

**I want to live with  
The death perspective.**

**James Kim**

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# Introduction

The Lord was teaching me a death perspective.

The Lord gave me a heart and passion for young people when I went to South Korea for a while and served as an education pastor at Seohyun Church. But the Lord brought me back to Victory Presbyterian Church in United State with His promise word "... I ... will build My church ..." (Mt. 16:18) and gave me an opportunity to serve the elders of the church. I prayed because I didn't know what the will of the Lord was. In the midst of this, the Lord made me even lead the funeral service of the elders of the church and made me think of my own death. And as the Lord gave me lessons about death, He planted the death perspective in my heart. And I came to realize at least little bit that this is the Lord's will. The Lord was teaching me the death perspective by making me to return to Victory Presbyterian Church to serve the elders of the church. From that point on, I began to exhort myself and also the members of our church to live with the death perspective. In addition, through the Internet ministry Naver Blog, Facebook, and KakaoTalk Stories and others, I began to share the lesson that we should all live with the death perspective.

Meanwhile, at the Morning Prayer yesterday, I was praying alone after preaching based on the word of Isaiah 40:1, "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God" and I thought that it would be good to make a book manuscript by collecting all my writings about the death perspective that the Lord has taught me on my Naver blog and share it with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. So I prayed that I would not only comfort God's people who are grieving by leaving their loved ones, friends, brothers, and sisters first, but also help them to have the death perspective that the Lord has taught me.

So, from yesterday until now, I found all my writings on my blog that would be helpful to have the death perspective and collected them all here under the title "I want to live with a death perspective". Mainly, the writings here are the writings that I meditated on the words of God, the short writings of meditation, and the writings about my personal family ministry and church ministry. I hope and pray that the Lord grant me the desire of my heart which is to live with the death perspective according to the Lord's will and face a beautiful death, but also comfort God's people through this book by instilling them the death perspective.

Thinking of Jesus Christ who died on the cross for such sinner like me,

James Kim

(August 1, 2018, As I miss my dear brothers and sisters in Christ who were embraced in the arms of the Lord)

# **Let us have the death perspective.**

**“It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart.” (Ecclesiastes 7:2)**

In this New Year 2008, I have already been to two funerals within a week. While attending two funerals, I once again meditated on Ecclesiastes 7:2 – “It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart.” As I was reminded of the fact that the destiny of every man is death and as I should take this to heart, I thought again and asked the question, ‘How should I really live?’ In particular, today, after I heard that Pastor Chang-hyuk Kim, my beloved third uncle, had 2-3 weeks left according to the doctor in charge, I meditated on the word of Ecclesiastes 7:2 again and took this to my heart. In the midst of this, the challenge I received is that I should live with the death perspective.

Why should we live with the death perspective? The reason is because it is beneficial to us. What are the benefits? There are many benefits, but I want to share only three.

**First, when we live with the death perspective, we acknowledge human incapacity and helplessness, and thus become more and more totally dependent on God.**

What I felt again while attending both funerals was the fact that humans have no choice but to come from dust and return to dust. As the Bible says, we are like a mist that appears for a moment and then disappears (Jam. 4:14). In the face of death, we humans cannot help but feel powerless and helpless. No matter how well-known or rich we are in our business, all human beings cannot help but feel their powerlessness and helplessness in the face of death. Especially young people should go to funerals more. This is because they can thoroughly understand the powerlessness and helplessness of humans. Why should we do this? For me, one of the reasons is so that I can lose some of my strength and power. In other words, I want to go to the funeral to lose my strength and power and rely on God's strength and power.

We people need to be a little shabby. We need to be thoroughly humble before God rather than in front of people. Considering that death is approaching before God, we should let go of our own strength and bow down before God and rely on His strength and power. We must learn that God is in control of life and death, even through funerals. We must learn to recognize God's sovereignty. We must admit that our lives depend on the Lord. In order to do that, we must see ourselves with the death perspective.

Personally, I like to sing the hymn “Simply Trusting Every Day” often. The lyrics and refrain of verse 1 of the hymn are as follows: “Simply trusting ev’ry day, Trusting through a stormy way; Even when my faith is small, Trusting Jesus, that is all. Trusting as the moments fly, Trusting as the days go by; Trusting Him whate’er befall, Trusting Jesus, that is all.” God is making me realize how weak my own faith is even through the difficulties that my loved ones are going through these days. Therefore, the Lord is making me rely on Him more and more. I am learning human weakness and God's strength as I come into contact with the reality of human beings who are bound to get old and sick as the years go by. Therefore, I want to look back on life from a more death perspective.

**Second, when we live with the death perspective, we seek the eternal rather than the momentary.**

It is often said that we come empty-handed and leave this world empty-handed. Even though we know that, we are busy living to fill our hands with something. Then, when we attend the funeral of a loved one, we are stimulated again and think a little about what we should live for and how we should live. Even then, we forget the things we made up our minds on at the funeral and live a busy life without a break to fill our hands with something again. What are the results of hard work without enjoying rest? We will end up going to the grave empty-handed.

If we are true believers in Jesus, we need to look back on our own lives from the death perspective through the funeral and think about what and how we will live for the days God allows us to live on this earth in the future. When we do this, we think of things above rather than things of this world. And we think that we should pursue eternal things rather than momentary things. And we will realize that this world is not our home. And like the fathers of faith in Hebrews 11, we will long for a better home and go to that heaven. Why? The reason is because when we look at the world from the death perspective, we cannot but agree with Solomon's words that the worldly things pursued in this world are vain and meaningless (Eccle. 1:2; 12:8). We realize that after the world has passed, only the eternal remains forever. And we learn to let go of the momentary things we longed for and pursue in this world and no longer attach great importance to them. In the midst of this, we renew our determination to value what is truly eternal and live for it. For the sake of the eternal Lord, we are determined to live by preaching the gospel to eternal souls with eternal love according to the eternal Word.

I often think of my own death and funerals when I see the bodies or coffins of loved ones who came to dust and returned to dust. Indeed, as the Bible says in Ecclesiastes 7:1, I think about what is better for the day of death than the day of birth. Since King Solomon said that “A good name is better than fine perfume (v. 1), I wonder if the name “James Kim” will feel beautiful in the hearts of those whom God has given me through my own death. I can only imagine how many people would say, ‘James Kim pursued eternal things and went to the eternal place he longed for’ when they think of my name in their minds. Even though we live in this world, in order to live like those who live in the world to come, we must live from the death perspective. While we live in this world with an eternal perspective, we must live in pursuit of eternal things.

**Third and last, when we live with the death perspective, we can save time.**

A man who lives with the death perspective is a wise man. And the wise man seeks eternal things. In the midst of this, the wise man is very careful how he lives – not as unwise but as wise (Eph. 5:15). For example, the wise man doesn't get drunk on wine which leads to debauchery (v. 18). Because he knows that such a life is a foolish life (v. 17). Since he knows that the days are evil, he makes the most of every opportunity (v. 16). And he tries to understand what the Lord's will is and does His will (v. 17). Therefore, he is living a life filled with the Holy Spirit, praising and worshiping God with his heart (v. 19). And he always gives thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 20).

It seems the logic of life is to realize that the older we get, the more we feel that the time passes so quickly. Of course, there are many people who ignore this fact and waste their time even when they are older. How can we save the time that passes so quickly? Attending a funeral and contemplating one's own death is one way. Even if we live as busy as we would for the rest of our lives, when we attend the funeral of a loved one, we should at least once look back on our lives and think about the end of our lives. And we have to think about how we are going to live our lives and how we will end it. The reason is because our funerals aren't too far away. It's just an acorn height difference.

I am already 40 years old. If the average life expectancy is 70 to 80, then I'm already half-lived. Of course, I don't know when God will call me. Somehow, these days, I think about the importance of living day by day. Because no one knows what will happen tomorrow. Just because God has given us today, I think we can do our best to live for God's glory. And if God allows tomorrow, then we can live with the same attitude we have today. I don't want to cling to the past too much, nor do I feel the need to be so lively and fussy about the future. I just want to enjoy living with the Lord every day, rejoicing and giving thanks to Him. Then I think that even if I die tonight, I will be able to go to the Lord with thanksgiving. What about the years that have already passed? I don't know how many years God has left me on this earth (I don't need to know). But I just want to depend on the Lord day by day and to pursue eternal things. I want to live for the glory of the Lord while walking with Him and fulfilling His work that He has entrusted to me.

Beloved pastor Chang-hyuk Kim is in the midst of a very weak body right now. I remember him who had a hard time getting up from the sofa himself. In the midst of this, I remember how Pastor Kim praised the chorus of hymn "How Great Thou Art," "Then sing my soul, My Savior God, to Thee/ How great Thou art, How great Thou art ..." to God vigorously as he relied on God. Although his body is in great weakness, his soul is like an eagle flying toward the sky. The soul of the pastor who praises "How great Thou art" depends only on the eternal God. I am making this confession in front of God and you while participating in the earnest prayer for pastor Chang-hyuk Kim who wants only the glory of God to be manifested: 'Even if I live, I want to live like the dead.' I want to live from the death perspective. In order to do that, I want to accept King Solomon's counsel more and go to the funeral. And I want to go to the funeral and think about the death which is the destiny of every man. I want to feel it and write it on the tablet of my heart. And I want to live the rest of my life from the death perspective, day by day, pursuing eternal things, relying on the Lord more and more. Then, even if I die, I believe I will live forever. Amen.



After my soul praise the Lord, “How great Thou art”,

James Kim

(January 30, 2008)

# The death of His saints

## **"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints." (Psalms 116:15)**

Last Saturday (November 19, 2016), after giving a death service to God at 12 pm, my church member Dok-II An fell asleep in the presence of his family. His daughter Jinkyung sent me a text message via KakaoTalk at 3:14 pm: 'My father has passed away. Rest in peace with God ... Thank you.' So I replied to her: 'Let us thank God for his peaceful sleeping in the arms of God.' After hearing the news, I shared the news of his death in our church KakaoTalk room. Then, about 10 minutes later, our church retired pastor in the mission field left a message in the church KakaoTalk room as was thinking about the late Dok-II An: 'A funeral song (Korean) Hymn 480, an elegy Psalms 116:15. May God give his family members much comfort (1 Thess. 4:13-18).' So, I decided today's sermon passage to be Psalms 116:14 for the late Dok-II An's viewing service, Hymn 480 ("I Will Meet You in the Morning") for the hymn after the sermon, and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 for the graveyard service sermon passage. The reason I did this is because the retired pastor loved brothers in Christ Dok-II An more than I did and was praying more earnestly for him from afar. Two days ago, his wife sister in Christ Kyung-Ja An and their daughter Jinkyung came to church after they visited a Korean mortuary in order to prepare for the funeral. At that time, through Mrs. An, I became more aware of when and how they started coming to our church. At that time, in our church, our retired pastor, who was a senior pastor, was running a seminary, and both Mr. and Mrs. An attended that seminary. It was an opportunity for them to start attending our church, and it has been 22 years already. That is why our church called the deceased An "Evangelist An" (in Korean, An Jun-do-sa-nim). My heart was touched when I thought of the word that Evangelist An had said while he was conscious through his wife Mrs. An while he was thinking about our church, which he loved.

Today, as we are having the viewing service for the late Dok-II An, I give my thanks to the bereaved family members whom Mr. An loves, our church family, and you mourners, under the title "The death of His saints" based on the word of Psalms 116:15. I would like to receive the lessons God gives us by considering the three things to keep in mind.

### **First, we must all remember that one day we will all die.**

Look at Ecclesiastes 7:2 – "It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart." This truth is already known to all of us. We know that death is the end of all people on this earth. Nevertheless, it seems that we don't take our own death to

heart. It maybe because we are busy living. Maybe we even have a tendency to take death a bit lightly. We must live with the death perspective. In order to do that, perhaps we need to feel the danger of death, and “the anguish of the grave” while living on this earth (Ps. 116:3). As King Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 7:2, the best way is to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting. That is, it is better to go to a funeral rather than a wedding. Personally, when I attend funerals, I often think of myself inside the coffin during the viewing service and being buried in the grave at the graveyard service. May you should try the same. At the same time, we have to think about how we should live the rest of our lives on this earth before God with the death perspective. At that time, the conclusion we need to draw is like the psalmist, “that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living” (v. 9).

