The Bible says, this person is blessed! Remember Nathanael? There was quite a bit of criticism and discussion about Jesus being a Nazarene. However, Jesus said that he was a man in whom there was no deceit. All of a sudden, I was also confused. Originally, in the eyes of people, Nathanael was an insignificant person with no merit, but because of Christ's declaration, Nathanael became a blessed person throughout the ages. Maybe some of us will ask: Why? Is it okay to just rely on the Lord to not count anyone guilty? In fact, because we believe in Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven and God does not consider us guilty!

Conclusion

Well, thank the Lord! The connection between faith and righteousness is whether the core of faith shows justification by faith, whether the connection of faith is connected with grace, and the essence of faith is whether our life is blessed.

Let us pray.....

(Romans 4:1-8)

- 4:1 What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh?
4:2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.
4:3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."
4:4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due.
4:5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,
4:6 just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:
4:7 "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;
4:8 blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."

18. Clarification of faith 【Romans 4:9-16】

Introduction

It can be said that the theme of Romans is to explain faith clearly. Do you agree? Faith is a clear subject that cannot be explained clearly. It is not that faith is unclear, but that people are often confused in their faith. After Paul talked about the scope of justification by faith, he felt the need to clarify faith. Let's look at the first point:

Faith has nothing to do with circumcision

How does faith have anything to do with circumcision? Kind of baffling to us today, right? However, we must not forget that the audience for Paul's message were believers from a Jewish background two thousand years ago, and they were all circumcised people. First, the meaning of circumcision. The meaning of circumcision must be understood from the original records in the Bible. God once said to Abraham: "This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. (Gen. 17:10)" Therefore, the initial meaning of circumcision is to establish a covenant and is a sign of the covenant. The Israelites made a covenant with God on Mount Sinai, but later continued to worship idols. How could they please God? What Paul was trying to say was that although Abraham was circumcised, he did not rely on circumcision to please God. Of course, circumcision is a sign that God calls and chooses the Israelites. From then on, the Israelites have the identity of God's children.

Secondly, the need for faith. But as the electorate moved forward, circumcision gradually became a ritual, even a custom. Leviticus says: "And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. (Lev. 12:3)" Although circumcision continues to this day, it has gradually become disconnected from the spiritual life of the elect. On his missionary journey, Paul preached the gospel to both circumcised Jews and uncircumcised Gentiles. Circumcision is no longer a standard or necessity; it is a matter of faith in Christ Jesus. The Jews might not understand it at first, but Paul said to them: "God counted 'Abraham's faith as righteousness to him.'" If the ancestors did this, the Jews understood it.

Finally, the confirmation of faith. Maybe the Jews were also puzzled at first: As soon as Abraham had faith, God counted him as righteousness. Why? How to count it? Doesn't it have anything to do with Abraham's circumcision? Paul's calculation is also very simple. Abram was 75 years old when God called him. There are still 25 years left until he is 100 years old and has a son. What happened to him during this period? The point is, before he was circumcised at the age of 99, " "And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness. (Gen. 15:6)" Explain that Abram's circumcision had nothing to do with his being justified by God. Let's look at the second point:

Faith is linked to the promise

It can be said that God's promise was the motivation for Abraham's path of faith, that is, the driving force generated by it. First, become a great nation. While Abraham was still in Haran, God called him and said: "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. (Gen. 12:1)" This sentence is God's first word for the salvation of mankind, and it is also God's first call to choose Abraham. In fact, it is also the original template for God's call to His servants. That is to say, if someone is called by God, they will have similar words. It was during this call that God also made a promise to Abraham, namely "And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. (Gen. 12:2) ...in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (Gen. 12:3)"

Secondly, become a great family. After Abram and Lot separated, Lot gradually moved his tents to Sodom. The Lord God came to comfort Abram and said: "I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. (Gen. 13:16)" A great nation refers to the scope of influence of the kingdom of God, which blesses all nations. A great family means that wherever the gospel goes, all nations and peoples will come to the Lord. The conversion of the whole family of Israel to the Lord is no longer limited to the descendants of Jacob, but all those who believe in Jesus Christ will be included in the great family of Abraham, fulfilling God's promise that the whole family of Israel will be saved.

Lastly, it became great righteousness. After Abraham finished tithing to Melchizedek, king of Salem, Jehovah God promised Abram in a vision: "Your very own son shall be your heir. (Gen. 15:4b)" It was even said that Abram's descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. When these words were spoken, Abram and his wife were already in their seventies or eighties. If it were you, would you believe it? However, the Bible says: "And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness. (Gen. 15:6)" It was not easy to believe, but Abram believed. No one can explain why, just as we can't explain why we believe in Jesus Christ. In short, God takes this as our righteousness and even declares us righteous. Let's look at the third point:

Faith is tied to grace

I don't know when faith and grace are married, loving each other, coworking with each other, and fulfilling the gospel. First, salvation is by grace. The religious reformers of Martin Luther used five solas to express their differences with Catholicism. It is Scripture alone, faith alone, grace alone, Christ alone, and the glory of God alone. Ephesians 2:8 says that by grace you have been saved, which is the basis of Abraham's belief that he was justified by God. Why did God call you Abraham in Ur and not someone else? Of course God has His own authority, but isn't it more about His grace? The same goes for Paul. There are so many Pharisees, why would God shine light on Paul on the Road of Damascus? Thinking about you and me, isn't it the same? God has chosen us from among all nations to be His children in the lineage of Christ. How can we be so virtuous?

Secondly, salvation is by faith. What is faith? Faith is the advancement of grace, illuminating

the way of Jesus, leading to the truth of the incarnation, and living a life like Christ. Paul said, “That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. (Romans 4:16)” So from now on both Jew and Gentile will be one in Christ Jesus. Because the veil was rent, the hindrance was removed and the obstacles were gone. The Israelites and the new Israel constitute the whole family of the Israelites. In the kingdom of God, this whole family must be saved. This is what God has said.

Finally, the law returns to faith. Paul said: “For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. (Romans 4:14)” The Bible never denies the law. Jesus said that heaven and earth will pass away, and not one stroke of the law will pass away. However, the law cannot save people, but it can point people out of their sins and lead them to Christ. Therefore, the law has also become the partner of faith in order to fulfill the gospel mission of Christ and fulfill the grace of justification by faith. For the sake of God’s salvation, the law chooses humility, cooperates with the gospel, and even ultimately returns to the steps of faith, in order to save the world and walk with those who have faith on the path to heaven.

Conclusion

Thank the Lord! Faith has nothing to do with circumcision because God justified Abraham before circumcision. God connects faith with promises because God promises great nations, great families, and great righteousness. Then, faith is linked to grace, which means Bible alone, faith alone, grace alone, Christ alone, and the glory of God alone.

Let us pray.....

(Romans 4:9-16)

4:9 Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.

4:10 How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised.

4:11 He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well,

4:12 and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

4:13 For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.

4:14 For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.

4:15 For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

4:16 That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

19. Abraham's Faith 【Romans 4:17-25】

Introduction

Abraham is called the father of faith. When he was ninety-nine years old, God changed his name and said: "I have made you the father of many nations" In the original text, there is the word "because" before this sentence. So, because of what? I will talk about it next, let's look at the first point:

Faith has to do with the source

The source mentioned in the Bible is of course related to God's creation, do you agree? First, make nothing into something. This is what sets our faith apart! There is no other God who brings nothing into being except the God in whom we believe. "God said, Let there be light, and there was light." Jesus Christ became human and manifested his divinity through signs and wonders. The disciples were also curious, why did even the wind and waves obey His words? Paul juxtaposes resurrection with creation to explain the reason for faith. If God's creation is very long ago, then the resurrection of Christ is not too far away from us. Many of us who are still alive have personally experienced the Lord's healings and exorcisms, resurrection and ascension to heaven. I, Paul, also experienced the great light of God on the Damascus Road. The Lord even appeared to me in the light. These were signs and wonders that had never happened before in ancient times!

Secondly, because there is a holy covenant. In the introduction, I said the word "because", why? God said to Abraham: "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. (Gen. 17:4)" From then on, even his name was changed from Abram to Abraham. From the sublime Father to the Father of many nations and the Father of all peoples. Abraham was called the father of faith because he wanted to keep a covenant with God. What covenant should he keep? God said: "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, (Gen. 17:1)" Jesus also said in the Sermon on the Mount: "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)." Being perfect before God refers to whether our heart toward God is perfect, that is, toward God Exclusive, unique, and first.

Finally, there is hope in despair. Lazarus was dead and had been in the tomb for four days. Jesus went and said he was just sleeping. Do you believe it? Paul preached all night in Troas, Asia, when a young man named Eutychus fell asleep and fell to his death from the third floor. Paul went down, laid his body on him, and he lived (Acts 20:4-7). The same was true when Abraham was a hundred years old and had a child, and Sarah had even stopped menstruating. But God said, you will have a son at this time next year, and they all believed it. Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead and lived before God, Satan, and the world. This is the hope that God's children live, that is, "When there is no hope, there is still hope through faith! Let's look at the second point:

Faith is connected to the promise

The expression of the relationship between God and man is the covenant, and the essence of the covenant is God's promise. God's promises are rewards for those who look to the Lord who is our Author and Finisher and who follow Him. First, resurrection is the greatest promise. Since ancient times, the road to death from the cradle to the grave has been the common destiny of mankind. At that time, the Jews, including the Pharisees, had a hard time crossing the cognitive line between life and death. People are accustomed to death, accept death, identify with death, and finally surrender to death. Therefore, we reject life, resurrection, and eternal life in terms of psychological cognition. The Jews did not understand and were unwilling to understand the promise of resurrection in the Old Testament. The same goes for people from ancient times to the present. On the premise of denying God's promises, they do not accept the gospel and reject the truth of resurrection. Little did they know that Christ Jesus' sacrifice of his life on the cross and his resurrection from the dead three days later are the greatest proof.

Second, life is a testimony of the promise. John testified about the Lord and said: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)" The Word became flesh, which is the Word of God made in human form. He is the living Word of God. The word *Tao* in Greek is translated as *Logos*, which cannot simply be translated as logic. The English "Word" is not comprehensive, because God's words in the Bible express the presence of God's power and the connotation of life testimony. Jesus Christ is the living Word, so John continues: "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. (John 1:18)"

Finally, the promise is to fulfill the righteousness of faith. God's promises are essentially responses to man's faith, and what they express is God's righteousness. Abraham believed God, and God was credited to him as righteousness. Likewise, the descendants of Abraham, including those of us who believe in God, are also included in God's righteousness. The matter of being imputed righteousness is God's promise. In other words, we can believe in God today because God promised to choose us in Christ and place us in the great circle of His gospel before the creation of the world. Believing in Jesus and gaining eternal life is something that God sees as right. This is the righteousness of God, and it is worthy of us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, and it is a matter of course. Let's look at the third point

Faith is tied to grace

Abraham believed in God, and God counted him as righteousness. This was not an empty talk, but a proper and real promise, and a promise full of grace. First, the promise of grace. God's promises to Abraham were rich and long-lasting, and His faithfulness was vast. Roughly speaking, there are five covenants and thirteen promises: (1) Becoming a great nation; (2) Becoming a great blessing; (3) Becoming a great name; (4) Blessing others; (5) Those who bless will be blessed; (6) All races will be blessed; (7) Descendants will be numerous; (8) Be the father of many nations; (9) Grant kingdoms; (10) Grant kings; (11) Grant land for inheritance; (12) Be firm forever Covenant; (13) To be God's people. These promises are all expressed in the form of covenants, and the scriptures all appear in Genesis (Genesis 12:1-4, 13:14-17, 15:1-20, 17:1-21, 22:1 – 19).

Secondly, the bearing of faith. In fact, both Abraham and Sarah were weak in faith, right? Sarah said to her husband, God has made me barren. What to do? Go and sleep with my maid Hagar! The angel came and announced: "But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year. (Gen. 17:21)" Abraham was confused and thought, can a centenarian still have a child? Sarah was ninety years old, could she still have children? Two thousand years have passed, but God said through Paul: "His faith is still not weak!" What I want to say is, even if we only have a little faith, it is so precious to God and valued by Him!

Finally, the connection to justification. It was because of this faith that God justified Abraham. Judging from the path of faith throughout Abraham's life, he left a testimony before God related to justification. What God's eyes saw was Abraham "No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness. (Romans 4:20-22)" This is also an encouragement and comfort to us! Even if our faith is weak, our testimony is not strong, and our life is weak. However, even if there is any merit in us, He will regard it as precious and take it as evidence of justification.

Conclusion

Well, thank the Lord! Abraham's faith is related to the source of faith, to God's promises, and to God's grace. I hope that God's grace and peace will be with all those who believe in Him, now and forever!

Let us pray.....

(Romans 4:17-25)

4:17 as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

4:18 In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be."

4:19 He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness[b] of Sarah's womb.

4:20 No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,

4:21 fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

4:22 That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness."

4:23 But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone,

4:24 but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,

4:25 who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

20. Faith transforms into grace 【Romans 5:1-11】

Introduction

Starting from Chapter 5, Paul leaves the Old Testament and returns to the New Testament to talk about faith and the relationship between faith and believers. This is the origin of the transformation of faith into grace. Let's look at the first point:

The grace of peace with God

After the sin of the ancestors, mankind was in a state of disharmony with God. It is also like some people who are enclosed under some kind of dry well, but feel good about themselves and boast about the sky they see above the well. First, the nature of justification. The truth structure of justification is not easy to explain, but it can be very simple. After a person sins, he is in a state of sin, that is, a state of unrighteousness. Therefore, the relationship with God is side by side and has no intersection. Now, because one believes in Jesus Christ, he begins to change his path and take the path of righteousness. This is called being at peace with God. In the eyes of God, once a person believes in the Lord and begins to walk on the road to heaven, God calls them one of His "righteousness". This righteousness refers to things and people that are right in the eyes of God. Faith is the life given by God for people to live, thus being accepted by God. On the contrary, unbelievers will never be able to appreciate God's justice and love, and it will be even harder for them to be used by God.

Secondly, the grace of entry. To believe is to believe in God. Therefore, the experience of faith is a process of entry. Faith cannot stay on the surface of knowledge, but enters into the essence of faith, which is the fellowship life of the church to receive His grace. Praying a prayer of decision is considered as entering. If you participate in various services in the church according to your gifts, you are standing in the grace of the Lord. Don't underestimate these two steps. Entering and standing cannot be completed by yourself. Therefore, Paul's premise is that it is through the Lord Jesus Christ that it is possible to accomplish this step that cannot be accomplished by oneself. In short, relying on the Lord, entering, and standing are grace!

Finally, joyful hope. We find that although some people have entered, they seem to be standing, and they seem to be relying on the Lord. But, they are just not happy! It is not difficult to find that there is sadness on the face, frowning, or even being gloomy all day long. Why? Have you ever thought about it? That's because our expectation of eternal life has not been transformed into hope. That is to say, if our joy is not due to the hope of eternal life, it cannot last. At this time, curiosity and novelty motives bind our values. The desire to control will fill our blood, control our family, control our friends, control everything around us! At this time, even joy also became fake. Falseness and emptiness filled one's heart and mind, and there was no satisfaction deep in the heart. Requesting became the only driving force. One was in great pain, but no one talked to me. Let's look at the second point:

Receive abundant love

First, rejoice in hope. If a person has no hope, then his faith is in vain. In this way, the connotation of hope is very important, right? There is no work today and you need to find a job. However, finding a job cannot be a person's hope. Because once a person finds a job, his original hope is gone. Therefore, a person's joy must be directed toward eternal hope. Rejoicing in faith in God is our lifelong pursuit. Our good is not outside of Him, so why should we care about gains and losses in this world. Faith produces hope, hope produces joy, and joy will not lead to sorrow.

Second, rejoice in the glory. Hope must be the goal of ultimate concern, connected to eternal values, connected to God. Although hope is invisible, because of faith, we can work hard for it down-to-earth and even risk our lives. When hope is connected to the heart, a sense of glory arises. Glory is the pinnacle of hope, it can only be looked up to, cannot be robbed, let alone stolen! The difference between joy and temporary happiness is whether there is the glory of God. Any joy or happiness that is not due to the glory of God is fleeting. It comes and goes quickly, light and worthless. On the contrary, any joy that comes from the glory of God is lasting.

Finally, rejoice in adversity. How to check whether our joy comes from gains and losses, or from the glory of God? At this time, God's examination of us comes. In what way? It is often when we encounter adversity. This is the saying that a friend in need is a friend indeed. When people are in an environment where everything goes well, it is often difficult to test whether they are rejoicing or temporarily happy. But the real test comes when illness comes, job loss, accidents happen, etc. When Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Bible says that His sweat was like drops of blood and His voice was hoarse when He prayed. On the cross, the Lord even asked the Father why He had abandoned Him. Finally, the Lord calmly said: "It is finished!" Let's look at the third point:

Contentment in God

Nine times out of ten things in life are not what you want, so why should you be happy? Therefore, it is difficult for us to see smiling faces in the crowd. Even the smiles are mostly fake. Why? First, the fruit of the Spirit. Frankly speaking, if it is not the fruit of the Holy Spirit, how can a person have long-term patience? The character produced from endurance is mature, and the hope at this time may be lasting. For example, when reading the Bible, it is impossible to persevere without patience. It is not difficult to persist for a while, but the difficult thing is to persevere and not give up. Otherwise, your true colors will be revealed as soon as you speak. When others hear this, they will know that you do not read the Bible much and do not think about it often. Paper cannot cover fire. The impetuosity of your heart and the lack of spirituality can be found out just by trying it. How can God use you? Even if you are used, the shame in life will be revealed, and the Lord will not receive the glory He deserves.

Secondly, true love is born of mission. When the Lord Jesus laid down his life on the cross for us, we knew what love is, right? It was not because Judas betrayed the Lord that He went to the

cross, but because the Lord Himself went to the cross. Why? Because it is His mission to lay down His life for the sheep, a mission He received from His Heavenly Father. On the contrary, if it is out of humanism “For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:7-8)” This truth also questions our souls and our motives. Whether what we do is because of the Lord or because of our own poor selfishness or ignorance.

Finally, a life that delights in God. This is a feeling not easy to experience, right? What does it mean to take delight in God? In fact, it is because of our faith in Him that our core values have changed. In the past, our preferences and satisfaction were determined by the world and the world’s perspective. If you go out without makeup and someone sees your true colors, that’s a big deal! If a photo is posted in a group without being retouched, your mood will be affected. Even your own age has made you afraid to face it calmly and without fear, and you can’t be asked or talk about it. Why? Our age is a vessel to bear witness to the Lord, why can’t it be used by the Lord? If everything in our lives can be used for the Lord, of course it will be a testimony that we enjoy God!

Conclusion

The transformation of faith into grace is the mark of spiritual life growth and the only way to live out the likeness of the Lord! The grace of peace with God is the way God has prepared for all those who believe in Him. The joy born of hope is the life we should imitate the Lord. Taking delight in God is a truth we must live out.

Let us pray.....

(Romans 5:1-11)

5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

5:2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

5:3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,

5:4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,

5:5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

5:6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

5:7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—

5:8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

5:9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

5:10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

5:11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we

have now received reconciliation.

21.The Essence of Justification by Faith 【Romans 5:11-21】

Introduction

The basis of Martin Luther's religious reform at that time was justification by faith. From Chapter 3 to Chapter 5, Paul has devoted a lot of space to explaining justification by faith, and now he has reached the climax. This is where today's information comes from, let's look at the first point:

The entanglement of sin and death

We may not be very clear about the dangers of sin, and we may feel that there is no harm in telling a little lie, telling a few false words, etc. Little do they know that sin has gradually become the norm for people, entering people's daily lives without feeling, ignorance, and helplessness. First, the prevalence of sin. The prevalence of sin is a major contribution to Paul's theology. Starting from Adam, the first ancestor, it was obviously just one person who sinned. However, from our perspective in later generations, sin is already a universal phenomenon. When we are born, before we have even thought about anything, we already have the identity of a sinner. As we walk through life, we find that sin always accompanies us, lingering and haunting us throughout our lives. Paul makes it clear here: "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned. (Romans 5:12) This is the theological basis for our confession and the prerequisite for our repentance.

Secondly, the authority of death. What is the authority of death? The authority of death is to make everyone in the world become the descendants of Adam, so that everyone in the world is subject to the authority of death. People do not become sinners because they commit sins; they sin because they are sinners. From sin to death is revealed in the law. In the first family, God's command is God's first law for mankind. If God had not commanded it, Adam would have eaten and it would not have been a sin. From Adam to Moses, on Mount Sinai, because of the law, the law extends from individuals to groups and becomes universal rules. Because of the law, everyone in the world is condemned without exception. From then on, Adam became a representative of sinners, that is, "who was a type of the one who was to come."

Finally, the inheritance of sin. Sin is not only rampant, but also passed down. Through resurrection, Christ declared the failure of the power of death, but sin used death to collect corpses among the descendants of Adam. A man of God demonstrates the glory of God with every word, decision, and action he takes every day. However, the descendants of Adam are living the old self and spreading the breath of death with the lives of sinners. In fact, we only need to record our daily conversations and listen to them again, and it is not difficult to discover the scenes. Are you used to complaining, but have no appreciation for encouragement, words of kindness, love, compassion, etc.? It seems like you don't feel happy if you don't say

anything harmful to others? When you talk, you always think about being competitive, challenging, saving face, humiliating others, or being ignorant! Look at the second point:

Gifts are better than the power of death

In the entanglement of sin and death, the world is toiled, troubled, desperate and desolate all day long! Because of the love of God, Christ Jesus was given to lay down his life for the sheep, so that everyone who believes may be justified by faith. First, the gift is greater than the transgression. This mathematical formula is not difficult to understand, but what is difficult is to understand its meaning. Adam and Eve's transgression in the Garden of Eden introduced sin into the world, causing everyone in the world to fall into transgression. Following this, God's curse came, and the relationship between God and man also entered a state of isolation. Because of God's love, God decided to save us. For salvation to be established, there must be something greater than human transgression. Otherwise, we cannot afford it! At this time, Christ's gift of salvation came to the world and bore the sins of the world. In short, the gift of Christ's sacrifice is greater than the weight of Adam's transgression.

Secondly, grace comes to the world. So, how does salvation come to the world? In other words, how can we understand and believe that God's grace is so freely given to save us? Paul said: "For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:17)" This is comparing Adam with Christ. When Adam sinned, the whole world sinned. Then, couldn't God, because Christ Jesus is the Lord and King of life, enable the world to be saved through Christ's redemption? From this point of view, isn't it natural that the grace of justification by faith should come to all those who believe in Him?

Finally, justified in transgression. Jesus said that only the sick need a doctor, and only the sinful need salvation. In the same way, sinless people do not need salvation, and disease-free people do not need doctors. Therefore, we do not need to fear the transgressions of men! Whether it is yourself or others who have committed transgressions, as long as you sincerely repent and turn to the Lord, God has the grace and power to save you. The most important thing is that it is enough for Christ to lay down his life for you and me once and for all and offer a sin offering to God. The Israelites had to offer burnt offerings and sin offerings endlessly, and the high priest would continue to offer sacrifices the following year. But Christ "so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. (Romans 5:18)" Let's look at the third point:

Righteousness and the Lord of justification

The righteousness of God is one thing, but being justified by God is another. Among them, only our Lord is the way, truth, and life for justification by faith. First, obedience justifies. It may be difficult for us to imagine the meaning that Christ's obedience to the Father brings to us. In fact, Christ's obedience is the prerequisite for Jesus to lay down his life for us. If Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane did not include the following word "nevertheless"; that is, "Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." Then, today we would still be living in a situation without hope. Why should the Son of God be hung on the cross and cursed by God?

Christ Jesus has not sinned, so why should he lay down his life on the cross for you and me? However, precisely because the Father and the Son are of the same mind, they co-work with each other and perform salvation. This is inseparable from the obedience of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, where sin abounds, grace abounds. This is a logically sufficient condition, not a necessary condition. In fact, this is also a simple mathematical formula: where sin abounds, grace abounds. Sins are no matter how big or small they are, nor how numerous they are. When a person commits one sin, he has committed many sins. God forgives our sins. Forgiving one sin is different from forgiving a hundred sins. This shows the extent of His grace. Forgiving the sin of theft and forgiving the sin of murder also shows the essential difference between grace. Of course, we cannot sin a lot just because we want to show the extent or magnitude of God's grace! This puts the cart before the horse of God's grace and falls short of God's glory!

In the end, righteousness reigns and people live. Likewise, Paul said: "so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:21)" God's grace must operate on the basis of truth, that is, on the premise that God's righteousness is manifested. If the church does not practice the truth, then everything it does will be false propositions, and God's grace will become a small favor for the world. When God's justice reigns, grace can be called grace. Justification by faith is possible when our Lord Jesus Christ is Lord and King! Believing in Jesus and receiving eternal life is the only feasible way to become a believer.

Conclusion

Thank the Lord! The essence of justification by faith is to free us from the entanglement of sin and death. At the same time, the gift of salvation in Christ Jesus enables us to overcome the bondage of death and the prison of transgression. Because of Christ's obedience, therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ^卍 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)

Let us pray.....

(Romans 5:11-21)

5:12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

5:13 for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.

5:14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

5:15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.

5:16 And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.

5:17 For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

5:18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

5:19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

5:20 Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

5:21 so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

22.Necessity of Believing and Being Baptized 【Romans 6:1-5】

Introduction

Paul's theology includes argument and application, and entering Chapter 6 begins the stage of faith application. That is, how the fact of our union with Christ is expressed. This brings up the issue of our baptism, which is also the core expression of faith. Let's look at the first point:

The choice of life and death in sin

Elevating the issue of baptism to a matter of life and death is a major contribution of Paul's theology. For this reason, Paul also presented his logical chain, making it irrefutable. First, man's choice in sin. The discussion that continues from Chapter 5 is that God's grace abounds in man's sin. It seems to be saying, since God's grace abounds in man's sins, shouldn't we sin more in order to make God's grace abound? This is the logical boundary between necessary conditions and sufficient conditions. The two cannot be combined on both sides of the equal sign. Yes, God's grace abounds where sin is abundant, and where sin is little, God's grace abounds. This is true, but this fact does not provide basis for the motivation of the promoter. In short, man in his sin has no room for willful sin in order that grace may abound. The only option for grace is repentance rather than continued display of human pride.

