

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
February 28, 2016

Prophecy of Sufferings

1 Peter 1:10-12

1:10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully,

1:11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

1:12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

1. Main Theme of the Bible

What do you expect from the Bible or Bible messages? Is it knowledge on Christianity, wisdom for life or the cheer-leading words? Could it be a tearful story? Of course the Bible is a treasure of wisdom and knowledge as well as a source for all the studies. Those who were deeply touched by the Bible words produced many art works. People have been encouraged and comforted by the Bible words and found peace. The Bible protected people from temptations and guided their lives to the right direction. The Bible has supported the society and changed the world.

However, the value of the Bible is not due to its readerships or contributions to the society. The Bible stands because it is the book to provide salvation through Jesus Christ. The Bible words keep us alive and strengthen us because it contains the news of salvation by Jesus

Christ, that is the gospel.

Pastor Greg Laurie once spoke at the Harvest America as follows; “Christ had come down to the earth from the heaven as a human, died for our sins on the cross and resurrected on the third day. He has ascended to the Heaven and prays for us. Christ will once again come to the earth to save the world.” Then, there was a storm of applause from the audience. I will talk to you later but Pastor Greg has a moving testimony. He is so good at speaking the truth of the Bible relating to our daily life. But the reason why people had gave such a big applause was not because they heard a wonderful speech or moving stories. As 1 Timothy 3:16 says, “He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.” It is because Pastor Greg spoke the core of the gospel.

The core of the gospel is the Cross and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Gospel of Mathew, Mark, Luke and John uses one third of the contents to describe the last week of the life of Lord Jesus and ends with the news of His Resurrection. Early churches spoke about the Cross of Jesus Christ and testified the Resurrection of Christ. The Cross of Jesus Christ and the Resurrection are the main subjects of the Bible.

We may get excited to hear the story that gives us eureka moment. Those excitements, however, gradually fade away. Even the most moving story will lose its power to excite people after repeated talks. But the Good News of the Cross and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ will never ever fade away. The hymn titled “Tell Me the Story of Jesus” sings “Tell me the story of Jesus, who was crucified on the

cross for redeeming us from sin. Every time I listen or read, my heart become open to God and my eyes are filled with tear of gratitude” in Japanese translation. As the lyrics of this song, the news of the cross of Jesus Christ and His Resurrection will move our hearts every time we hear or read and give us believers a power to live.

2. Prophecy of the Cross

The Cross and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was written in detail in the New Testament, and also prophesied in the Old Testament. After the Resurrection, Lord Jesus appeared in front of disciples and said “All the things written about me in Moses’ law and prophets and Psalms were fulfilled”, “Christ shall be suffered and risen from the dead at the third day” and taught in detail about the prophecies of the Cross and the Resurrection of Christ described in the Old Testament. Therefore, the New Testament said, “the Words of the Bible were fulfilled in these ways” in many places. And many of them are related to the Cross of Lord Jesus.

The most famous one is Isaiah 52:13-53:12. An eunuch of Ethiopia, shown in Act 8, was reading the prophet Isaiah in his carriage. “He was oppressed and He was afflicted. Yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?” (Isaiah 53:7-8) And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” Then Philip

opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. If we read well these verses, we would know that these words prophesy the Cross of Jesus Christ.

The reason that God prophesied the Cross and the Resurrection is let people know that when it happens, this is the salvation God planned for all mankind. We can know by prophecies of the Bible that it is not a only happening but God of love has provided the salvation for us. There is nothing exactly fulfilled like the prophecies of the Bible. The prophecy is the one of the evidences that the Bible is the Word of God, and it proved that the salvation of Jesus Christ is perfect and reliable.

3. Good News for Us

Then, who is the Good News for? Who do the prophets expect to read the prophecy of the Good News? According to today's verses, it says, "It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you." The prophets of the Old Testament prophesied about the coming salvation for those who live in the posterior generation. The prophecy of the Bible is for us, living the present generation.

In the subsequent verses, it also tells us that the prophecy was not for the angels but for the people, saying, "in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look." The achievement of the prophecy of the Bible, which fulfills the plan of salvation from God, would have been the concern of angels. The Bible says, the salvation by Jesus Christ was the "mystery" or "secret" hidden in the deep mind of God; however, it no

longer is the secret and was revealed to us now. The things above might have already been announced to the angels, but God told us first about the plan, which was not yet known by angels.

The salvation of Jesus Christ is the salvation from sin; then, because angels are not sinful, they could praise God but would not receive. Thus, human beings are the only existences forgiven through Jesus Christ, freed from the chain of sin, and saved joyfully to praise. We praise to harmonize with angels' praising, but there is a song that angels cannot sing. They are the songs of redeemed people. Angels are always close to God in heaven, and God recognizes those who repent and believe as His children and invites them closer than angels are. We are less than angels for wisdom, knowledge or power, but He still make angels to serve the believers.

The Good News prophesied by prophets, delivered by Holy Spirit, and beheld by angels are for us. It could be said that everything told in the Bible are for us now living in present time. God, our Father, would like us to hear the Good News of salvation to that extent, and guides us to repent and have faith. Consequently, we are surrounded by the great love of God throughout.

When Pastor Greg Laurie was 17 years old, he sought the salvation and accepted Jesus Christ. His previous life was very rough. His mother was alcoholic and repeated marriage and divorce seven times. Fortunately, his mother's marriage partners were rich so that he was free from financial worry; however, his heart was never satisfied. When he was 17 years old, he felt like he was 70 years old since he had seen low, dirty and mean aspects of human beings. He hated alcohol because of his mother; however, he started to drink at a party

when he was still teenager, and used drugs for two years. Moreover, the alcohol and drug were not for satisfying his heart. His heart was dominated by the deep darkness. At that time, a speaker from the Calvary Chapel visited his high school to hold an evangelistic session. At the beginning of the session, he resisted the message but started think “Oh I might be able to solve my problem is if this is true”. Then he noticed “How can I change myself? There is nothing except believing in Jesus Christ”. The speaker invited the students to faith saying, “Please come to the front if you believe in Jesus Christ”, and Greg answered. At this moment, he was released from the deep darkness in his heart.

Since then, Pastor Greg has been saved by this Gospel. His mission is to testify the Gospel and to tell them to people. He noticed that it was the purpose of his life. He was called by God and became a pastor to preach the Good News to people. The Cross and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the Good News that can be told by the believers. Perhaps, you can not wait to tell, it should be told. We would like to send this message, which has been prophesied for long time and now are preached, to the people who are looking for light in their darkness. We would like to pray for the people who are struggling in their darkness so that they may find the salvation by this Good News.

(Prayer)

Dear heavenly Father, the light of the Scripture shines the Cross and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. And the Cross and the Resurrection shines the people who believe in the Lord who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. Please lead and help us

go forward the light from the darkness as we hear the Good News. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.