### **Second, we must keep in mind that the death of His saints is precious in His sight.**

Look at Psalms 116:15 – “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.” Why does God regard the death of His saints as precious? The reason is because we, the believers, are precious and honored in God’s sight (Isa. 43:4). How did we become precious and honored in the sight of God? This is because God loved us even by sacrificing His precious Son Jesus Christ on the cross in order to save us, forgiving us all our sins and justifying us. Therefore, we, who are precious and honored in the sight of God, should know that the grace of salvation that God bestows in Christ is too great. Then, like the psalmist, we should serve the Lord faithfully as His servants (v. 16), pondering, “How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me?” (v. 12) And we must worship God with thanksgiving and offer ourselves to the Lord (v. 17) and live according to His will (v. 9).

### **Third and last, we must remember that there will be no more death.**

Look at Revelation 21:4 – “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” Evangelist An suffered from an illness since 1994, about 22 years ago. From then on, he started dialysis and had a kidney transplant about 11 years ago. But he was ill and suffered from the disease for a long time. So I delivered a message of hope to him through the word of Revelation 21:4 when he was conscious at lunchtime last Friday. I told him that he will be held in the arms of the Lord, and there will be no more pain and he will enjoy freedom from pain. After he passed away, his daughter Jinkyung told me that he was peaceful. I was very grateful. Deacon Victor Kim, who is a missionary in Egypt, wrote in the church KakaoTalk room: ‘Victory Presbyterian Church are all respectable people, but Evangelist An wasn’t afraid of sickness and death and showed the hope of heaven through his words and actions.’ The late Evangelist Dok-II An is at rest in the arms of the Lord as the psalmists said to himself, “Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the LORD has been good to you” (v. 7).

We who believe in Jesus are His saints. The death of His saints is precious in the sight of God. In order to face such a precious death, we must worship God while remembering and giving thanks for all the grace God has bestowed us in Jesus. And we must live according to God's will and face a beautiful death. After that, I hope and pray that you and I will all meet together in heaven.

1. I will meet you in the morning Just inside the Eastern Gate;  
Then be ready, faithful pilgrim, Lest with you it be too late.
2. Keep your lamps all trimmed and burning, For the Bridegroom watch and wait;  
He'll be with us at the meeting Just inside the Eastern Gate.
3. Oh, the joys of that glad meeting With the saints who for us wait!  
What a blessed happy meeting, Just inside the Eastern Gate.

[Chorus]

I will meet you, I will meet you, Just inside the Eastern Gate over there;  
I will meet you, I will meet you, I will meet you in the morning over there.

(Korean Hymn, "I Will Meet You in the Morning")

As I want to face the death of a saint who is precious in the sight of God,

James Kim

(November 23, 2016, A sermon that I preached at the viewing service of Evangelist Dok-II An)

## **‘The living should take this to heart’**

**“A good name is better than fine perfume, and the day of death better than the day of birth. It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, because a sad face is good for the heart. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure.” (Ecclesiastes 7:1-4)**

On Thursday, April 20, 2008, there was interesting news in South Korea YTN 11 o'clock night news. The news was about some people taking pictures for their funerals, writing their last will letters, reading that letters in a mortuary room. I saw most of them crying when they were reading down their letters. Not only did they read down their letters, but they actually went into their coffins in the mortuary room. Then the other person slowly poured the soil over the coffin with a shovel. When I was watching that moment I thought if a person who was inside the coffin heard that sound of the soil, he would probably felt real about his death. The response of those who experienced their dying process was "I wanted to live more." And they said that they remembered their family members the most when they were going through that dying process. I heard the person who is the director of the death experience center came out and said, so many people are interested about their own well-being but not many people were interested in well-dying. He said that was why he started this program. You might think that what a strange program that is. But personally I thought it was a good idea to have that kind of program. I think it is good if we could feel our deaths more realistically so that we can prepare to die.

In Ecclesiastes 7:2, King Solomon says that "the living should take this to heart." What is "this" here? Here, "this" is the destiny of everyone which is death. Look at Ecclesiastes 7:2 – “It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart.” We have to think about our death. We have to ponder about the fact that someday we all have to our end in this earth, which is death. From this point of view of death, we have to think seriously and momentarily about how we shall live. How can we do that? King Solomon gives us good way in Ecclesiastes 7:2. What is that good way? It is to go to a house of mourning (v. 2). In other words, going to a funeral is a good way to think about death. There is no better way to think about our own death than to go to a funeral. As we mourn the death of the deceased, we can imagine what death we will face in this world. I personally have a thought to attend my funeral and often feel my death more realistically. My thought is to live well in order to die well. In the end, death at a funeral gives me an opportunity to

think about how to live well.

But what is the problem? It is that our instinct prefers to go to the house of feasting rather than the house of mourning. This means we like laughter than sadness (v. 3). In other words, we like to enjoy the physical pleasure than to visit those who have lost their beloved one (Park Yun-sun). But as King Solomon had already said in Ecclesiastes 2:11, physical pleasure is useless. In other words, going to the feast house and enjoying worldly pleasures is of no benefit in God's perspective. Rather, King Solomon says that what is beneficial is to go to the house of mourning and experience grief. Why does he say that sadness is better than laughter? It is because "a sad face is good for the heart" (v. 3). What does it mean? It means that our hearts are softened by the sorrow of the death (Park Yun-sun). And when our hearts are soften, we will not pursue this worldly pleasure and waste our lives in vain. Instead, we will humble ourselves before the Lord and will be in obedience to the Word of God and live a profitable life in the sight of God. So this is what King Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 7:4 – "The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure."

Our hearts should not be in the house of pleasure. In other words, our hearts should not be in the house of feasting where we can enjoy physical pleasure. Rather, our hearts must be in the house of mourning. We should like to go to the funeral better than the wedding. And we should go to the funeral and think about our death before the death of the deceased. We also have to go someday when the Lord calls us. The reason is because death is the destiny for all of us (v. 2). Therefore, we should think about our death and how we should live beautifully today. We have to leave the "good name" in this world (v. 1). What is the best beautiful name? We must keep in mind that it is the Name "Jesus". We who believe in Jesus should imitate Him so that at our funeral we can leave the memories of Jesus likeness to our children's hearts, in the hearts of our descendants and our neighbors. Therefore, at our funeral, there must be true praise when our children, descendants, or even neighbors think about our names. Furthermore, the people should gratefully praise God in thanksgiving as they mourn over our death.

As I want to leave the name "Christian" in my children's hearts,

James Kim

(Desiring to live with the death perspective)

# “The same destiny overtakes all”

## [Ecclesiastes 9:2-6]

Have you ever heard of "Paul Syndrome"? "Paul Syndrome" is a syndrome that hit the World Cup in South Africa. It refers to the syndrome produced by the "fortune-teller octopus" named Paul. Paul who lives at the aquarium of Oberhausen Marine Biological Museum in western Germany, predicted the scores of the World Cup match and they were 100% right. Paul predicted 100% right for the German soccer team for 8 games total including the championship (Internet). I also saw the news about this octopus on TV and the Internet, but I thought it was ridiculous. The reason for this was not only the octopus but also other animals that are called the fortune teller and the star astrologer. It was funny that in the betting business, there are also some businesses that have made a lot of money because of this fortune teller octopus Paul. After winning the finals, I saw the Spanish player on the TV saying "Long live Paul". I just laughed.

Why do you think people see fortune-tellers? Isn't it because they want to know the future? But the Bible speaks clearly that we can not comprehend the future (Eccle. 7:14; 8:7). Only God, who controls the past, present, and future, knows all about our future. But there is one thing you and I know clearly about our future. What is that? It is the fact that all of us will die ultimately. And no one will deny that the end of man is death. But what we do not know is that people will react differently to this definite future that we all know. How do you respond to your eventual death?

When we look at Ecclesiastes 9: 2-3, King Solomon, says four times, 'There is one fate.' What is he saying 'There is one fate' over and over again? It is death that is the end of all of us. In other words, King Solomon says that the end of all of us is death. Look at Ecclesiastes 9:2 – "It is the same for all There is one fate for the righteous and for the wicked; for the good, for the clean and for the unclean; for the man who offers a sacrifice and for the one who does not sacrifice. As the good man is, so is the sinner; as the swearer is, so is the one who is afraid to swear." King Solomon tells us that the righteous and the wicked, the good and the sinful, the good and the clean, the unclean, the man who offers the sacrifice and the one who does not, all die in the end. There will be no one in this world who will deny this truth. Everyone knows that our end in this earth is death. Whether we are Christians or non-Christians, we all agree that death is our end in this world. But there are things that we Christians do not agree with non-Christians. It is what happens after death. In other words, Christians and non-Christians agree that death is the end in this Age, but they are differ concerning the The Coming Age. We Christians believe in the life in the Coming Age after the death. In other words, we believe in eternal life. But the non-Christians do not believe in the life of the Coming Age. They do not believe in eternal life. They do not believe the Bible's teaching about heaven and hell. This is the difference between Christians and non-Christians.

What must we do? Unlike non-Christians, we who believe in the Coming Age, what must we do? We should listen to the words of Ecclesiastes 7:2 – “It is better to go to a house of mourning Than to go to a house of feasting, Because that is the end of every man, And the living takes it to heart.” We should take this truth to our hearts that everyone’s end is dead in this earth. As we do so, we must live the rest of our lives with death perspective. How should we live in this world with death perspective? I would like to think of 2 things based on Ecclesiastes 9:2-6.

**First, we must live in repentance of our sins that are in our hearts with a view of death.**

Look at Ecclesiastes 9:3 – “This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one fate for all men Furthermore, the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives. Afterwards they go to the dead.” Since there is not much difference regarding the consequences of what the righteous men or the wicked men face in this earth, those who belong to this world, the wicked, take this as an opportunity to commit sins all the days of their lives(Park Yun-sun). For example, when the wicked perceive the righteous who believe in Jesus as suffering as they do, the wicked commit sins because they perceive that there is no distinction between believing in Jesus and not believing, And the reason why the wicked sin is more and more boldly guilty is because the punishment of God is not carried out quickly on the evil things that he does (8:11). Therefore, the wicked not only will not but also cannot repent of their sins even before death. Rather, in front of death they are bold to commit sin.

How would you respond if you knew that your death was imminent? For example, how would you respond if your doctor told you that you can only live six months or a year? I think there can be at least two reactions: (1) Trying to do whatever I want to do within the days to live, or (2) Looking back at myself in front of death and repent my sins that I committed against God. And I think that the first of two reactions is likely to be more reactive than the second one. The reason is that those who do not believe in Jesus can never look back on themselves before death and give true repentance to God. So if we include these non-believers as well as believers who want to do what they want to do in front of death, like non-repentant and non-believers, the first response seems to be more than the second. The biblical basis is that when we see the Israelites at the time of the Old Testament exodus, we can see how they were so stubborn, the stiff-necked and refusing to repent, so that they were in the wrath of God. I think we are no different from them. Even before death we are slow to realize our sins and repent. My personal thoughts are that there are more people who try to live their lives as they would like to do instead of repenting their sins before their death. If we live our life like this even before our death, then “there is madness in their(our) hearts while they(we) live, and afterward they(we) join the dead” (9:3). We must not die this way. Instead, we must repent our sins that are filled in our hearts before we die.

When I thought about death, I thought about what Pastor Warren Wiersbe said. He said that death is like "X-ray power of death" (Wiersbe). This means that death is like an X-ray that lets us see things in our minds, just as



we do X-rays when we go to the hospital and do health checks. So, just as the X-ray shows what is in us, death gives us the opportunity to repent before God by bringing out the full sins that are in our hearts. In other words, God uses the means of death to make us the holy people of God by making us to repent our sins. Therefore, when we live in this world, we must live in repentance of the sins filled in our minds with a view of death. We must live our remaining lives by laying down our sins that are in our hearts before the cross by connecting our death to the death of Jesus on the cross. We must diligently lay down our sins before His cross. As we rely on the power of the blood of Jesus that was shed on the cross, we must lay down all our sins in front of the cross. Even though we have been sentenced to death, we must live the rest of our lives on this earth as we repent of the iniquities in our hearts. In doing so, we will be able to receive death worthy of God's sight as God's holy people.