Secondly, man's outcome in sin. The Bible says that the wages of sin is death, and death is the only consequence of sin. However, when a person puts sin to death through Christ, he can no longer live in sin. This is a bottleneck in the growth of believers. That is, they still desire to sin. This feeling is like that of the first ancestors who saw that the fruit on the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eyes. Thinking about it, since God has given me the fruit of all the trees in the garden, he would not miss this one tree. The same goes for observing the rules in the church. Anyway, I am going on a missionary trip, so I can do whatever I want. Don't I even have this bit of freedom? The greed and pride in the heart activate the rebellious nature and issue challenges from Satan to the kingdom of God.

Finally, man's way out of sin. Thank you Lord! God not only allows people to make choices in sin, but also allows people to see the outcome of sin. He also gives people a way to repent in sin. This is the only way to survive, provided that you are dead in sin and cannot still live in sin. When the thought of sin comes, those who are enlightened by the Holy Spirit must say no to sin! The essential reason for saying no is because we are dead to sin. Since you have died to sin, how can you live like sin? What to do when greed comes? What if pride comes? When temptation comes? How to resist the visit of hidden sin? The Bible says that in everything you do in the name of the Lord, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God! Let's look at the second point:

Baptismal pattern

If man's choice of life and death in sin is justification by faith and the grace of passing from death to life, then being baptized by faith is a testimony of justification by faith. First, be baptized into His death. People are both familiar and unfamiliar with death, and often refuse to talk about it. When Christians look at death, there are at least two kinds of death: one is physical death, which is the death that everyone has; the other is eternal death, which refers to the final outcome of those who do not believe in the Lord. In fact, there is another kind of death for Christians, which is called the death of the old self! Our baptism expresses the death of our old self. Because of sin, the death of the old self is extremely difficult. When the Holy Spirit testifies with our hearts that we are children of God, it also means that we should work together with the Holy Spirit, always reminding us to put to death and strangle our old self! Now that you have been baptized, you should consider that the old self that once sinned has died and is gradually dying!

Secondly, also included in His burial. Have you ever wondered why the Lord Jesus was buried in a tomb after he was crucified? He is demonstrating the path we will follow in imitating Him! The moment we were baptized, we disappeared on the horizon. Where are we going? Dead, buried, and no longer exists! It is to show the truth that a person who has died and been buried will no longer sin! So, whenever sinful thoughts come to visit, feel your spiritual pulse and pray to ask God if you are being quiet? If the old self is not dead, it will be difficult for your heart to be at peace! As soon as a person is not quiet, sin is lurking at the door. As soon as you step out of the boundaries of commandments and rules, you will be controlled by sin! The reason is because the sin that binds you is pretending to be dead, or not dead!

Finally, there should be a newness of life. For this reason, we should encourage and remind each other to strangle our old selves! If the old self is really dead, there will be a newness of life. What is the newness of life? It is to imitate the Lord's likeness, His humility and meekness, His willingness to be a servant, and to lay down His life for the sheep! It's not a slogan, but "we too might walk in newness of life." The meaning of every move refers to the changes in our minds that accumulate over time and are renewed every day. It comes from the heart, lived out through words and deeds, seen through testimonies, from family, from fellowship, from church, from serving, from chance encounters with strangers, etc. So now it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. Let's look at the third point:

Be united with him in a resurrection like his

From believing in the Lord to being baptized, we can say that we have completed the first step of salvation. Next, we must be united with the Lord in the shape of His resurrection. First, be united with the glory of the Father. Man's knowledge of God's glory is limited, because man's pattern and personality are limited. The glory in the Garden of Eden is an understatement in the biblical description. What kind of memory is it to name more than five billion living creatures? Then there is the sorting and categorization that goes far beyond what we have today, the postmodern way of thinking. What language is he using and what generation of quantum computer is he using? How big is the Garden of Eden? Will it be similar to the New Jerusalem in Revelation? "The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal.

(Revelation 21:16)” Glory refers to God’s honor, wisdom, power, grace, love, etc. in the world, causing people to worship and praise God!

Secondly, be united with him in a death like his. Why unite with the Lord in a death like his? Because the death of the Lord is the highest expression of God’s love. As the scripture says: “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)” To be united with the form of death, one is to imitate the Lord’s death and imitate His laying down of life for the sheep. We should also love one another and lay down our lives for one another. The second is to put the old self to death by relying on the Lord Jesus Christ. Without experiencing death and resurrection with the Lord, it is impossible to have new life. Co-death is the foundation of the life experience of co-resurrection, and it is the complete renewal of body, mind and soul! For example, our character, temperament, personality, spirituality, etc., all need to be changed by the renewal of the mind!

Finally, be united with him in a resurrection like his. The shape of resurrection is the appearance of the Lord after His resurrection, and it is the appearance of glory! What the Bible reveals is not complete, but the Lord’s appearance after his resurrection can also give us some clues. He was not limited by time and space. He made an appointment with the disciples in Galilee, as if he had “walked through the wall” and came to the disciples. The resurrected Lord can also eat, drink, share, fish with his disciples, and also issue the Great Commission. Finally, welcomed by angels, he gradually ascended to heaven on the Mount of Olives in front of more than five hundred disciples. The angel said: “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven. (Acts 1:11)”

Conclusion

Well, thank the Lord! Being justified by faith, being baptized by faith, and being united with the likeness of His resurrection are the only steps on our heavenly path. Then, the Lord’s instructions before his ascension are also the goal and hope of our life. That is: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8)”

Let us pray.....

(Romans 6:1-5)

6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

6:2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

6:3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

6:4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

6:5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

23. Growth after baptism 【Romans 6:6-23】

Introduction

For every Christian who believes in the Lord, there is nothing more confusing and even a bit overwhelming than the growth after baptism, right? On the one hand, knowing that believing in Jesus and gaining eternal life is a good thing, but on the other hand, how to hold on to this good thing to the end and never lose it has become a source of confusion and tension for many believers, right? Let's look at the first point:

Know the essence of life

Yes, what is the essence of life? It is the situation in which human life interacts with Christ because of Christ's redemption. First, be crucified with the Lord. We know that the cross was a torture instrument in the Roman Empire, specially used to deal with serious criminals. Jewish law also says that those who are hung on a tree are cursed by God. Because of God's mercy and because of the heavy sins of Adam and Eve, Christ Jesus took the initiative to go to the cross in order to bear our heavy sins. When we believe in the Lord and follow His example, we turn to the Lord by baptism, which means the death of our old self. The moment we are immersed in water, it typifies our crucifixion with the Lord. We are dead to sin, and our body of sin has been destroyed! The point is, we are dead! The very body that causes us to sin is dead!

Secondly, believe that you will live with Him. The reality is that after we are baptized into Christ, we will still sin. That's frustrating, right? Doesn't it mean that you have been freed from sin? Doesn't it mean that you are no longer a slave to sin? Why is it so difficult for me to live a victorious life? It is easy to be anxious when something happens, emotions come and go, it is difficult to calm down the mind, the spirit is difficult to be quiet, and the body is difficult to get rid of the entanglement of sin. Alas, as the scripture says: "Who can deliver me from this body of death?" Why? I believe the main reason is the direction issue, verse 8: "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. (Romans 6:8)" That is to say, we cannot just focus on dying with the Lord, but we must "believe and live with Him!"

Lastly, life is living to God. The direction has changed, and so have the driving force, motivation, and persistence. The poet said: "If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. (Psalm 66:18)" Paul said: we believe that we will also live with Him. The point is to live with Him! Our Lord is the living Lord because we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he will no longer die and death will no longer be his Lord. Therefore, we can no longer let death be our master. The Lord's breath, the Lord's style, the Lord's thoughts, the Lord's behavior in the gospels, etc. are all examples for me to follow, my thoughts, my meditations, my reflections, and my love! As time goes by, you will find that your life can also be changed. Let's look at the second point:

A vessel of righteousness or unrighteousness

Seeing life as a vessel is the beginning of theocentrism. This is an extremely difficult turning point in life. First, the status of created beings. To be honest, it is not easy for people to accept their status as created beings in their full consciousness. Human pride and greed make us subconsciously have the urge to compete with God. Unconsciously, there will inevitably be the inertia of doing whatever you want, and you will even subconsciously test the boundaries of sin. Even our consciousness is extremely easy to be shaken, tempted, and being affected easily. Only when the human heart fully accepts God as the Creator and we are the created beings, can our hearts be at peace! Every time the heart surges and refuses to be lonely, it is because we are dissatisfied with the fate, arrangements and destiny given to us by the Creator!

Second, the options of righteousness and sin. Since we know that man was created by God, he can be used by God and become a vessel for God's use after being saved by God. This is an important option after baptism! Because what God values is people's willingness, not force. Therefore, the Bible often uses conditional sentences to express the relationship between God and man: If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. A new creation means a new person and a new vessel that can be used by God. Say goodbye to the old self and the body of sin! Why? For old things have passed away and have become a new creation. This process is a collaboration between God and man. On the one hand, man is willing, on the other hand, the Holy Spirit works, and God gives the opportunity for life change. From then on, the new creation begins to live a new self!

Finally, it is under grace. The relationship between law and grace is also very important. Law affects people's behavior, and grace triggers people's motivations. If a person chooses to sin, there is a law that binds him. If a person chooses to offer his members to God as instruments of righteousness, he will live under grace. Similarly, Paul said, can we sin if we are under grace and not under the law? Of course this is not possible. In fact, the standard of living under grace is much higher than living under law. The purpose of living under the law is to be able to obey it. To live under grace is to please God. Let's look at the third point:

Challenges on the road to sanctification

The path to sanctification is the lifelong pursuit of Christians. It is also the only way for God's children to grow spiritually after they believe in the Lord and receive baptism. First, be willing to be a slave of righteousness. The philosophical premise here is that everyone in the world has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, thus becoming slaves of sin. Paul said that the key to going from being slaves of sin to being slaves of righteousness is that "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. (Romans 6:12)" Once greed ferments, it will stir up the dough of pride, stir up the bulging belly in the basin of human life, and even give birth to the offspring of sin. Paul exhorts us, "But present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. (Romans 6:13)" The so-called instrument of righteousness is a life that is holy in God's eyes and used by God, and is completely surrendered to God's will.

Secondly, it is glorious to be a slave of God. The word "slave" is a surrogate word, which can

easily lead people to misunderstand, thinking that once a person becomes a slave of God, his freedom is gone. In fact, it is such a glorious thing to be a slave of God. Being a slave of God is worship in itself! When Isaiah saw the angels as servants of God, he heard the angels "And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" In fact, the two major purposes of life are to believe in Jesus Christ and to be a servant of God! Because of the glory, we are willing to do it. Because there is a willingness, and in it lies the glory of God.

Finally, it bears the fruit of eternal life. What is the fruit of eternal life? It is the fruit of holiness and glory! Holiness, of course, must be the fruit of the Holy Spirit that goes far beyond moral standards, that is, "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Another more important meaning of holiness is to be sanctified and belong to the Lord. The fruit of glory is accompanied by God's attributes, such as His eternity, wisdom, honor, power, love, and judgment! As the scripture says: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)"

Conclusion

Thank the Lord! It turns out that the riches God has prepared for those who believe in Him are so long, wide, high and deep! The essence of human life is to be connected to the Lord. Be willing to be a vessel of righteousness, a slave of God, and bear the fruit of eternal life.

Let us pray.....

(Romans 6:6-23)

6:6 We know that our old self[a] was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

6:7 For one who has died has been set free[b] from sin.

6:8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

6:9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.

6:10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.

6:11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

6:12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

6:13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

6:14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

6:15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

6:16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves,[c] you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

6:17 But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,

6:18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

6:19 I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

6:20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

6:21 But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

6:22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

24.The original ecology separated from the law 【Romans 7:1-6】

Introduction

What is the original nature of the law? This is the situation when the law came into the world, which is what I often call the “state of time and space.” Where did the law come from? Who promulgated it? Who received it? What was the result? What is the impact? What is the historical origin? Why should we separate from it today? Let’s look at the first point:

Innate bondage

From the perspective of the process of biblical revelation, the Bible has gone through various historical stages including the general revelation in Genesis Chapters 1 to 11. From the ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob went down from Canaan to Egypt, Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, entering the wilderness, returning to Canaan, went through judged, establishing a kingdom, destroying the homeland, being plundered, living in the nations, God’s promises, returning home, the fullness of time, and the coming of Christ. First, the testimony in history. God’s instructions to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden were the prototype of the law. The rebuke to Cain was an extension of the law. The human judgment of the great flood before Noah was a type of the final judgment of the law. The experience from the patriarchs to the Israelites was the initial stage of the formation of the law and left many traces of immaturity. After the Jews returned from captivity, the Pharisees dressed the law in the cloak of legalism, and were rebuked by the Lord Jesus as hypocrites. This is the original ecology of the law that Paul wants us to think about and face, that is, it has been incompletely received in history, but it can still be regarded as an immortal achievement of preservation and inheritance. The fact that the Israelites preserved the Law of Moses intact is indeed God’s grace that benefits all peoples!

Secondly, acceptance in the incompleteness. The process of Moses going up to Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments was full of twists and turns. The Israelites waited for forty days. When they could no longer wait any longer, they made a golden calf and worshiped it. When Moses came down from the mountain and took a look, he was so angry that he broke the tablets of the Ten Commandments. In order to practice the Ten Commandments, the Jews even compiled 613 commandments. Gradually, these 613 commandments even became equal to the Ten Commandments. This became a burden on the lives of the Israelites. On the one hand, the Israelites wanted to please God by keeping the law. However, on the other hand, the Israelites failed to keep the law completely, creating an uncontrollable tension in their lives. This is also the reason why the hypocrisy of the Pharisees has room for survival among the Israelites.

Finally, the law among the living. Paul says here: “Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? (Romans 7:1)” This was a blind spot in the thinking of the Israelites. They never thought that

the purpose of the law was to establish it for the Son of Man. Jesus said: "So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.(Mark 2:28) " This sentence has profound meanings. First, it refers to the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ, and He exercises the authority of the Son of God as the Son of Man. On the other hand, it means that the law was established for living people. He said: "And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. (Mark 2:27)" This is the key to unlocking the mystery of the law and the guarantee for us to live out the law by faith. Let's look at the second point:

The transition between life and death

The function of the law is to point out that people are guilty, and the wages of sin is death. Therefore, the essence of the law is the contest or transformation between human life and death. First of all, when you live, you must face the law. As long as people live, they must face the law. Paul took the relationship between husband and wife as an example. He said that a woman is bound by the law of her husband while her husband is alive. If the husband dies, the woman is freed from the law of her husband. This metaphor is very vivid, right? While her husband is still alive, a woman crawls into bed with another man, and Paul calls her an adulteress. When her husband dies, a woman is freed from her husband's law. If she remarries, she can no longer be called an adulteress. This is true of the relationship between husband and wife, and it is true of other things as well. Everyone living in the world is bound by different laws, without exception. The law comes from God, and there is no problem with the law itself. The problem is our attitude toward the law.

Secondly, death means freedom from the law. When a person dies, he is released from the law. This statement is true, but if it is just this, it does not fully understand the scriptures. What Paul means is that Christ's incarnation, sacrifice of his life on the cross, and resurrection from the dead have satisfied the requirements of the law and fulfilled the law punishing man's sins. From then on, the wages of sin is death. It has no effect on those who have believed in Christ Jesus. Death no longer functions as a law for God's children. This is the core content of the gospel and our hope! Because people believe in Jesus Christ, they can pass from death to life! The sting of death can no longer devour our lives.

Finally, resurrection can bear fruit to God. Resurrection and bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit are the result of the life of the saints. At the same time, this is also a choice between life and death. People who live under the law value behavioral norms, moral requirements, and ethical perfection, but in the end they are on the road to death. If a person lives under the salvation of Christ, he overcomes the bondage of death by faith, transcends the regulations under the law, and turns to please God and bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The nine fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. In fact, it is a fruit with nine aspects, none of which can be missing. Resurrection life bears the fruit. Otherwise, there will be no fruit. Let's look at the third point:

The release of spiritual honesty

The Bible says that the results of our life come from the heart. Therefore, the honesty of our spirit becomes the evidence for our account to God. First, the evil thoughts arising from the law.

How can the law give rise to evil thoughts? Will it be a bit confusing? This is truly a great contribution of Paul's theology! The law was given by God and does not itself produce evil thoughts. However, when the law encounters sinners, it points out their sins. For example, the law says, Thou shalt not be greedy. When the sinner hears this, hey, what is greed? Isn't it fun? When to try it? The sinner's heart is stirred up, and what follows is dancing with excitement. Observed from a phenomenological perspective, sinners who did not commit any crime originally manifested the crime of greed.

Secondly, you are now free from the law. What does it mean to be free from the law? Does this mean that we no longer have to obey the law? Being lawless and doing whatever you want? Just like Black Lives Matter in the United States, is it not considered a crime to rob a supermarket under \$950 in California? As soon as these words are said, some people will start to feel excited in their hearts, thinking about when to go to California or New York? New York is even more interesting. Illegal immigrants can live in other people's homes at will, but their owners can't drive them away, otherwise it's illegal. What kind of world is this? What Paul means is that Christ has died and the law's function of causing death has been eliminated. From then on, people who were originally condemned to death by the law because of their sins are now freed from the law through the redemption of Christ!

Finally, according to the newness of spirit. Paul said, according to the newness of spirit, not according to the old way of manners. The spirit in the original text refers to the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is to be according to the newness of the Holy Spirit and not according to the old way of ritual. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, and His presence is a promise of God to all who believe in Him. The newness of the Holy Spirit means that it is no longer me who lives now, that is, the old me who still follows the rules in everything, but Christ, with the help of the Holy Spirit at any time, living in my life, inspiring me, guiding me, leading me, renewing me, and saving me!

Conclusion

Well, thank the Lord! It turns out that the original nature of the law, when we are still weak, actually causes us to have evil desires caused by the law, leading to death! However, because of the sacrifice of Christ, we are freed from the judgment of the law and live out the likeness of Jesus Christ with integrity in spirit and according to the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray.....

(Romans 7:1-6)

7:1 Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives?

7:2 For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage.

7:3 Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

7:4 Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.

7:5 For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.

7:6 But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

25. Breaking Away From Devouring by the Law 【Romans 7:7-25】

Introduction

It can be said that the content of this chapter is the high point of difficulty in Romans, and few people can explain it clearly. Today we can only ask for God's mercy and look forward to the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that we can receive what is in line with God's will. What is "devouring by the law"? It is the law that struggles and fights with sinners in the depths of their spirits because of sin, so that it robs people of their greed in their pride and causes them to die because of sin in front of the commandments. Let's look at the first point:

The killing of paradox of the law

The paradox of the law is that the law points out people's sins, but instead puts the guilty people to death. First, the law is not sin. The core of the law is the Ten Commandments issued by God. How can we say that the law is sin? This comes from thinking about the original nature of the law, and is designed to help us understand the power of the cross and break away from being bound by legalism. However, this also brings about another possible misunderstanding, that is, thinking that the law is evil, and even asking why God gave the law? Because without the law, we wouldn't even know what sin is? The function of the law is to make people realize their sins, find no excuse to deny them, and make them submit to God's authority and judgment! Not only that, the law even points out what sins a person has committed. I believe this is the meaning of the law expanding from the Ten Commandments to 613 Jewish laws.

Second, the law activates sin. We have already said that the law is not sin, so why do we still say that the law triggers sin? Because in addition to pointing out our sins, the law has also become the moral high ground deep in people's hearts, which is desirable but difficult to reach. After believing in the Lord, we all want to live a life that pleases God, right? Therefore, it is possible for people to put the burden of the law on themselves and become the standard for pleasing God. At this time, Satan finally seizes a gap and allows sin to activate all kinds of evil thoughts in us. Maybe we don't feel it at first, but when evil thoughts accumulate to a certain extent, we may even become enemies of the Holy Spirit's inspiration and gradually deviate from the truth in order to maintain face or vanity.

Finally, the killing of the law. Before believing in the Lord, everyone has sinned, and the wages of sin is death, and death is our only choice. After believing in the Lord, we are justified by faith, full of joy, and full of grace! However, from the time we first believed to our growth, our spiritual life has become weak and even corrupted. 為什麼呢? Why? Because the purpose of God's promulgation of the law is not to make people obey it, but to make people realize that they are unable to obey it and instead rely on God's grace. The danger of sin is that it requires people to obey the law and forget and stay away from grace! At this time sin comes to devour the believer's life. From this point of view, the law was originally given by God, but it was used

by sin and became a tool of killing. Let's look at the second point:

The helplessness of good and evil in law

The two sides of the law are clearly revealed here. I think this is why we feel helpless. First, the law is good. Paul said: "So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. (Romans 7:12)" God revealed it to Moses on Mount Sinai and gave him the Ten Commandments. Every commandment expresses God's holiness, justice, mercy, and love. The Israelites also tried their best to develop 613 Jewish laws. In their wording, they maintained and demonstrated the glory and goodness of God. The history of the Israelites' kingdom, captivity and return, made the Jews discover that whether they obeyed the law or not was the prerequisite for their grace. Therefore, the Pharisees imposed laws on God's chosen people that the Israelites were unable to obey. This makes God's chosen people lose the essence of goodness in front of the law.

Secondly, sin is revealed as evil because of the commandment. The law or commandments themselves are good, but when the law meets sinners, sin takes the opportunity to do evil and rob people. Why? Because the law has the function of pointing out people's sins, but it has no power to make people do good. The Israelites dressed up in a sanctimonious manner, tied scripture boxes to their foreheads, and prayed everywhere while shaking their heads. Although they clearly cannot do good deeds, they use a false appearance to claim that they are a different elect and a spiritual aristocrat who is superior to others. In their eyes, the gentiles are just the added fuel to hell. In fact, their inner pride is already prosecuting their evil intentions. They are a typical group of people who do evil because they boast about the law.

Finally, the law is spiritual. Paul said: "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. (Romans 7:14)." This is also a major contribution of Paul's theology, or a highlight of God's revelation to Paul. When we understand that the law is spiritual, our lives are instantly released. The law is spiritual. First, it shows that we cannot just focus on the literal meaning of the law, but must understand its essence. The second is to understand that people cannot obey the law, not because there is a problem with any of the laws, but because the descendants of Adam are carnal, not spiritual, and have been sold to sin. This is the fundamental reason why people cannot obey the law. Let's look at the third point:

The ultimate belonging of the law

Paul pointed out the dual nature of human hearts and minds. First, there is no good in the fleshly life, that is, Satan is within us. Second, the good after rebirth and salvation is Christ. Paul lamented: How miserable I am; who can save me from this body of death? First, the good Christ. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is God's promise! When we believe in the Lord and receive baptism, God promises us, "just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)" Moreover, the Bible says: "For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. (Romans 6:14)" This is the faith and assurance that a person who believes in Christ Jesus should have in his life. Nicodemus called Jesus a good Master, but he did not know that Christ Jesus was the Creator of heaven and earth! Knowing Him as the Lord of life indwelling us will give us the faith to

overcome the world!

Secondly, the physical old self. When our faith is weak or even loses it, we will experience battle and confusion deep in our spirit. Paul said: "For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. (Romans 7:15)" People around me are living together before marriage. How can I resist this overwhelming power? I also know that swearing does not please God. But I'm used to it, and I've been talking about it since I was a kid; and my neighbors, colleagues, and classmates all say this, so why should I show myself to be noble? When I encounter trouble, I go to a fortune teller or find someone to read Feng Shui. I feel that what these people say makes sense. "Christ alone" in Acts 4:12 no longer works at this time!

Finally, total reliance! The experience of many believers is failure and discouraging. They don't understand why "For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. (Romans 7:19)" Paul's "secret recipe" is just one sentence: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Romans 7:25)" How to rely? How to get out? I think the first thing is to be quiet in Christ! For if you are not quiet, you will not know who the Lord is. The second is to get closer to God more and more, love God regardless of everything, serve God, and long for God. The third is to learn to make decisions in Christ that are in line with God's will. The fourth is to take faith as the criterion and stay away from worries. Fifth, everything should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Well, thank the Lord! Breaking away from devouring by the law is an inevitable stage in the growth of a believer's life. We may be struggling with the pain of another law in life throughout our lives, but thankfully we have the Lord as our eternal reliance. Let us pray.....

(Romans 7:7-25)

7:7 What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."

7:8 But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead.

7:9 I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.

7:10 The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me.

7:11 For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.

7:12 So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

7:13 Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.

7:15 For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

7:16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good.

7:17 So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

7:18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

7:19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

7:20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

7:21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.

7:22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,

7:23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

7:24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

7:25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

26.The relationship between the law and the Holy Spirit 【Romans

8:1-8】

Introduction

It can be said that the distinction between the law and the Holy Spirit started the New and Old Testament eras. But what is the connection between the law and the Holy Spirit? This is the focus of our thinking today and the origin of the topic of today's sermon. Let's look at the first point:

The Holy Spirit transcends the law

The Holy Spirit transcends the law. It seems like an attempt, but it also brings profound meaning. First, the meaning of being in Christ. What does it mean to be in Christ? Frankly speaking, the meaning of being in Christ is not something we can fully understand, because the richness of Christ is far beyond the reach of our human abilities. But through the revelation of the Bible, we can know what God wants us to understand. In today's scripture, Paul tells us: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)" If we just look at this verse, it seems to be nothing, it seems to be sparse and ordinary. However, if we combine the context, we will find its earth-shattering significance. We find that the law in our flesh that causes us to sin always outweighs the law in our heart, remember? The point is, from now on, God no longer condemns us!

Second, freedom in Christ. That is to say, no matter how much we fail or how many times we fall in the battle against the law in our own hearts, in the end God will no longer condemn us! This is the power of the gospel, which will save everyone who believes! The law cannot do this. Only the law of the Spirit of life can free us from the law of sin and death! Nor is it how well we did in our struggles, how touching our testimonies were, how compelling our conduct was. It is because we belong to Christ and are in Christ, God has released us in Christ Jesus!

