

**Sunday Sermon 07282024 2 Samuel 11:1-15 Ephesians 3:4-21**

**“Grace of Suffering, Disaster of Peace”**

Pastor K, a minister from our denomination whom I knew, was well-regarded. He graduated from a prestigious seminary in Asia early and came to the United States to study. Despite being a foreigner, he was talented and competent, so after completing his studies, he became the head pastor of an English-speaking congregation in the UMC right away. More than a decade later, he joined the UMC's Discipleship Ministries headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee.

Discipleship Ministries was given the primary responsibility for the support of receiving, nurturing, and caring for the ministries of congregations in the United Methodist Church. Therefore, he was busy visiting all regions and churches in the United States, serving as a counselor and advisor for church revival. In the future, he was expected to make a significant contribution to the entire denomination for administrative and spiritual development.

One day, more than 10 years later, I received some incredible news. It was discovered that Pastor K personally misappropriated a large amount of public funds from the denomination, and he was expelled from the denomination's pastoral office. How did this happen for someone who had a lot of promise for the future? When I heard the news, I was quite shocked. It made me wonder what his identity would be and how he should live in the future.

I mentioned "David's covenant" through 2 Samuel 7 on last Sunday in my sermon. To David who wanted to build the temple of God, God promised that his kingship would last forever through his posterity. But the Davidic dynasty lasted for only about 500 years. What happened? The true meaning of this promise is to give Jesus Christ, the Messiah, birth through David's bloodline.

However, today's text records the heinous crime committed by King David. How then can God's great and holy promise be fulfilled? If he knew the human nature of David, God should not have given David his great covenant.

Or should God have prevented David from sinning? We know that the text is by no means a message that "a king in the great promise of God can be tolerated by any sin."

We do not see the answer to solve this content from the human side. So, what does this text tell us? Why is this embarrassing and heinous article inserted here? Does the text reveal the sinful nature of David and the atrocities of crime? Does the text proclaim: 'Woman is a snake, man is a wolf?'

Does this passage testify that David's crime was motivated by the temptation of Bathsheba? Does the author want to emphasize the principle of crime and punishment and that the perpetrator of crime must be penalized? Is it a warning that if you hide your sins, you will commit a greater sin? Perhaps it is possible to find all the lessons I have listed. However, these lessons do not seem to be the purpose of this text.

Ironically, we can find the reason for the passage from the Old Testament today in the New Testament scripture, Ephesians. It is to say how great the unconditional love, forgiveness, and faithfulness of God are toward man. The omnipotence of God is a substitute for what we cannot do because of human weakness.

The difference between the records of Samuel and Ephesians is about 1,200 years. Because of David's crime, we had a moment of confusion about the realization of God's promise. But we see through Paul's letter to the church of Ephesus how God accomplishes the work of salvation toward humanity.

God wanted to show that, no matter how lethal David's human flaws, they could be solved in any way through the love and sacrifice of the cross of Jesus Christ the Redeemer. Also, there is no one other than the Mediator Jesus to solve the problem of human sin. Without God's grace, man cannot be free, but in the grace of God, there is no reason for anyone to perish.

Through David, we realized how humans are weak and evil. If a faithful man, like David, has committed such a terrible crime, how can beginners of faith like us prepare for our spiritual failure? We can find the solution through Paul's prayer in Ephesians.

This prayer is a declaration of assurance that it will be done according to the promises and guarantees of the living God. Here we can examine the five aspects of the Lord who works in us.

1. The Holy Spirit makes our inner man strong by his power (v. 16). The Holy Spirit is the one who worked hand in hand with God in the creation of heaven and earth and with the birth, ministry, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit promised that he would strengthen us with his power. So, we are not afraid of the world, and we are used as tools of God's victory.

2. Through faith, Christ stays in our hearts (v. 17). Through faith, we are able to live in our hearts with Jesus, the king of kings. Therefore, we live as Jesus' friends, children, and co-workers.

3. When we know the love of Christ (vs. 17b–19a), we are filled with the fullness of God (v. 19). Do you know the length, breadth, height, and depth of Jesus' love? We are able to know these things through the love and power of the cross of Jesus and the blood he spilled. In his infinite love, he allows us to live in the fullness of God's character, blessings, power, and world.

4. God works with power in us. Therefore, he gives us more than we ask for and can imagine (v. 20). I personally love this promise. Do you think that you are always harmed and lost with God? No. God delights in giving you more than you always ask and imagine for your joy, health, success, and faith.

5. In the church and in Christ Jesus, the glory of the Lord will be everlasting for ever and ever (v. 21). Like Moses or Paul, how good would it be if we could experience the glory of the eternal Creator, God? However, the Lord has decided to show His glory through the Body of Christ, the Church.

As a result, church, worship, and the fellowship of saints became so blessed. It is God's promise that if we do not want to see the glory in the church, we cannot see it. But if we want to see it, it certainly looks like that.

Humans have no guarantee that they can manage themselves perfectly. We all have the negative potential to commit mistakes and sin.

However, the Creator God has given us an incomparably greater positive possibility through Jesus Christ to go beyond weakness and sinfulness to achieve good and righteousness. Therefore, we must always hold this possibility in faith.

What is all we need in our lives? Our Almighty Guardian God knows what we need. Do you believe that it is possible to fill all our needs with the love and forgiveness of God? He is waiting for us to pray to Him in order to fill that need. Remember that the Lord has always been the safeguard of our lives, so that we may enjoy his blessings abundantly.

Do you think the title of my sermon today is an appropriate expression? On the contrary, isn't "Grace on a Day of Peace, Suffering on a Day of Disaster" realistic? But while on this earthly journey of faith, we can create any number of opportunities to turn things around. It is because my weakness creates causes, but God's omnipotence creates effects.

As David was being pursued by his enemies, he fervently prayed and sang praises to God. But when his kingship was established and his kingdom was stabilized, he sinned against man and God. In order to gain the lasting grace of God, can we face our sufferings and refuse security?

When Pastor K was an international student and was in the early years of his pastoral ministry, he had to keep his faithfulness to God only because he could not survive without God's grace.

Several years have passed since then, and I have never heard of Pastor K. But I believe and hope that wherever he is now, he will be living as a true son of God. Human weakness brought him to ruin, but God's grace can deliver him from destruction.

Although he lost his office as a pastor, he can live as a more faithful layman than any other pastor. This is because everything is possible if we repent of all our past before God and are created as new beings. This is the power of our gospel!

We cannot say that unconditional security is always beneficial to us and that unconditional suffering is harmful. Being within the boundary of God's care is our stability, and going out of that boundary is our suffering.

In the hands of our God, the Almighty Protector, both stability and suffering are good for us, for it is God's will for us.

We must be really afraid that my power or ability will become so strong that I no longer fear God. For when I am at peace, without my knowledge, evil can swallow me. When we kneel before God daily and submit ourselves to the Lord's authority, we can always enjoy the joy of walking with the Lord. Amen.

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

(1) What makes you particularly angry on a human level about David's sin of adultery? If you were God, what punishment would you give him? What are the weaknesses of your humanity that you discovered through David's humanity?

(2) Let's pray today for that person in your memory whom you have never been able to forgive or tolerate. However, while you are praying, please remember Jesus Christ, who forgave you, accepted you, and led you to salvation.

(3) What has God provided for you beyond what you have prayed for or simply wished for? What change in belief did that experience bring about in you?