### **Lastly, we must live with hope in our hearts with a view of death.**

Look at Ecclesiastes 9:4 – “Anyone who is among the living has hope --even a live dog is better off than a dead lion!” What do you think about the word “a live dog is better off than a dead lion”? For the Jews, "dog" was the most despicable animal (Walvoord). And as we know, the lion is king in animal kingdom. Nevertheless King Solomon is saying that a living dog is better than a dead lion. What does it mean? It means living is better than dead. Why is living better than death? The reason is that once a person dies, there is no chance to live right again, but to those who is still alive, they have opportunity to repent and hope to be right before God (Park Yun-sun). Therefore, the living dog is better than the dead lion. Therefore, we who are alive are better than those who are already dead, no matter how famous they were, no matter how wealthy and powerful they were.

How shall we live today? We must live to know that we are going to die. Look at Ecclesiastes 9:5 – “For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten.” As King Solomon is saying here, the dead do not know anything. To the dead, there is neither love nor hate nor envy (v. 6). Since they are already dead, “never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun” (v. 6). In a word, there is no hope for the dead. The dead do not have the understanding to look at the reward and act (Park, Yun-sun). The dead have no hope, and their names have been wiped out. But the living has hope. What kind of hope do the livings have? Since they know they will die, they have hope of awakening and to live with a new determination and resolution (Park Yun-sun). Do we have such hope? Do we know that we will die? And knowing that we will die, do we live with a new determination and resolution? We must repent when we have the opportunity to repent. There is not always an opportunity to repent. Knowing that we will someday die, we must turn away from sin when we are still living. And we must walk the right way in the right relationship with God. Never miss God's opportunity for repentance, and do not regret it too late. Let's not try to repent when it is too late to do so and we regret it. That is useless. After we die, we can not repent or regret. The opportunity to repent is now.

The same destiny overtakes all of us. Whether we are righteous or the wicked, all of our end is death is this earth. Knowing this, how shall we live in this world for a given time? We must live to repent of our sins that are filled in our hearts. We have to live in repentance, dependent on the power of the blood of Jesus on the cross each

day before our holy God, with a view of death while we ponder the death that functions like an X-ray that shows things in our hearts. We also have to live with hope in the mind with a view of death. We are the ones who have the hope in the Lord to determine to live a new life. In this hope, we must walk in the right path of the Lord with new resolution, repenting as the living ones. When we walk in the path of the Lord, we have hope in the future. Let us remember that the living dog is better than the dead lion.

As I want to live in repentance with the death perspective,

James Kim

(July 22, 2010, with the desire not to regret the life I lived when I died)

# Death is not the end.

**“So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. ... In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' ” (Acts 20:31, 35)**

As I meditate on the word of God, I have a view of life that God the Holy Spirit is planting in my heart. One of those views on life is that people come to dust and return to dust. In other words, the perspective that God the Holy Spirit instills in my heart through the word of God is the perspective of death. Look at the Bible Ecclesiastes 7:2 – “It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart.” So, even though I am alive now, I am praying, pondering, and working hard on how to live a life worthy of God’s view of life on this earth given the death perspective while thinking about my coming death. In the midst of this, after I preached the words of Acts 20:17-38 at the Morning Prayer meeting, I kept thinking during the prayer that ‘Death is not the end’. Of course, I know that death is not the end, because I believe there is a world after death. I didn’t think that death isn’t the end just thinking about the afterlife. But I thought that death is not the end because there are memories that we plant and leave to our loved ones and church members who remain on this earth even after we die. In other words, death isn’t the end because we leave memories to all the people in the encounters the Lord has allowed on this earth, such as family, relatives, church members, friends, neighbors, etc. Although we leave this world after death and go to the other world, heaven, our death isn’t the end because the loved ones who remain on this earth will live on this earth with the memories about us in their hearts. When I came to this view that death was not the end, I was compelled to kneel before the Lord and think again about how I should live the rest of my life on this earth.

Another view of life that God is instilling in me with the word of God is that “A life is making memories.” While living on this earth, our life is a series of encounters and partings. In these encounters and partings, we make memories in our relationships with each other during the given meeting period. Sometimes we make good memories. But we also make bad memories that we don't want. Therefore, we should think about what kind of memories we are planting in the other person’s memories in the encounters that God allows in His sovereignty. The reason is because the memories that are planted will affect the other person even when we die. For example, when we think of our family, we can instill both good and bad memories in our family members. If we leave this world with good memories in the Lord rather than the bad memories we don't want, our family members will have a good

influence on their lives even after we die. On the other hand, if we leave this world with more bad memories in our family members, we will have a bad influence on their lives even after we die. That's why I thought, "Death is not the end" this morning.

At the early Morning Prayer meeting today, I preached and prayed the words of Acts 20:17-38. And now after the Morning Prayer, I want to meditate on the text again like this. In particular, I want to focus on verses 31 and 35. The reason is that in these two verses there are words "remember" (v. 31) and "remembering" (v. 35). I would like to meditate on why apostle Paul told the Ephesian church elders to remember him in 2 ways when he was with in Ephesus for 3 years (v. 31), how he lived the whole time he was with them (v. 18) and what kind of memories he planted in their hearts.

### **First, the apostle Paul planted the word of God in the Ephesian church members.**

Look at Acts 20:31 – "So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears." From Miletus, Apostle Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church (v. 17). While giving a farewell sermon before them, he exhorted them to remember that he had been warning each one day and night with tears for 3 years (v. 31). Why did the Apostle Paul exhort the Ephesian elders to remember the warning? The reason is because he knew that after he left Ephesus, savage wolves would come in among them (v. 29), and would distort the truth in order to draw away the disciples after them (v. 30), and eventually would try to deceive the flock and lead them from the faith. In other words, Paul knew that heretics would come in and deceive the church members of the Ephesian church by distorting the truth, so that some of them would fall away from the faith. That was why Paul exhorted them to remember that he never stopped warning each of them night and day with tears. Do we really understand Paul's heart?

I applied this to my family to understand Paul's heart. As the head of the family, I thought for a moment what I would say to my wife at the crossroads of life and death if I had to leave first, leaving my beloved wife and three children in this world. As I leave my three children with my beloved wife, I ask myself if I can exhort my wife as Paul did to the elders of the Ephesian church. Perhaps I should say to my beloved wife: 'Remember, dear wife. Remember what I've been trying to instill in you and our children until this time. I have tried to instill in you and our three children the commandment to love Jesus. Please remember that. And I hope you can love Jesus twice more when I'm gone. And I hope that your love for Jesus can be planted in the hearts of these three children.' The reason I think I can say this to my beloved wife before death is because one of the two prayer topics that I have been praying for the family that the Lord will establish in the future is 'Love your spouse with God's love'. This is because I pray that my future spouse will also love me with the love of God. What is it that I love my wife or my three children with the love of God? It is keeping the commandments of God (Jn. 14:21). And in order to keep the commandments of God, I must diligently plant His word in my heart. It is my responsibility to teach my wife and my children to love the Bible and to read, hear, learn, and obey the word of God as I show first my devotion to His word. Is it really that I am faithfully bearing this responsibility to my beloved wife and children and to the members of Victory Presbyterian Church from the death perspective? I feel again the weight of this responsibility in this

morning. I wonder if, after I left like Paul, I could earnestly exhort my family and church members to remember the word of God that I diligently taught to them after knowing the infiltration and delusion of heresy, which is the temptation of Satan, among my family and members of the church. I am asking myself if I am warning them day and night with tears unceasingly like Paul so that my family members and the church members may stand firm in the word of God, so no matter what Satan's delusions may come, and do well until the day we meet the Lord faithfully without turning our back on Jesus. Even if I die, if my children and church members remember the words of God that I have taught, and if they can win the spiritual battle with those words and live their lives faithfully, what a blessing it is. Even if they forget the existence of "James", if they can keep their faith by remembering the word of God that God told them through me as my wife's husband, my children's father, and my church members' pastor, and can obey the word, and can fight spiritual battle with the assurance of victory, I wonder how happy I am as a husband, father, and pastor. What must I do to enjoy this blessing and happiness? Just as Paul taught the Ephesian church members when he was in Ephesus for three years, just as he preached and taught without hesitation in public or in each house whatever was beneficial to the Ephesian church members (v. 20), the lesson that I am learning is that I must teach them the word of God diligently and faithfully that is beneficial to them during the time I have with them in this earth. And just as Paul committed them to God and to the word of His grace, which can build the elders of the Ephesus church up and give them an inheritance among all those who are sanctified (v. 32), I also commit my beloved church members and my family to the Lord and the word of His grace. I believe that the Lord will build up God's children with His word. Therefore, this morning I again devote myself to the Lord and His word. I devote myself to planting God's word diligently in the church members, and in my family.

### **Second and last, the Apostle Paul planted the image of Jesus in the Ephesian church members.**

Look at Acts 2:35 – "In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" This verse is the Apostle Paul's farewell sermon to the elders of the Ephesus church, telling them that he set an example in everything while working with the Ephesian church members for three years, exhorting the elders to remember the word of Jesus. What is that word of Jesus? That word was "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Paul, who exhorted them to remember this word, told the elders of the Ephesian church that he set an example for all the Ephesian church members in obeying this word of Jesus that it is more blessed to give than to receive. For example, Paul didn't covet anyone's silver or gold or clothing (v. 33). In a word, he was not covetous. The reason is because a covetous man cannot obey Jesus' words that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Rather, the covetous man believes and obeys the exact opposite of the word of Jesus. The opposite here is that 'it is more blessed to receive than to give'. Not only was Paul not covetous, but rather he worked with his own hands and supplied his own needs and the needs of his companions (v. 34). Paul didn't receive from the Ephesian church members. Rather, he gave them. What did he give them? He didn't hesitate to proclaim to the Ephesian church members the whole will of God (v. 27). Paul didn't hesitate to preach anything that would be helpful to them but taught them publicly and from house to house (v. 20). In Ephesus he declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance

and had faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 21). Paul didn't just speak with his lips. He proved his faith in Jesus Christ with his life. He taught the will of God through his life. The will of God was to serve the Lord. That is why Paul told the elders of the church in Ephesus that he served the Lord with great humility and with tears, enduring trials (v. 19). Although he was compelled by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem (v. 22), and knew that in every city the Holy Spirit warned him that prison and hardships are facing him (v. 23), he said this about his determination to bear witness to the gospel of grace: "... I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace" (v. 24). Paul considered the will of God more important than his own life to finish the work of testifying the gospel. In other words, Paul didn't consider his life worth anything in order to fulfill God's will. After showing this example of life, Paul told the elders of the Ephesus church to 'remember'.

When I think of this example of Paul's life, I think of my father. And it reminds me of the late Henry Nouwen's book titled "The Living Reminder". And I remember the Korean hymn "We Shall be Like Him" that I sang twice during the Morning Prayer meeting today. And I prayed to God: 'Lord, I want to imitate the heart of Jesus. I want to be like Jesus. Make me a reminder of Jesus.' One of the two prayer topics that I personally pray for before getting married is, 'May my future spouse see the image of Jesus in me and I also see the image of Jesus in her'. As I have been praying until now, praying and pursuing until the day the Lord calls me is to imitate the image of Jesus. Therefore, if I can show my beloved wife and three children a little bit of Jesus before I die, I believe that is the best gift I can give to my family. So, at the early Morning Prayer meeting today, I especially sang the hymn "Lord, I Want to be a Christian" verse 4: "Lord, I want to be like Jesus In a my heart, in a my heart, Lord, I want to be like Jesus In a my heart. In a my heart, In a my heart, Lord, I want to be like Jesus In a my heart." This is my earnest prayer. The reason I pray so earnestly is because I believe that the work of he who imitates Jesus will continue even after his death. I believe that those who become like Jesus set the example of Jesus' life when they are alive, so the good memories planted in the hearts of our beloved brothers and sisters will work in their hearts even after they die. We should treasure the beautiful memories that are planted in our hearts as we meet with those whom we have fellowship in the Lord when they were alive and who remind us of Jesus even after their death. Those who have these beautiful memories planted in their hearts are truly blessed and truly rich.