Finally, Christ became the sin offering. Some people may ask, why is this happening? In fact, the Bible explains it very clearly, but we may not pay much attention to it. The law in our hearts battles against the sinful law in our bodies and often fails. So Paul said: "For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, (Romans 8:3)" God knew that we were powerless, so He made the powerful Christ Jesus become flesh, sacrifice his life on the cross, resurrect and ascend to heaven, and became the propitiation sacrifice for us. In this way, God will no longer condemn us! From then on, the Holy Spirit leads us to walk on the road to heaven, surpass the law, and enable us to overcome by relying on the Lord! Look at the second point:

Life battle situation

The reason why the gospel is powerful is that God's salvation can save us from darkness and into the wonderful light of eternal life with God! First, follow the law or the Spirit. Originally, I relied on myself and the law and struggled desperately, but the result was just as Paul said: "I am so miserable!" Now relying on the Holy Spirit, God will "in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:4)" From then on, it is no longer us who fight, but the Holy Spirit fights for us. We only do one thing, that is, do nothing, but give all the sovereignty of our lives to the Holy Spirit! We can pray, ask, and give thanks in everything, pour out our hearts to God, trust Him, and not worry or be afraid! In essence, people should give their authority to the Lord, and should not grasp, control the situation, or control people, as if only what you do can show your value.

Next, to set the mind on the flesh or the Spirit. What is carnality? It is our flesh, our old self, our habits, and our self-righteousness. In particular, some things that are conventional, taken for granted, on the moral high ground, and difficult to change in character constitute physical lust. The lust of the flesh will surely breed the pride of life, It is the inertial blood flow of believing that one must be right, which is enough to make people lose control and even act forcefully and randomly. At this time, our five senses, cognition, and learning abilities will inevitably decline, because the lust of the eyes will also participate, destroying our spiritual sensitivity, and losing contact with God. Unless we repent quickly, catch up with God's steps, to set the mind of the Holy Spirit's inspiration, and let the Holy Spirit take control.

Lastly, the choice of life, death and peace. To set the mind on the flesh makes people feel comfortable and relaxed, just like the first ancestor saw that the fruit was pleasing to the eyes and good for food. So what happened? She ate it, and as soon as she ate it, she realized that it felt so good and happy! However, the consequence is death! This kind of setting the mind on the flesh for doing whatever you want can be seen everywhere today! Eve might also have argued that: You, the Lord God, told us not to eat the fruit from the tree in the garden, but You did not tell us not to eat the fruit that was handed to me by a talking snake! You, Lord God, have not made it clear and explained the rules clearly. How can you blame us? The human heart is deceitful above all things, except that the heart is unwilling to choose to set the mind on the Holy Spirit. Let's look at the third point:

Receiving life from setting the mind on the Spirit

Why is it important to set your mind on the Holy Spirit? When a person died, he didn't know how he died! Paul specifically mentioned it and asked us to be alert to this. First, enmity against God. Maybe when people are enemies of God, maybe they themselves are even confused, right? Scripture shows that enmity with God is the consequence or equivalent of a carnal mind. For example, antichrists, false Christs, governments, groups, individuals and other forces that persecute the church and arrest God's children throughout the ages are all races that are enemies of God. The point is, the Bible says their end is death! Death is the devouring of the meaning of life and the demise of the value of life. After all, they are pitiful, pathetic, and hateful people in the eternal value system! But Christ said on the cross: Father, forgive them,

for they do not know what they are doing! At the end of King Saul, the Holy Spirit left him!
Pitiful!

Secondly, unwillingness to submit. The core nature of sinners is disobedience. This was true for Adam, so for Cain, so for the Tower of Babel, so for Sodom, so for Nineveh, so for Pharaoh, and even more so for the Israelites who came out of Egypt! All right! You say that God has not given you written laws and regulations, so I will take you to Mount Sinai and carve the Ten Commandments with my own hands. Is it time to return to the land of Canaan? No, you still refuse to obey! Along the way, you continued to worship idols, stir up trouble in the church, and refused to obey the leadership of Moses! In the end, Moses also struck the rock with flesh and water came out, so that the companion coach could not enter Canaan, but entered Mount Nebo, and died alone. Do you still not understand the message God put in the Bible?

Finally, God was displeased. At this time, Paul had to look at the problem from the perspective of a person's subordinate nature. Please tell me, who do you belong to? People who belong to God will choose to follow the Holy Spirit, be considerate of the Holy Spirit, and please God! However, if you are a person who goes by flesh, you will not choose to obey in your heart. Instead, you will find faults in every possible way, make things difficult for the church, embarrass yourself, and become an enemy to God! Why? For a moment of pleasure? Eating a bite of fruit that does not please God, killing Abel who does not please yourself, building a Tower of Babel that reaches the sky, raising up a question that you think is very satisfying, etc. However, you will only fail to please God. Let me ask, is this the goal in your life?

Conclusion

Well, thank the Lord! The relationship between the law and the Holy Spirit gives us a glimpse into the mystery of the Holy Spirit and the law so that we can understand that the purpose of life is to please God!

Let us pray

(Romans 8:1-8)

8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

8:3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,[c] he condemned sin in the flesh,

8:4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

8:5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

8:6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

8:7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

8:8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

27.The Holy Spirit Releases Life 【Romans 8:9-13】

Introduction

We know that the coming of the Holy Spirit is sent by the Holy Father and the Holy Son to participate in God's salvation plan. The Holy Spirit is the third person in the Trinity. It is the same glory and substance as the Father and the Son. It transcends all laws and bears the burden and responsibility of life. More importantly, in God's salvation, the function of the Holy Spirit is even freeing a life originally enslaved by sin. Let's look at the first point:

The mystery of life's belonging

When it comes to life, people are often confused, right? Anyway, to live is to live. As long as there is a way to make a living and to take refuge in whoever gives you benefits, it becomes a golden rule that people are accustomed to. But, is this the life in your mind? First of all, the essence of life depends on belonging. Obviously, the essence of life is not to live, but to see where it belongs. Moreover, there are not many choices between being of the Spirit or of the flesh. How do you know where you belong? The Bible says: "You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. (Romans 8:9)" So how do we know if the Spirit of God dwells in our hearts? The Bible says: "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. (Romans 8:16)" Children of God must first do everything in the name of the Lord; secondly, they must imitate the Lord's style, loving God, loving others, and loving others as themselves. The third is to have the spiritual sensitivity to confess and repent, and not to be like King Saul, who refused to surrender the sovereignty of his life to God until his death.

Secondly, the Spirit of Christ is discernment. Of course, as the Bible says: "Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. (Romans 8:9)" How do you know if a person has the Spirit of Christ? The Bible says: "and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. (1 John 4:3)" It's not just about confessing with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, but more importantly, believing in your heart! If a person believes in his heart, he will surely bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit! What you say and do will be consistent with the gospel you believe. In fact, the essence is to act in a manner worthy of a repentant heart and worthy of the grace you have received! If you cannot live out repentance, you will not be saved. If you cannot live out gratitude, it will be difficult to be sanctified.

Finally, Life and death are controlled by God. Some people may still quibble and say that I believe it! You see, I serve, contribute, participate in short-term missions, offer time and all kinds of resources. How can you say that I do not belong to Christ? Frankly speaking, it doesn't matter who speaks and who doesn't. What matters is that one day Christ will speak. What to talk about? Saying: I don't know you! In here, Paul is exhorting us to be humble and

trembling in our hearts. There is no need to be boastful and arrogant, boasting and disobedience becomes a habit, so that it becomes difficult to turn back. Don't forget that it is Christ who is the Head and who rules through His body! If He truly is in our hearts, the Bible says: "Although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (Romans 8:10)" Let's look at the second point:

The resurrection of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit

"The Spirit is life because of righteousness." It refers to the Spirit of resurrection reigning in our hearts. Only the Spirit of resurrection has the authority to make us live for righteousness. First, receive God's Spirit with joy. Frankly speaking, We are unfamiliar with the Holy Spirit. Not only is it unfamiliar, but it will also be rejected. Even if we accept it in our consciousness, subconsciously, we often even unconsciously suppress the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Paul introduced the Holy Spirit in a very special way. He said, who is the Holy Spirit? It is "the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead." It means asking the disciples, do you know the mystery of Christ's resurrection? It was the Holy Spirit, whom we are unfamiliar with, who raised Jesus from the dead. Paul's introduction enables us to readily receive the Holy Spirit and obey the Holy Spirit's leading in our lives. This is an attitude, and it is also a deepening of the understanding of God, so that we can know more and more about God.

Second, it is the Spirit from "in" to "dwell in". In today's scripture, the word "if" appears twice. Once in verse 10, "if Christ is in you." Another time is in verse 11, "If the Spirit dwells in you." What does it mean? Regarding the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Bible does not force us, but invites us. God seems to be asking here: Are you willing to invite me to live in your hearts? We may ask, on what grounds? Why? The truth is actually very simple, and there is only one reason, that is, Christ wants to dwell in our hearts. The process of "from being in to being dwell in" in the scriptures is actually the progress, depth, and advancement of the relationship between God and man.

Finally, the mortal body comes to life. This is the fruit brought by the indwelling of Christ, the fruit of resurrection, the fruit of life, and the fruit of mission. The fruit of resurrection is intended to resolve the issue of our spiritual identity. Only those who belong to the Lord have the possibility of receiving resurrection life. The fruit of life is living out the resurrection life received from the Lord, not just talking about it. From words to faith, from faith to deeds, and from deeds to missions. The fruit of mission is the overflowing of the blessing of life that belongs to the Lord, so that the testimonies flowing out glorify God and benefit others. As the Bible says, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. We cannot wear new shoes and walk the same old path! Let's look at the third point:

Living in obedience to the Holy Spirit

Living by the Holy Spirit is a core value of the Bible. It's just that we may only stay at the point where we know it but don't necessarily follow it. Why? This is because we have forgotten the other disjunctive, the opposite disjunctive, which is the consequence of disobedience to the Holy Spirit. First, the choice between the Spirit and the flesh. This is an old topic, right? For us,

living in the flesh will become more accustomed and more skillful. At least some people will ask why we should obey the flesh? It seems to be something that comes naturally, without any obstacles or reasons. It has been a habit for many years. Lincoln emancipated the black slaves. However, when many black people saw their original masters on the road, they would still lie down on the ground and ask the master to step on their back and get on the horse. We may be the same. When temptation comes, we can't help but sin. We forget that Christ has actually paid off our sin debt in the flesh, and we no longer need to be entangled and bound by the flesh.

Secondly, if you live according to the flesh. What is flesh? The flesh is the sin we inherited from Adam and the resulting fall and corruption. The specific manifestations are our flesh, lust and other emotions that do not glorify God. Logically speaking, as those of us who have been reborn and saved and have overcome by relying on the Lord, we have been freed from the temptation of sin and have nothing to do with sin. However, we who have been crucified with the Lord still have a body that is capable of sin. Paul said, How miserable I am! The suffering lies in living according to the flesh and meaninglessly. What to do? Paul said, rely on the Lord and not on yourself! Life depends either on oneself or the Holy Spirit! The difference is between being bound or being free.

Finally, mortify the body by the Holy Spirit. Once a person chooses to rely on the Holy Spirit, things are completely different. From now on, the focus is far away from sin. Now that it is far away, God no longer condemns us! The prerequisite for no longer being condemned is to be in Christ Jesus, and the first step in life in Christ is to repent of sin. A person who often confesses his sins and repents will be sensitive to sin and will not commit sin easily. On the contrary, those who never confess and repent are insensitive to sin and resist confessing their sins. It is impossible for a person who refuses to confess his sins to mortify the body by relying on the Holy Spirit. In this way, it will be difficult for the Holy Spirit to release his life. May I ask, what is your choice?

Conclusion

Well, thank the Lord! The Holy Spirit releases life, and through the ownership of our lives, the resurrection of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and obedience to the Holy Spirit, we will gain life! May God grant us peace, walk with us on our pilgrimage, and release our lives!

Let us pray

(Romans 8:9-13)

8:9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

8:10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

8:11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

8:12 So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

8:13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the

deeds of the body, you will live.

28.The glory of God' s heirs 【Romans 8:14-25】

Introduction

Heirs, in a broad sense, refer to future generations. In a narrow sense, it refers to those who have inherited or will inherit the property. God promised Abraham that only the child of Sarah would inherit his inheritance. Heirs in Romans refer to being heirs with Christ and inheriting God' s inheritance because of faith in the Lord. Because of this spiritual identity, Paul was moved by the Holy Spirit and greatly honored! This is the origin of today' s sermon message. Let' s look at the first point:

The Holy Spirit-led identity

It is normal to have difficulty understanding the book of Romans, because the thinking mode of the Bible is often not familiar to us. In particular, Paul' s method of interpretation is full of the roots of two cultures, namely Hebrew and Greek culture. However, it is not unattainable. It means learning with your heart, brain, time and life. First, receive sonship. We are originally sinners, but because of our faith in Christ we are called the sons of God. How can we bear this? We feel scared when we listen to it, and may even feel a certain degree of rejection in our heart, right? Today' s scripture tells us that all those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. Many people are interested in seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit, and that is good. How good is that? The only good thing is longing for God and longing for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the leading of the Holy Spirit is equivalent to walking the path of faith. Anyone who believes in Him is a child of God! So, whoever believes in Him, the Holy Spirit leads them! We don' t need to worry about how the Holy Spirit leads us. We only need to obey the Holy Spirit' s inspiration, walk with Him, and accept His help at any time.

Second, receive the love of the Heavenly Father. Like the Jewish Christians at that time, we do not have a "father view" of God, that is, the concept of God as our father in heaven. We may even resist: How can the Lord who created heaven and earth be our Father in heaven? On the contrary, we are more accustomed to being slaves or bandits, wasting our time in fear and disobedience. Jesus taught his disciples the Lord' s Prayer, and Paul also told us here that from the day we believed in the Lord, our hearts have been renewed by God. No longer the heart of a slave, but the heart of a son! From now on, we can even call God our "Abba! Father!" The idea of a Heavenly Father will change our lives! No more fear, for He is my Father and my God!

Finally, receive the companionship of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the promise of Christ, the sending of the Father, and the seal in the hearts of God' s children. Jesus pointed out the origin of the Holy Spirit: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, (John 14:16)" The original meaning of Comforter is the one who is called to someone' s side to be a comforter, helper, encourager, protector, teacher, and intercessor. Among them, one of the most important tasks of the Holy Spirit is to remind people of all the

words Jesus said to his disciples. The very presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is the guarantee of our identity as children of God. The Holy Spirit tells us who we are, who we belong to, and for whom we live, and we receive His help at all times. What's even more amazing is that the Holy Spirit is willing to co-work with us and bear beautiful witness to God together! Let's look at the second point:

The path led by the Holy Spirit

Christ told His disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you." Then, after I leave, I will ask the Father to give you the Holy Spirit. Then, the Holy Spirit will lead you and teach you the path you should take. First, after suffering comes glory. If we briefly described the life of Christ, we would probably say: He suffered for us, died, sacrificed his life on the cross, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and promised to come again. Right? Therefore, if a person who believes in Jesus wants to follow the Lord, he must understand the suffering and the meaning of it. Therefore, Paul said: "and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (Romans 8:17)" This word brings hope, grace and power. Life is unsatisfactory, nine times out of ten. What to do? As long as we suffer for the Lord, after the suffering is the glory of the Lord, so what?

Secondly, the creation's groaning in pain. Have you ever thought about what suffering is in life? Where is the suffering and difficulty in this life? Lost your job? Lose health? Lost your wealth? Lost love? Losing family ties? On the contrary, if you get everything, will there be no suffering? In fact, the day you get it, new suffering will come. Paul tells us here that the greatest suffering in life is ourselves! Why? Because after our ancestors sinned, it is difficult for us, as created beings, to escape the bondage of corruption. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. It is for this reason that Christ laid down his life for you and me, bearing the burden that we cannot bear, and saving us from the vanity of this corruption.

Finally, the body is redeemed and bears the first fruit. If the Lord Jesus had not come, become flesh, and become the ransom for all of us, we would be in toil and sorrow, and it becomes empty in the blink of an eye and we sigh together! Not only that, even if we are saved, we will inevitably sigh in our hearts. Why? Because we are still waiting, waiting for our bodies to be redeemed to receive the sonship of God. This is what we often mean when we say that although we are saved, we are not perfect yet. Because our bodies will still sin and our hearts will still be weak. We may even occasionally be overcome by sin, hurt God's heart, and bring God's name into disrepute. This is why we who have the first fruits of the Holy Spirit should be watchful and pray lest we fall into temptation! Let's look at the third point:

The hope led by the Holy Spirit

Since you are the son of the inheritance, you should hold on to hope in eternal life, lest you lose faith due to groaning in pain. First, hope is the grace given by God. Paul said: For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph. 2:8-9) Therefore, we can say that we are saved by grace through hope. Then the proposition that hope is grace arises spontaneously and is thought-provoking. Because hope does not naturally belong to us. We are born without hope.

God's way is justification by faith, but how do we believe it? Not everyone believes it, and those who do believe it are weird, right? God cannot be seen, touched, or heard clearly, so how can one believe in Him? Maybe even you can't explain it clearly! Not only did you believe it, you believed it to the end and were faithful until death. Why? Isn't it just because there is hope in your heart? What is hope? You can't tell clearly, because hope is grace! Since it is grace, it is received by faith!

Secondly, hope for what is unseen. People who feel strange may ask, what are you hoping for? Is there any scientific basis for this? Can you prove it? Paul said at this time, it turns out that what we hope for is beyond our eyes! When our family left Norway for Hong Kong in 1995, we had no idea about the future. Apart from faith, it is hope, nothing more. I didn't know that after Hong Kong, I would go to Europe for missionary work. I didn't know that I would return to Norway in two years. I didn't even know that after Norway I would come to the United States, and it would be more than 20 years since I arrived. In fact, everything I saw later was not my hope. Because what I won't see in the future has become my new hope.

Finally, it turns out that faith is hope. As Paul said: "For who hopes for what he sees?" Once you see it, you know it, and your hope disappears! Paul said: "But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." It means that before what you hope for comes, there will be suffering and even disaster. Without the will to wait patiently, the grace of hope will also be lost. Here, the hope that Paul emphasizes is the salvation of our bodies, that is, the return of the Lord, which can be fully realized. What the Lord cares about is not what we do, but more importantly, our patience waiting in faith! This is the glory God has prepared for His children, the heirs who inherit the spiritual inheritance!

Conclusion

Well, thank the Lord! The glory of God's heirs is the identity, path, and hope led by the Holy Spirit! I wish that God's hand would show His deeds in us, so that we creatures could still have hope, be freed from the corrupting control of sin, and enjoy the glory of the freedom of God's children!

Let us pray.....

(Romans 8:14-25)

8:14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

8:16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

8:17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

8:19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

8:20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it,

in hope

8:21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

8:22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

8:23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

8:24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?

8:25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

29.Evidence of being glorified with God 【Romans 8:26-39】

Introduction

One of the great fears in life is not being able to see, not being able to touch, and having to move forward, right? Paul said earlier: "But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. (Romans 8:25)" Anyone who has experienced it knows that patience, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, is not easy to bear! What to do? Obviously, the glory of God's heirs is the assurance given to us by the Holy Spirit. Let's look at the first point:

The power of the Holy Spirit's presence

The highest expression of being glorified with God is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The essence of the filling of the Holy Spirit is that the Holy Spirit is in control and the Holy Spirit is manifesting His power. First, lead the prayer in the midst of people's groaning. When do people sigh? A moment of weakness, right? Hey, this year's harvest is not good again, my son is unemployed after graduating from college, and the house payment is about to be cut off. If this continues, the whole family will move under a bridge! Hey, the sigh came out! This situation and scene are both familiar and sad at the same time! I guess what he fears most at this time is that someone will come to persuade him and say, you can pray! Maybe not many people can understand that people in this situation may not be able to do anything but sigh! At this time, the Holy Spirit appeared. The Bible says, "but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. (Romans 8:26)"

Secondly, pray according to God's great love. Have you ever wondered why the Bible says that the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words? Because He loves us! The Holy Spirit does not send angels to help us, but comes to help us himself. He does not use any lofty slogans to help us, but uses unspeakable sighs to help us. Why? Because we are also sighing, we are sighing. Therefore, the Holy Spirit chooses to accompany us, even without saying anything, just move a small bench, sit next to us, accompany us to cry, accompany us to be sad, accompany us with His great love! We are so weak that we no longer have the ability to pray. It doesn't matter, He sings the melody of intercession with us through sighs!

Finally, intercede according to God's will. Where is God's will? Where can you see God's will? Of course it's in the Bible, right? Have you ever wondered why the Holy Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the Bible? This is because of the unity of the Trinity and because the Holy Spirit chooses to be humble and self-limiting so that His revelation does not go beyond Scripture. When we read the Bible and seek God's will, we can confidently and boldly receive the will of the Triune God from the Bible. The infallibility of the Bible is the foundation of our faith. The Bible carries the true, accurate, and unerring will of God, so that we can rely on faith and look to the Lord Jesus Christ, our author and finisher, who is interceding for us! Let's look at the second point:

The calmness of the Holy Spirit's help

In addition to God's omnipotence to express God's presence, the Holy Spirit also uses His omniscience to demonstrate God's glory! First, all things work together for good. Since it is all things, nothing is not included in it. The calmness of the Holy Spirit is due to the attributes of God's omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence. Everything is in God's hands, and He has the power to make everything work together for good. Of course, this is God's perspective, and only those who belong to God can know or even understand it. Paul said: "15 The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. (1 Cor. 2:15)" The human perspective is to only see part of oneself, and may even be immersed in one's own gains and losses, causing bitterness and resentment, making it difficult to extricate oneself. The Bible says that we know that all things work together for good, but we may not necessarily know why we know it. It's very simple, it's because God searches people's hearts and knows the thoughts of the Holy Spirit!

Secondly, be the firstborn among many brothers. All things work together for a specific purpose, which is to make Jesus Christ the firstborn among us, which means to be the greatest. This shows us God's intention for us: when a person is born, it is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; after believing in the Lord, the purpose of our life is to imitate the Lord! When we read the Old Testament, it is not difficult to find that the image and deeds of Christ are everywhere. It can be said that the entire Bible is "predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son". It typifies Christ Jesus. For example, Moses, Aaron, David, Joshua, Joseph, Solomon, Isaac, etc., every fragment of their lives, were living out the likeness of Christ. When the time was full, the Lord became flesh and came into the world as a human being.

Finally, being glorified with justification by faith. The word "incarnation" may be so familiar to us that we may overlook its meaning. Paul said: "And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Romans 8:30)" It turns out that our salvation is by grace through faith, leading to justification by faith, so that we who are saved by grace can be glorified with Him! This is the great mystery of the universe, which cannot be penetrated by human wisdom, nor can it be understood by human imagination. Especially for the Jews at that time, this was almost a transgressive and even unbelievable argument. Let's look at the third point:

Peace promised by the Holy Spirit

The peace given by the Holy Spirit is completely different from the peace that people fabricate based on their feelings. The greatest mystery of all is being in Christ. Being in Christ is what we want in life and where our peace is! First, live fully in Christ. What does it mean to live fully in Christ? In essence, it means letting go of the sovereignty of your life, letting Christ take control, and living by faith boldly. Whenever we serve in the name of the Lord, no matter life or death, gain or loss, danger, fame or fortune, etc., we can fearlessly live in Christ, live in faith, live in grace, and live in testimony. When we are walking with the Lord in the boat, if the wind and waves come, the Lord will not wake up, I will not be alarmed, and I will not wake Him up. If you encounter suffering, be grateful! Because this is a good opportunity for the Lord to bestow

grace and an experience of the Lord's presence. If we have any losses on the road of life, the Lord will make up for all our shortcomings in Christ, and at the expense of Himself.

Secondly, life and death are in Christ. Life is nothing more than a process of life and death. So, how should we look at it? The standard by which we look at life and death depends on Christ and how God views and describes the life and death of Christ. Paul said: "Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. (Romans 8:34)" When God describes Christ, He is going from death to life. Christ first died for us and then rose from the dead. We who have believed in the Lord must also consider how to die in our old self, how to die completely, so that we can possibly experience resurrection! If you can understand life and death, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? (Romans 8:35)"

Finally, more than conquerors are in Christ. Victory over life and death cannot be a boast in our mouths! Why? Because it was Christ who won the victory on the cross. If you want to boast, just boast about Christ! Who are human beings that one wants to boast and be proud of? Paul's words reveal the secret of our being more than conquerors. "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Romans 8:37)" It turns out that the secret of victory is to love the Lord! Complaining is useless, and boasting is even more useless! "For I am sure that neither bitterness is useless, death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)"

Conclusion

Well, thank the Lord! The basis for being glorified with God is in Christ. Because of the presence, help, and promises of the Holy Spirit, no one can separate us from the glory and great love of Christ!

Let us pray.....

(Romans 8:26-39)

8:26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

8:27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

8:29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

8:30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

8:32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him

graciously give us all things?

8:33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

8:34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

8:36 As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

8:37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

8:38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,

8:39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

30. Glorious Election 【Romans 9:1-13】

Introduction

Paul said that he spoke the truth in Christ and did not lie. This is a remarkable claim! However, this should also be the moral bottom line for every Christian, to be an honest and sincere person who does not tell lies. Why? It's very simple, because God's choosing of us is a glorious election! Let's look at the first point:

Innate inheritance

It is not difficult for a person to tell the truth once, but what is difficult is that from a certain day on, he no longer tells lies! Paul's declaration is based on the love of Christ, His faithful and reliable love and authority. First, the conscience is moved by the Holy Spirit. Ever since the first human beings sinned, their consciences have been polluted and become unclean. Only when people believe in the Lord, God promises that the Holy Spirit will dwell in them, so that their consciences will be touched and cleansed by the Holy Spirit. The growth of life cannot be achieved by falsehood or boasting, it can only be lived down to earth. Start by speaking the truth, not telling lies, and only speaking the truth in Christ! If a person does not speak the truth in Christ, what he says is nothing more than humanistic empty talk. Because only what we say, think, and do in Christ can become a beautiful testimony that glorifies God.

