

**“The Cross Is the Wisdom and Power of God”**

# There is a Buddhist monk in Japan. He studied Buddhism at the Sorbonne University in France, where he earned his doctorate. Although he majored in Buddhism, he had to take Comparative Religious Studies during his degree program. So, he had to read and study the Bible deeply. As a result, he had a great deal of academic knowledge of the Bible. Compared to a Christian who doesn't read much and doesn't study the Bible, he has an incomparably broad knowledge of the Bible.

Then, because of the knowledge of the Bible he acquired, did he believe the truth of the Bible and become a Christian? Unfortunately, no. He had so much knowledge of the Bible, but he was not a Christian. So, did he not become a Christian on his own? Or couldn't he be a Christian? I don't know the answer. However, each of us will be able to get the answer to that question through today's scriptures.

I. The Original Good of Mosaic Law

What will happen if God gives the Ten Commandments to humankind today? I believe that the 5th to the 10th articles of the commandments would generally be well received. But the 1st to 4th articles would be very opposed by the majority of today's people.

They would say these commandments would constitute an abuse of human rights and a deprivation of autonomy. They would proclaim, "Let us do whatever we want!" Because modern people hate being forced to "do" or "not do" things by someone.

What is true freedom? How many laws and regulations exist in the United States, which is viewed as one of the pinnacles of democracy? To be guaranteed my freedom, I should not violate the freedom of others. Additionally, in order to guarantee the freedom of others, my needs must be thoroughly controlled.

Absolute power over man can only be given by the Absolute. An absolute guarantee to man is possible only by an absolute ruler.

In the commandments given to us by our God, God's absolute almightiness is implied. It is impossible for any person to perfectly conform to the commandments he gave. However, it is with God's love and assistance that we can strive to do our best to fulfill those commandments.

\*The greatest and first commandment (Matthew 22:34–40):

We should be aware that the Ten Commandments of Moses are not only thoroughly God-centered but also thoroughly man-centered. As Jesus said, the meaning of the Law and the Prophets is "love of God and love of man." The whole Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets depend on these two commandments. In other words, God gave this commandment to man for love.

Who can love or punish humans? It is only possible for the Almighty, who created the universe and man (v. 11). When we receive the Ten Commandments as a command, despair and death are wiped out for us. We must receive this commandment as a promise, not a command. When we receive this commandment as a promise, we expect Jesus, the Messiah. And the Messiah, in His grace and power, guides us to complete this law.

Humans cannot keep God's laws by their own might because of their weakness; however, God enabled us to obey the law through the love and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. That is why we must believe in Jesus, our mediator. That is the only way to comply with these laws. We cannot accomplish the commandments of God through our own actions. But it is possible to accomplish it when we believe in Jesus, our perfect accomplisher.

## II. The figure of the cross

### 1. Foolish Cross:

Those who are deemed intelligent by worldly standards often judge the cross to be foolish. It is because the cross, which was the death penalty for executing criminals back then, is a symbol of shame, a symbol of failure, and a symbol of death. Who in the world would want to take that kind of cross?

But Jesus died in that manner, so many humans calculate that Jesus' life ended with a shameful execution by death on the cross. So, it is easy to think of the cross as a sign of a cursed life and a horrible death.

2. The cross is the power and wisdom of God:  
However, we need to realize that, despite this worldly symbolism, the cross is a sign of God's love and power. In fact, Jesus' life is eternal. On this earth, his life was extended again through the resurrection from the grave after the cross. And it was concluded by ascending into heaven. The meaning of "His life is eternal" is because he will come again to the earth for the final judgment as the same figure of his ascension.

Who in the world has a father who hangs his son on the cross? It may seem like God is cruel for doing this. However, God had no choice but to forsake his son because he loved us so much and because our sins are so great.

The greatest mystery of our lives is that we have become children of God, because this world cannot know God by their wisdom (1:21). This is God's total gift of grace to us. For those of us who are now saved, Christ is the power and wisdom of God. So, we can apply the truth in our lives that "God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength" (vv. 24, 25).

# My children are married adults who have completed the higher education required by the world. However, I still have one thing: to pray earnestly to God every day for them. This is because no one can live their lives only with the power of the higher education. They must continue to experience the wisdom and power of Jesus in practicing obedience to Heavenly Father and love for mankind through the cross.

Its wisdom and its power will make them live truly eternal and successful lives, not any worldly wisdom or power. When our souls are full of vitality, we are able to manage our physical lives prosperously.

### III. Jesus' Messianic Sign

According to the text of the Gospel of John today, the Jews asked Jesus to provide evidence to prove that he was their Messiah. Then Jesus said that the evidence was in his death on the cross and in the event of his resurrection after that death.

Who can die as a perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world? Who can free mankind from the chains of sin and deliver them from the limits of death? This is only possible with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, so he becomes our Lord.

# My grandfather died in a car accident at the age of 42, shortly after the Korean War. That left my grandmother in a state of poverty with five unmarried children. Fortunately, her eldest son was married, but he was also poor, and he had four children, including me. What my grandmother relied on at that time was only the wisdom and power of Jesus' cross.

My house and my grandmother's house were  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile from each other. My grandmother, aside from taking care of her housework, usually reads the Bible and prays. When I went to her house, if my grandmother was reading her Bible, fortunately I could see her.

But then, if she was praying, unfortunately, I couldn't see her and had to go back to my house because I didn't know when her prayers would end. She was closing her eyes while praying, and I didn't want to bother her. I was a good boy, right?

No matter how much she read the Bible, my grandmother, who didn't even have an elementary school education, certainly had less knowledge of the Bible than that Buddhist monk with a doctorate degree. If so, what is the difference between my grandmother and the Buddhist doctorate?

Here, the truth is proven: the wisdom of the world and human nature cannot know God. We cannot help but confess that the fact that I became a saved child of God was not due to my own merits but to God's absolute grace. It seems that our humility begins there.

As Paul argues, God is pleased to save believers through preaching that sounds foolish (1 Cor 1:21b). That's why I can be so brave when I preach. The Holy Spirit leads us to fulfill God's commandments, which surpass human nature, for those who trust in the promises of God's Word. The power of the Almighty Holy Spirit, not the strength of myself as a human being, will enable me to obey God's demands by using me as his tool. Hallelujah!

Church, remember! God's strict law is because He wants us to know the necessity of the Messiah. He has given us the commandments and the Bible to give us warnings of what will happen to us if we do not heed his call. God has the authority and love to forgive us and lead us to salvation, but we must first come to him humbly and ask for forgiveness. We must seek humility and wisdom in order to achieve salvation.

When you use Jesus' cross as your weapon of life, you will be the strongest and happiest person in the world. Only those who experience that happiness today can hold the hand of others who are wandering in search of that happiness in the present world. Amen.

***Reflections and Applications for Today's Sermon:***

- 1) Have you ever felt a dilemma because you could not completely keep the Ten Commandments? What solution does today's sermon suggest to you regarding that problem?
- 2) When will you confess that Christ, who bore the cross, is the power and wisdom of God? What changes does that confession bring to you?
- 3) We are celebrating Lent on the church calendar. Express in your own words the feelings of Jesus as he fasted for 40 days and prepared for his crucifixion for us.