The time will come. The time will surely come when we will have to leave this world and go to the Lord's side. We should cherish the encounters that God allows in God's sovereignty while we live in this world with this death perspective. And we must devote ourselves to making beautiful memories in the Lord through those encounters. Although bad memories can be given to each other during our encounters due to our sinful nature, we should devote ourselves in making more and more good memories in the Lord, so that the good memories cover the bad memories. In the midst of this, as the time of separation draws near, we must influence each other for good through the good memories the Lord has made for us. As we influence each other for good, we must do the Lord's will on earth as it is in heaven. In other words, we must serve the Lord with great humility, tears, and patience, and risk our lives to finish the work of bearing witness to the Lord's gospel. With such a strong sense of duty, we must prepare to part with our loved ones. We must prepare for a momentary separation on this earth. I earnestly hope

and pray that we can become a good influence on those we love even after we die by making many beautiful memories that bring out the fragrance of Jesus among the encounters the Lord allows with the death perspective.

As I want to be a reminder of Jesus who is a good influence on those I love even after death,

James Kim

(Thinking of my loving parents, both my parents and my wife's parents, who have such a good influence on me)

## Before I die ...

**“May the LORD, the God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the LORD's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd. ... Take vengeance on the Midianites for the Israelites. After that, you will be gathered to your people.” (Numbers 27:16-17; 31:2)**

What do I want from the Lord before I die? What is the final mission the Lord will command me to do before I die?

In Numbers 27:16-17, we see that Moses, who knew that he would die like his brother Aaron (v. 13), asked God for what he wanted. It wasn't that he asked God to extend his life (cf. 2 Kgs. 20:6). Moses didn't even ask God to let him go into Canaan, where he really wanted to go (Cf.: Deut. 34). In fact, Moses went up to Mount Abiram according to God's word and saw only the land of Canaan, which God had given to the Israelites, but could not enter into it and died (Num. 27:12-13). So, what did Moses want before he died? What he wanted God to appoint a man over the community of Israel so that the community of God would not be like sheep without a shepherd (vv. 16-17). In other words, before Moses died, he asked God to raise up a leader in the congregation of Israel who could lead the Israelites to the land of Canaan instead of him. Looking at this, we can see that Moses thought more about the people of Israel than himself. In other words, Moses cared more for God's people than himself.

When I meditated on these words, I thought of pastors who were retiring early for the church members. When they retired from a church that they had planted and served for 20-30 years, or even more than 40 years, I thought about how they felt when they retired early for the sake of the flock (the church members) more than themselves. When they retire, they will no longer be able to stand on the pulpit and preach, but will have to sit and listen to other pastors' sermons while sitting in the parish chair. When I think of the pastors who determine to retire for the sake of the church and put it into practice, I think that is the heart of the pastor. Moses' heart was more concerned about the people of Israel, the congregation of God, than his own death. Moses didn't want them to be like sheep without the shepherd (v. 17). So Moses longed for God to raise up a new leader to lead the Israelites before he died. So God heard his prayer and raised up Joshua the son of Nun (vv. 18-23).



As I meditated on the words Moses prayed to God before he died, I remembered the word of Jesus: “When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things” (Mk. 6:34), and “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Mt. 9:36). When Jesus saw a great crowd, who had followed him even to a solitary place (Mk. 6:32-33), he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without the shepherd (v. 34). Also, Jesus went through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness (Mt. 9:35). And when he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them (v. 36). It was because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (v. 36). If I am following this Jesus in my heart, I think I will earnestly ask God for the members of the Victory Presbyterian Church, the spiritual family that the Lord entrusted to me before I die, and for my wife and three children who are my physical family. In particular, when I ask God for the victorious community that is the body of the Lord, I will ask God to raise up a leader with the Lord-centered dream of conquering the promised land like Joshua in the new age and lead the victory Presbyterian Church. The reason is because I don’t want our church members to be like sheep without a shepherd. I believe that God will hear my prayers.

In Numbers 31:2, God gives Moses the last mission before he dies. The final mission was the command to take vengeance on the Midianites for the Israelites” (v. 2). Why did God give Moses this mission? This was because the Midianite women who followed Balaam’s advice and turned the Israelites away from the Lord in what happened at Peor, so that a plague struck the Lord’s people (v. 16). Here, “what happened at Peor” means that the Israelites, while they were staying in Shittim, not only began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, but also at the invitation of the Moabite women the Israelites bowed down before their gods and joined in worshipping the Baal of Peor (25:1-3). Because of this Beor incident, God’s anger burned against the Israelites (v. 3), and a plague struck the Lord’s people (31:16), and 24,000 people died from the plague (25:9). So God commanded Moses to treat the Midianites as enemies, and kill them (v. 17). This is because they cleverly deceived the Israelites into serving Baal in Peor and seduced the Israelites through the incident of Cozbi, the daughter of a Midianite leader, who was killed when the plague came as a result of Peor (v. 18). So, in order to take revenge on God, Moses chose 12,000 men, 1,000 from each tribe, and armed them, and sent them to battle against Midian according to God's word (31: 3-6). While sending them to the battlefield, Moses had Phinehas son of Eleazar the priest, follow along with the articles from the sanctuary and the trumpets for signaling (v. 6). This shows that Moses and the Israelites trusted God (Park). In the end, as God had commanded Moses, they fought against Midian and killed every man, along with the other five kings of Midaan and Balaam the son of Beor with the sword (vv. 7-8). The problem, however, was that even though the Israelites attacked Midaan and killed all the men (verse 7), they allowed all the Midianite women to live who were the ones who followed Balaam’s advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the Lord in what happened at Peor (vv. 15-16). So Moses was angry with the officers of the army, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds who returned from battle (v. 14).

When I think of the last mission God gave Moses before he died, I remembered the words of Exodus

chapters 3-4. If we look at those words, you will see that God is calling Moses. The reason God called Moses was because God sent Moses to Pharaoh king of Egypt to lead God's people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt (Exod. 3:10). This was the first mission God gave Moses. And he tried to get Moses to lead the Israelites into Canaan, the land God had promised them (v. 17). Originally, this should have been Moses' last mission. But Moses not only didn't believe in God before the Israelites who were quarreling with him at Meribah, but also didn't show God's holiness. As a result, he was not allowed to lead them into Canaan, the land God had given them (Num. 20:12). So, Moses' final mission was to avenge the children of Israel against the Midianites according to God's command before he died, that is, to destroy the Midianites completely (31:2-3). I'm a little strange as to how God's last mission to Moses was to avenge God by defeating and destroying Midian. If Moses' first mission was to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, his last mission was to avenge the Israelites' enemy.

When I think of this last mission of Moses, I wondered what the last mission God would give me before I die. The word that came to mind at that time was Romans 5:10 – “For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!” For we who were enemies of God and need to be destroyed in the wrath of God, the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who suffered all the wrath of God on the cross, was forsaken by God the Father, died on the cross, and rose again, so that all our sins are forgiven, we are justified and we became the children of God. As I get to know more about God's wonderful grace of salvation to such sinner and enemy of God and became a child of God, I want to live for Jesus and His gospel to the end (Mk. 10:29). I think this is a mission God has given me. Therefore, I hope and pray that those who are enemies of God will no longer be in God's wrath, but live in God's saving grace and love by hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ and receiving Jesus as their Savior.

About 15 years ago, after receiving the word of Matthew 16:18, the promise of the Lord to build His church, I returned to the Victory Presbyterian Church and served the Lord's church as a senior pastor. In serving, the Lord is teaching me the death perspective, especially as I am serving the elders of the church. It made me think more and more of my own death as I lead the last moments on earth of many elderly people and especially their funerals. And I am realizing that not only do I have to live a life of faith with the death perspective, but also have to carry on the ministry of the family and the church with the death perspective. In the midst of this, I asked myself a question while meditating on what Moses wanted from God before he died and the last mission God gave him, focusing on Numbers 27:16-17 and 31:2 – ‘What do I really want from the Lord before I die?’ and ‘What is the last mission the Lord will command me to do before I die?’ I hope and pray that the Lord will answer my last prayer I long for before I die and that the Lord will give me the grace and strength to carry out the last mission.

Wanting to bless my family and church members before I die (Deut. 33:1),

James Kim (February 24, 2018, Praying that the Lord will raise up the next generation of Christ-centered visionary leaders and expand the Kingdom of God by building His church)

# **“Put your house in order”**

**“In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, "This is what the LORD says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover.” (2 Kings 20:1)**

Is there order in your house? Is your family now obedient to biblical family ethics? Does a husband love his wife (Eph. 5:25-30)? Does a wife obey her husband with respect (vv. 22-24, 33)? Do children obey their parents in the Lord (6:1)? Do parents not exasperate their children, but instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (v. 4)? For some reason, it seems that the families are becoming more and more broken families. There is no bond, harmony, or order between the family members, and each of them lives in their own way, unable to keep the unity of the family, and conflicts and divisions are getting worse. What should we do?

In 2 Kings 20:1, God is telling King Hezekiah through the prophet Isaiah: “Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover.” How terrifying is this word of God? God had said to Hezekiah, ‘You are going to die and you will not live, so put your house in order!’ Here, “house” refers to the nation of Judah. And ‘Put your house in order’ means to carry out the transfer of the government, which he should do as a king (Park). However, I would like to apply this word to each of our family. In other words, I think now God wants us to keep our house in order. Of course, like Hezekiah, we aren’t going to die soon. But I think we should keep our house in good order with the death perspective. Just as King Hezekiah had to transfer the government before he died, we must pass on our faith to our children (and descendants) before we die. When I think about how heavy the responsibility of transferring the faith is, I think that God is even giving us a warning saying, ‘You are going to die and you will not recover’ if we don’t put our houses in order. To that extent, I think that we have a great responsibility to keep our house in good order. We should never take this responsibility lightly. What should we do? How should we pass on our faith to our children before we die? I would like to learn two lessons from 2 Kings 20:2-3:

## **First, we must pray to God.**

Look at 2 Kings 20:2 – “Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD.” King Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to God after being told, “Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover” through the prophet Isaiah. He prayed to God, weeping bitterly (v. 3). Shouldn't we too weep

bitterly? When we think of the faith of our children, shouldn't we weep bitterly and pray earnestly to God? Especially when we think of our unbelieving children, we need to weep bitterly and plead with God for the salvation of their souls. The reason is because as we approach our death, we are compelled to think more deeply about the eternal death of our children's souls. If our children didn't believe in Jesus even when our believing parents were alive, what would happen to the salvation of our children's souls after we died? It is a serious problem, and it cannot but be a prayer subject to cry out to God.

### **Second, we must walk before the Lord faithfully and with wholehearted devotion.**

Look at 2 Kings 20:3 – “Remember, O LORD, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.” When King Hezekiah wept bitterly and supplicated God, he prayed that God would remember how he had walked before Him faithfully and with wholehearted devotion, and what was good in the eyes of the Lord. When I was thinking about this prayer, 2 Kings 18:2 came to mind. In other words, King Hezekiah did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. Indeed, King Hezekiah, who was a king who did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, asked God to remember that he had done good in the eyes of the Lord faithfully and with wholehearted devotion before the word of God that he would die. When I think of this word, I think it is very precious that King Hezekiah was able to say that he had done good before the Lord faithfully and with wholehearted devotion in his whole life when he heard the word of God, ‘You will die and you will not recover.’ Think about it. Will we be able to speak like King Hezekiah to our children and even our descendants in the face of our death? In particular, when we reflect on ourselves in the words of Isaiah 38:1, “Put your house in order,” can we say to our children and descendants before we die that ‘I had walked before the Lord faithfully and with wholehearted devotion all the days of my life’ so ‘You also must walk before the Lord faithfully and with wholehearted devotion’? In order to be able to do so, from now on, we must walk before the Lord faithfully and with wholehearted devotion.

When King Hezekiah wept bitterly and prayed to God, God heard his prayer, saw his tears, and quickly answered Hezekiah's prayer (vv. 4-6). God's answer to Hezekiah's prayer can be summarized in three ways: (1) God said that He would heal Hezekiah (v. 5). And God told Hezekiah that in three days he would be completely healed of his illness, and would go up to the temple of God in order to give thanks to God first (Park). (2) God promised that he would add 15 years to Hezekiah's life (v. 6). The reason he received the blessing of extending his life was so that he could do good in the presence of the Lord faithfully and with wholehearted devotion (Park). (3) God told Hezekiah that he would deliver Hezekiah and the city of David from the hand of the king of Assyria and would defend the city (v. 6). Because this word of God is good (v. 19), King Hezekiah received an answer to his prayer and tasted the goodness of the Lord. In his lifetime there was peace and security (v. 19).