Second, imitate Christ's self-denial. Only with core values that are in line with God's will can we emulate the self-sacrifice of Christ Jesus. Paul was for the salvation of his fellow Israelites. The Bible says, "that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart." Why? Paul said, "For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. (Romans 9:3)" I remember when I first believed in the Lord, I read this passage of scripture and was inspired by the Holy Spirit to pray for my parents and family members every day until they were all saved and returned to the Lord. Paul said: "For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. (Romans 9:3)" Being willing to separate from Christ is imitating the Lord's self-sacrifice and is the highest form of love for God and for others!

Finally, Christ's faithful care. Have you ever wondered why Christ was born in Bethlehem, grew up in Nazareth, and died in Jerusalem? As Paul said: "They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. (Romans 9:4)" Furthermore, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and other "patriarchs are their ancestors." Even "Christ according to the flesh came from them." In other words, Jesus Christ became flesh as a Jew. This is because God is a covenant-keeping God who shows mercy, and a faithful and reliable God! God made a covenant with Abraham, and it was an everlasting covenant, so God keeps the covenant until the coming of Christ! Let's look at the second point:

The basis for being God' s children

God kept his covenant with Abraham with the goal of keeping it until the second coming of Christ. When Christ comes, the new covenant of Christ replaces and explains the covenant between God and His children, which is the basis for becoming God' s children. First, who are the Israelites? After the Israelis regained their independence in 1948, they also faced this problem: Who are the Israelis? Based on the twelve tribes? It' s difficult. It' s already difficult to check. What to do? Based on the mother' s Jewish ancestry? Yes, but it will be difficult to continue because the number of people is decreasing. At the same time, the number of returning Israelis increases year by year, and the task of screening becomes increasingly difficult. Finally, the Israeli government simply announced that as long as you identify with the Jewish faith and are willing to live the traditional Israeli life, pay taxes, perform military service and other basic obligations, you can apply to become an Israeli. Of course, the Israeli Ministry of the Interior still has a lot of complex verification work to do, and the whole process is not easy.

Secondly, the children of promise. Here Paul declares: "For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, (Romans 9:6)" This was a bold declaration, and it was difficult for the Jews at that time to accept. What Paul is dealing with here is the relationship between Christ and the Jews. The Jews did not know how to deal with the identity of Jesus Christ. They wanted to deny Jesus' origin; however, "Christ also came from them!" They wanted to treat Christ as an ordinary person. But the disciples declared that Jesus Christ "is God over all, blessed forever!" This created a contradiction: Who are the Israelites? Paul did not directly declare that only those who believe in Jesus are true Israelites, but rather he said, "Through Isaac will your descendants be named."

Finally, He is above all. The point Paul makes here is that even in the history of the Old Testament, among Abraham' s descendants, only Isaac, born to Sarah by God' s promise, can be called a descendant of Abraham. Who has such great power to make a promise and then fulfill it in the future? This brings out the main point that Paul wants to make: Only Jesus Christ "is God over all, blessed forever!" Paul' s logic and rhetoric are quite advanced. He speaks to the point and leaves the conclusion of the reasoning for the readers to draw their own conclusions. The words that were about to come out are already on the tip of his tongue: Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God. As John said: "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, (John 1:12)" Let' s look at third point:

Demonstrating God' s Authority

Have you ever thought about the meaning of our salvation being by grace? Grace is free, and we are all familiar with it. However, grace is also irresistible, and we may not have thought about it. This is the glory of God! First, Omniscient God. God chose us in Christ in the beginning, before He created the world. Did any of us know about it at that time? God chose us without our consent! We don' t know He will come and choose us, but He knows! God said to Abraham: "About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son. (Romans 9:9)" What would you do if a centenarian heard this news? If it were me, I would wonder in my heart: How do You know everything? The point is, who is Jehovah God? He is the Lord who created

the heavens and the earth! Not only did God know that Sarah would give birth to a son, Isaac, the next year, He also knew that Isaac's wife Rebekah would give birth! Dear brothers and sisters, He also knows your and my steps for tomorrow!

Second, Almighty God. No matter how great a person's abilities are, they are knowable to people. God's power is often beyond human's ability to understand. God told Abraham that Sarah would give birth to a son by this time next year. Don't forget, at this moment, they haven't even slept together as husband and wife. God's power is so great and awe-inspiring! The authors of the Bible were writing the Bible, and they did not know that they were writing the Bible. God's power is gentle, transcendent, and transcends human cognition, perception, and wisdom. Before Rebekah gave birth, God knew that she would give birth to twins, and He told Rebekah the destinies of both children, saying: "The older will serve the younger."

Finally, All-Loving God. Frankly speaking, it seems that there is nothing to boast about in Jacob's life. Jacob was born holding onto his brother Esau's feet. When he grew up, he competed with his brother for the title of the birthright. He even used a bowl of red bean soup to cheat Esau of his title of the birthright, and used a bowl of game to cheat his father's blessing. God used his uncle Laban to discipline him for twenty years. It was not until he wrestled with God at the ford of the Jabbok that he discovered that God had always been with him, but he had not known it! What makes him precious is that once he knows it is God, he holds on to it and asks for God's blessing! Jacob lived out God's love throughout his life! The Bible even endorses him: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." Although Esau received all the property, Jacob received God's love!

Conclusion

Well, thank the Lord! Glorious election is the innate inheritance of our spiritual life. He loved us first while we were still sinners. God has proved through the incarnation of Christ and the Bible that whoever believes in Him is a child of God! This is not even from ourselves, but from God's grace and God's authority!

Let us pray.....

(Romans 9:1-13)

9:1 I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—

9:2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

9:3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

9:4 They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.

9:5 To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

9:6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel,

9:7 and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.”

9:8 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

9:9 For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.”

9:10 And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac,

9:11 though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—

9:12 she was told, “The older will serve the younger.”

9:13 As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

31.The Glory of Mercy 【Romans 9:14-33】

Introduction

Last week we talked about the glorious election and realized that we humans have no ability to resist God's glory, God's power, and God's election. Some people say that I seem to emphasize Calvin and ignore Arminius, or that both are unbalanced? In fact, the Bible speaks for itself, and today's message emphasizes the essence of God's glory, which is God's mercy. Let's look at the first point:

The sovereignty of God's mercy

What is mercy? The most direct meaning in the New Testament is to show compassion to people, especially to the weak and helpless. The Old Testament has three meanings: one is loyalty, two is grace, and three is maternal love. What is Paul trying to say here? First, mercy is God's sovereignty. In the realm of humanism, mercy is usually relegated to the moral high ground, looking down on others and issuing proud judgments. Man's arrogance even challenges God's justice and sovereignty, leading Paul to ask: "Is there injustice on God's part?" The subtext of saying that God is unfair is that you are more fair than God! Do you listen to sermons and accept the teachings of the truth in church, or do you put forward some opinions that differ from the truth? Moreover, aren't those who teach the truth also human beings? If you speak it out loud, you are challenging God's authority; if you don't speak it out loud, it is the judgment of your heart. As if God's mercy is a refuge where people can do whatever they want, or a breeding ground for ungodliness and rebellion?

Secondly, mercy is God's will. "God will have mercy on whom He has mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He has compassion." When people read this sentence, they seem to accept it all as it is, as if God's mercy is His own property that He can squander at will, and it has become the boasting of a dude. The core value of God's mercy is to express God's forgiveness of sinners and not remembering their sins. However, God's mercy is based on Christ's salvation and interacts with the faith God has given to man! The important thing is that mercy is God's will, what does it have to do with you? All people can do is be grateful, nothing else! Those who understand this principle are blessed, and it is also the beginning of wisdom. God is determined to show you mercy, and no one can stop him!

Finally, mercy is an act of God. Why do some people still get angry and lose their temper in the face of God's mercy? Why were the Israelites unwilling to accept God's salvation when it came to the Gentiles? God wants to bless your neighbor, so why are you jealous? If you don't understand God's will, why should you take out your emotions on irrelevant people? Even Paul couldn't help but ask: "But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, 'Why have you made me like this?' (Romans 9:20)" It is human duty to accept God's actions, thank Him for creating you, and be thankful for the spouse He has given you. Yes,

it is duty! Man is but a vessel, yet he always tries to seize the position of the potter! Let's look at the second point:

God's mercy comes to the Gentiles

God's mercy always accompanied the Israelites until they rejected the gospel to the end, and then God preached the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul's time was the advent of this great era. First, this is God's provision. The Jews may not have known it, but the coming of the gospel to the Gentiles was God's provision in his eternal plan. God allowed Jonah to go to Nineveh to preach, even at the risk of being swallowed by a fish. The Moabites and Ammonites were never allowed to enter the assembly of the Lord, but God chose Ruth to marry Boaz and even become the ancestor of David and the physical ancestor of Jesus. Paul himself was an Israelite among Israelites and a Pharisee, but under God's guidance he became an apostle who preached the gospel to the Gentiles. In God's eyes, the selection of the Gentiles is God "in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory. (Romans 9:23)" As the Bible says: We are God's work!

Second, this is God's calling. Faced with God's work, the Israelites still did not understand! Those who do not understand are easily stubborn in their hearts, rebellious in their natures, and not easily obedient in their lives. Since they were God's chosen vessel, the Israelites did not understand why "even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? (Romans 9:24)" Even though the ancestor of the Israelites was Abraham, they were once a nomadic people and did not have a glamorous background. God was going to choose them, so the Egyptians, Philistines, Amalekites, etc. at that time had nothing to be jealous of, right? Now that God's selection has come to the Gentiles, and you Jews refuse to believe the gospel, what can you say?

Finally, these are the people of God. The Jews may feel unwilling and say that "they are not God's people!" Paul quoted the prophet Hosea 2:23, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'" God's word is the foundation of heaven and earth. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. Calling the Gentiles sons of God is a new thing that God wants to do. God has not done it in the past, but He wants to do it today! God asked through Paul: "And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'" Paul said to the Jews: Just because you don't know something doesn't mean God hasn't done it or will not do it! Let's look at the third point:

Mercy depends on faith

In fact, all people, including the Israelites, must be saved by grace and through faith! It was just the greed and pride in the hearts of the Israelites that led them to mistakenly believe that the Kingdom of Heaven belonged to them alone! First, it is the remnant who are saved. The so-called remnant refers to the remaining number, which means the minority. Elijah felt lonely and thought he was the only one left. But God told him that he was wrong. There were still 7,000 people who had not bowed their knee to Baal! Today, too, few Israelites believe in Jesus, as the prophet Isaiah said: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea,

only a remnant of them will be saved, (Romans 9:27)” It is clearly pointed out here that not all the Israelites were saved, but only a few. The same is true in the church today. Not all those who come to church are saved, but only the “remnant” who truly believe. We must ask ourselves, am I among those who truly believe? Are you there?

Secondly, righteousness by faith. At this point, some of us might panic, right? Don't follow the Lord your whole life and yet end up not being saved. Isn't that a huge joke? In Sodom and Gomorrah, except for Lot and his family, all the others fell into the judgment of the sea of fire. Even though she was rescued by the angels, Lot's wife, because of her lack of faith and her turning back, immediately turned into a lifeless pillar of salt. The others all escaped and did not turn into pillars of salt. However, Lot was not vigilant and was addicted to drinking all day long, and a breach appeared in his life. The two daughters' core values are unclear, and everything is based on realism, selfishness, and utilitarianism. Our mother is gone and our father cannot have children on his own, so let us two daughters take action! Without God's righteousness, our faith will be lost!

Finally, trust in God and you will be saved. After returning, the Israelites were very confused. They thought that since God had given us the law, we should be justified by the law! Anyway, the law was given by God only to us Israelites, right? Paul said, “How could they know? “but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. (Romans 9:31)” They thought they could be justified by the law, but they didn't realize that the law had become a stumbling block on the Israelites' path of faith! God even acknowledged through Paul that this stumbling block was placed by God himself. Why? There is only one purpose, which is to make “whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

Conclusion

Well, thank the Lord! It turns out that God's glory is His mercy. God will have mercy on whomever He wants to have mercy on! We have received God's mercy today so that He may be glorified. God's will is accompanied by His actions, which are His sacrifice of His life on the cross. God prepares the Gentiles to be saved and called to become sons of God, the new Israelites. Look! What kind of people have we become today? We have become the saved remnant, for nothing else but a simple and pure faith!

Let us pray.....

(Romans 9:14-33)

9:14 What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!

9:15 For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”

9:16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion,[b] but on God, who has mercy.

9:17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”

9:18 So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

9:19 You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?”

9:20 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder,

“Why have you made me like this?”

9:21 Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?

9:22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,

9:23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—

9:24 even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

9:25 As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’ ”

9:26 “And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’ ”

9:27 And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the sons of Israel[c] be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved,

9:28 for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.”

9:29 And as Isaiah predicted, “If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.”

9:30 What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith;

9:31 but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness[d] did not succeed in reaching that law.

9:32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone,

9:33 as it is written, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

32. God wants the Israelites to be saved 【Romans 10:1-3; 16-21】

Introduction

Mercy is God's calling to the Israelites, and glory is the Israelites' experience and understanding of God. The revelation of the Holy Spirit finally made Paul understand that God's will was for the Israelites to be saved. This is the origin of the title of today's sermon. Let's look at the first point:

Want to establish one's own righteousness

God's intention to save the world is consistent, continuous, and ongoing, but man's disobedience has always been an obstacle to God's salvation. First of all, a hot-headed mind lacks true knowledge. When the first man sinned, he wanted to establish his own righteousness. Satan's words made the first ancestors unable to sit still. Why does the human brain get hot so easily? It's nothing else but that they don't truly know God, and of course they don't know the truth of the Bible. God said, you must not eat from this tree, for on the day you eat from it you will surely die! This is the true insight, this is the only truth! After God finished speaking, He waited for man's attitude. Are you obedient, or doubtful, or even challenging? You will also bring up a lot of their own reasons and feelings, as if you want to walk out onto the street to have a Cultural Revolution-style debate to see if you are right or if what God says is the truth?

Secondly, Self-righteousness and disobedience. Paul still had some national sentiment, and he even wanted to prove to his compatriots that they had a zeal for God. But, so what? What is enthusiasm? At best, it is just an emotional reaction of human flesh. Does it have anything to do with the true word of God? Is it related to God's salvation? Because they do not know the righteousness of God, they try every possible means to find a foothold for their own righteousness, and refusing to obey the righteousness of God becomes a highly likely option. The Bible says that the heart is more deceitful than all else; who can understand it? The Bible says: "The spiritual person judges all things," which means that the church sees all things! This is also a great mystery! This is God's ordination: "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him,"

Lastly, enthusiasm is just ignorance. Enthusiasm is often a kind of attractive deception, right? It seems that once a person is enthusiastic, everything else can be ignored. As long as he serves the church, offers the tithe, and loves his brothers and sisters and pastors, he can then establish his own righteousness. The so-called establishment of one's own righteousness is based on the unwillingness to be quiet, unwilling to abide by the rules of the church, and even to despise the rules of the church. Although they clearly have limited knowledge of God, they often act as if they actually know a lot. He spoke in a loud tone and muttered to himself, as if he was preaching some profound truth, requiring everyone to understand and not to misunderstand. It seemed that no one except him had the ability to understand the problem literally. This was the

case with the Israelites back then. How ignorant must one have to be to live in such an ignorant state! Let's look at the second point:

Who has believed what he has heard from us?

How could God feel when faced with such an ignorant and rebellious group of Israelites? First, who knows God's mood? To understand God's mood, we can observe it from the books of the prophets. When Paul read Isaiah and understood God's mood, he was somewhat disappointed. Do you agree? This, of course, was the sentiment of the prophet Isaiah. But, can't God and humans empathize with each other? One can imagine the scenario that Isaiah went out to preach the gospel, but no one believed it! What to do? Just talk to God! He said: "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" Maybe God would comfort Isaiah and say, yes, I understand your feelings, because this is how I feel too! When we have the heart of Jesus Christ, it is not difficult to understand God's mood! He is a merciful Lord, full of love. He does not remain angry for long and always gives people the opportunity to confess and repent. But, few people are willing to seize this opportunity!

Secondly, it all comes down to the Bible. Maybe we are too busy daily and don't remember to think, reflect, or be grateful! Over time, the standard of truth was gradually lost. It's like the one always wants to make a point, but he can never explain it clearly. Therefore, it is easy to become discouraged! And then wonder: Why don't you understand me? Don't you see or understand that I love the Lord, the church, and my brothers and sisters? Doesn't my faith come from hearing the Word? Right! Yes, we listen to the pastor's sermons in church every week, but who would understand what he heard as Christ speaking to him? In other words, if we lack reverence for the sermons we hear, thinking that it's just someone saying something on the stage. Then, what is the significance of listening to sermons for you?

Lastly, those who have not heard must hear. This is also the will of Jesus Christ, that those who have no intention to obey and listen to the word will not be able to hear. Indeed they heard it, but did not understand it! These people live in the church and walk in God's house, but they pass by God, have a chance encounter with Him, and miss good opportunities! Of course, God will continue to spread the gospel according to His irrevocable grace. The Bible says: "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." Just like our International Online United Church, we spread the gospel to the ends of the earth every week! The brothers and sisters in our church are blessed because we can spread the gospel every week according to the mission circle in Acts 1:8! Let's look at the third point:

All day long I have held out my hands

Perhaps we don't know that in addition to having moods, God can also have emotions. The Bible records that Jesus Christ even had His wrath triggered in the temple! He overturned the money-changing table, and the coins were scattered all over the floor. First, it triggers God's wrath. If we do not understand God's wrath, it is probably because our knowledge of God is limited or incomplete! Paul said: "But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry. (Romans 10:19)" The basic meaning of this verse is that God wants to use the Gentiles to provoke

the emotions of the Jews, including anger. Why? For she calls out at the gates, even with a loud voice, speaking beautiful words, speaking of things that are upright and righteous. But “who has believed what he has heard from us?” At this moment, God wants to empathize with people and feel the wrath of God’s righteous anger together!

Secondly, I appeared to them. Unfortunately, God’s wrath cannot awaken those ignorant people! The ignorant are still ignorant, the foolish are still foolish, and they continue to go their own way like sheep going astray! God cried out through the prophet Isaiah: “I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.” Is it clear? God’s will is for us to seek Him, not to sulk, act with attitude, play tricks, or play different psychological roles to deceive oneself and others! The result is that we cannot see God’s actions, hear God’s voice, and of course cannot understand God’s will.

Finally, holding out hands all day long. In fact, God has been calling you, looking for you, tolerating you, and continuing to love you, did you know? This is what Paul wanted to say to the Israelites: “But of Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people. (Romans 10:21)” Are we not rebellious and contrary? We are that “disobedient and contrary people,” right? What should we do if we hear God’s words but know that we cannot put them into practice? Can’t you humbly express your limitations? Tell God that we have no power, so we need God’s truth and grace, we also need the church’s guidance, and we cannot do without quiet prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving in the Lord. The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds in Christ!

Conclusion

God revealed His will in His glory, which was for the Israelites to be saved! However, salvation is by grace through faith, so we must put aside our self-righteousness! Have the heart of Jesus Christ, empathize with God, know God more and more, understand God, comprehend God, and follow God!

Let’s pray together.....

(Romans 10:1-3; 16-21)

10:1 Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

10:2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

10:3 For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.

10:16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?”

10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

10:18 But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for “Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.”

10:19 But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, “I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry.”

10:20 Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, “I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.”

10:21 But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

33.Christ is the end of the law 【Romans 10:4-15】

Introduction

Today's sermon scriptures are sandwiched between last week's verses. If we understand them together, it is not difficult to find that God wants the Israelites to be saved so that they can understand that the law they have been holding on to for thousands of years can be summed up in Christ Jesus! After reading Romans Chapter 10, one can sincerely admire God's wisdom and the power of Paul's rhetoric and logic, which are worth learning from. Let's look at the first point:

For righteousness to everyone who believes

So that everyone who believes in Him may receive righteousness, this refers to justification by faith, and the core of justification by faith is actually the summary of the law, that is, Christ. Why? First, the end of the law. End means goal, generally refers to the end point, and expresses the end or endpoint of something. As Jesus said, do not think that I have come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. Because the goal of the law is Christ, Christ fulfills the law, and the function of the law also ends with Christ. In other words, before Christ came, the law was a teacher to lead people to Christ. After Christ came, the role of the law in front of Christ gradually disappeared and no longer played a role related to salvation. From then on, people only need to live under grace and no longer need to live under the law.

Secondly, is it the righteousness of the law? There is no doubt that righteousness which is of the law springs from the righteousness of God. The two stone tablets that Moses took down from Mount Sinai are the Ten Commandments, the core of law. However, the purpose of God's issuing of laws was not for people to obey. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. (James 2:10) That is to say, throughout history, no one has ever been justified by the works of the law (Gal. 2:16). I know that many people cannot accept this, thinking, didn't God give the law so that people would obey it? Yes, and no! Yes, it is to give people opportunities, to let them experience and realize that people are powerless, helpless, desperate, and hopeless by observing the laws!

Finally, the righteousness of faith. The scripture becomes easy to understand at this point. For it is by grace we have been saved through faith, not by works, lest anyone should boast. Therefore, Paul is using it here to contrast with the righteousness of the law. The purpose is to explain that in the world, no one can be saved except by the name of Jesus Christ. Here Paul equates salvation with righteousness, thereby emphasizing that God's righteousness is the standard that God manifests in any generation. The so-called righteousness of God is what is considered right in God's eyes. This is why God's children should pursue God's righteousness and satisfy God's righteousness at all times. The transition from the righteousness of the law to the righteousness of faith is the basic step in the gradual manifestation of God's revelation of His

salvation for the world. Let's look at the second point:

For with the heart one believes and is justified

Before Paul enters the "salvation equation," verses 6 to 8 specifically quote Deuteronomy 30:11-14 to illustrate the leap from the law to faith. First, from the incarnation to the resurrection from the dead. Moses talked about the law, but Paul cited it extensively as the incarnation of Christ. What Paul quoted was not even the original Hebrew text, but the Septuagint, and he also applied the principles in the content. Because from the incarnation to the resurrection from the dead is the core of faith in Jesus Christ. The incarnation of God was His preparation, and His resurrection from the dead was the manifestation of the power of the gospel. If Christ has not been raised from the dead, our faith is in vain. Likewise, if we do not believe that Christ has come in the flesh, our faith is in vain. If we hold fast to our faith to the end, the eternal life prepared by Christ will be given to us.

Secondly, move from confessing with your mouth to believing in your heart. Now that we know the truth of the gospel, how do we obtain it? Here is Paul, through whom God has given us the "salvation formula": "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)" Confessing with our mouth that He is Lord means offering worship and prayer to Him, confessing our transgressions to Him, and asking Him to forgive our sins. Believing in your heart that God raised Him from the dead is trusting in Him! Because He is the only Lord who has conquered the power of death, and He is the only One who has passed through death and shattered death's bondage and control over man. Believing in your heart is the foundation for an eternal relationship, now and forever.

Finally, from the Hebrews to the Greek. For the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. This is an extension and application of Paul's theology, which shows that God's gospel will not stop at the Jews alone, but will extend to people of all nations throughout the world. Two thousand years ago, the world that Paul faced seemed to consist of only Romans and Greeks. The expansion of the mission of preaching the gospel is the manifestation of life from the inside out. Paul quoted Joel 2:32, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." This also reveals the chaos of the last days, where people seem to no longer want to mention the name of the Lord and even feel ashamed! Let's look at the third point:

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved

The day I wrote the sermon happened to be May 1st. President Trump led the nation in prayer at the White House, vowing to protect religious freedom and safeguard America's faith. Many pastors gathered at the White House to pray for America and for President Trump. First, call on the name of the Lord and you will be saved. At the prayer meeting in the White House, pastors and bishops came to the stage one after another and prayed one by one. It seemed that at that moment, God showed me a beautiful picture: there were many people calling on the name of the Lord in the White House! I know that God is going to do something in it. He is going to do something great, something wonderful, something new! Not long ago, on the

campuses of some American universities, people were praying, worshiping, and praising. They were running around telling others that the Lord Jesus was going to do miraculous works and that all of God's children were going to call on the name of the Lord together! We must never underestimate the power of calling on the name of the Lord! In any generation, as long as someone calls on the name of the Lord, it is definitely not out of human selfishness. Humans don't have this ability! No!

Secondly, the gospel mission cannot be slackened. No matter what happens or goes through in this world, never stop preaching the gospel! Don't underestimate the power of your first gospel tract to someone, and don't be ashamed or afraid to tell someone that Jesus is your Lord. Paul said: "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? (Romans 10:14)" In fact, don't you and I believe in the Lord because someone preached the gospel to us? It is even possible that the person who preached the gospel to us back then just said something to us casually, or "accidentally" joined the church's short-term mission team and preached to us once during the short-term mission period. Who would have thought that we would believe it?

Finally, How beautiful are the feet of those who are sent to preach the good news. Paul quoted Isaiah 52:7 to encourage us who are inherently weak. Just as Isaiah encouraged the captives, God will set them free. Paul said: "And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news! (Romans 10:15)" May I ask who was sent? Pastor, minister? A church co-worker? Or every child of God? If we keep our eyes fixed on God, we will surely see our own mission! Preach the Word whether in season or out of season. Whether it is timely or not, we must save some people! Woe to us if we do not preach, for the mission has been given to us! Of course, if we preach the gospel, we will be rewarded! You have to be willing and happy, without any compulsion!

Conclusion

Well, thank the Lord! It turns out that the end of the law is Christ, and Christ is the answer to our lives! Whoever has the Son of God has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life!

Let us pray.....

(Romans 10:4-15)

10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

10:5 For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.

10:6 But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down)

10:7 "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

10:8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);

10:9 because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that

God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

10:10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

10:11 For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame."

10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.

