

## **“You Are a Masterpiece of God”**

# Fruit Roll-Ups: Let me tell you about a story from when my daughter and son were in early elementary school. One day, they were eating fruit roll-ups at home. Specifically, the brand was called Fruit by the Foot, which has a foot-long ribbon of fruit snacks. Kids love them! We had bought a box of them from Costco. I don't recall, but I believe Euni evenly distributed the snacks to them.

Anyway, Philip still had a few of them left, but Esther had nothing left. I told Philip to give one to Esther, but he refused, saying that he had purposely saved them. Having said it over and over again, Esther went on to complain to me that Philip didn't share any with her.

Then I thought about our home education. I was concerned that if the two siblings did not learn to share with each other when they were young, they would not have a close relationship in the future. I hit Philip several times with my belt. But now, I have to confess that I spanked Philip with some feelings of anger, and not just for the purpose of teaching a lesson.

As you raise your children, what corporal punishment have you inflicted on them when they complain and resent you? No matter how badly we punish them, none of us would have caused our children to die from viper bites. Why did God allow the Israelites to die after fiery serpents bit them?

Today's text in Numbers states that the Israelites “spoke against” God and Moses. What is the exact meaning of it? I list words that relate to the event at that time: disobey, complain, disagree, resent, etc. However, in order to understand what the details of the event were like, we need to look at the words the people said.

They complained, “Why did you bring us out of Egypt to die in this desert, where there is no food or water? We can't stand any more of this miserable food!” (v. 5). This was a rejection of God's concern and love for them. They had to know the consequences of rejecting God.

The real lesson of this event is that the result of man's sin against God must bring about death. It does not mean the violence of the Creator; it means His absolute sovereignty.

We realize this meaning when we discern whether we are sinners who should have died already and whether we are still alive, not because of my power but because of the grace of the Creator.

We know that the events of Numbers, through the events of John's Gospel, were the starting point and the process to bring about the events of Ephesians. The content extends to the bronze serpent on the pole, the crucified Jesus on the cross, the salvation that those who see and believe in him will receive, and the holy mission given to those who are regenerated as a masterpiece of God through salvation.

When we realize how much the other person loves me, when we find out that the other person loves me, we can appreciate ourselves. How many of us can be confident that our parents have given us the most valuable love in the world? But when it is confirmed that God the Creator has given up his life for me, we realize that our bodies and spirits are filled and overflowing with the greatest love.

If you look at the bronze snake, you will live. Can a person bitten by a viper in the desert heal completely just by looking at the bronze snake? This is an unbelievable, lie-like truth. However, it could be a similar experience for modern people to believe in Jesus.

If so, who will look at the bronze serpent and the cross of Jesus? They are those who believe in the promise in order to obtain life in the face of death. God has already planned that salvation will be given to mankind through Jesus on the cross.

# Here, I'd like to introduce a poet. The day she was born, a doctor accidentally injured her cerebellum, and she got cerebral palsy. She always had to suffer extreme poverty and physical pain. However, as she met her God personally at age 17, she accepted her own disability.

She learned the Bible through God, discovered a vision, and wrote poems as God called them. She published two of her poetry books and one testimony book in 1985, while her poems were published as a book of praise by a composer.

Since then, she has published many collections of poetry, columns, and testimonies, held meetings, and founded a mission. Due to her hard work in her ministry, she got a disk in her neck in 1997, and she suffered accelerated aging. Currently, she has ceased all her ministries and is struggling with illness.

Here is one of her poems. The title is "I."

"I do not have the wealth of others. I do not have the knowledge of others. I don't have the health of others. But I have something that others don't have.

I saw what others hadn't seen. I heard a voice that no one else could hear. I received love that others did not receive. I realized what others did not know.

Even though I didn't have what others had,  
A fair God gave me something that others didn't have."

She had blamed her parents and God for her "cursed life." But how was she able to live a joyous life with such terrible afflictions? It is because she accepted Jesus as her Savior through the Bible and trusted in the Creator, God.

For us, there is a saying that "just one child of mine is more valuable than ten children of others." The principle is the same for God, the Creator. I believe his attachment is infinitely stronger than any human's because he does not have any restrictions on him. But he made a far worse choice for himself than his human parents. He abandoned his son as a sacrifice for this world.

Today, the text of Ephesians proclaims to us: "God created you in Jesus Christ. So, you are a masterpiece of God. There is a clear purpose for which he created you. It is to make you live by doing good deeds" (vs. 8–10).

Pablo Picasso's *Nude, Green Leaves, and Bust*, a painting created in the span of a single day in 1932, was sold for \$106.5 million in May 2020. Who bought this painting at such a high price? He must be someone who knows the value of the painting well. The person who cherishes and loves the painting the most will be the owner of the painting.

Who can value you today? It has to be someone who knows exactly who you are. If so, it would be impossible for you to be granted that qualification except for the Creator who made you. Only the creator, who knows exactly what you are worth, loves you the most.

So, you can be the safest and most happy when you are in His arms. Now that you know your worth, you know what's good for you to do. And in Him, you have the strength, courage, and mission to do the good he wants you to do. The good thing you must do is convey and impart the gift of salvation to others, as you are saved by grace through faith.

Here, I would like to emphasize one very important point in our Christian lives. We need to know, believe, and remember God's heart for us and His power at all times in every situation. At that time, we have a positive mind and can develop patience.

Let's go back to the case of the Bronze Snake in Numbers for a moment. Then the Lord sent fiery serpents to the people. As they bit people, many Israelites died. At this time, some have shown great interest in the fact that a lot of people died, but you should be more concerned that the fiery serpent was sent by the hand of the Lord.

Who can move the vipers in the desert from one place to another at will? When we submit to the Absolute, who rules the universe alone, the way to prosperity opens to us in all areas of life and faith.

How did Abraham become the father of our faith? Perhaps he was the only one who listened to God's voice during many of his days. So, he recognized God's calling. At that moment, he was chosen by God. From then on, he lived a new life while walking with God. All of us, through Jesus Christ, have become his masterpieces, picked up by our Heavenly Father as His children.

My son Philip still remembers that time more vividly than I do. And sometimes, when family members gather, he exposes and accuses the old incident like a joke. "Dad, I can't believe you hit me so much at that time. That was so unfair!"

Of course, it is fortunate that the relationship between the siblings is still close now. But I can't remember if I definitely apologized and comforted Philip for what happened then. Although it's pretty late, I'm still going to call him after worship today and sincerely apologize. I believe that is how our God handles His masterpiece, with care and love! Amen.

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

- 1) Recall the religious moment that made you realize the precious value of your existence after accepting Jesus as your Savior. How will you be grateful?
- 2) Did you experience a moment of pain when you felt like God was punishing you? How did you respond to Him at that time, and what comfort and restoration did He give you? What religious lessons did you learn as a result?
- 3) What influence does the recognition and belief that you were created as a masterpiece of the Creator have on your life and interpersonal relationships?