May there be peace and security in our houses. I hope that there are God's answers of our prayers in our houses. In particular, I earnestly hope and pray that our children return to the Lord before we die so that the whole family can come together to the temple of God and worship Him in thanksgiving. Until that day comes and until the day the Lord calls us, I hope and pray that we will all become beautiful examples to our children and descendants by

doing good in the presence of the Lord faithful and with wholehearted devotion.

As I recommit my life in building the Lord-centered family that is in order in the eyes of the Lord,

James Kim

(May 4, 2011, ahead of Mother's Day)

# Isaac who was afraid of being killed

**“So Isaac stayed in Gerar. When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, ‘She is my sister,’ because he was afraid to say, ‘She is my wife.’ He thought, ‘The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful.’” (Genesis 26:6-7)**

Yesterday, I found out that the son of the first friend I met when I came to the United States was battling cancer. I was surprised to hear that news. When I heard that my friend's young son was diagnosed with cancer and was receiving chemotherapy, it reminded me of my first baby in the intensive care unit and I told him that I would pray for his son. Even in the midst of this, what I was grateful for was that my friend experienced God's amazing grace and made a precious confession of faith. How is this possible?

While I was praying for my friend's son after the Morning Prayer while I was praying alone, I thought about my friend and his wife. My thoughts at that time also reminded me of the father of a pastor of the presbytery who was battling cancer, whom I met last week. When I visited the hospital, I saw the father touching the sore spot of the lying son pastor, and also stroking his head, and I wondered how he would feel. Among the words of that father, I remember how he said that even though modern medicine has developed a lot, he thinks that cancer still cannot be overcome. Another thought came to mind as I thought of another pastor's wife, who was recovering after cancer surgery and treatment, and I thought about how difficult it must be for her whose parents, former missionaries, aren't here with her because they passed away. Another sister in Christ, who needs to be definitely get tested now, but has cancer symptoms, I am praying for her because she cut ties with her parents and lived by herself for a long time. I remember the words of my dear pastor, who had gone to the brink of death from cancer, last week on KakaoTalk: ‘When I stand before death, I see honor, high positions, money, big numbers... It didn't matter. I think the terms of great ministry, great pastor, and pastoral success are too misleading. Through cancer, He gave me as a gift that the best way to live and work worthwhile, deeply and happily and go to heaven.’

What would it be like if we had cancer and stood before death? Aren't we afraid of death? Or will we confess God's wonderful grace like my friend in the midst of it?

In Genesis 26:6-7, we see a person named Isaac, who is afraid of being killed. The reason he was afraid of being killed was because his wife, Rebekah, was beautiful (v. 7). It may be hard to understand how Isaac feared his

death because Rebekah was beautiful. But if we think about the circumstances at the time from the point of view of Isaac, we may think that it could have been. At that time, Isaac and Rebekah were living in a city located southwest of Gerar, the southern boundary of the land of Canaan (v. 6, Internet). And it was the city that Abimelech king of the Philistines ruled (v. 8). The reason Isaac moved to Gerar with Rebekah was because of a famine (v. 1). Interestingly, there was a famine in the days of Abraham, Isaac's father, and there was another famine in Isaac's time. That was why Isaac moved to Gerar (vv. 1, 6). But it doesn't seem like Isaac was trying to move to Gerar when the famine came. As for how we can know it, we can understand it a little by looking at what God said to Isaac: "The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live" (v. 2). From this verse, it seems that Isaac was going down to Egypt during a famine. But God gave Isaac a promise, commanding him not to go down to Egypt, but to "live in the land where I tell you to live" (v. 2): "Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed" (vv. 3-4). Therefore, after receiving the word of this blessing from God, Isaac didn't go down to Egypt but lived in Gerar. But he was afraid to call her his wife, Rebekah, because Rebekah was beautiful, and the people there might covet her and kill him (v. 7). So, when the people there asked about his wife, he didn't say Rebekah was 'my wife' but said "my sister" (v. 7). How could Isaac lie by saying Rebekah was his sister instead of his wife? From the fact that he lived in Gera for a long time (v. 8), it seems that Isaac not only deceived the Philistines there for a long time to say that his wife Rebekah was his sister, but also treated his wife like a sister in front of the Philistines. We can know this little bit when we look at verse 8: "When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah." This means that while Isaac was living in Gerar for a long time until he was caught by Abimelech king of the Philistines, he embraced his wife and treated her like his wife, and in the public eyes, he treated her like his own sister. Considering this situation, how could Isaac afraid of himself being killed because of his beautiful wife, instead of being afraid that she could be raped, or even killed by the Philistines, who coveted her? It seems that Isaac was such a selfish person. He didn't love Rebekah, who was one with him, as he did himself. So he led a long double life, deceiving the Philistines of Gerar and lying that his wife was his sister. Then one day Isaac hugged his wife Rebekah and caught by Abimelech king of the Philistines (v. 8). So King Abimelech called Isaac and said, "She is really your wife! Why did you say, 'She is my sister'?" (v. 9) Then Isaac replied, "Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her" (v. 9).

This was Isaac's thought. Although God clearly gave Isaac the word of promise (vv. 3-4), Isaac didn't believe in the word and the God of the covenant who gave it. Instead, he relied on his own thought and lived a life by lying that his wife was his sister, and caught by King Abimelech (v. 8). God promised Isaac, "I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands" (v. 4), would God allow Isaac to be killed by the Philistines of Gerar for his beautiful wife Rebekah? Not only does God never allow this to happen, but even if the Philistines coveted the beautiful Rebekah and tried to kill her in order to steal her from Isaac, wouldn't God surely save him? But why did Isaac live in Gerar for a long time by deceiving the people, telling them lie that Satan, the father of lies, likes as he though ahead of time and was afraid of dying? Wasn't Isaac, the

son of Abraham, the father of faith? But his father Abraham also had nothing to say because he also called Sarah his sister in Gerar (20:2). And the reason was because he thought that those who didn't fear God would kill him because of his wife Sarah (v. 11). I think it was transmission from the father to the son. However, God's amazing faithful grace was that when Isaac farmed in the land, God blessed him so that the same year reaped a hundredfold, and he became rich and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy (vv. 12-13). He had so many flocks and herds, and servants, to the extent that the Philistines envied Isaac (verse 14). Isn't this God's grace? God, who gave this wonderful blessing to Isaac, who had lived for a long time by lying and deceiving others without believing in God's promises, faithfully fulfilled His promises to the unbelieving and unfaithful Isaac. The reason is because even though we are unfaithful, God is always faithful and cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13).

Like Isaac, we too may fear being put to death. So, like Isaac, we can lie and deceive others, not for a day or two, but for a long time. After all, we too can rely on our own understanding to protect ourselves in artificial ways, rather than relying entirely on God. However, we must keep in mind that the God who is in charge of life and death protects and keeps our lives. Also, the truth we must believe is that the God of the covenant will surely fulfill the promises to us in His time and His way. Therefore, we should not rely on our own understanding, but trust in God with all our hearts (Prov. 3:5). Also, we must live by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). If we rely on our understanding, we can fear our death when we have cancer. However, if we trust God and live by faith, we will be able to confess God's wonderful grace to those around us just like my friend's son who has cancer as we experience God's wonderful grace. I hope and pray that no matter what kind of famine or dreadful situations we face in our lives, we all need to hold on to the word of promise the Lord has given us and to speak and act in faith while looking only at Jesus, who is the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb.12:2).

Praying for victory in the fight against myself, sin, the world, Satan, and death,

James Kim

(January 9, 2018, As I pray for me to live by faith in the Lord and the word of His promise)



# Ready to die

**“Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” (Acts 21:13)**

A person who is ready to die in a fight and rushes forward is really scary. The reason is because he fights for his life. If he scares us in such a way that it doesn't matter if he dies while fighting, who will stop him?

In Acts 21:13, we see the Apostle Paul who was ready to die and was about to go up to Jerusalem. Although the Holy Spirit warned him that prison and hardships are facing him in every city (20:23), Paul was not shaken in his determination to go up to Jerusalem. Among those cities, Paul arrived at Caesarea in Acts 21:13. And there a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea, took Paul's belt, and tied his own hands and feet with it, and said, “The Holy Spirit says, ‘In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles’” (v. 11). At that time, Paul's companions and the people there, who heard this, persuaded Paul not to go up to Jerusalem (v. 12). Then Paul said, “Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (v. 13).

Paul was ready to die for Jesus Christ. He was a man who risked his life for the gospel of Jesus Christ. He was a man who was prepared to die for the body of the Lord and the kingdom of God. Look at Acts 20:24 – “However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.” Paul considered the mission he received from the Lord Jesus more important than his own life. He valued completing the work of witnessing the gospel of God's grace more precious than his life. How amazing is this value? How did Paul value the mission he received from the Lord—the preaching of the gospel—more than his life? I think the reason is in Psalms 63:3 – “Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.” It was because of God's eternal love that Paul was able to value the mission he received from the Lord more than his own life. Paul, who was realizing, feeling, and experiencing the eternal love of God, was grateful and moved by that love, and didn't consider his life as precious at all in order to finish the mission of the Lord in testifying the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul, who was on fire for the mission he received from the Lord Jesus, saw that he was not only bound but also prepared to die, and those who advised him not to go up to Jerusalem stopped exhorting, saying, “The Lord's will be done” (21:14). After this, Paul and his companions got ready and went up to Jerusalem (v. 15).

For some reason, in the image of Paul going up to Jerusalem, I see Jesus as a lamb being led to the slaughter (Isa. 53:7). Jesus, who lived from the stable in Bethlehem toward the cross on Calvary, and who gave His life on the cross for our salvation (eternal life), obeyed God the Father even to death (Phil. 2:8). Like this Jesus, Paul, an apostle of Jesus, also went toward death. When I think about how I could not have valued my life once in this world so much, I am again challenged to the importance of the mission I received from the Lord and to fulfill it. As an evangelist with a burning sense of mission, I want to spend the rest of my life with an attitude of being ready to die in fulfilling the mission I received from the Lord.

Longing to become a burning evangelist and comforter of God's love,

James Kim

(October 18, 2008, Being thankful for God's eternal love, which is more precious than our seven or eighty years of our lives)

# Present suffering and future glory

Since we are children (heirs) of God (Rom. 8:17)  
we have no choice but to suffer “present sufferings” (v. 18).  
But even when we suffer, we must be patient and keep our faith  
since we have a sure and clear hope.  
That hope is the glory that will be revealed to us in the future (v. 18).

The glory that will be revealed to us is not worthy to be compared with the present sufferings (v. 18).  
The exceedingly great and eternal glory cannot be compared with (v. 18)  
our light and momentary troubles that are achieving for us (2 Cor. 4:17).  
What is the glory to be revealed that cannot be compared with the present sufferings?  
It is the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:23).  
The day when Jesus comes back to earth, the day the last trumpet is sounded (1 Cor. 15:52),  
our perishable bodies will surely be resurrected and transformed into imperishable bodies (v. 52).  
Our bodies will be transformed to be like the glorious body of Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:21).  
In addition to this, the glory of the life to come is that we will enjoy eternal life in heaven,  
we will see the Lord face to face (1 Cor. 13:12; Rev. 22:4),  
we will reign with Christ (Rev. 22:5),  
and we will live forever shining (v. 5).

Therefore,  
As we have assurance of the glory that is to be revealed to us,  
we must carry the Lord’s given mission to us patiently and with perseverance  
in the midst of suffering and persecution.

[2015. 9. 17. As I summarized the Pastor Chang Kim’s sermon based on Romans 8:18 during the Wednesday prayer meeting]

## **“If only I had died instead of you”**

**“The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you--O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 18:33)**

A father's heart toward his child is a loving heart. The father's heart for his suffering child is compassionate. When he looks at the suffering child, he is feeling pity. His heart aches. So he sheds tears in his heart. He wishes he had suffered instead of his beloved child. He wishes he is sick instead of his child. He wishes he has a hard time instead of his child. He even thinks that it would have been better if he dies instead.