10:13 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

10:14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

10:15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

34. Who believe what we preach 【Romans 10:16-21】

Introduction

Thank the Lord! Minister Flora told me: Someone noticed that I seemed to have preached about this topic at the end of April? Is that so? I asked who it was? She said: It's Brother Cao. I said, thank the Lord! At least one person noticed! In fact, they are two different angles, broad and narrow, or macro and micro. Today's message is that Paul uses a macro perspective to encourage us to cherish God's salvation and experience God's great love. Let's look at the first point:

Deep expectations

From a micro perspective, this is a question: "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" However, once we look at it from a macro perspective, it becomes God's loving kindness toward mankind. First, the prophet has declared it. If we focus on our emotions, question marks will bring us into a low point. Thinking that, why don't you believe it? When we went out to preach the gospel, handing out flyers outside a café on the Left Bank in Paris or on the beach in Nice, it's difficult for people to even accept a gospel flyer, let alone believe in it, right? Even Isaiah experienced this kind of disappointment! He said: "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" However, from God's perspective, the gospel has always been preached! Whether you believe it or not, God's word is passed down from generation to generation in this way! Among them, the prophets have already declared! Behind the prophet stands the affectionate Heavenly Father, waiting for the prodigal son to return home!

Secondly, the Bible has already recorded it. How do we know that what the prophet said is true? What's more, there were many false prophets at that time! Many people say, that depends on whether it comes true, right? That's right, but not entirely right! For what some the false prophets say will also come true. Don't forget that the Egyptian magicians who battled Moses were also powerful! Our standard for deciding things is the Bible, the Word of God! As long as there is God's Word, everything becomes possible! Mountains can be moved and hills can be relocated, but the Lord's love will never leave you! In human history, there is an event that can be called standing firm because it was recorded in the Bible.

Finally, the ears have heard. Proclaimed by the prophets and recorded in the Bible, this is a great spiritual foundation! I would like to ask you, what is God's purpose? As the poet said: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. (Psalm 19:1)" The purpose of everything God does is for man to receive peace, be redeemed, hear, see, awaken, gain wisdom, joy, be enlightened, be warned, be forgiven, avoid being arrogant, and be accepted! Furthermore, Paul said: "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." This is the same as the founding vision of our church, which is: But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in

Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Let’s look at the second point:

The gospel to the ends of the earth

Spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth is the ultimate mission God has given to His children. That is to say, the whole purpose of our life is here. This goes without saying and has already been said. First, spread it all over the world. God preached the gospel through the incarnation of Christ Jesus. And He has a clear order, first the Jews and then the Greeks. Peter and Paul in the early church all wanted to imitate! Wherever they went, they went first to the synagogue. Starting from the Church of Antioch, it passed through Tyre, Sidon, Syria, Philippi, Asia, Macedonia, and returned after arriving in Achaia. The whole journey was basically forced by the Jews. Paul also seemed to understand that the scope of the gospel is to spread it throughout the world and to let their voices spread throughout the world!

Second, spread it to the ends of the earth. To reach the ends of the earth is not just about geographical expansion, but about doing everything we can to bring the gospel to the farthest places possible. That is, to preach the word in season and out of season; to save some souls in season and out of season. The church, in particular, must not create a goal that is unreachable, or even never visit the ends of the earth until death. The so-called ends of the earth in the gospel, for a church, refers to the church’s daily worship and preaching with all its heart and soul. Every church must examine its own faithfulness and dedication before God. One day, when the Lord comes again, the church will give an account to the Lord.

Finally, achieve perfection. When it comes to excellence, God is our role model. He created all things. Each day there is evening and morning, and He said that everything He created was very good, which means perfect. In order to get His chosen people, the Israelites, to turn back to Him, God said: “I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry.” This was the starting point for Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. From then on, preaching the gospel to all peoples, nations, and tribes became the church’s natural mission. Although it is our duty and responsibility to preach the gospel to our own people. However, preaching the gospel to people who are not of our own ethnic group is our mission that cannot be shirked! Let’s look at the third point:

Calling God’s People

After talking about expectations, we talked about the ends of the earth. Paul next talked about the concerns in God’s heart, which are that God wants to make a covenant with man, God wants to have fellowship with man, God wants to establish a relationship with man, and God wants to restore His people. First, God wants to take the initiative to seek people. If it were not for the incarnation of God, if it were not for Jesus Christ taking the initiative to come among us, reveal himself to us, die for us, and resurrect for us, we would still be living in a state of confusion and ignorance, sinking in despair! The first man sinned and was afraid, so he hid himself. What should he do? Just as he was feeling uneasy, Jehovah God came to the Garden of Eden and walked in the garden. So, he searched for the ancestor while walking and asked the first question God asked to man in history: Where are you? While Paul was on a journey of

persecuting Christ in his self-righteousness, God found him in great light and said, "Saul, Saul, It is hard for you to kick against the goads." "

Secondly, God wants to reach out and call people. Moses killed people out of humanism and nationalism, fled to the wilderness, and married Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, the priest of Midian. Maybe Moses was thinking that this might be the end of his life! It's not lying flat, but it's better than lying flat! Forty years passed in a flash. The sun rose and set. Every day he was an ordinary person, with an ordinary mind, doing ordinary things. Who would have thought that God would meet Moses on an ordinary day on Mount Horeb, the mountain of God. It was not an encounter, but God reaching out to him and greeting him: "Moses, Moses!" This greeting determined the destiny of Moses' life! This year, Moses was eighty years old! From then on, the third forty years of Moses' mission journey began!

Finally, God will discipline rebellious people. God not only seeks people, but He also works His miraculous hands. Jonah disobeyed and fled to Tarshish, which is Spain. God reached out and saved him. First, he was moved to repent and pray to God in the belly of the fish! God commanded the big fish to spit Jonah out onto the shore, and he went into Nineveh to preach. As he walked through the city, he only said: In forty days, Nineveh will be destroyed! He could not have imagined that such a bad missionary could cause the entire city, from the king to the common people, to wear mourning and repent to God with just one sentence! What He could not have imagined was that God actually regretted his decision and did not destroy the city and the people! Jonah lay down outside the city in anger, and God held out his hands to comfort him: "And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle? (Jonah 4:11)"

Conclusion

Who believes what we preach? Is it a question mark? Then please move closer to the period! Because God has deep expectations for you, and God's will for you and me is for the gospel we preach to reach the ends of the earth! No matter where we are physically or spiritually, He is the God of Immanuel!

Let us pray.....

(Romans 10:16-21)

10:16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?"

10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

10:18 But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."

10:19 But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry."

10:20 Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me."

10:21 But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary

people.”

35.A Remnant 【Romans 11:1-6】

Introduction

The concept of remnant is an important term in biblical revelation, appearing 540 times in the Old Testament alone. The original meaning of this word can refer to people or things. Such as the leftover food at home, or the people who survived the disaster. For example, Noah and his family of eight were the remnants after the flood. The seven thousand were those who did not forsake God during the apostasy of Ahab and Jezebel. Let's look at the first point:

The grace that never gives up

Paul's mood at this moment was complicated. He felt sad for the Israelites who refused to accept the gospel. Paul expressed his disappointment through the prophet Isaiah when he said: "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people." This is also the voice of God, used to express God's expectations of mankind. First, the God who never gives up. Paul used a question, but what he actually meant was an exclamation point! This means that there is absolutely no reason for God to abandon His people! He is the God who was and is and is to come! And with Him there is no shadow of turning. As the prophet Isaiah said: "For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you. (Isaiah 54:10)" This is the recognition in the hearts of God's chosen people throughout the ages, from Isaiah to Paul, that the Lord's love never changes! What changes are people, but what remains unchanged is God, the Creator of heaven and earth! Having such a recognition of God is the foundation of our faith!

Secondly, I am the witness. Maybe after Paul finishes speaking, someone will challenge him and ask, why? How do you know? So Paul has something to say: "For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin." There is an old legend among the Israelites that the Benjamites were extremely bad. The story recorded in Judges 20 is thrilling and shocking. A Levite was passing through Gibeah of Benjamin with his concubine, and was gang-raped by Benjaminite bandits. The Israelites retaliated and almost wiped out the Benjaminites. However, even though the tribe of Benjamin was in such a tattered state, God ultimately preserved it. Paul is still alive and is that witness!

Lastly, the people whom God foreknew. God is omniscient, Paul emphasized, "The people God foreknew." It is to show that God is faithful. Just as the Israelites recognized God: Jehovah is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God said to Abraham: "And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. (Gen. 12:2)" This covenant was unconditional. Abraham did not need to do anything. God took the initiative to keep his covenant with Abraham. Abraham's descendants are God's "people whom He foreknew"! This covenant also extends through Jesus Christ to all

who believe in Him. It turns out that because of our belief in Jesus Christ, you and I have become “the people whom He foreknew.” Let’s look at the second point:

The testimony of the prophet Elijah

The seven thousand people in the Bible have become a meme, used to illustrate the inevitable stages of growth in faith. First, Elijah’s weakness. Elijah had weaknesses, and it felt a little strange! He went to meet King Ahab, the word of the Lord accompanied him. He also carried with him the promise that God would send rain on the earth, which showed his courage and faith. Obadiah, the steward of King Ahab, was Elijah’s spy, so he took him to see King Ahab. So, on King Ahab’s stage, Elijah single-handedly defeated the four hundred and fifty prophets who served Baal. Such a great prophet was so frightened that he ran away because of a threat from King Ahab’s queen Jezebel! He came to Beersheba in Judah, lay down under a broom tree, acted like a spoiled child, and asked God to kill him. Why? He said, “For I am no better than my fathers.”

Second, Elijah’s transformation. A person lying down has subconsciously made a decision that he does not want to wake up again. Not only that, no one was able to wake him up. Elijah did the same thing. He lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep with a clear conscience. Who can wake up a person who doesn’t want to wake up? At this time, the Bible says: “An angel touched him and said, ‘Get up and eat.’” He was indeed hungry, so he ate and drank. Then, continue to lie flat. The Bible says: “And the angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, ‘Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you. (1 Kings 19:7)” The angel pointed out the direction, which was Mount Horeb, and that they would have to travel for forty days and nights. This new direction became a turning point in Elijah’s life!

Finally, Elijah was healed. Elijah was healed because “the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah? (1 Kings 19:9)” At this time, God moved a small stool and sat next to Elijah to accompany him and talk with him, giving him the opportunity to pour out his heart to God. He said, “I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away. (1 Kings 19:10)” What really healed Elijah was that he was called by God and received a new mission. Let’s look at the third point:

Keep for myself seven thousand men

The Bible never says who these seven thousand people are. Is it important? The key point is that these words were spoken by God. Since He has spoken, I will believe and follow Him! First, Elijah’s new mission. When Elijah was still trapped in his own bitterness, he felt lonely and even thought, “I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me!” God was not affected by his short-sightedness, but gave him a new mission: “And the Lord said to him, ‘Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. (1 Kings 19:15-16)” The Kingdom of God even required Elijah to anoint the successor of the king of Aram, the enemy

country, not to mention that its own country wanted to anoint Nimshi' s grandson Jehu as the king of Israel. Even Elijah' s own successor, Elisha, was prepared for Elijah.

Second, God' s new declaration. The God we believe in is the great ruler who controls everything in the universe. All authority in the world comes from Him, including that of our own country, friendly countries, and enemy countries. For there is no authority except from the LORD! However, what God cares more about is His people, the Israelites, and all those who believe in Him, those who are loved by Him more are those who are faithful to Him! God says, "Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him. (1 Kings 19:18)" Just like today, all over the world, God has left for Him those who have not worshipped idols, have not compromised with the Antichrist regime, and have not colluded with or had secret dealings with the Three-Self Church, false churches, and false Christs.

Finally, the new remnant in grace. Paul said: "So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. (Romans 11:5)" In the words of Jesus, the road to heaven is narrow and few go there. However, going to heaven requires hard work; you cannot get there by just lying down. However, from the world' s perspective, most people do not go to heaven, but prefer to go to hell. In this way, judging from the overall number of people, the few who are justified by faith, believe in Jesus, and have eternal life have become a definite remnant! Yet it is by grace we have been saved through faith, not by works, lest anyone should boast! For, "and if it is of grace, it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace."

Conclusion

Thank the Lord! It turns out that we are all the remnant ordained by the Lord, the seven thousand people left behind by the Lord for His own sake! Seven means perfection, and thousand is a multiple of one hundred, which means finite number. The number of people in the kingdom of heaven is not small, but not too many; they are the remnant chosen in the Lord' s heart in Christ. For the sake of this remnant, the Lord will never give up on us! Elijah testified to this, testifying that we are the seven thousand in the Lord' s heart!
Let us pray.....

(Romans 11:1-6)

11:1 I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham,[a] a member of the tribe of Benjamin.

11:2 God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?

11:3 "Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life."

11:4 But what is God' s reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

11:5 So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.

11:6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

36. Mutual grace 【Romans 11:7-15】

Introduction

After talking about the “remnant,” Paul wanted to clarify the relationship between the Israelites and the Gentiles. Of course, Paul’s purpose was still to enable the Israelites to wake up and quickly receive the gospel. Let’s look at the first point:

The confusion of hardening

When the gospel came to the Israelites, their attitude was one of rejection. They even went so far as to crucify Jesus Christ, creating the greatest tragedy in history. First, the confusion of hardening. The Greek word for hardening in the scripture is πορος (poros), which means hard-heartedness and the verb is “to make insensitive.” In fact, it is not difficult to understand the meaning of this word. Just ask ourselves, what is our attitude towards the gospel today? With feeling or indifferent? Do you feel or not feel the sacrifice of Christ? God chose us in Christ Jesus before the creation of the world. Who are we? It’s very simple, we are the chosen ones! Are you one of the chosen ones? Ask yourself whether you have a feeling for Christ, the gospel, the church, and the Lord’s great commission! Do you have it? This has been true from Isaiah to the early church and even more so today!

Secondly, man’s disobedience is his retribution. When we read verse 8, it is often difficult to understand. We may wonder, how could God “give them a spirit of stupor”? Moreover, it is recorded in the Bible and has many references in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy chapter 29 verse 4 is the earliest record: “But to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear.” Starting with Pharaoh, the drama of God hardening his heart has been played out over and over again. If one plague is not enough, there will be two, three, four, until ten, and even all the way to the Red Sea. If people can stop at ignorance, they will not die. However, once Satan arouses man’s foolishness, it is difficult for him to calm down. At this time, man’s disobedience is his retribution!

Finally, bending down is not humility. The heart is more deceitful than all else; who can understand it? If a person’s mind is not filled with the Holy Spirit, it will be filled with greed and pride. What’s worse is that you live in darkness but use a flashlight to shine on others. This was the case with the Pharisees, whom Jesus accused of being hypocrites. They wear long robes, walk on the streets, use long prayers as a cover, and find fault with others everywhere. Not only that, they are also very polite, such as bowing and showing humility. The “bending” that Paul refers to here is the retribution given by God, referring to their short-sightedness and confusion in the spiritual world. They cannot see far, they cannot read the Psalms, they cannot understand the Proverbs, they cannot comprehend the book of Gospels, and they do not know eternal life. Let’s look at the second point:

Encouragement of gentile believers

We were originally Gentiles, wild branches, but were grafted into the true vine by God. This should be one of the seven most wonderful things God has done! Creation of the heavens and the earth, selection of the Israelites, incarnation of Christ, salvation of the Gentiles, salvation of the whole house of Israel, judgment of all things, new heaven and new earth! First, stumbling is not falling. If you stumble, you still have a chance to stand up again, but falling means eternal destruction. Of course, from stumbling to falling, it ultimately depends on their attitude toward Christ. The Israelites never dreamed that they would fail the test of Jesus Christ, the cornerstone. God's will was to save, but the Israelites chose to reject the gospel. Including Pilate, who heard Jesus say that He came to bear witness to the truth. However, Pilate waved his hands in confusion and asked, "What is truth?" He, like the Jews at that time, had missed out on God. The difference is that Pilate fell and never had another chance. However, God considered the Israelites to have stumbled, and there was still grace for their entire family to be saved.

Secondly, trespass also becomes an opportunity. This is the limit of human wisdom and ability. For God, "Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. (Romans 11:11)" It was clearly their fault, but God, who loves them forever, turned decay into magic and curse into blessing! On the one hand, God wanted to take this opportunity to bring the gospel to the Gentiles; on the other hand, God wanted to encourage His own chosen people, the Israelites, to work hard and strive to walk the heavenly path and enter the narrow gate because they saw that even the Gentiles were saved! Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, never ignore or underestimate people's mistakes, for they may be used by God to serve as an encouragement to yourself or others.

Finally, all things work together for good. God's vision is not man's vision, and God's perspective is something man cannot fully understand. When Queen Jezebel's power overwhelmed the prophet Elijah, the prophet's vision was covered by worry and fear, and his future and direction were obscured. So what to do? There is only one way left: escape! We may not be able to believe that a man who was more powerful than four hundred and twenty false prophets of Baal would be afraid of a woman, an evil woman, even though she was a queen. When God's comfort came to Elijah, God opened his view. It turns out that there were seven thousand people who did not worship Baal! Today, God's servants are being thrown into prison and tortured by the Antichrist regime for upholding their faith. God allows their testimonies to be an encouragement to us today, and to create thousands and thousands of elite soldiers of the Kingdom of Heaven who refuse to bow to the Antichrist! Let's look at the third point:

Transcendence of resurrection from the dead

Have you ever wondered what the difference is between New Testament believers and Jews? Although the Old Testament and the New Testament are different, the New Testament is actually contained in the Old Testament. What the Jews could not accept the most was precisely the resurrection that we consider most precious, that is, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. First, look forward to the fullness of the elect. Since the difference is the understanding of resurrection, the key to preaching the gospel to the Israelites is to help them

understand Christ's resurrection. Although we do not know how to enable them to know Christ's resurrection, making them full is the command of the Bible today. David said, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! May they be secure who love you! (Psalm 122:6)" Reading this passage may also help us understand why God has blessed the United States for so many years because of its help to the Israelites. It's not because everything about the United States is good, but there is at least one thing that is worth emulating and learning from by other countries in the world, and that is to pray for peace for Jerusalem!

Secondly, hoping to encourage my fellow Jews. From the records in Romans, it is not difficult to discover Paul's love for his compatriots! This is a very precious sentiment and is also blessed by God. He said: "in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. (Romans 11:14)" It is not difficult to find that Paul's love for his fellow Jews is based on the truth of the gospel. That is to say, Paul's purpose was to "save some of them"! Therefore, the feelings in Paul's heart are definitely not the so-called patriotism. It is true that Hudson Taylor loved the Chinese. He said that if he had tens of millions of pounds, he would give it all to the Chinese without hesitation. Many Chinese people were very excited, saying, "Hudson Taylor loves us Chinese so much!" "Unexpectedly, Hudson Taylor went on to say: It's not China, it's Christ!

Lastly, isn't it resurrection from the dead? Paul concluded: "For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? (Romans 11:15)" In fact, whether the Israelites were abandoned or accepted, it became a grace option for the salvation of the entire Israelite family. It didn't matter that the Israelites were rebellious, disobedient, and unwilling to accept the gospel. God used their disobedience to save the Gentiles and even to reconcile the world to God! One day, God will save all of Israel, and we will experience the same excitement that Christ experienced when he rose from the dead! I believe this is the greatest miracle God will perform in the last days, that the entire Israelites will be saved!

Conclusion

Well, thank the Lord! It is the gospel that works together with our hearts, enabling all who believe in Him to experience God's mighty grace together! What about the hardening of the Israelites? God used it to save the Gentiles. Gentile believers were encouraged by the gospel and experienced God's power to make all things work together for good, which enabled the Israelites to experience the power of Christ's resurrection, so that the whole house of Israel to be saved and God's will of choosing all those who believe in Him in Christ, which He did before the creation of the world, to be fulfilled!

Let us pray.....

(Romans 11:7-15)

11:7 What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened,

11:8 as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that

would not hear, down to this very day.”

11:9 And David says, “Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them;

11:10 let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever.”

11:11 So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.

11:12 Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion[b] mean!

11:13 Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry

11:14 in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.

11:15 For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

37.The Grace of New and Old Branches 【Romans 11:16-24】

Introduction

Paul used the example of the contribution in Numbers 15:17-21 to illustrate that the Jews who believed in Jesus Christ became new creations, like the first fruits. Moreover, without faith, it is impossible to please God! Let us look at the first point:

Wild branches' humility

The root of the tree is Christ, and the branches grafted in are both old and wild branches. Obviously, the old branches refer to God's chosen people, the Israelites. The new branches, which Paul calls wild branches, refer to New Testament believers. First, the holiness of the root. When buying Japanese maple trees in Texas, you will often see grafted trees, which are more expensive branches grafted onto cheaper trees. Although they are all maple trees, the price is quite different. After the tree is brought home, after it grows for a while, the original tree becomes stronger, but the grafted branches become weaker and weaker, and eventually die. The same is true for us in Christ. If the life we live out does not have the holiness of Christ and the style of Christ, it is not the same as the root of the tree. Then, what is false is false, and we cannot live out a true life. The life we live out either proves that we are truly children of God, or betrays the faith we claim. All of this will one day be accounted for before God.

Secondly, the nourishing root of the tree. In fact, God is not partial to anyone. Whether it is the Israelites or the New Testament believers, they all "share in the nourishing root of the olive tree." God spent two thousand years to call Abraham, lead the Israelites out of Egypt, walk through the wilderness, enter Canaan, establish the kingdom, make a covenant with David, return from captivity, and rebuild the temple. To this day, God has also spent two thousand years to send His Son Jesus Christ to become flesh, die on the cross, resurrect and ascend, give the Holy Spirit, lead the Acts, establish and lead the church until today. God has spent two thousand years using the same nourishing root of the olive tree to feed the new and old branches grafted into the tree roots, that is, the Old Testament elect and the New Testament believers.

Finally, reliance on the roots. Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles, so he had a better foothold to speak to Gentile believers: "Do not be arrogant toward the branches." This should also be a common phenomenon in the early church, that is, the old and new branches are not so harmonious. Even Peter did not dare to sit down and eat with Gentile believers in public. Paul even rebuked Peter for this, saying that he was not honest, had no courage, did not dare to face the truth, and lived out his faith. The old branches boasted to the new branches because of their status as the elect; similarly, the new branches boasted to the old branches because they could directly believe in the Lord Jesus. Just like our brothers and sisters in the international church today, some are in China, and some are overseas, and they have nothing to boast about.

Let's look at the second point:

The old branches' alert

After exhorting the Gentile believers, Paul began to speak to the Jews. As an apostle to the Gentiles, Paul should also speak appropriate words. First, holiness should be viewed from the Lord Jesus. When Jews look at Gentiles, the feeling in their hearts can be summed up in one word: dirty! In the eyes of the Jews, Gentiles do not eat clean food, wear unclean clothes, and even their thoughts are filthy and dirty. The Jewish purification pool (Mikveh) is deeply rooted in the daily life of the Jews. The water in the pool is also called "Water of Life" (Mayim Chayim), symbolizing cleanliness and renewal. The Jewish family cleanliness regulations are also very strict and complicated, including husband-wife relationships, family ethics, and more importantly, expressing the relationship with God. Paul said: "if the root is holy, so are the branches." This means that when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are clean before God!

Secondly, faith should be fearful. Because of Abraham's faith, God called him righteous. The Israelites also tried to carry out this faith to the end, until the end of the world. However, when God's time was fulfilled, the Son of God, Christ, became flesh and became the Son of Man, Jesus, to preach the gospel of confession and repentance, justification by faith and eternal life. At the same time, the gospel law set by God is the law of faith, that is, without faith, it is impossible to please God. The Jews should have been God's chosen people and continued to carry Abraham's faith, fulfilling God's intention to call Abraham to bear witness to all nations. Unfortunately, the Jews had no fear at this time, but because of pride, they chose to fall in faith, rejected the gospel, rebelled against Christ, and even killed Jesus.

Finally, kindness is due to God's presence. The Jews' ignorance made them insensitive to kindness and even more ignorant of the wisdom of God's presence. Paul said: "Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. (Romans 11:22)" It is not difficult to understand God's kindness. What does it mean to "continue in His kindness"? It means knowing God's presence! God's presence is God's Immanuel, God's peace among men. To put it bluntly, it means God is willing to be among us and is pleased for us to eat, drink and rejoice in His presence. What about us? Are we also willing to be in the Lord all the time? Read the Bible, pray, participate in church activities, and care about spiritual things? Let's look at the third point:

New and old branches receive grace

When the Lord Jesus was crucified, the curtain of the temple was torn, and Paul said: "by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh. (Hebrews 10:20)" First, standing fast through faith. It is extremely difficult for people to stand fast without being proud. When standing fast, it is inevitable that there will be a feeling of eagerness. It is as if we always want to prove some inner impulses. Thinking, in fact, I am still good, even if there is a mistake, it should be someone else's fault, right? Because we are standing fast, it is easy to despise those who cannot stand fast. In fact, the reason why we can stand fast is because of faith. The goal of faith is to aim at God, so where is the place for

arrogance? On the contrary, but fear. It does not mean that we do not have God's love or that we are afraid of losing salvation! It means to humbly reflect on ourselves, to know that we are unworthy and unworthy of God's salvation, so that we tremble, be cautious and reverent in words and deeds, and not be presumptuous!

Secondly, you will be cut off because of righteousness. Don't think that God can do nothing to you because of love. The Bible says that you should be justified by faith, but you still boast about your behavior, money, and good deeds. What is even more terrible is that people are like sheep that have gone astray, and they will go further and further away from rebellion, further and further away from God, further and further away from the church, and further and further away from the brothers and sisters in the church. The most terrible thing is to deceive yourself and others, and to deceive yourself, thinking that you believe in Jesus. When people carry out their unrighteousness to the end, and choose not to live in God's mercy and give up God's presence with people. At this time, God's hand will rise and the knife will fall, and such people will be cut off! If He can cut off even His own old branches, why won't He cut you? Please remember that God is a righteous God!

Finally, reconnect because of love. Jeremiah said, "And the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do. (Jeremiah 18:4)" Two thousand years have passed, and the Jews still do not believe. What should they do? Paul said: "And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. (Romans 11:23)" This is what the Lord said, without reason, without logic. But we know a revelation from the Bible: Because God is love! He not only wants to reattach the cut branches, but also accepts us, the wild branches, to continue to grow on the tree.

