

Sunday, September 8, 2024 Sunday Morning Worship Sermon

「What God Has Done」 Pastor Takaaki Inoue  
Acts 21:1~24, John 8:42~47

① 【Faith prompted by the Holy Spirit】

Paul returned to Jerusalem after his second missionary journey. In Miletus, he invited the elders of Ephesus and said, "I am going to Jerusalem at the urging of the Spirit, and I have no idea what will happen to me there. Only imprisonment and tribulation await me is that the Holy Spirit has made it clear to me in every city." (Acts 20:22~23). In Caesarea, they stay in the house of Philip, the evangelist, and a prophet named Agapo came and took Paul's girdle, bound his hands and feet with it, and said, "Thus is the Holy Spirit saying: In Jerusalem the Jews will bind the bearer of this girdle in this way and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." (Acts 21:11). Everywhere he went, the Holy Spirit taught him that he would be imprisoned. The people ask Paul not to go to Jerusalem, but Paul does not listen and goes up to Jerusalem. When I go to Jerusalem, I am compelled and prompted by the Holy Spirit. I don't want to do that either. But the Holy Spirit is making it so.

●Martin Luther King Jr., who led the Black Liberation Movement, said in his book *Love Your Enemies*: "There is hardly a day that my family and I have not been exposed to the threat of death. I've been stung and wounded almost fatally. In the true sense of the word, I had been battered by the storm of persecution. I must confess that on some occasions I felt that I could no longer bear such burdens, and was tempted to take refuge in a quieter, more idyllic life. But every time such temptation came to me, something strengthened and sustained my resolve."

As long as you don't exercise like this, you will be safe and you can live a peaceful life, and there are people who live like that. There are times when I think that no matter how much I scream, it won't happen, and that I should stop now, but a mysterious force works and drives me. This "something" is the Holy Spirit.

●Pastor Yasuo Enomoto writes: "I think the compulsion of the Holy Spirit is the power that makes us feel compelled to do it, even though we know it's a loss, it's a trivial thing, and it's the kind of power that drives us down that path without making our lives or other things a problem."

I think Paul was very happy when he realized that he was not saved by his own works, but by Christ unilaterally. It means that he was seriously thinking about salvation up to that point. That's why I wanted to convey it, even if it meant giving up my own life.

●Pastor Yasuo Enomoto also wrote: "If you don't have the passion to spare your life for the gospel, how can you preach the gospel to people? How much will it resonate with people's souls by preaching the gospel while ensuring a comfortable life? It is the appearance of living the gospel that makes people afraid."

② **【Those who believe in the power of man and those who believe in the power of God】** When he arrived in Jerusalem, he greeted James, the bishop of the Jerusalem church, and the elders of the church, and explained in detail "what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry" (Acts 21:19). This is how Paul always speaks. During the first missionary journey, it is written, "God was with them and reported all that was done" (Acts 14:27). Instead of saying, "I did this," we say, "God did this through me." Who the subject is, whether it is me or God, is very important in our faith.

●In the book of Acts, there is a person named Apollos. He was described as an Alexandrian-born Jew who was well versed in the Bible and eloquent (Acts 18:24). However, Peter and Andrew, just because they were fishermen, are not mentioned at all as competent or religious. Apollo was a competent teacher, but he lacked something. It appears in Acts chapter 19. When Paul met the Christians in Ephesus, he felt that something was wrong, so he asked, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you came into the faith" (Acts 19:2), and they replied, "No, I have never heard if there is a Holy Spirit." When Paul asked, "Then what kind of baptism did you receive?" he replied, "The baptism of John (the Baptist)." The disciples who did not know this Holy Spirit were the disciples taught by Apollos. The problem with Apollos was that he did not believe in the Holy Spirit, but in the power of man.

There are two kinds of believers in the Bible. This is the same in Christendom today. There are those who believe in the power of man and those who believe in the power of God. It can also be rephrased as the faith of the flesh and the faith of the Holy Spirit. Those who believe in human power say, "I have done this and that," but those who believe in the Holy Spirit say, "God has done this and that." It doesn't really matter who I am. The most important thing is what God chose me to do and worked unilaterally to do it. Let's talk about God. Those who have not experienced God cannot speak of Him. That's why we can only talk about human things. It doesn't smell like God. Even now, there are pastors and believers who believe in the flesh. Watch out for them.

③ **【The temptation of faith is the work of trying to perfect it in the flesh】**

Upon hearing Paul's report, the people of the Jerusalem church praised God. Then he said to Paul: Rumors have been circulating here that you are breaking the law and teaching you to stay away from Moses. So go to the temple with the person who has made the vow and have them cleansed, pay for them, and prove to everyone that you are living righteously in keeping the law. Then the misunderstanding will melt away. Since he praised God's work, it is understandable that he would ask God to solve this problem, but he immediately thought of a human craft and tried to overcome it with human strength. Here lies the temptation of faith. All you had to do was pray, "Many people misunderstand and hate you, but you stand up for your faith and speak your faith in Jerusalem, and God will surely show you that you are right and that your faith is true." They quickly forget God and try to believe in it through human power and intrigue. These were the core members of the Jerusalem Church. However, this human conspiracy is soon frustrated. While Paul was in the temple, he was captured by the Jews and beaten by the crowd, and the city was in an uproar, and a thousand Roman captains were sent to protect him. When Paul was taken to the barracks, he stood at the top of the stairs and told the story of his encounter with the resurrected Jesus, pleading with the captain of the thousands, "Please let me speak to these people" (Acts 21:39). He realized that his attempt to get through it through human manipulation was a mistake, and that what he had to do was to confess clearly the wondrous work that God had done for him. This would be Paul's repentance. The book of Acts teaches us how to live a life of faith. Since we started with the Holy Spirit, we must not finish with the flesh. You should not go back to meat either. The same was true of the Galatian church, and the Christian church today has fallen into the same temptation. God came to me. The kingdom of God has come from heaven to earth. That's how it touched me, and faith and life began in me. Let's rejoice in it. We want to continue to be able to rejoice in what God has done for us.