In 2 Samuel 18:33, we see King David whose heart aches very much. His heart ached because he heard the news that his son Absalom had died (vv. 28, 31-32). So David, overcome with grief as if it were breaking his heart, went up to the room over the gateway and wept, saying, “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you--O Absalom, my son, my son!” (v. 33) Parents who have lost their loved ones must have experienced the sorrow that broke David's heart. I saw my first baby Charis (It means 'grace' in Greek) for the first and last time lying in my arms in the intensive care unit and wept bitterly. At that time, I thought I was out of breath as I wept. It was so heartbreaking and painful. I was so sad that I cried and cried again and again. In particular, the thought that my child had died in my place for my sins (12:14, 18) brought a deep sense of guilt to my heart. It wasn't the child, but was me, the sinner, who should have died. Father David, unable to overcome the sorrow that seemed to tear his heart, wept and cried out like this: “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you--O Absalom, my son, my son!” (18:33) David cried out that it would have been better if he had died in the place of his son Absalom. I think this is how we parents feel. When our beloved child passed away before us, we bury that child in our hearts for the rest of our lives. And our beloved child still lives so vividly in our memory and we cry in front of God. And we think “If I had died instead of my child.’ As I meditated on the word of David’s cry, I suddenly thought, ‘What would David have done in the relationship between father David and his son Absalom, so that Absalom wouldn’t have to die like this?’ So, I have been thinking again about the Bible verses about David and Absalom that I meditated on during the Morning Prayer meeting all week. When I did so, I thought that if father David had done these three things well then his son Absalom would not have died.

**First, if father David had acted righteously at that time.**

David was furious (13:21) when his son Amnon raped his other son Absalom's sister Tamar (13:14), but he did nothing. Obviously, in spite of Amnon's foolishness to do disgraceful thing to Tamar (v. 12), David as a father didn't even rebuke Amnon in love. How could David not rebuke his son Amnon for committing such a sin? If he had truly loved his son, wouldn't he have to discipline him? (Heb. 11:7) Wasn't that the job of a father, the head of the family? What would Tamar have thought of her father, David, as she had been raped? In particular, from the standpoint of Absalom, who loved his younger sister to such a degree that he named his daughter Tamar (14:27), he saw his younger sister remained and was desolate in his house after being raped by her other half brother Amnon (13:20). What did Absalom think of his father David when he was seeing his beloved sister Tamar? Could he have thought, 'Although he is a father and my sister suffered such a shocking thing, does it make sense that my father is just very angry and doesn't punish Amnon at all?' If David is the head of the family, shouldn't he keep order and peace in his home by doing what is right? Why was David so angry but didn't do anything to Amnon? Maybe it was because he remembered the sin he had had with Uriah's wife Bathsheba in the past? (11:4) Was it because David himself lay with Bathsheba (v. 4) when he saw very beautiful Bathsheba bathing (v. 2) even though he knew she was married (v. 3), that he didn't rebuke Amnon, who was stronger than Tamar, violated her and lay with her (13:14)? If so, what was David's position, and what was the position of Tamar, who was raped, and the position of his brother Absalom? How did Tamar feel, who was desolate and living in his brother's house? At least we know that Tamar's brother Absalom hated Amnon (v. 22), who not only did evil by raping his sister Tamar, but also did more evil in sending her away (v. 16). What was Absalom thinking in that hatred? It was revenging. Absalom had been sharpening the sword of revenge to kill Amnon for two years (v. 23). Who was responsible? I think it is the responsibility of father David. If David had listened to all that his son Amnon had done to his daughter Tamar and didn't just become furious (v. 21) and acted righteously, Absalom would not have sharpened the sword of vengeance against Amnon for two years to kill him. How would Absalom feel at that time when his father had not taken any action against Amnon for raping his sister Tamar, nor did he rebuke him for a single word, so he had continued to see Amnon live in peace as if nothing had happened in the palace?

Raising three children God gave me as a gift of grace, one of the words that I heard when they were little was "It's not fair." I don't remember very well, but I think it was the youngest child who said that to me. The reason I think so is because she is the only child who can speak directly to me like that at that time. Haha. Not too long ago, the youngest child talked to me about her older sister this and that and said she too this and that. At the time, what the youngest was saying was that I need to be fair to both her and her older sister (I think). So I gave the youngest the same permission as I gave her older sister. As a father, I try to love my three children equally as much as I can, but I feel very inadequate. In particular, when the youngest daughter was young, I also read picture Bibles to her. But I couldn't do that to my oldest daughter. But thankfully, these days, I am getting closer to my first daughter. It seems that these days God is helping me to love my two daughters in a balanced way. The eldest son, who lives in the university dormitory, has a lot of conversations with me as I bring and pick him up from school on Friday and Sunday. I even play basketball with my son and his friends on Saturday afternoons. As a father, I try to love my three children in a balanced way. But each of them will be able to accept my heart and my efforts differently. I still remember when my three children were in elementary school, I disciplined them together.

Although I did it because I thought that I shouldn't discipline them equally, not just disciplining one child and not another child, I think the children could have thought differently. When I think about the relationship between David and Absalom, if father David had quickly rebuked Amnon in love, Absalom's heart would have hated Amnon for two years and would have sharpened the sword of revenge to kill him. I think the father David should have acted righteously so that the seed of Absalom's hatred toward Amnon didn't grow in his heart.

### **Second, if the father David had found his son Absalom a little earlier then.**

David's son Absalom hated Amnon for raping and sending his sister Tamar away, and decided to kill him (2 Sam. 13:32) and sharpened his revenge sword for 2 years (v. 23), and in the end killed Amnon (vv. 23-29). Then Absalom fled (v. 34) and went to Talmai son of Ammihur king of Geshur, and dwelt in Geshur (v. 37). When he had lived there for 3 years (v. 38), General Joab knew that his lord, King David, was longing for Absalom (vv. 39; 14:1), and told a wise woman what to say to King David (v. 2) and made her go to King David and speak (vv. 4-20), so that in the end King David allowed Joab to bring Absalom to him (v. 21). But I don't quite understand it. Obviously, the Bible says that King David's heart longed for his son Absalom (13:39; 14:1). I don't quite understand why David missed his son Absalom only in his heart and didn't look for him. If he was longing for the son who ran away, shouldn't he, as a father, have to find the son quickly? Still, if he was the king of a country, wouldn't he have been able to find enough of his fugitive son with all his might, abilities, and people? But why didn't David do that? Why did he miss Absalom who ran away only in his heart? In the end, it wasn't David himself who found Absalom, who had fled to Geshur, after 3 years, but Joab was the first to find him with David's permission. What kind of father would miss his child who ran away without looking for him? Could it be that the father didn't forgive his child with his heart? Could it be that Absalom, who killed Amnon, was not forgiven in David's heart, so David did not look for him? How could David, who sent a man to find out about Bathsheba after he saw her bathing, didn't send anybody to look for his son Absalom, who hated and killed Amnon, who raped Tamar and send her away, who ran away by Geshur for 3 years? The father who longs for his son only in his heart without even forgiving him can hurt his heart and give him bitterness and pain in his heart.

By the grace of God, my first son, whom I love, has entered college and is now living in college. It's a 45-minute drive from my house. So I go to school every Friday to pick him up and drive him back to the school dormitory on Sunday evenings. Although it is fine now, but when my son first left for the university dormitory, and I saw his vacant room at home, my heart was a little empty. Since it has been 18 years since we had been together at home, when I think of my son who left home after 18 years, I would remember the memories I had with him in one way or another. Especially since my son moved to the university dormitory, there are only three women (my wife and two daughters) in the house. So there are times when I miss my son as a father. Haha. (Actually, I told my youngest daughter that in front of my wife. My oldest daughter also heard what I said since she was in the living room lol). If my son had killed one of his sisters and ran away instead of leaving home to go to college, I wondered what I would do as his father. The reason I imagined it that way was because I wanted to understand the feelings of David's heart. Like father David who loved Absalom, who had killed his half-brother, I think I will miss my son

who ran away like Absalom who fled to Geshur. But will I look for my son or will I just miss him like David? Among the three parables of Jesus in Luke 15, when I look at the parable of the lost sheep or the parable of a lost coin, I think that I will earnestly seek my son who has fled. But when I think of the parable of the prodigal son, I wonder if I will wait for him to return home without finding my son. Of course, I think that the premise of this waiting is that the father searched for his lost son and waited for him. In the end, I think the heart of a father is to find his child, even if it is the child who has committed a sin and ran away. When the child knows the heart of the father who is looking for him, what will the child's heart toward the father be like? But what if the son finds out that his father isn't even looking for him? It will inflict deep wounds, bitterness, and pain in the child's heart.

### **Third and last, if the father David had forgiven him then.**

Absalom, who had sharpened his sword for revenge to kill Amnon for two years, and finally killed Amnon and fled to Geshur, returned to Jerusalem after 3 years (14:23). But his father David had his son Absalom go back to his house so that he could not see his face (v. 24). In other words, David didn't want to see Absalom (v. 24). To what extent David didn't want to see Absalom was that he didn't see Absalom for 2 years (v. 28). No matter how much David didn't want to see Absalom, if he allowed Absalom to return to Jerusalem, whom he has missed for 3 years, shouldn't he immediately see Absalom's face? How can David not see Absalom's face in Jerusalem for 2 years? Isn't it 5 years in total (3 years in Geshur and 2 years in Jerusalem)? After Absalom fled and lived in Geshur for 3 years, David didn't see Absalom. Where is the father who kept his son from seeing his face for 2 years when he returned to Jerusalem? Why was he so reluctant to see Absalom's face? Although David hadn't seen the Absalom's face for 5 years, what if Joab had not known King David's heart for Absalom and had not brought Absalom to Jerusalem with his permission? Then David would not be able to see Absalom's face for longer than 5 years. Also, when Absalom returned to Jerusalem and had not burn down Joab's fields (v. 30), then he would not have seen the face of his father David within 2 years. That was why Absalom said, "It would be better for me if I were still there!" (Geshur) (v. 32) How cruel is this on the part of his son Absalom since he returned to Jerusalem from Geshur after 3 years, and his father David didn't want to see his face for 2 years. If he didn't want to see his son's face, why did David brought Absalom, who was living in Geshur, back to Jerusalem? Why didn't he just leave Absalom to live in Geshur? I don't quite understand why David missed Absalom so much in his heart. Seeing that David missed Absalom so much that his servant Joab knew, he seemed to have missed Absalom with a sincere heart. But how should we understand David, who didn't even think about looking for his son Absalom and, even if he did, didn't actually put into action? If he didn't see Absalom in Jerusalem for 2 years, why did he allow Joab to bring Absalom to him? Had it not been for him, Absalom would have continued to live in Geshur, so that he would not have lived in Jerusalem for 2 years and suffered this incomprehensible event of not seeing his father's face. In his book "Leap Over a Wall" Pastor Eugene Peterson said David's most inexcusable and most costly sin of his life was the sin of not truly forgiving his son Absalom (Peterson). David kept a distance from his son Absalom for about 2 years, even though he was in the same palace in Jerusalem, and didn't truly forgive him. If David had immediately forgiven Absalom for killing Amnon, just as God had forgiven him for his sin of sinning with Bathsheba and killing her husband Uriah (12:13), then maybe Absalom would not have tried to kill David (16:11). But David didn't

forgive his son Absalom. So Absalom returned to Jerusalem and saw the face of his father David after 2 years. After that, he stole the hearts of the Israelites for 4 years (15:6, 7), made their hearts turn to him (v. 13) and tried to kill his own father David. In this way, the result of the father's sin of not forgiving his son was the death of his son's life.