Conclusion

Thank God! God's wish is for all people to be saved, but in the end only a few people believe! Few people walk the narrow road and enter the narrow gate. On the contrary, many people go to hell! Whether new branches or old branches, all can enter the kingdom of Christ by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us pray together...

(Romans 11:16-24)

11:16 If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

11:17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree,

11:18 do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.

11:19 Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in."

11:20 That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear.

11:21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you.

11:22 Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.

11:23 And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again.

11:24 For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

38.All Israel will be saved 【Romans 11:25-36】

Introduction

The topic we are going to talk about today is very big and cannot be covered in a small size. However, praying for God's mercy and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit to help us see the eternal mystery is indeed God's grace. Let's look at the first point:

All Israel will be saved

The Bible declares that all Israel will be saved, and all will be saved. But who is the whole house of Israel? When is the whole house of Israel? Where is the whole house of Israel? What is the mystery revealed by God in this? First, hardening and filling. The Bible says that this is a mystery. This mystery includes two aspects. One is that the Israelites are somewhat hardened; the other is that the number of the Gentiles will be filled. Judging from the content of the scriptures, this mystery does not say anything else except hardening and filling, right? The Israelites rejected Jesus Christ, which was their hardening. Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles, preaching the gospel to the Gentiles until the time of filling. If people can think less and have a cautious heart against the additions of humanism, this could have ended here. Of course, it is reasonable to have doubts. For example, if the Gentiles are filled, then should the Israelites be filled? What is the quantity and proportion between the two? The Bible does not say, so I will stop here!

Secondly, salvation comes from the removal of sin. Then Paul came to his conclusion. He said, "And in this way all Israel will be saved." The Bible's view of salvation is actually very simple and has never changed, that is, justification by faith. God said: You are saved by grace through faith. Not by work, so that no one can boast. What do you believe in? Believe that God raised him from the dead, that Jesus is the Son of God, the Son of man who has become flesh. So, what does it matter if you believe in God? Paul quoted the words of the prophet Isaiah, "And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression," declares the LORD. If sin is not removed, how can we come before God and restore our identity as God's children?

Finally, the gift and the calling. The Israelites in the scriptures are not the same as the entire house of Israel. The Israelites refer to the Jews whom Jesus Christ faced when he became flesh and came to the world. The Israelites, including the high priest, who shouted that they wanted to "crucify him" The Bible says them, "a partial hardening has come upon Israel, " The whole house of Israel refers to those who are justified by faith and whose sins are forgiven, including Jewish Christians and Gentiles who believe in the Lord. This is the core of the mystery that Paul talked about, that is, no matter who you are, as long as you believe in the Lord Jesus, you will be included in the whole house of Israel. Not only that, God also confirms the relationship between God and man in the form of a covenant, that is, the forgiveness of sins is

the sign of the new covenant! Let's look at the second point:

Obey and you will receive mercy

Paul said that because of God's gifts and calling, there is no regret. Because God is an omnipotent God, and even more so a covenant-keeping and loving God! First, God's mercy for those who disobey. From the history of the Israelites, they disobeyed God for a long time and did many things in rebellion. They complained after leaving Egypt, and lived in the wilderness for forty years. A whole generation died, and only Joshua and Caleb were left to enter the promised land. After Solomon, there were many bad kings and few good kings in the successive dynasties, and they were marked by the history of captivity and return. Jesus has come, preaching, casting out demons, healing and saving people among the Israelites. However, the Jews chose to rebel, refused to obey, and were unwilling to believe in Christ. It seems that God's salvation plan has been blocked, right? Paul said, "For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, " It is because of this that the Gentiles receive God's salvation!

Secondly, they are all consigned to disobedience. The Gentiles are justified by faith and saved by grace. When they come to the church, they wonder why there are Jews who disobey God in the church? In addition, the Jews outside the church are persecuting Christians. Imagine what would happen if it were you? Would you feel emotional, difficult to calm down, or even hate and want revenge? For this reason, Paul said to them, "For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all." So that's how it is. We Gentile believers and Jewish Christians were all consigned to disobedience by God. What is there to boast about? It is the same today. Whether people are white, black, Asian, or any ethnic group, we are all united in Christ!

Finally, disobey in order to obey. Perhaps we would ask, why does God want to consign us all to disobedience? The Bible says that God has a special purpose to have mercy on all! Of course, it is difficult to ask all questions related to life with "why", don't you agree? When Paul wrote this, he couldn't help but compose a poem, "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!" Yet, obedience is what God expects of all who belong to Him. "And Samuel said, "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. (1 Samuel 15:22)" Let's look at the third point:

All things come from Him

Since it is God's will that the whole house of Israel be saved, no one can fathom His wisdom and power. First, for who has known the mind of the Lord? The prophet Isaiah once said, "From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him. (Isaiah 64:4)" Paul must have been inspired by the Holy Spirit to quote the words inspired by God to the prophet Isaiah seven hundred years ago and write down his own feelings, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him. (1 Cor. 2:9)" From God's perspective, we see that the

Holy Spirit chose two prophets from the Old Testament to the New Testament to speak the same words, which is extremely amazing!

Secondly, who came before the Lord? However, God further reveals to us, "these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. (1 Cor. 2:10)" The Holy Spirit searches everything, but what about humans? Obviously, fleshly people cannot understand the things of the Holy Spirit. Not only can they not understand, but they regard spiritual things as foolishness, and are still proud and self-righteous! Unless people are willing to have the heart of Jesus Christ and become spiritual people who are accepted by God. Then, what the Bible says about the gift of "The spiritual person judges all things" will for sure come upon them and become a vessel to glorify God, benefit people, and build the church.

Finally, everything comes from Him! God is the Creator, Savior, and Judge. "All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.(John 1:3)" He wants the whole house of Israel to be saved, and the whole house of Israel will be saved, because this is what God said! Paul also said at the end, "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen." Through faith in Jesus Christ and through Him we have become new Israelites, descendants of Abraham, and members of the whole house of Israel. What a great honor and grace this is!

Conclusion

Thank God! Once God's words are explained, they will shine eternal light, illuminating the road to Damascus! It turns out that the Israelites are not equal to the entire family of Israel. The only standard for salvation is Jesus Christ. Apart from Him, there is no salvation! Let us pray.....

(Romans 11:25-36)

11:25 Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

11:26 And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob";

11:27 "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

11:28 As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.

11:29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

11:30 For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience,

11:31 so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy.

11:32 For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

11:34 "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?"

11:35 "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?"

11:36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

39.To present your bodies as a living sacrifice 【Romans 12:1-8】

Introduction

Paul explained that the concept of Israelites is not equal to the entire house of Israel. There is an important purpose, which is to call on God' s children to offer their bodies as living sacrifices, to preach the gospel, to bear witness, and to live for the Lord! Let' s look at the first point:

The meaning of living sacrifice

What is a living sacrifice? The term living sacrifice does not exist in the Greek Bible. Living sacrifice is a complex concept in the scriptures, that is, offering a living life to God. First of all, this is an exhortation. God is pleased with the life of a living sacrifice, but it is not directly issued from God' s perspective. God expressed the motivation and source of people' s worship of God through Paul' s exhortation to the church. In other words, why should people worship God? Why must we preach the gospel, bear witness, and devote ourselves to the Great Commission? Why must we serve God in the church? What is the basis for Paul' s exhortation to us? He said that he exhorted us based on God' s mercy. The word mercy is borrowed from Buddhism term "loving-kindness", and Christianity often uses "mercy". In the book of Gospels, Jesus was moved with compassion and had mercy on the five thousand people in the wilderness as sheep without a shepherd, using the same root word. Paul' s exhortation was chosen by God and became our encouragement.

Secondly, the renewal of the mind. If spiritual ethics are what we should do, then the renewal of the mind is God' s higher expectation of us. Because living a holy life is the saint' s demeanor and a duty that cannot be boasted about. However, the renewal of the mind requires that we are willing to put down our old self, abandon humanism, and not associate with this world. Are you willing? Do you know that God is speaking to our motives? Are you willing "by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Instead of using your own ignorance to interpret the scriptures, dismember God' s words, and think that you are proud of yourself! God is holy and cannot be despised. Especially for God' s words, all those who belong to God should be vigilant and never go down the same path!

Finally, we should look at ourselves in a moderate way. This is the third of the "three looks" for believers, which is to look at ourselves in a moderate way. The first two looks are to always think that God is indebted and to always think that others are better than ourselves. There are two core aspects of looking at ourselves: one is not to be proud, and the other is to look at ourselves from the perspective of faith. The perspective of faith must point to Christ Jesus, so if we want to boast, we should boast about the Lord we believe in! When our hearts are honest with the Lord, pride will be exposed! When pride disappears, humility will enter our lives. When humility comes, God' s joy will follow and accompany our lives. This is why the Bible says: "And without faith it is impossible to please him." Let' s look at the second point:

The nature of the body

Paul said that we should offer our bodies. Whose body should we offer, why should we offer it, and how should we offer it? This is a key point in the believer's life and the relationship between God and man. First of all, there are many members in one body. The one body that Paul mentioned refers to the church. The church is the body of Christ, and we are members of each other. There is a basic premise here, that is, faith is not a journey that can be completed by one person. God has prepared salvation, the path of sanctification, and the church for us to walk together. Since we are the same body, we are different members of this body. Some are hands, some are feet, some are mouths, and some are ears. The members obey the head of the body, and the church obeys Christ, uses the Bible as the standard for everything, and "be worthy of the calling (Ephesians 4:1)." The important thing is that there is only one body of Christ, one mission, one hope, and one direction.

Secondly, we are connected to each other as members in Christ. The focus of faith may not necessarily be the moment of decision and prayer, but the persevering confirmation of life after believing in the Lord. How should you behave when you come to church after your first belief? You may be curious about everything at the beginning, reading the Bible, praying, sharing your thoughts, and expecting people to like your thoughts. However, soon the old self occupies the territory of the new life. The gift of the Holy Spirit's inspiration is intended for the unity of the church. However, once the old self comes out, the heart to be taught disappears, and obstacles to the body of Christ, as well as the rebellion and pride of the old self's life, are revealed everywhere. Ananias and his wife had the gift of dedication, but they used it as a source of pride, robbing God's authority, and eventually fell into God's wrath! Be alert!

Finally, we should serve according to the gifts we have received. If a person has some money and some talent, there is nothing to be proud of. "But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. (Eph. 4:7)" Since all our gifts are measured to us by Christ, what is there to be proud of? What is the essence of serving God? It is nothing more than the gift of God expressed in our lives in a personified activity. Paul exhorts us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, which is exactly the purpose of the gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit. Serving according to the Holy Spirit is a mystery. We must be faithful and serve with all our strength, but we cannot rely on our own strength. The secret is humility. Let's look at the third point:

The purpose of living

After talking about the significance of living sacrifice and introducing the body of Christ, how should we live? Many people complicate simple issues. In fact, the path of faith can be lived very simply. First, in quietness and in trust. "For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength." (Isaiah 30:15) In fact, it is not difficult for us to see from the New Testament, especially the Gospels, that our Lord is an example of quietness. The Bible says that He often withdrew to the wilderness to pray. Luke recorded that before the Lord selected and appointed the apostles, the Bible said that Jesus went out to the mountain to pray and prayed to God all night! David also

said: "Be still, and know that I am God. (Psalm 46:10)" When we believe in Jesus, what do we believe in? Isn't it the example of Jesus Christ? Don't you even understand this spiritual common sense? Don't you still understand?

Secondly, live out faith. After God has given us gifts, how should we serve? First, by ability, and second, by faith. What about you? Do you rely on your flesh? Paul said that even if you want to prophesy, "you should prophesy according to the proportion of your faith!" In fact, including faith, is also given by God. And the faith is the same as a person's spiritual day. God assigns us different levels of faith according to our spiritual situation. The effectiveness of gift service is also determined by the size of faith, and there can't be anything far-fetched. If you do not have enough faith and take on too much service, the fruit produced will not be the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, be honest and sincere. Honesty can be a moral character, or a spiritual ability or personality. People from the world often tell lies when they open their mouths and lie when they close their mouths. Because they are used to it, they gradually become insensitive to lying and even numb. Honesty can also be a kind of courage and responsibility. People who belong to God, that is, people who truly believe in the Lord, must make a decision one day, that is, never tell lies again. It sounds like nothing, but it is not easy to do it. This will be a comprehensive adjustment of core values, including not talking about gossip, not slandering, not pleasing, not flattering, and not saying a word that displeases God.

Conclusion

Well, thank the Lord! It is my own hands that are willing to give up worldly enjoyment and come here to serve God. It is my own feet that are willing to run on the heavenly road. Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Paul said: "I appeal to you therefore, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice." Excuse me, are you willing?

(Romans 12:1-8)

12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

12:3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

12:4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,

12:5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

12:6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith;

12:7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching;

12:8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one

who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

40.How to live in Christ 【Romans 12:9-21】

Introduction

When a person believes in Jesus Christ, the first thing he may be concerned about is how to behave in Christ. Because people listen to the word in order to practice it, and only what is practiced is the way of life. Let's look at the first point:

Love others as yourself because of God's love

Because God is love, we can love one another. The Bible says, "You shall love one another!" From this, everyone will recognize that we are the Lord's disciples. First, love one another in the truth. For a believer, the so-called truth can be the Bible or the true God of the Trinity. Christ is the truth, which expresses the true life and mission. Therefore, Paul exhorts us to "love others without hypocrisy!" Evil should be hated and good should be approached, which means that Christians should have a clear view of good and evil and should not be confused about right and wrong. The antichrist regime persecutes the church, kills Christians, and tortures God's servants, but some of us still cooperate with Satan's representatives to hold a Bible exhibition in North America. The superficial intimacy, making dumplings, steaming buns, and showing kindness seem to serve the Lord, but in fact they are in the company of the world and walking with Satan! To love one another, we must be in Christ, in the truth, and in the standards of the Bible.

Secondly, love each other in patience. Love is difficult because it is not simple or easy. We can be very enthusiastic, but we may not be understood by others. We may feel good about ourselves, peaceful and joyful, but when we encounter difficulties, we will "technically deform". The so-called "technical deformation" refers to a situation that exceeds the normal favorable conditions. The Bible says: "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. (Romans 12:12)" Especially when we are being asked to have a tea meeting, detained in a cell, threatened, etc., patience becomes the best gift the Holy Spirit has given us. Especially "Bless those who persecute you; only bless and do not curse." Loving those who do not love us or even persecute us is true love in God's eyes!

Finally, love each other in difficult situations. When we encounter grievances, persecution, imprisonment, bondage, poverty, and sadness, the Bible requires us to "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep." Is it difficult? Of course it is difficult! Human nature is selfish, easily self-centered, not easy to care about others, and even more difficult to have an "altruistic" mentality. When you see others benefit, you should be grateful, satisfied, joyful, and bless them. Especially when you are misunderstood or even mistreated by others, can you still have a normal heart and a quiet spirit? What is even more difficult is "don't repay evil with evil"! You hit me on the left cheek, and Jesus commanded me to give you the right cheek. This is extremely wise. People from the world cannot understand. Let's look at the second

point:

Always strive to be at peace with everyone

The heart is more deceitful than all things, and is so bad that who can know it? Sometimes, even in the church, disappointing things happen. First, do the right thing. It is in the nature of the wicked to do evil, and even the Lord will not be surprised. However, when the wicked do evil, it provokes God's children to retaliate, or to give the wicked a taste of their own medicine. Then, in God's eyes, we are no different from the wicked. There is no difference. What God cares about is our heart that is Christ-only, our heart that is moved by Him, our heart that Satan is helpless against, and our heart that makes us victorious. Our strength lies in quietness and in trust, and our victory lies in magnifying the Lord. What Satan fears most is that we have a close relationship with the Bible. What Satan likes most is that we have no feelings, and no connection with the Bible. The Bible says, I have hidden your word in my heart, that I may not sin against you.

Secondly, live peaceably with all. The people here refer to the church. So why did Paul say: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." Because the church is the body of Christ, we are all called together and have the same hope. Even "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Eph. 4:5-6)" If it is not a major issue of principle, then we should try to choose peace in the church. Of course, the premise of Paul's words is: "If possible!" Because unity is not about compromise, but about unity of mind in the truth.

Finally, we should do our best. It is not easy to do the right thing, and it is even more difficult to maintain the unity of the church. Why? From the perspective of the believers' lives, it is because our old self is unwilling to die and cannot die completely. The church is the place where Christ reigns, and the old self jumps out to snatch God's glory and compete for Christ's authority. Paul also knew that this was not easy, so what should he do? Paul encouraged, saying, "If possible..." It means that we cannot rely on ourselves, but must rely on the Lord! What is impossible with man is possible with God. Paul asked, "If possible," which is asking about our willingness and whether we are willing to hand over sovereignty to God. Let's look at the third point:

Vengeance is mine, I will repay

When the Lord Jesus was crucified, he prayed to God the Father, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. First, do not seek justice for yourself. This is the most difficult, right? It is clearly your own grievance, but you cannot seek justice for yourself. Why? Not only that, but we are also asked to give in. Why? Human nature, that is, sinful nature, is to seek revenge. There is an old saying in our tradition: If you do not seek revenge, you are not a gentleman, and you will be cursed for eternity. However, the Bible teaches us not to seek justice for yourself! This is because retribution is within God's authority, and He does not want anyone to take over or even seize His authority. Of course, in this process, the heart is very painful. You know who is behind it, who is the evil person, and even have evidence in hand. But God says, do not seek justice for yourself! Are you willing to obey?

Secondly, where to heap burning coals on? To heap the burning coals on his head was a popular idiom at the time. It means to make the other person feel ashamed, as if being burned by a raging fire. Please note that the mentality here is not revenge, but kindness. How kind is it? And no matter how you treat me, I will pray for blessings and peace for you before God, and treat you with the heart of Christ, looking forward to your grace and your benefit! This is the meaning of burning coals. Some people interpret the Bible and say that this person was so bad to me that God should burn him and scald him with burning coals! That is of course wrong.

Finally, we should overcome evil with good. It's not easy, right? I can treat evil people without being evil. But how can I treat evil with kindness? In fact, this is the highest level of victory in interpersonal relationships! Whether it is a husband-wife relationship, a parent-child relationship, a friend relationship, or a colleague relationship, the same principle applies. If the husband or wife loses his temper, the other party chooses to be quiet, even smiles, and speaks kind words. This will heap burning coals on his/her head, causing people to blame themselves for their sins under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The effect of overcoming evil with good is to bear the fruit of peace, and God's name will also receive the glory it deserves.

Conclusion

Well, thank God! Life is not easy, and walking the road to heaven is even harder! It is difficult because we rely on ourselves, not on God! We have no love, but we can ask God for love! It is the work of the Holy Spirit to make the church united. Not to seek justice for ourselves is to please God! Because God is pleased when we overcome evil with good, so that He can get the glory He deserves!

Let us pray.....

(Romans 12:9-21)

12:9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

12:10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

12:11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, [g] serve the Lord.

12:12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

12:13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

12:14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

12:16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. [h] Never be wise in your own sight.

12:17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

12:18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

12:19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it [i] to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

12:20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."

12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

41.How to Act Before Authority 【Romans 13:1-7】

Introduction

We can see or hear on many occasions that Romans 13 is the biblical basis for unconditional obedience to the government, right? Then, the issue of how to behave before authority is brought before each of us, the children of God. Should we obey? To what extent should we obey? What exactly is obedience talking about? Let's look at the first point:

Obey the God behind the authority

In fact, the Bible makes it very clear that the essence of obedience is to obey God! First, because authority comes from God. Frankly speaking, this sermon is not easy to preach. Authority comes from God, no problem. The problem is that the person holding authority is the Antichrist, what to do? There is a question here, that is, can God use the Antichrist for His own good? Do we accept God's omnipotence, even beyond our cognition? On the one hand, God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, but at the same time allowed Pharaoh to stop them, right? God called us to preach the gospel in China, Iran, and North Korea, but at the same time allowed the Antichrist regime to persecute the church. It feels a bit embarrassing! But isn't this an opportunity for God to be glorified?

Secondly, refuse to accept God's authority. Obeying God's authority to the wicked is the basic attitude of God's children toward God. Job said nothing in his suffering, and the Bible said that there was no sin in his mouth. What about us? Maybe we can't stand a little suffering, even a little grievance, how can we bear it. Paul still sang hymns to praise God in prison, which was to express his obedient attitude. It means that even in bondage, I still firmly believe in God's presence. Even my going to prison, Paul, is a grace given by God, and it is also a good opportunity for God to be glorified. God opened the prison door, loosened the chains, and Paul and others could have escaped. When the jailer woke up and saw it, he felt that the responsibility was too heavy and he couldn't bear it, "he drew his sword to commit suicide." However, Paul chose to accept God's authority and stay in prison.

Finally, resistance will bring punishment upon oneself. The resistance to authority mentioned here refers to taking a hostile attitude towards God's power. Power encompasses authority, and authority is the way to express God's power. To do this is to resist God's command. The word "command" is translated a little strangely. The original text refers to God's character, disposition, or will. God had already decided to appoint Pilate as the governor of the province of Judea, and Jesus even took the initiative to go to the cross. Not only did Jesus obey and not resist, but he still had to be whipped, tortured, and finally died on the cross. It seems a little unfair, right? Wang Yi, Cao Sanqiang and other servants of God were sentenced to prison for preaching the gospel and doing good deeds. Is this fair? The question is, is there fairness in this world? Let's look at the second point:

Acting according to the law of conscience

After people sin, their consciences are polluted and can no longer fulfill the functions that God originally designed them to fulfill. However, God still has the power to choose an imperfect vessel to be used by Him. First, conscience overcomes fear. When Pastor Cao Sanqiang was serving his sentence, two jailers watched him sleep at night. At first, Pastor Cao was not used to it and might have been disgusted. However, over time, Pastor Cao also felt pity for the two jailers and felt pity for them from his conscience. The prison authorities were most afraid that Pastor Cao would pray and talk to his fellow inmates and preach the gospel. In fact, at this moment, God has already received the glory he deserves. The antichrists are afraid that the gospel will be widely spread, because once the truth is spread, it will illuminate the darkness in people's hearts. Pastor Cao prayed silently every day during his seven years in prison. Through prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving, obtaining the unexpected peace given by God in Christ!

Secondly, take the initiative to be calm. Today, Pastor Cao Sanqiang has become a "new three-no person", that is, no ID card, no passport, and no job. Logically, Pastor Cao should feel very sad, right? But who can stop the power of the gospel? The Bible says that the gospel is the power of God to save all who believe. Pastor Cao's life is filled with peace and joy, gospel gatherings, church fellowships, people being baptized, laughter, peace and joy. Instead of complaining about suffering, it is better to take the initiative to enter the Great Commission and testify in a calm and fearless manner that there are God's people in this city, the presence of Immanuel, and the law of conscience from God. Because the Lord is our shepherd, we will not lack!

Finally, ordinary people should have an ordinary mind. If people regard the suffering they endure as an ordinary thing in life, Satan will not be able to do anything to us. Jesus Christ was whipped, and every time the whip with iron hooks hit him, it would bring blood to his flesh and cause great pain. However, Christ "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped," even "by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." The secret is that our Supreme Lord has an ordinary mind and regards himself as an ordinary person, as it is written in the Bible: "but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." The so-called human form refers to ordinary people. Look at the third point:

To fulfill righteousness with respectful attitude

Attitude determines a person's altitude, and attitude is determined by our core values. First, ordinary people and ordinary things. No matter what kind of social system we live in, it is not difficult to find things to obey, agree? At least traffic rules must be obeyed, right? We cannot disobey worldly laws just because we are spiritual people. Do you agree? As a citizen of a society, it is natural to pay taxes. And we should do better than non-believers, agree? The public interests of the community should also be jointly maintained, right? Living in a walled country, the dictator blocks the Internet and brainwashes, what should we do? Should we do it by force? Or ask God for mercy and wisdom to help us get through the difficulties? Even if it is an evil law, if you want to violate it, you have to pay a price. Be mentally prepared and do what

you should do before God. No matter what the result is, just don't complain!

Secondly, we should be fearful and respectful. What should we do if the police come during a gathering? Some brothers and sisters told me that they were very scared! I said that it is normal to be afraid, the key is why we are afraid, right? If we choose to have a respectful attitude toward those in authority because of our fear of God, it will be accepted by God. A more appropriate attitude is to be neither humble nor arrogant, to answer peacefully and rationally, and not to be controlled by emotions. Doesn't the law say that citizens have religious freedom? Didn't you come overseas to hold a Bible exhibition and say that there is religious freedom in the walled country? Our gathering today is to pray for the peace and prosperity of the country and the national leaders, and to ask for God's mercy to come, including that college students have jobs, people have food to eat, and the economy can recover.

Finally, we should look up to God's righteousness. In fact, as children of God, we are the most confident people in our hearts, right? The journey of life in the world is just a journey of a few decades. There is no need to seek fame and fortune, nor to occupy public resources. Everything is for the purpose of blessing others. There is no need to force people to preach the gospel. If you believe, you will walk with us on the road to heaven and gain eternal life; if you do not believe, you will go to hell with Satan, and each of you has nothing to do with each other. Of course, it may be inevitable that we will eventually conflict with those in power, or even be nailed to the cross. What about it? Just follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, pray for those who nailed us to the cross, and ask the Heavenly Father to forgive them! Walking the road to heaven and carrying the cross is difficult, but not difficult either! Whether it is difficult or not depends entirely on our thoughts and minds before God!

Conclusion

Well, thank the Lord! I finally finished writing this sermon, which I worked so hard on! I must preach what I should preach, and keep silent about what I should not preach or cannot preach clearly! Relying on the Lord to win includes that we can be martyred for the Lord or continue to serve God! Whether we live or die, we are always the Lord's people. Because He loves me and died for me! It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me!

Let us pray.....

(Romans 13:1-7)

13:1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

13:2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

13:3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,

13:4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

13:5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God' s wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

13:6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.

13:7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

42.The practice of loving your neighbor as yourself 【Romans 13:8-14】

Introduction

In fact, after Romans 12, Paul's message has been centered around the greatest commandment of loving God and loving others. To love God, we should offer our bodies as living sacrifices. Acting in Christ is the foundation of loving others. Last week's talk about acting before authority and today's talk about "the practice of loving your neighbor as yourself" are both analyzing our motivation to truly love God. Let's look at the first point:

The reason for loving each other

Yes, why should we love one another? The reason for asking this question is that it is difficult for sinners to love God and others by nature. First, there is the debt and no debt of love. What is the debt of love? It is a flaw in the flawlessness, just like man sinned against God. Sin is man's debt to God, and it is not up to the standard of God's eternal perfection. As a result, all people have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. This is why we should always feel that we are in debt before God. We all owe God a debt and a debt to His glory. So, why don't we owe it? First, it is because Christ's sacrifice made up for our debt; second, except for the cross, which was obtained for free, we should not owe anything else, let alone take advantage of others. Therefore, because we owe God a debt, we should not owe others a debt.

Secondly, the morality and immorality of love. When morality comes before love, the Holy Spirit will interrogate our motives and inquire about our reasons. However, when morality comes before the law, God will also come to watch the state of our lives. On this stage, even people and Satan have become spectators to see God's judgment and righteousness. Just one sentence, "Owe no one anything," will stumble thousands and millions of people! Who can boast in front of God's law? And who can keep the law completely? What is impossible with man is possible with God! How can this be said? Look at Luke 7, Jesus said to the Pharisee called Simon, "He who loves much, all his sins are forgiven!" What God values is our heart toward Him!

Finally, the perfection and imperfection of love. No one is perfect, right? Then why does God want us to be perfect? The Lord said in Matthew 5:48: "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)" Take any one of the laws and we will be found wanting. "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," Who dares to boast that he has never committed a crime? But Paul said, "and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The most direct point here is to see if we have the mentality of "benefit others" in our hearts. Are you willing? Let's look at the second point:

Love is the fulfilling of the law

The law is very effective in pointing out the shortcomings in our lives, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Christ’s death on the cross made up for what we lack in the law. First, love fulfills the law of growth. Because of Christ’s incarnation, the law extends and even enters the field of growth. We know that in the Old Testament, the function of the law was only to point out people’s sins. What’s worse is that people are powerless and at a loss when faced with the rebuke and judgment of the law. Jesus Christ updated the summary of the law, pointing out that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and the second is to love your neighbor as yourself. What a wonderful grace! The Jews fell in the law, but now they have fulfilled the law because of their faith in Christ and love for others. That is to say, the law is here, putting love and the law into the growth of spiritual life to glorify God and benefit people.

Secondly, love fulfills the law of vigilance. Some say you can’t wake someone who doesn’t want to wake up. Right? That makes sense, doesn’t it? But David said, “It is He who awakens my soul, He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” In other words, if God hadn’t awakened me, how could I have awakened myself? It was God’s love that awakened my dormant spirit. Not only that, God even defined awakening me as God’s law. This is also a renewal of the law, a renewal from the Old Testament to the New Testament. He who is awake and remains awake is on the alert. Jesus got up early in the morning to pray, prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, and prayed on the cross. He was using his great love to awaken us and help us to be alert!

Finally, love fulfills the law of life. The path of faith is not easy. What is the difficulty? The difficulty lies in the word “true”. Do you agree? That is to say, when we believe in Jesus Christ, we cannot have false faith and we must not deceive ourselves or others. Paul said, “The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” The core of faith is the change of life, not just empty talk. Since we are children of God, we should live in the light. Living in the light means saying goodbye to “putting off the deeds of darkness.” We must start from a certain day and stop telling lies, spreading rumors, committing adultery, killing, stealing, being greedy, being proud, and owing others! Let’s look at the third point:

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ

To put on means to wear. Have you ever thought about why we should put on Jesus Christ? First, put off the deeds of darkness. This is the prerequisite for faith, that is, to say goodbye to sin and welcome eternal life. First, we must affirm that our deeds before believing in the Lord were dark, which is confession. Then we must put off the old self, which is repentance. If we only confess our sins but do not repent, our faith is in vain. Darkness refers to ignorance and corruption. Ignorance can be interpreted as deliberate ignorance, such as the Pharaoh of Egypt. He repeatedly prevented the Israelites from leaving Egypt, and even refused to repent when his eldest son died in the tenth plague, until the whole army was eliminated and buried in the Red Sea. Corruption means that a person has become insensitive to the words of God, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and objective cognition.

Secondly, we must behave properly. When Paul said to put on the armor of light, he was referring to the good behavior of God's children. A person's behavior is upright because God's love in his life has given rise to core values that are in line with God's will. This core value is our armor, which is what Paul called the armor of light. Walking the heavenly path and living eternal life is fighting a good fight for the Lord. Our upright conduct is not a show, but a testimony for God. God will be glorified when the world sees that we do everything in the name of the Lord as if we were walking in the day. If we can follow Paul's exhortation: "not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy." We have truly gotten rid of the work of darkness.

Finally, put on the Lord Jesus Christ. The reason for putting on is that we have been away from God for a long time. We have become unfamiliar with spiritual equipment, the clothes we wear, the air we breathe, the thoughts and mindsets we should have, etc. Therefore, today Christ sends us spiritual armor to facilitate us to fight for the Lord. In the process of fighting for the Lord, gradually, the Christ we wear becomes like our life, so that we become more and more like the Lord. In God's eyes, now it is no longer me who lives, but Christ who lives in me. This makes us no longer willing to make arrangements for the flesh, let alone indulge in selfish desires! This transformation process may be painful, but it must be peaceful, hopeful, and joyful.

Conclusion

Well, thank the Lord! Love is patient, kind, and never fails! Love becomes a mission because God is love! It is not because we love, but because God loves us first, so that we can love each other. Because of love, love has fulfilled the law and completed the law. Jesus said that heaven and earth will pass away, but not a single stroke of God's law will pass away! May God help us to put on Christ, so that our lives can bear witness to the beauty of the Lord!

Let us pray together.....

(Romans 13:8-14)

13:8 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

13:9 For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

13:10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

13:11 Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.

13:12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

13:13 Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.

13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

43.The consequences of judging one another 【Romans 14:1-12】

Introduction

In the process of loving each other, judging each other is the biggest obstacle and hindrance. Judgment comes from the heart, grows in sin, and is full of filth and dirt. Let's look at the first point:

Do not debate doubtful matters

It is human nature to worry, and the cause of worry is doubt, which is the first killer of faith. First, faith can be weak. Paul said, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? (2 Cor. 11:29)" A demon-possessed child, who was possessed by a dumb demon, was brought to Jesus by his father. Jesus said to him: " ' If you can' ! All things are possible for one who believes. (Mark 9:23)" Guess what happened? The Bible says: "Immediately the father of the child cried out] and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" Faith can be weak, but it cannot give up! Paul said: "For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. (Hebrews 3:14)" Those who walk the heavenly path are all weak in faith to varying degrees, but at the same time they must be those who persevere in their faith and carry their faith through to the end until they see the Lord.

Secondly, doubts cannot be debated. The Bible has exhortations for those who doubt. James said: "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. (James 1:6)" Why did Paul say, "Do not debate doubtful matters" ? In fact, the reason is very simple. Because "For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. (1 Cor. 4:20)" Earthly things can be debated, but heavenly things can only be declared, and only by revelation. Jesus said: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:27)" Same, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (Revelation 2:7)"

Finally, each of us should be responsible for our own lives. People whose hearts are filled with judgment of sin tend to focus on other people's sins. In fact, it is their own sin, but they want to frame others and satisfy their sinful desires. In Paul's context, the church quarreled and judged each other because of what to eat or not to eat. Why can't we be quiet before God and live a pious life? To put it bluntly, we are unwilling to take responsibility for our lives! When you are irresponsible, responsibility will chase you back until you catch up, bite the corner of your clothes, and collect your sin debt! In fact, you can choose to keep the doubts in your heart, pray and ask God, until you meet the Lord and ask the Lord for advice! Let's look at the second point:

Don't judge other people's servants

Who is the servant of others? Who is the master of others? These are questions that we don't

t often think about in our daily lives, and the boundaries are not easy to distinguish. First of all, who are you judging? This is often a blind spot when we speak normally, that is, we don't know who we are talking to! As the saying goes, you should look at the owner before you beat the dog, right? When Paul was testifying for the Lord in Jerusalem, the high priest Ananias ordered someone to hit him on the mouth. Paul was of course unhappy, so he said to him: "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck? (Acts 23:3)" At this time, "those standing by said, are you insulting God's high priest?" Paul said, "I didn't know he was a high priest!" He also quoted the scriptures and said: "You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people. (Exodus 22:28)"

Secondly, what day are you judging? Not only do we need to know who is standing before us, but we also need to know whether it is appropriate to speak at the right time. Paul said: "One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. (Romans 14:5)" This brings up a very important concept of time and space, that is, everyone has a unique time and space given by God. Even Christ's incarnation and coming to earth as a human being was a time when the fullness of time had come (Gal. 4:4). The same is true for you and me. The Bible says: "As your days, so shall your strength be. (Deuteronomy 33:25)" Therefore, when we are about to draw a conclusion or even make a judgment, don't forget the biblical view of time and space, and don't forget that He is the ruler of time and space.

Finally, why are you judging? The biggest characteristic of the descendants of Adam is that they are lost and don't know why. As time goes by to today's generation, it is not difficult for us to find that there are many people who lie down, lost and fallen in the world. Even in the church, there are not many people who truly live Christ and carry out the mission. It seems that it is not difficult to see people who love to judge, but don't know why they judge or what they judge, but they are full of shit, spit out some dirty and filthy words, and spread rumors. To put it bluntly, why are you living in the world? If you live for the Lord, please focus on the gospel! If you live for Satan, please leave the church! Don't show off, be domineering, and be ignorant in God's house! Don't know that God cannot be mocked? Let's look at the third point:

Don't judge your brothers in the church

I remember when we first established the McKinney Chinese Baptist Church, we told the brothers and sisters that gossip was not allowed in the church and there was a "zero tolerance" policy for gossip! A sister asked why? Because gossip and judgment are the biggest killers that destroy and tear apart the church and dishonor the Lord's name! First of all, the root of judgment is pride. Have you ever thought about why people judge? Flesh is the trigger, but the reason is inner pride. I have seen everything in the world. I have even seen countless people, and I judge you, what can you do to me? When you have been in life on the road for a long time, everything else feels inadequate, and it will be difficult to find the quiet heart created by God in the beginning. Especially when pride is in power in the heart, it will be more unscrupulous and without fear. Satan only needs to blow the wind lightly, and Eve ate the fruit and gave it to her husband Adam boldly. Eve also became the ancestor of despising brothers! From then on, the

pride of wives not obeying their husbands at home has become a trend and popular all over the world!

Secondly, people who judge cannot give an account. When judging, you feel good at the time, as if you can also please people's eyes and even refresh your spirit. However, once the words are out, it is hard to take them back! Talking about gossip and judging, it seems that deep down in your heart you are addicted and can't help but speak out. Whether it is drug addiction, gambling addiction, Internet addiction, sex addiction, game addiction, plus the addiction to judging that we are talking about today, it is essentially because evil spirits are controlling people's lives. Today, Jesus will pass through the Gerasenes in your life and drive away the two thousand pigs in your life. Are you willing? The premise is that you must give up the greed of these two thousand pigs!

Finally, judgmental life is worse than death. If you are greedy and refuse to let go, two thousand pigs will live firmly on you. The feces and urine in the pigsty are all over the ground, and the place where you live is mixed with the stench, and people are actually indifferent to their own situation. If a person has truly believed in Jesus, he should realize that at this moment, life is worse than death. If you truly believe in Jesus to the end, you will inevitably have a heart of repentance. John the Baptist said, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand, you should repent!" It can be said that this is the "original intention" of the New Testament, and it is also God's unchanging heart for man! May I ask, are you willing to "have the heart of Jesus Christ" and follow the Lord's footsteps forever?

Conclusion

Thank the Lord! It doesn't matter if you have doubts, pray often, ask more questions, and just don't argue. Because the heavenly truth has always been revealed and declared. Only those who belong to the world will argue and love to debate. Before judging, you should be clear about your own situation, understand your own position, understand the other party's time and space, and be careful in what you say and do, lest you fall into Satan's temptation. In the church, you should be more vigilant and pray, otherwise, falling into Satan's temptation will become a high probability. Important things are said three times: It doesn't matter if you are wrong, repent and turn back quickly! God is waiting for you, are you willing?

Let us pray.....

(Romans 14:1-12)

14:1 As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.

14:2 One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.

14:3 Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.

14:4 Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

14:5 One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

14:6 The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

14:7 For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.

14:8 For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

14:9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

14:10 Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God;

14:11 for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."

14:12 So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

44.The sorrow of stumbling over each other 【Romans 14:13-23】

Introduction

The purpose of church life is to preach the gospel, bear witness, imitate Christ, walk with God, glorify God and benefit others, be humble and pious, and must bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit! For this reason, Paul exhorts us not to stumble upon each other, lest we find it difficult to give an account to the Lord, or even gnash our teeth in pain and sorrow in the darkness. Let's look at the first point:

Do not put a stumbling block in your brother's way

If the children of God knew who they believed in, they would probably have a fear of God, right? Unfortunately, this is not the case in reality. It is common to see brothers stumbling everywhere. First of all, judgment is a killer of the church. The essence of judgment is a lack of faith in God, or even no faith. When judgment becomes a person's cage and bondage, mutual judgment becomes active, like a piece of fermented dough. The Pharisees were the people whom Jesus often rebuked, and he exhorted his disciples not to imitate the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. The heart is more deceitful than all things. Once a judgmental word enters the ear, it is possible to squeeze out the faith that is heard. The church's exhortation to brothers and sisters is that when you hear words of gossip and judgment, you should be quiet first, then read the Bible, pray, and then share with the church pastors, so as not to participate in judgment with the judges and hurt the church.

Secondly, the Yin and Yang hellfires. The verse "not putting a stumbling block or cause of fall for your brother" has two meanings: one is stumbling, and the other is falling. Stumbling refers to open attacks on the church, especially humiliating, slandering, and spreading rumors against pastors. Falling refers to actions done behind the scenes, including talking behind the back, spreading rumors through text, video, and other channels, and launching rockets to attack the church through various means. People who belong to God will not attack the church. Only people who belong to Satan will have hatred for the church and speak malicious words.

Finally, Christ determines life and death. The situation that Paul faced in the Roman church at that time was about whether or not to eat so-called unclean things. Some people in the church wave a chicken feather as a token of authority, and really thought that they had obtained some kind of "imperial sword" and could slaughter the church and massacre the city as they pleased. Who are you? How dare you judge the servants of Christ? Whatever you eat and drink, everything that is by faith is clean before God. When will it be your turn to stand above Christ and make rash conclusions and accusations? The person you are judging is the one for whom Christ died! I am also very curious, how could there be such people without reverence in the Roman church two thousand years ago? Do they really think that God can be despised? Of course, later history tells us that the curse on the city of Rome has also explained the problem!

Let's look at the second point:

Do not let your good be spoken of as evil by fools

Christ set an example for us in facing the evil of the Romans. On the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ prayed for those who crucified him, asking God the Father to forgive them. First, everyone should be alert and self-disciplined. When spiritual attacks come, many people often cannot stand up. One year when I went to Guangzhou to visit my family, I heard my childhood friend tell me: "Open the car door and look inside, everyone is a corrupt official. Shoot them first, then file a case, and guarantee that there will be no false or wrongful convictions!" I asked, is there no exception? Once I preached in a business fellowship that spanned provinces, and I said, you are all Christian businessmen, right? Excuse me, is there anyone among you who got his first pot of gold cleanly? Did you not accept bribes? Did he not make false reports to pay taxes? As a result, no one dared to stand up! I asked them: How can you serve God in such a spiritual state?

Second, the church has the authority to bind and loose. Paul said, "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17)" The Kingdom of God is where God rules. Christ is the head and the church is His body. God exercises authority on earth through His body. When the church is bound on earth, Christ is bound in heaven. The Antichrist regime and all of Satan's followers are blind and cannot see this spiritual mystery. They think the church is weak and easy to bully, so they wantonly destroy churches, tear down crosses, arrest God's servants, torture, spread rumors, spit out slander, fan the flames, light ghost lights, post online news, and show viciousness. Little do they know that the hand of God's judgment is approaching!

Finally, discipline with the heart to restore people. Of course, as a church, the purpose is not to have authority, but God's righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. God's righteousness is the glory of God revealed in the Bible and the standard of what should be done in human life, that is, what is right in God's eyes. Peace is Christ's mission, which only brings about the renewal of the relationship between God and man, that is, the reconstruction and reconciliation of the relationship between God and man. The joy in the Holy Spirit refers to the Holy Spirit's help to us at all times and the satisfaction when we bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of the church's discipline is also to help brothers and sisters eventually practice justice, love mercy, walk humbly with God, and return to God's arms. Let's look at the third point:

Do Not Destroy God's Work Because of Food

In this world, what is the meaning of other things besides Jesus Christ? If people eat and drink because of Jesus, there will be eternal meaning. Otherwise, people are just eating and drinking their own sins. First of all, a heart that pleases God and man. What is the purpose of life? Is eating and drinking important? In other words, is it worth it to launch a spiritual attack because of eating and drinking those worldly things? Can't you tell which is more important and which is lighter? Whether it is eating meat, drinking wine, or eating beef or roasted lamb, how can it become a dispute within the Roman Church? Do you want to destroy God's work because of food? If you do too many evil things, the rebuke of the Holy Spirit will surely come! If you

belong to the Holy Spirit, you will also feel the rebuke of the Holy Spirit and your heart! What a person does in his life depends entirely on his heart, and this is what God cares about.

Secondly, in Christ, we do not blame ourselves. If a person is honest and sincere and treats God with openness, he will inevitably face God's judgment. If you know that something is displeasing to God, you must not do it! Do not say that it will cause your brother to fall, even if it will cause your brother to suffer damage, do not do anything. Paul exhorts us: "So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding." If you have good morals, you should not offend others with food. You should not refuse the church's discipline because of your sins, and fail the great love of Christ who died for you on the cross! If you do this, how can you not blame yourself?

Finally, whatever is not out of faith is sin. The Bible says that without faith it is impossible to please God. Since we can trust in God, why can't we say yes if it is yes and no if it is no in Christ? There is complete peace and grace in the body of Christ. What can't be put on the table and made clear? Do we have to do things other than yes or no? Don't you know that if we leave the body of Christ, we will lose our way, go astray like sheep, and go our own way, which will become a high probability. Perhaps, while Christ may still be able to redeem you, quickly turn around by faith, confess your sins and repent, return to the body of Christ, accept the discipline of the church, and receive the grace of the Lord! Don't forget that God will discipline those whom He loves!

Conclusion

Dear brothers and sisters, the end is near, and Christ is already standing at the door. He said that at the last days, nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes, famine, plague, and death. The war between Russia and Ukraine has not stopped, and Thailand and Cambodia are at war again! The war crises in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea are just around the corner. The footsteps of World War III, nuclear war, and the Domsday War are approaching us. Do we still need to fight among ourselves? If you are a brother, please stop the rockets in your hands! Of course, if you are not a brother in the Lord, God's judgment is on the way and is not far from you!

Let us pray.....

(Romans 14:13-23)

14:13 Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

14:14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.

14:15 For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died.

14:16 So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil.

14:17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

14:18 Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

14:19 So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

14:20 Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats.

14:21 It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.

14:22 The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves.

14:23 But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

45.The way to love one another 【Romans 15:1-13】

Introduction

Paul spends an entire chapter fourteen discussing judgment, his point being that judgment is the greatest obstacle to loving one another. In this situation, how should we love one another? Let's look at the first point:

Can we bear with each other?

What does it mean to bear with each other? The word "bearing" means to pick up or remove, essentially meaning to be able to take on and let go. First, the motivation for bearing. Being able to take on something demonstrates physical strength. Being able to let go demonstrates spiritual strength. To be considered strong, one must possess both physical and spiritual strength. But where can we find such a person? Theoretically, such a person is impossible to find. Our old selves are always seeking their own pleasure, so how could they bear the weaknesses of others? During the Cultural Revolution, we often saw slogans written by rebels: "One more step, and he'll never be able to get up again!" These slogans lack love and are filled with cruelty. Unless we truly have the heart of Jesus Christ, we can develop a mindset of benefiting others. Otherwise, the limit of human nature is selfishness.

Secondly, please your neighbor. Even with an altruistic mindset, pleasing your neighbor is even more challenging! Your closest neighbor is your spouse, whether wife or husband, and you always want to please your spouse. Husbands often make decisions in the home, so what are the criteria or standards for their decisions? Essentially, it's to maximize the benefit for your wife! Seeking your own pleasure isn't difficult; it comes naturally, without even a second thought. However, pleasing your neighbor means paying a price; it means suffering a loss. If it weren't for the desire to please God, establish virtue before Him, and gain His remembrance, no one could do it.

Finally, it fell on me. Paul said, "For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me. (Romans 15:3)" If it is not too heavy, it is okay to take on someone else's burden. If it pleases your neighbor, you may feel a little reluctant, but if you think about increasing your own virtue and gaining God's approval, then it is okay! However, now you have to let "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." Why? I was simply acting according to the Bible's teachings, the church's decisions, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Yet, I was met with humiliation and lashes. How unbearable! I treated others with such sincerity, only to receive scrapes and thorns in return! Thank God! Let's look at the second point:

We should live in such harmony with one another

The Bible says that the fruit of a person's life flows from his heart. The church's exhortation is

to be of one mind and to spread the gospel. The only thing that can bring us together is the Bible. First and foremost, the Bible is there to teach us. Perhaps we misunderstand that the Bible is meant to make us feel comfortable and stress-free. Is that possible? Our old selves are dirty and stinking. How can we find our place in God's holy kingdom? From our first words to speaking appropriate words, like golden apples falling into a net of silver, it's more than just not easy! This process should be painful, disorienting, and occasionally despairing. It feels as if we are being lectured, regulated, required, rebuked, and corrected at every turn, as if everything is wrong. Actually, this is normal! Compared to the past, the vocabulary we use has changed!

Secondly, the Bible is for our growth. The purpose of the Bible's teachings is to enable us to grow in Christ. The problem is, growth itself is painful. How much patience is required to move from filthy and defiled habits to one that glorifies God and benefits others in Christ! This is a major obstacle to our growth! The very feelings we experience with patience are no longer the same as they once were! Christ, being in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped; He denied Himself and took the form of a servant. Finally, He humbled Himself to the point of death, even death on the cross. In other words, the secret of growth is to die, to die completely to our old self! Otherwise, how can we receive the comfort and hope of Christ?

Finally, the Bible aims to imitate Christ. Since we have the example of Christ, we should imitate him with all our heart. The prerequisite for imitating Christ is to be of one mind and one heart in Christ and to promote the gospel. The so-called one mind and one heart means to be united in the church, the body of Christ. Because it is impossible for a person to boast that he is in one with Christ, while on the other hand, his words, actions, thoughts and ideas diverge from the church or even attack the church. That is what the Pharisees did. Judas, who betrayed Christ Jesus, did so because he stood on the church founded by Jesus Christ and judged the teachings of Jesus! Judas thought he had the authority to teach and judge Jesus, and even betrayed Jesus, doing something apostate and ending up in a dead end. Let's look at the third point:

Always accept each other

Why should we accept one another? Is it okay for us to go home and see our own mothers after Sunday service, and not have anything to do with each other? Sorry, no! Because God is pleased for those who belong to Him to eat together and rejoice together. First of all, the starting point of fellowship is acceptance. The Apostle Paul taught us, saying, "Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." The mutual acceptance mentioned here is the starting point of fellowship (koinonia). In other words, mutual acceptance within the church fulfills the core value God requires of believers in fellowship. This mutual acceptance must be like Christ accepting us, glorifying God and benefiting others. Peter refused to accept Gentile believers, the Roman church was divided over eating and drinking, and James rebuked some in the church for judging people by appearances. Even today, some people judge one another based on their backgrounds, denominations, and cultures. None of this pleases God.

Second, unity with the Body of Christ. A hallmark of the early church was its composition of believers from both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds. For example, the Greek-speaking members of the Jerusalem church complained bitterly, accusing the Hebrews of being unfair and neglecting their widows (Acts 6:1). It seems that differences in race, culture, diet, wealth, social status, perspectives on matters, opinions on ministry, and political affiliations can all create barriers to mutual acceptance. What can be done? This is why God gave us the church! The church is the Body of Christ, and unity with the church demonstrates unity with Christ. Fellowship is the life of the church, and living in fellowship is evidence of our affiliation with Christ.

Finally, it demonstrates the Holy Spirit's presence and power. Did you know? Satan hates to see God's children worshipping in church and fellowshiping together, for the church is the only instrument God has given us to live out and bear witness to the truth in this world. The Holy Spirit's power is only manifested in the church. Our worship, praise, fellowship, sharing, and love for one another in church are clear evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts. Our weekly Sunday worship, Sunday school, discipleship, prayer meetings, and so on all demonstrate the Holy Spirit's powerful presence. However, only those who belong to God can understand this. Those who belong to Satan not only fail to understand, but instead harbor blasphemous and contemptuous feelings!

Conclusion

Thank God! As Paul said, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." It is not us who love, but God who first loved us and gave His life for us! May God help us to bear with one another, be of one mind, and accept one another, so that we can give an account to Him when Christ Jesus returns.

Let us pray.....

(Romans 15:1-13)

15:1 We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

15:2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.

15:3 For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me."

15:4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

15:5 May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,

15:6 that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15:7 Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

15:8 For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs,

15:9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name."

15:10 And again it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people."

15:11 And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him."

15:12 And again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope."

15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

46. Only in Christ Jesus can we boast 【Romans 15:14-21】

Introduction

People like to boast, and there is nothing we can do about it, because we are descendants of Adam. But now it is different, because we have left Adam and entered into Christ Jesus. Therefore, from now on, all that we can boast about must only be in Christ Jesus. Let us look at the first point:

Because of the grace God has given me

What can we boast about in Christ? Apart from the grace we have received from the Lord, we should have nothing to boast about! Right? First of all, life interaction in Christ. Once a person walks in Christ, many precious life interactions will arise. The core values have changed, and the way they live out will also be different. The goodness after believing in the Lord is to honor the Lord. Because all the goodness without Christ as Lord and King is nothing but the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. All kinds of spiritual knowledge refer to the spiritual common sense gained through church life. After believing in the Lord, we should start from the first word we say every day, be humble and teachable, and strive to say every word well. In addition, life interaction is inseparable from daily study of the Bible and research of all kinds of knowledge. Otherwise, how can we admonish each other in the fellowship? In other words, it is the growth of spiritual life, maturity, and being used by the Lord!