Parents feel compassion when they see their beloved child suffering. The child is pitiful and even poor. So parents want to suffer for themselves instead of for their suffering child. Even so, parents don't want their child to suffer any more. Also, the hearts of parents cannot bear to see their beloved child suffer and die. In particular, the pain of guilt that the child's death was due to my sins will be different for each parent who has experienced it. I think it is the heart of a parent that no one can fully understand. Father David's heart ached so much that he could not bear his sorrow (18:33). The reason was that he had heard of his son's death. So David, unable to overcome the sorrow that seemed to tear his heart, cried out: "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you--O Absalom, my son, my son!" Father David thought it would have been better if he had died instead of his son Absalom. As it was already after Absalom's death, David's regrets would have been to no avail. But as he looked back on his relationship with his son Absalom, he should have had at least these three thoughts: (1) 'If I had not been very angry when I heard the news about Absalom's sister Tamar being raped and driven out by Amnon, but had justly punished Amnon for his sin, Absalom's heart would not have been dissatisfied with me.' (2) 'If I had found my son Absalom, who had fled by Geshur, sooner, he would not have lived in wounds, bitterness, and resentment toward me for 3 years.' (3) 'If I had forgiven Absalom immediately when he came back to Jerusalem for 2 years after not seeing his face for two years (and asked him for forgiveness?), he would have stayed with the Israelites for 4 years and wouldn't have tried to steal the hearts of the Israelites and cause a coup to kill me.' When I think about David's cry out, "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you--O Absalom, my son, my son!" (v. 33) when Absalom died in battle with David's army, I remembered Jesus who cried out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34). When Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" while dying on the cross for us, who were sinners and enemies of God, and who deserve God's wrath and must die forever, I wonder what was his Heavenly Father's thought as He was listening to His Son's cry out? When He saw Jesus crucified and died and heard his cry out, don't you think God the Father said, 'My Son Jesus, my Son Jesus, it would have been better if I had died for you! Oh, Jesus, my son, my son!' and wept over His heartbreaking sorrow and crying?

Became a child of God through the atoning death of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross,

James Kim

(April 14, 2018, Praying to be a father who does justice and fairness to the three children whom God has given me as a gift of grace, seeking them diligently and also forgiving them as the Lord forgives such sinner like me and asking them for forgiveness)



# How can I end my life well?

**“Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.” (1 Timothy 1:13-14)**

This time, my mind was not at peace before I went to Korea for “2017 Internet Ministry to Korea”. The words I heard during the retirement process of my dear mentor pastor made me think a lot. For example, I asked myself, how should I retire after completing my pastoral ministry, how to achieve enduring beauty, etc. The worries that started like that made me to think about not only my retirement from the ministry but also my own death. It made me to think to myself again how I should end this life in front of the Lord and people. When I think about how I can end my life to give glory to God, I have come to think that among the many things I need to guard against myself, I should be especially vigilant about the sense of merit. While I live on this earth, I don't want to be sensitive to numbers and my record as I work hard for the expansion of God's kingdom while serving the church, the body of the Lord, until I die. Whether I have been pastoring for a few years, or documenting the things I have done for the Lord during those years, or asking for a certain amount of retirement money from the church at the end of my ministry, etc, I don't want to show my merit and glory in front of people with those things. Rather, like the Apostle Paul, I want to confess, 'It is the grace of God that I am what I am,' and while carrying out the Lord's work with the power of that grace. And at the end of my life, I want to confess, "I have fought the good fight, finished all my work, and gained faith. I have kept it, and now all that is left is to receive the crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. 4:6-7). To do that, while I was contemplating on what to do, I went to Korea and met a pastor I got to know about through internet ministry. When I heard the story of the reality of the church that the pastor saw, heard, and experienced through the pastor on Friday morning, the day before returning to the United States again from Korea, for the first time in my life, my heart was unbearably frustrated and my heart was blank. Not only that, I wanted to cry. I couldn't hear any more. Anyway, the previous Thursday, when I met a couple of associate pastors and talked to them, I heard bad things about the Korean church through those pastors, and I wrote this: ‘We pastors need to repent. Please pray for that. Thank you.’ But the next Friday morning, I heard the bad stories about the Korean church through another associate pastor, and my heart was so stuffy that I wanted to cry. As I listened to the stories of those bad pastors, I thought that the reason we pastors were arrogant and greedy for material things was because we had forgotten God's grace. I also thought that the reason was because we had forgotten God's mercy.

In 1 Timothy 1:13-14, the apostle Paul is writing a letter to his spiritual son Timothy, especially saying two things. Those two things are the Lord's mercy and the Lord's grace.

First, Paul told Timothy what he was like in the past: “Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man ...” (v. 13). Before meeting the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:4, 26:14), Paul was a violent man who blasphemed Jesus Christ and persecuted His church. In other words, when he didn't believe in Jesus (1 Tim. 1:13), he was a zealous persecutor of the church (Phil. 3:6). Paul did this without knowing that Jesus was the Messiah (Christ) (1 Tim. 1:13). Therefore, he was shown mercy because Jesus Christ might display His unlimited patience (v. 16). As I meditated on these words, I thought of the Lord's mercy toward me. Because of my sins, I was reminded that I was a sinner worthy of eternal destruction (2 Thess. 1:9). When a sinner who deserves the punishment of eternal fire (Jude 1:7) thinks that the Lord displayed His unlimited patience to me (1 Tim. 1:16), what is this if this isn't the Lord's mercy? He imputed all of my sins to Jesus, His sinless, only begotten Son, so that Jesus could receive the punishment for my sins. He bore with great patience the objects of His wrath – prepared for destruction (Rom. 9:22). What is this if this isn't the Lord's mercy? Knowing that this Lord's patience means salvation (2 Pet. 3:15), how could I not thank the Lord for His mercy and humble myself before Him?

The next thing Paul is talking about to Timothy is the Lord's grace: “The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 1:14). Before meeting the resurrected Jesus, Paul, who was “a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man,” knew that he was the worst sinner among sinners (v. 15). To Paul, the chief of such sinners, Jesus Christ displayed His unlimited patience (v. 16). The Lord was merciful to him and didn't punish him with the wrath of eternal destruction. On the contrary, the Lord gave him eternal life (v. 16) with abundant faith and love (v. 14). Not only that, but the Lord considered Paul faithful and appointed him to His service (v. 12). Although we may be unfaithful, the Lord is always faithful. The Lord, who could not deny himself (2 Tim. 2:13), was faithful to Paul and appointed him with the apostleship to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13). If this isn't God's grace, what is it? It is the great grace of the Lord that the one who persecuted the church zealously before believing in Jesus could receive eternal life rather than receive the punishment of eternal destruction. That is why Paul said he thanked Christ Jesus our Lord, who had given him strength (1 Tim. 1:12). As I meditated on these words, I thought about the Lord's grace that was bestowed upon me. It cannot be without His abundant grace. I can't help but be thankful for the grace of salvation of the Lord who gave me faith, the gift of grace, and enabled me to receive Jesus Christ as my Savior. Not only that, what a great grace that the faithful Lord considered such an unfaithful man like me and entrusted me with the office of a pastor.

I remember hearing about the late Pastor Kyung-jik Han through an Internet article one day. The memory is that he said, ‘First of all, I confess that I am a sinner. I went to shrine worship.’ Not only him, but the late Pastor Yoon-sun Park also said that while leading the revival meeting, he confessed his own shrine worship this way: ‘I have been guilty of attending shrine worship only once. So I have always been unable to contain my grievances over that incident’ (Internet). These two godly men, who publicly confessed their sins of worshipping at the shrine,

in my opinion, lived humbly in front of the Lord and people until the end. I think that they were able to do that because they came to the Holy Lord, always remembering their past sins, so they realized more and more deeply the magnitude of their sins. So I think they gradually realized the magnitude of the Lord's mercy and grace to greater, greater, and deeper depths. A Christian who realizes that he is a sinner more and more deeply in this way has no choice but to realize God's mercy and grace more and more deeply. The reason is because he is full of the consciousness of grace. And even after completing pastoral ministry, a Christian who is filled with a sense of grace not only confesses with his lips but also truthfully, 'It is by the grace of God that I am who I am' (1 Cor. 15:10), but also humbly confesses the same confession at the end of his life. And he cries out to the Lord, "Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness" (Ps. 115:1).

He who is living today with the great mercy and grace of the Lord,

James Kim

(December 13, 2017, As I praying that I will be filled with only the Lord's grace consciousness, instead of merit and number consciousness)

# What to do before I die

**“There on the mountain that you have climbed you will die and be gathered to your people, just as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people.” (Deuteronomy 32:50)**

Early this morning, I heard the news of the death of a friend of my beloved seminary alumni pastor. When I heard that my friend pastor’s friend had died at his home with heart attack, I went to the website of the church he served. The first article I read was written by the late Pastor Kim while thinking of his son(s) in America. Then I went to the gallery section of the church website and looked at the pictures. Pastor Kim's birthday is of course different from mine, but his birthday is on October 7th, one day apart from me. As I thought about what Pastor Kim's wife and his children and his church members and co-workers were going through, I prayed to Heavenly Father for them. As I prayed, I thought of my own death. In particular, I prayed to God while reading Deuteronomy chapters 31 through 32, especially while meditating on the three things Moses did before he died, focusing on Deuteronomy 32:50, which I read at the early morning prayer meeting. And as I write this down again, at least in writing, I want to remind myself again.

**The first thing Moses did before he died was to build up his successor, Joshua, in the congregation of Israel and encouraged him.**

Look at Deuteronomy 31:7-8: “Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their forefathers to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” Before he died, Moses prayed to God: “May the LORD, the God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the LORD's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd” (Num. 27:16-17). Then God told Moses to take Joshua son of Nun and lay his hand on him, have him stand before Eleazar the priest and entire assembly and commission him in their presence, give him some of Moses' authority so the whole Israelite community would obey him (vv. 18-20). So Moses obeyed God's word (vv. 22-23). Then, when he was 120 years old, he knew that he could not cross the Jordan and would enter the land of Canaan as God had already said before all the congregation of Israel. So he told all Israel that the Lord Himself would cross over ahead of them and would destroy the Canaanites before them, and would take possession of their land (Deut. 31:1-3). Moses, who said that God would cross the Jordan before them, said,

“Joshua also will cross over ahead of you” (v. 3). What does it mean? It means that God would be with Joshua, Moses' successor (v. 6), to cross the Jordan first in front of the Israelites. Then Moses summoned Joshua for the purpose of all Israel and encouraged him: “Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their forefathers to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged” (vv. 7-8).

Before I die, I want to continue to participate in the Lord's work of raising up the Lord-centered workers who have vision. I want to devote myself in seeking out more potential harvest workers and sending them out to expand the kingdom of God in this time when the number of souls to be harvested are so many but the workers are few, as I pray to the Lord of harvest to send out workers into His harvest field (Lk. 10:2).

**The second thing Moses did before he died was to write the law and read it to all Israel so that they could hear it.**

Look at Deuteronomy 31:9-13: “So Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. Then Moses commanded them: “At the end of every seven years, in the year for canceling debts, during the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose, you shall read this law before them in their hearing. Assemble the people--men, women and children, and the aliens living in your towns--so they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this law. Their children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.” Moses wrote the law before he died. And he made all the children of Israel hear the law. And Moses gathered the law, the men and women, and the children of the people, and all the foreigners living in their cities, so that they could hear and learn from it. Its purpose was that all the people of Israel may learn to fear the Lord their God (v. 13). Why did Moses do this? This was because Moses knew that when the Israelites entered the land of Canaan, they would prostitute themselves after the foreign gods of the land, would forsake God, and would break the covenant that God made with them (v. 16). How did Moses know this? This is because God told Moses (v. 16). Moses knew that they had been rebellious against the Lord while he was still alive and with them, how much more would they rebel after his death (v. 27). He knew that when the Israelites entered into the land of Canaan and ate their fill and thrive, they would turn to other gods and worship them, rejecting God and breaking God's covenant (v. 20). That was why he wanted to write the law before he died so that all the people of Israel could listen and learn to fear the Lord their God and follow carefully all the words of the law (v. 12).

Before I die, I want to meditate and preach on all the letters of the Apostle Paul. And I want to make a book based on my sermons. Currently, I often write “James’ family stories” for my three children. And I am sharing the Word Meditation (QT) in writing for the members of the Victory Presbyterian Church I serve, my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, and members of my internet ministry. The reason I am doing this is simply to

share the grace that God has given me through His Word with others. And I am continuing to share my meditation on the Word, trusting that the Holy Spirit may give grace to the members who read it. However, the thing I want to do more than all of this before I die is that my life becomes more like Jesus, so I earnestly pray that the little memories of Jesus will be planted in the hearts of all my loved ones, brothers and sisters in Christ, the friends whom I want to reach out share the gospel of Jesus Christ, and all the people I know.