Secondly, the identity and mission in Christ. Although Paul did not know the brothers and sisters in the Roman Church before, he had great expectations for them. Although his words were a little cautious, he still boldly reminded them to remember God's words. I believe that when Paul wrote the letter, the brothers and sisters in the Roman Church had already begun reading the "Paul's Epistles". Paul needed to explain that he could share God's words entirely because of the grace God gave him. This grace came from His calling, calling him to be an apostle to the Gentiles. This is Paul's spiritual identity, and because of this identity he had to fulfill his mission. From the reason, content, identity, object, work, basis, and goal of service to our embarking on the road of mission, it is the meaning of life that we hold on to for a lifetime.

Finally, the holy acceptance in the Holy Spirit. Grace is where I am, and gifts are what I do. However, gifts are not talents, but rewards from God. God distributes various gifts according to His own will, and selects vessels suitable for God's use on the path of mission. The priority of God's selection criteria is holiness, and then different spiritual gifts will be distributed, the church will be served, and the mission will be participated in. If a person does it based on humanistic selfishness and without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, everything he does is in vain. Even if someone seems to be preaching the gospel, what he preaches may not be the gospel. Because your life is unwilling to be quiet and cannot be accepted by God, what good is there in everything you do? Little do you know that obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is

better than the fat of rams. Let's look at the second point:

Only mention the power of Jesus Christ

Christ alone is the theme of themes and the core of the core in the Bible. However, being in Christ is the mystery. First, the meaning of being in Christ. The core meaning of being in Christ is to accept the gospel, believe that Christ died for me, and rose from the dead. From God's perspective, people who are in Christ are holy, flawless, and perfect. Because now it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in us. At this time, being in Christ and Christ living in us become one. The obstacle that once blocked the relationship between God and man, that is, sin, has been removed. Even after we believe in the Lord, preaching the gospel, going on missions, and walking with the heart of Christ Jesus are all righteous deeds in Christ and are justified by God! From the perspective of human thoughts, it means to regard God as the first, exclusive, and only in our lives.

Secondly, protection in Christ. What does it mean to have something to boast about? It means something that you feel proud of, or even glorious about. The difference depends on whether you are in Christ. If a person is not in Christ, he will appear proud and will not be accepted by God. If someone is in Christ, his boasting in Christ is actually a righteous act that glorifies God. Those who are not in Christ, looking at the righteous acts in Christ from a humanistic perspective, not only do not understand, but will also accuse and spread rumors in the self-righteous moral court. However, those who live in Christ are protected by God. The key is to give all the glory and praise to the Lord Jesus Christ! People who belong to Satan do not understand this point, and of course they cannot live it out.

Finally, the works in Christ. Paul said, "I will not speak of anything except what Christ has done through me"! This is the outline of the words and actions of every Christian! Not daring to mention it is because people have a fear of God. Those words that come out of our mouths are mostly corruptions that dishonor the name of the Lord. No matter what we say, we should always think in prayer whether it is from Christ? Whether a word is from Christ, first we need to look at the Bible, and second, to see who the glory falls on? Even if we speak words of grace, we cannot gain moral boasting. Because our every word and action is in Christ. Since we are in Christ, of course, the power of Christ is glorified, and we who are in Christ live in peace! Let's look at the third point:

Built on the Lord's Foundation

If being in Christ is asking about our motives, then being built on the Lord's foundation is preparing to give an account to the Lord. First, the gospel is the power of God. How can we testify that the gospel is the power of God? First, we need to see how people face the gospel, and second, we need to see how the evangelist views the gospel. When people believe the gospel after hearing it, it is strange and seems unreasonable. Because people who belong to the world will not be interested in the gospel! People who belong to Satan should not be interested in the gospel and are unwilling to preach the gospel. In other words, people who belong to the old self want to rob God of His glory and steal His authority from the preaching of the gospel, to gain some sensory satisfaction and to show off their own vanity. The power of

the gospel is that God is glorified, people are at peace, and what is obtained is a calm and stable humility. If the heart is not at peace after preaching the gospel, it means that Satan has entered his heart and the Holy Spirit has left his spirit.

Second, the gospel is built in the name of the Lord. Paul said, “so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ;” This is the distance and scope of Paul’s three gospel journeys, from southeast to northwest. Illyricum was a Roman province in the north of Macedonia, which is the territory of today’s former Yugoslavia. It has now split into six countries in the Balkan Peninsula. It is still the poorest, darkest and most dangerous place in the world. Paul did not even mention the name Illyricum in the Book of Acts, but our church short-term mission this year will go to Austria, which once belonged to Illyricum two thousand years ago. Our short-term mission team in August will also move from all over the world to Austria, which was Illyricum back then.

Finally, the gospel is preached to unreached places. The missionary concept of our church is based on Acts 1:8, which is oriented to unreached places. Europe is thirsty for the gospel like a long-lost rain, and the Chinese have an obligation to “give back the gospel” to the Europeans. Just as Paul quoted Isaiah 52:15 in verse 21 of this chapter: “Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.” It seems that wherever the gospel reaches, it is both the power of God and the mystery of God. For those who belong to God, they must receive it. For those who do not belong to God, God hides the mystery, so that they cannot understand even if they try, and they gnash their teeth and weep in darkness.

Conclusion

Thank God! Today we can boast in the Lord Jesus Christ and demonstrate the power of the gospel to save all who believe. Anyone who truly believes in the Lord will have life, and anyone who is hypocritical will die forever! As for me and my family, we will serve God! What about you?

Let us pray

(Romans 15:14-21)

15:14 I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers,[a] that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.

15:15 But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God

15:16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

15:17 In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God.

15:18 For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed,

15:19 by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ;

15:20 and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been

named, lest I build on someone else' s foundation,

15:21 but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand."

47. Declare the path of mission 【Romans 15:22-33】

Introduction

Paul poured out his heart to the brothers and sisters in the Roman church, expressing his frustration and concern. He likely wrote this in or near Corinth, during his third missionary journey from AD 53-58. He was announcing his missionary journey, the direction God would lead him in his future missionary work. Let's look the first point:

After Rome came Spain

This is the inevitable conclusion of the book of Romans: to keep moving forward to fulfill the Lord's Great Commission! Rome, though great, was not Paul's ultimate concern. First, despite obstacles, we must continue on our journey! During our short-term mission trip to Europe, we reached a consensus: to bring the gospel into our lives and let the mission guide our lives. If these are the core values of our lives, obstacles will not become obstacles! Paul said, "This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you." Can we experience the same feelings as Paul did? Was it discouragement and disappointment? Or sadness and grief? The fact that he encountered numerous obstacles demonstrates his perseverance and his refusal to give up! Despite obstacles, he continued to go! While the Europeans may not have been Paul's blood relatives, the core value of prioritizing spiritual roots over blood ties influenced Paul's direction. There are always more solutions than problems; the mission drives us to overcome every obstacle.

Secondly, Rome and Spain are steps. Doesn't that seem strange? Paul was in Greece, and before he even reached Rome, he began to yearn for Spain. And, he kept thinking about it for years. Our church's short-term missions over the years have been repaying the gospel debt. The gospel to us Chinese was brought to us by Europeans, so there is a sense of gratitude in our missions to Europe. However, the mission cannot stop at repaying gratitude. Missioning to Muslims is a vision that God placed in my life many years ago. Until this year, our missionary Steve visited us in May and put the opportunity of missioning to Islam before us. So, missionary work in Turkey next year has become the path before us. Are you ready?

Finally, it was because there was no place to preach. Paul said, "Now there is no place to preach here," which does not mean that everyone in Greece has believed in the Lord. Rather, it means that the gospel has been preached in Greece, Macedonia, Achaia and other places. The local churches are also preaching the gospel in the local area. As a missionary apostle, Paul was driven by the mission and while he was heading from Greece to Rome, his heart was running to Spain, which was farther away. Over the years, our church has used Dallas as its starting point and Northern Europe as its base for discipleship, and has been heading towards Europe. In the past three years, starting with the violin-making town, we have spread the gospel to France, Italy, Germany and other countries. We have seen that more and more churches have begun to pay

attention to European missions, especially preaching the gospel to Europeans. Let's look at the second point:

Paul still has concerns

The Roman Church was founded by the Apostle Peter. Paul once said: "and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation," Therefore, it's not difficult to imagine that Paul's concern for the Roman church stemmed from the spread of his letters. First, even if it was just passing through, it was important to meet. Meeting spiritual beings is inherently a grace. Paul had no direct connection with the Roman church, and logically, there was no need for much contact. However, Paul was chosen by God to be the writer of the Bible. Moreover, by the time Paul wrote Romans, his books like Galatians were likely already widely circulated in the Roman church. This inevitably led to some interactions and connections, allowing for direct or indirect acquaintances and even close relationships with the brothers and sisters. Therefore, whether Paul was staying briefly or passing through Rome, he longed to meet them. For meeting believers is, in essence, meeting the Lord, meeting the Lord in their lives!

Secondly, there is the satisfaction gained from fellowship. In other words, fellowship among believers is what the Bible calls the satisfaction found in fellowship. God delights in His people eating and drinking together and enjoying the Lord's grace together. When brothers and sisters meet together, there are many options for dining. While buying food at the supermarket is the most economical option, it also misses the opportunity to fellowship with brothers and sisters. How do we determine the relative value of these two? Fellowship, sharing food and drinks, and sharing the cost will be more expensive, making it more costly than buying food at the supermarket. However, fellowship holds eternal value, while saving money only brings the pride of moral boasting and the satisfaction of feeling good.

Finally, the joy that comes from seeing someone off. Even if you have met someone and had a meal together, you may not be completely satisfied. Even Paul said that he was slightly satisfied in his heart. A person may be satisfied but may not enjoy that satisfaction. Even if he is not very satisfied, he can still long for satisfaction in the Lord. Seeing someone off is sometimes a sad thing. Therefore, sometimes people are reluctant to see someone off. However, the Bible says that Paul longed for the brothers and sisters in Rome to see him off. Paul even regarded the church's seeing him off as a blessing. In fact, all this has not happened yet. Paul just wrote a letter to express his expectations to the Roman church. How we treat our brothers and sisters, God will have the same attitude towards us. Let's look at the third point:

This is my prayer request

Intercessory prayer is a daily ministry in the church and can also be a manifestation of faith in believers' daily lives. What are our intercessory prayers every Wednesday? Is gospel missionary work included in our church's public prayers? What can we learn from Paul's intercessory prayers? First, care for the poor among the saints. At this moment, Paul was returning from his third missionary journey. Having collected donations in Macedonia and Achaia, he prepared to return home to Jerusalem. Frankly speaking, Paul's relationship with

the church in Jerusalem was not particularly harmonious. However, Paul's love for his brothers and sisters in the church was not affected by personal relationships; he still cared for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. This is Paul applying the "debtor principle" to his missionary work. Because the Gentiles received the gospel from the Jews, it is only natural for the Gentiles to repay the Jews. Just as we preach the gospel to Europeans, it is because we Chinese received the gospel from Europeans.

Second, we carry the abundant grace of Christ. The only way to prove that we carry the abundant grace of Christ is through our testimony in Christ. Paul wanted to tell the brothers and sisters in the Roman church about their countless wonderful testimonies along the Aegean Sea, through Galatia and the Turkish mountains of Asia, around Macedonia, down to Athens and Corinth. They had endured persecution amidst turmoil, found comfort in exhortation, and even been protected from harm by God amidst the Jewish plots. These wonderful testimonies were the welcome gift Paul wanted to bring to the brothers and sisters in the Roman church, his purpose being to encourage the church, strengthen believers, and persevere in their faith until the day of the Lord's return, when they could confidently give an account to the Lord.

Finally, they found rest together with joy. How could people still be joyful after suffering so much injustice and persecution? Not only joy, but Paul said that he would go to meet the brothers and sisters in the Roman Church with joyful happiness. Isn't it a bit unreasonable? When people suffer, shouldn't they be bitter in their hearts, complain out loud, and even have a gloomy face? However, at this time, Paul was no longer controlled by his own emotions, but was "following God's will." Our benefits are not outside the Lord, and our rest can only be in Christ. Because without Christ, we will have nothing! Stop boasting about our love and ability! Aren't all we have received from the Lord?

Conclusion

Well, thank the Lord! Paul, in Corinth, wrote to the brothers and sisters in the Roman church, announcing his journey to Rome and on to Spain! Today we are sharing God's Word, sharing testimonies from our European travels, and announcing our upcoming missionary journey to Turkey and Islamic countries next year. May God prepare our hearts to fight the good fight for the Lord! May we fish for men, allowing Christ to capture all His people.

Let us pray

(Romans 15:22-33)

15:22 This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you.

15:23 But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you,

15:24 I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while.

15:25 At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints.

15:26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.

15:27 For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings.

15:28 When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected,[b] I will leave for Spain by way of you.

15:29 I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing[c] of Christ.

15:30 I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf,

15:31 that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints,

15:32 so that by God' s will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company.

15:33 May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

48. Roman Church's 29 people 【Romans 16:1-16】

Introduction

Paul mentioned 29 people to the Roman church all at once, and I wanted to introduce them one by one. However, due to limited time, I could only briefly discuss the 29 people that Paul valued. Let's look at the first point first:

To welcome in a way worthy of the saints

Paul emphasized that Phoebe's spiritual life was in accordance with the order of a saint. This is the basic requirement of the New Testament church for believers and the basic symbol of spiritual life. First, in a way worthy of the saints. The so-called saintly demeanor is a series of life styles that are developed by imitating Christ, including the believers' words and deeds, lifestyle, the quality of their friends, the consistent morality, and the adherence to Christ alone. Clearly, Phoebe is a sister with a wide circle of friends. This demonstrates her saintly character in the area of friendship. Friendship involves mutual acquaintance, acceptance, and friendliness. But don't forget, it also includes the possibility of parting ways and going separate ways due to disagreements. Initial acquaintances are often good, but that doesn't guarantee success. The quality of a friend is determined by their spiritual behavior after separation. May God grant divine insight!

Secondly, consider the example of Phoebe. Phoebe was the first person Paul introduced. She was the only female deacon in the church at the time. Being a deacon was difficult enough, but being a female deacon was even more challenging. Paul mentioned her as a deacon of the church in Cenchreae and described her as a sister who was worthy of the saints. This was a commendation that was not easily earned. Phoebe came from a wealthy family and belonged to the upper class of local society. Paul does not mention her husband, suggesting that she was perhaps single, perhaps possessing exceptional administrative or business skills. However, she was undoubtedly a woman of beauty and elegance, skilled in dress. Paul's confidence in introducing her to the Roman church suggests that Phoebe was beautiful, but not seductive, and a woman of integrity.

Finally, help each other. Helping others is probably one of the most common things in the world, right? There is a lot of information involved here! What is your motivation for helping others? Do you expect something in return? Or is it because of your pride? Or is it simply because you are unwilling and reluctant, or even bitter and complaining? Paul asked the Roman church to help Phoebe, "for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well." The biblical view of "help" is to maintain a normal attitude, even to the point of not letting the left hand know what the right hand is doing! Phoebe lived in the harbor, and the apostles passing by were commonplace. Without a normal attitude, it is impossible to fulfill the mission of helping others. If one later complains, one incurs God's wrath and becomes a fool. Let's look at the second

point:

Treat each other with gratitude

If Phoebe was a sister in Paul's team who lived in the church in Cenchreae, then Priscilla and Aquila were a Christian couple who traveled all over the country. First, put life and death aside. The ultimate faith is to lay down one's life. Christ laid down his life for the sheep, which is the ultimate expression of God's love. Paul said that Prisca and Aquila "who risked their necks for my life," What kind of people were these two whom Paul called his fellow workers in Christ? They shared a life-or-death bond with Paul, willingly imitating Christ's self-sacrifice for Christ's sake. When people disregard life and death, they can unleash extraordinary power. They were tentmakers with Paul, yet they achieved profound theological attainments and even became mentors to Apollos. They shared no particular dangers with Paul, yet they pioneered and established the church in Corinth alongside him. This alone far outweighed all the hardships and dangers.

Secondly, they made tents with Paul. It seems that Apollos and Aquila are models of workplace service, suggesting that serving God isn't limited to full-time service. Part-time or part-time service should also be a given, right? However, judging by the ministry of Paul and Aquila, full-time, part-time, or part-time service is no longer important! Their service focused on wholehearted dedication. Although their shared experience of tentmaking facilitated their mutual understanding and cooperation, However, compared to their spiritual connection, they and Paul had already become spiritual partners in theology, pastoral work, and pioneering. God values our unity and, even more, our companionship on the mission path.

Finally, everyone gave thanks. Paul said, "to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well." Frankly speaking, gratitude isn't just a matter of courtesy; it can be a theological question, even one related to truth. From a personal perspective, when we hear people say thank you to us, our response is: Thank the Lord! However, this doesn't mean we can't say thank you to others! Paul said that not only he himself should thank, even the Gentile churches should give thanks to Prisca and Aquila! Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to everyone who helped us during our short-term mission trip this year! May God reward you generously, and may Immanuel be ours! Let's look at the third point:

With a cherishing heart

What is the church? We might quickly answer: the Body of Christ, our spiritual home. Is that right? Of course! However, the church's content is rich and challenging, enabling people to grow in life. First, no one should be left behind! For Paul, every person who truly believes in the Lord is someone he cherishes. The Bible records very little about Epaenetus, only one sentence: "who was the first convert to Christ in Asia." And then, nothing happened. What happened to him later? Did he become a pastor or evangelist? It's a bit like Robert Morrison, who preached in China for decades but only won one Chinese convert. This man, Liang Fa, later became a pastor. One was the first person to believe in the Lord in the province of Asia, and the other was the first person to believe in the Lord after Christianity was introduced to China.

People don't quite know what they did later, but the Lord has not forgotten them. In God's eyes, not one of them is left behind!

Secondly, those who are remembered by the Lord. In Paul's list, the name of Rufus appears. Do you know who he is? Take a look at Mark 15:21: "And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross." The Bible reveals the decades-long testimony of Simon, the man who carried the cross, his son Rufus, and his wife. Perhaps at first, Simon didn't fully understand the cross, perhaps even felt somewhat reluctant. But later, he realized that the cross he was carrying was for the eternal Savior of mankind. This glory, this great grace, made family heritage a source of honor for the entire family.

Finally, the nameless people. Verses 14 and 15: "Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them. Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them." It seems they didn't gather in one place, perhaps scattered around Rome. Paul refers to them collectively as brothers and sisters of the Roman church. I suspect that if Paul hadn't mentioned their names here, no one would know who they were. Just as people are remembered by a limited number of people in this world, and most of them are forgotten. However, God will not forget any of us in Christ.

Conclusion

The twenty-nine members of the Roman church mentioned by Paul possessed the demeanor of saints, a heart of gratitude toward God, and a heart of cherishment from God to us. Can you recognize yourself among them?

Let us pray.....

(Romans 16:1-16)

16:1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae,

16:2 that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.

16:3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,

16:4 who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.

16:5 Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia.

16:6 Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you.

16:7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.

16:8 Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord.

16:9 Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys.

16:10 Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus.

16:11 Greet my kinsman Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus.

16:12 Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord.

16:13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well.

16:14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them.

16:15 Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.

16:16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

49. Paul's coworkers 【Romans 16:17-27】

Introductions

Have you ever thought about what church co-workers are? It's not an exaggeration to say they are the most important people in the church. Paul placed the issue of co-workers at the end of Romans, clearly placing the most weight on Paul's mind. Let's look at the first point:

Avoid apostates

Our team of co-workers must be pure, flawless in the faith, united in the church, faithful to Christ, and detached from dispute, eliminating those who are apostates, and avoiding false people, false things, and false hearts. First, we must be vigilant in prayer. This is what Jesus Christ taught his disciples while they were praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Lord said, "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Matthew 26:41)" From Jesus' exhortation to his disciples to Paul's exhortation to his co-workers, it's not difficult to see that the primary responsibility of core church workers is to be vigilant and pray. Why? Paul said: "making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. (Eph. 5:16)" Two thousand years have passed, and the evil of the generations has multiplied beyond measure. Even in the church, Satan's clutches have been extended.

Secondly, stand firm. Paul proposed three standards of vigilance: First, be careful not to be divided; second, to be offended; and third, to go against the doctrine you have learned. If people stay away from dispute, Satan's attempt to alienate people will be difficult to succeed. The so-called fall is a pause, or an obstruction, or even no longer moving forward on the spiritual path. It may be because of a feeling, or some disagreements in opinions, or even different eating habits, it is also possible that people will go their separate ways and no longer walk together. Going against the doctrine you have learned, either because of ignorance, or because of pride, always thinking that you are better, stronger, and more powerful than others, even than God! In fact, it is exactly the same as Satan tempting Eve. Jesus resisted Satan's temptation in the wilderness and is our example!

Finally, avoid the wicked. The wicked Paul refers to are those who are in the church but do not truly believe in Jesus. They appear to have life, but their hearts are filled with pride and rebellion, they are enemies of Christ and the Body of Christ, they attack the church at all costs, they slander those who serve the God, they follow the flesh and their desires, and they are willing to be Christians in name only. Frankly speaking, if people do not follow the Lord closely and maintain unobstructed communication with the Holy Spirit, they can easily be deceived. This is because these wicked people once held high positions in the church, participated in service, and once seemed spiritual. But when God's test came, these people were exposed and their fox tails were revealed! Paul said: "I appeal to you to watch out for them." Here, in the name of the Lord, I also urge brothers and sisters to choose to follow the teachings of the Bible

and stay away from the wicked! Let's look at the second point:

Choose good or evil

Paul exhorted the church to stay away from evil people. So, what's next? Paul offered two options: either choose good or choose evil. First, recognize the nature of evil people. Jesus Christ is undoubtedly the only standard for distinguishing good from evil. Therefore, Paul said, "Such people do not serve our Lord Christ." Not serving includes being unwilling to serve, avoiding service, and also includes being denied permission to serve, such as being suspended from service by the church. When a person reaches this point, they are not far from being evil. If they repent, there is still hope. The Bible says that they "serve their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive." Their eyes are always focused on food, and they use it to control people's desires. Even if they spend money to treat others to a meal, they are unwilling to do so. Your complaints betray your motives. Even the simplest people will eventually wake up!

Secondly, obedience to God is the Lord's will. However, Paul's colleagues obeyed God. Furthermore, Paul said that the testimony of his coworkers' obedience to God had spread. When God's people hear such testimony, they find peace and joy in their hearts! As descendants of Adam, humans need almost no training in evil; they are born to do evil. However, good obedience, because of its noble spiritual quality, is extremely difficult to learn. The Bible makes it very clear, as does 1 John 1:9, If we confess our sins, God is just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness! Unfortunately, confession and repentance are not the way of life for the wicked! Apart from rebellion, the wicked find no respite!

Finally, the choice between good and evil. For this reason, Paul proposed a new core value, which is "to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil." The wicked are always entangled in rebellion and foolishness, persevering until they die. Even at the Last Supper, Judas betrayed the Lord, yet the Lord still looked upon him with loving eyes, hoping for his return and even repentance! However, under the Lord's gaze, Judas walked step by step out, into the darkness of betrayal. After the Lord's resurrection, Judas still had the opportunity to repent, but in the end, his own shame, arrogance, and guilt dragged him into death. Let's look at the third point:

The ones trampling on Satan

After the first man sinned, God issued a curse on mankind. One of the curses is, "he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." From that moment on, a never-ending struggle between man and Satan began, one that continues to this day. First, the church will triumph. Romans 16:20 declares Satan's end: "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." "Will soon to" means not yet. But, Satan, don't get complacent. God says it will soon, in the very near future, you will be trampled underfoot! Under whose feet? The "you" mentioned here refers to the church. I hereby warn those who are hostile to the church, attacking it, tearing it down, humiliating it, and harming it: the day you will be trampled underfoot is not far off! You who persecute the church, humiliate, torture, and slander God's servants today will one day be trampled underfoot by the church and receive

God' s judgment!

Secondly, spiritual roots are superior to blood roots. I can' t find any special backgrounds or connections between Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, who were called Paul' s relatives. I only know that they were all Jewish. Whether this is why Paul called them that, I don' t know. However, Timothy' s name being listed before those of Paul' s relatives is very meaningful. At the very least, it illustrates Paul' s core value: spiritual roots are superior to blood roots! This core value has a profound and far-reaching impact on people and the church. As the Lord Jesus Christ once said, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:26)"

Finally, we must rely on the Lord to overcome the world. Living in this world, believing in Jesus, walking the heavenly path, and the path of sanctification, what should we rely on for victory? Our flesh, our emotions, our old self, and Satan, who lies at the door to ensnare us, cannot be overcome by ourselves and will inevitably fail! Paul said, "Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages" When we preach the gospel, Satan is afraid! When we live Jesus Christ, Satan has no way to stop us. When we worship the Lord with sincerity and act in the name of the Lord Jesus, then Satan will flee!

Conclusion

Dear brothers and sisters, we already have the Lord. With the Lord, we have everything; nothing is impossible with Him! God has given the church the highest authority, unsurpassable by this world. Church workers are like a dam, maintaining the unity of the church, leaving no opening for Satan to attack. Those who avoid apostates, choose good over evil, and trample upon Satan are truly God' s chosen ones, becoming His co-workers, fighting the good fight for the Lord! Today concludes our study of Romans. Next week, we will begin our study of Exodus. May God lead the church to follow in His footsteps and walk together on the heavenly path! Thank the Lord!

Let' s pray together.....

(Romans 16:17-27)

16:17 I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.

16:18 For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites,[f] and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

16:19 For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.

16:20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

16:21 Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.

16:22 I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord.

16:23 Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.

16:25 Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages

16:26 but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—

16:27 to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

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