**The third thing Moses did before he died was to write songs and teach it to the sons of Israel in order for them to sing with their lips.**

Look at Deuteronomy 31:19 – “Now write down for yourselves this song and teach it to the Israelites and have them sing it, so that it may be a witness for me against them.” Moses wrote a song before he died. And he recited the words of this song from beginning to end in the hearing of the whole assembly of Israel (v. 30; 32:44). The content of this song is recorded in Deuteronomy 32:1-43. Why did Moses write this song and read its words to the entire congregation of Israel? The reason was because he wanted this song to be a witness for God against the sons of Israel (31:19). Moses wanted this song to testify before them as a witness (“for it shall not be forgotten from the lips of their descendants) because he knew that when they entered the land of Canaan and had eaten and were satisfied, became prosperous, then they would turn to other gods and serve them, would spurn God and break His covenant, and the result would be that many evils and troubles would have come upon them (vv. 20-21). So Moses wrote this song and taught it to the sons of Israel (v. 22).

Before I die, I want to collect the songs that I enjoyed singing and and write a book about the grace that God has given me through them, and share it with my family, church members, and many brothers and sisters in Christ. If possible, I would like to record a voice praising those songs while playing the guitar and give it to my children. Some of those songs I hope my family members, church members, and mourners will sing praises to God during my funeral service.

The three things I need to do before I die are to raise up Christ-centered visionary kingdom workers, to publish books about my meditation on the Word of God, and publish a book about my testimonies of the songs that I enjoyed singing to the Lord. Through all these things, I hope and pray that God will be glorified and that it will be beneficial to many loved ones.

As I entrust to the Lord what I must do before I die,

James Kim

(March 6, 2013, thinking of my dear brothers and sisters in Christ who are already asleep)

# **How should we prepare for parting from our beloved family?**

**“When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him, grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see his face again And they were accompanying him to the ship.” (Acts 20:36-38)**

I remember what sister-in-Christ Ja-ok Kim said before she passed away: ‘Cancer is not a difficult thing, but it is a disease that gives us time to prepare for parting.’ Perhaps it is because we all know that we may not have time to prepare for a farewell with someone we love. So I thought about this: ‘I should be ready for parting from my beloved wife and children.’ The reason I came to think this is because there is no order of death and to leave this world, and I don’t know when God will call me Home. Especially when I think about my loved ones more than myself, I always think that it is good to make some preparations for parting. Then how should we prepare for parting from our loved ones?

In Acts 20:36-38, Apostle Paul gave a farewell preaching (vv. 18-35) to the elders of Ephesus in Miletus (v. 17). And then he knelt down and prayed with them all (v. 36). “And they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him: (v. 37). And they accompanied Paul to the ship (v. 38). Based on these words and Paul’s farewell sermon, I thought how we should prepare for parting from our loved ones in seven ways:

## **First, I always want to show faithfulness to my beloved family.**

Look at Acts 20:18 – “And when they had come to him, he said to them, “You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time.” Apostle Paul reminded the elders of the Church of Ephesus how he was with them the whole time from the first day that he set foot in Asia (v. 18) until he stayed there three years (v. 31). How did Paul live with the saints of Ephesus for three years? At least I think Paul lived faithfully among them. In other words, I think Paul showed faithfulness to the church saints during the three years in Ephesus. The reason I think this way is because Paul said to the elders of the Church of Ephesus, “You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time” (v. 18). When I

think of the word "the whole time" in this phrase, I think Paul had been with them for three years consistently, unwavering and faithfully so that the elders of the church of Ephesus knew that well.

I don't know when God will call me to heaven. So I don't know when I have to say goodbye to my beloved family. But I want to be faithful like that of the Apostle Paul until that moment. I want to live faithfully with the power of God's grace, just as the faithful Lord does so to such sinner like me. Thus, after I die, when my family thinks about me, I hope and pray that they can say 'My husband/my father lived in a coherent state faithfully without leaning to the right or to the left.' Isn't that God's grace? Of course, my beloved family will see most of my unfaithfulness. But in the midst of such unfaithfulness, if they can see even little faithfulness in me for the Lord and His church, isn't that God's amazing grace and faithfulness? So I want to show consistent faithfulness to my loved ones today, tomorrow, and until the day of my death. I hope and pray that my loved ones may remember the faithfulness of the Lord which appeared little bit in me to their hearts even after I leave this world and to be with the Lord forever.

### **Second, I want to show serving the Lord to my beloved family.**

Look at Acts 20:19 – “serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews.” It was serving the Lord that Apostle Paul did faithfully when he was with the saints of the church of Ephesus for three years. Paul served the Lord faithfully. The Ephesian church elders knew this too (v. 18). So Paul reminded them how he faithfully served the Lord when he was with them and the rest of the Ephesian church saints for three years while he was preaching the farewell sermon. He told the elders of the church in Ephesus that he served the Lord with "all humility and with tears and with trials" (v. 19). Although he had many hardships due to the plots of the Jews, Paul served the Lord faithfully and humbly by not ceasing to admonish each one of the Ephesian church saints with tears night and day for a period of three years (v. 31). Wouldn't the Ephesian church saints have seen his tears? Wouldn't at least the elders of Ephesian church remember the tears that Paul shed for three years? How could they forget the precious tears of Apostle Paul who loved them, served them, admonished them and shed tears for three years? Although they might not remember his teachings and admonitions, the Ephesian church saints would have remembered Paul's tears in their hearts forever. I thought about the Ephesian church elders' heart who were saying goodbye to Paul, who served the Lord and the Ephesian church saints with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon him through the plots of the Jews (v. 19). In Acts 20:37, the Bible says that “they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him.” When they thought about Paul who loved them, served them, admonished them and shed tears night and day for three years and when they thought about not being able to see his face again (v. 38), the Ephesian church elders wept aloud (v. 37). It is beautiful tears of love.

I want to shed these tears too. Especially, I want to shed tears of repentance, tears of gratitude and tears of devotion, three kinds of tears that I shed during the college retreat in Victory Presbyterian Church in May 1987. Wouldn't it be beautiful if not only my loving Father God sees my tears but also my beloved family see my tears and decides to serve the Lord with tears as the Holy Spirit works in their hearts? I would like to have such a



beautiful farewell moment with my beloved family. I want to have beautiful death not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of my family. When my beloved wife and three children thought of my death, I hope and pray that they may be able to say, 'My husband/my father served the Lord faithfully and humbly until he died. I am sure he had many trials when he used to serve the Lord and His church. But he endured them and patiently served them in tears. I cannot forget his tears. And I want to serve the Lord and His church with humility and tears as well.' Then, isn't this God's great grace and my death is beneficial?

### **Third, I want to seek the profit of my beloved family.**

Look at Acts 20:20-21: "how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." Apostle Paul spent three years in the church of Ephesus, "serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews" (v. 19). Especially, he didn't hesitate to preach anything that would be helpful to the Ephesian church saints (v. 20). And he taught them publicly and from house to house (v. 20). And the thing that he didn't hesitate to preach to them was repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 21). He testified solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God (v. 24). In other words, Apostle Paul declared to the Ephesian church saints the whole purpose of God (v. 27). Why did Paul do that to them? Why didn't he hesitate to proclaim to and teach the Ephesian church saints anything that was profitable? The reason was because Paul loved them. I remember the words of 1 Corinthians 13:5 – "it does not seek its own." Since Paul loved the Ephesian church saints, he didn't seek his own but theirs. Therefore, for their profit, Paul preached and taught repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to the Ephesian church saints, bearing witness to the good news of God's grace to them.

Which husband/father would seek his own profit than the profit of his family? Isn't he working hard to support his beloved family? But more important than this, I think, is that husband/father to nurture his wife and his children as the head of the family. So I don't forget Ephesians 5:29 and 6:4 that there is a great responsibility for me to nurture my beloved wife and three children. Then how should I nurture them? I should make my wife and my three children disciples of Jesus Christ (Mt. 28:19). As a spiritual teacher in my family, I must teach my beloved wife (and three children) to obey everything the Lord commanded me (v. 20). The purpose of doing so is to cleanse her (my three children) with the Word of God (of course before that I myself must be cleansed with the Word of the Lord each day) (Eph. 5:26). In doing so, my wife and I will be able to love one another with sincere love from our hearts (1 Pet. 1:22). Also, as spiritual teachers of my three children, I shouldn't exasperate them, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). I must nurture and teach them to obey Father God. And I should raise them as God's children who obey their parents as they obey their heavenly Father God (v. 1). And I think the children who honor their parents (v. 2) can honor other adults. Why should I do this? It is because I want my wife and my three children to be prosperous and be in good health, just as their souls prosper (3 Jn. 1:2). My purpose is clear. It is to seek the profit of my beloved family. The reason is because I love my wife and my three children with the love of God.

**Fourth, I want to show my life that is being led by God’s calling and mission to my beloved family.**

Look at Acts 20:24 – “But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.” Apostle Paul was bounded by the Holy Spirit, and was on the way to Jerusalem, not knowing what would happen to him there (v.22). He knew that the Holy Spirit solemnly testified to him that in every city, that they bonds and afflictions awaited him (v. 23). And Paul would have known that the danger that he would lose his life by the Jews who tried to kill him. But Paul didn’t consider his life of any account as dear to himself (v. 24). In other words, he considered the Lord’s mission that was given to him more precious than his own life. That was why in order to finish his course and the ministry which he received from the Lord, he didn’t consider his life of any account as dear to himself (v. 24). What a wonderful man of God? Shouldn’t we have this kind of value too?

I received two promised word of the Lord. The first promise word of the Lord is John 6:1-15, which I received in 1987 May during the Victory Presbyterian Church college retreat through the guest speaker named Pastor Young Ik Kim. The Holy Spirit touched my heart and inspired me to surrender my ‘two fish and five loaves of bread’ kind of life to the Lord. So now, with the full grace of God, I become a pastor and am serving the Lord's church. The second promise word of the Lord is Matthew 16:18, which the Lord gave me through the guest speaker Pastor Won G. Kim at the Korean Church Renewal Pastoral Council in 2003. After receiving the Lord’s word “... I will build my church ... “and when I was praising “I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord”, I cried in tears thinking of Victorious Presbyterian Church. I missed the beloved Victorious Presbyterian Church. So I resigned from the Seohyun Church in Korea, which I served until the end of November of 2003, and returned to the United States on December 3. And I took office as a senior pastor of Victory Presbyterian Church on December 21 when my father Pastor Chang Kim retired. And so far I have been serving the Lord's church with my beloved wife and three children. When I think of these two promise words of the Lord, I think my mission is to share the Word of God (Jn. 6:1-15) and to build the Lord’s church (Mt. 16:18). And to expand the kingdom of God by building the body church of the Lord. My vision is to raise the Christ-centered visionary leaders and to send them into this world to expand the kingdom of God. In fulfilling this mission, I must build my wife and my children as a leader of my household, and build His church members as a leader of the church. I pray and hope that I will be able to faithfully complete this mission by the grace of God. So when I leave this world, I hope and pray that my beloved wife and three children have this memory of me.’

**Fifth, I want to commend my beloved family to God and to the Word of His grace.**

Look at Acts 20:32 – “And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” Apostle Paul said to the Ephesian church elders, “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (v. 28). The reason he spoke to

them was because Paul knew that after his departure externally “savage wolves” would come in among the Ephesian church saints, not sparing the church members (v. 29). He also knew that internally from among the Ephesian church saints men would arise, speaking perverse things in order to draw away the disciples after them (v. 30). That was why when Paul was giving his farewell sermon to the Ephesian church elders he said “be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears” (v. 31). And then Paul commended them to God and to the word of His grace (v. 32). The reason he did so was because he was convinced that God and the word of His grace “is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (v. 32). Can you imagine that the church elders (both the teaching elders and the ruling elders) are not standing firm in the word of God’s grace? Then, what will happen to the church saints? What will happen to the church saints from the extreme temptations of not only externally, but also internally? Won’t they leave faith and lean to the right or to the left? Isn’t it terrible to think?

I often think of myself leaving this world, leaving behind my beloved wife and three children. The reason why I think this often is because I have gotten more and more of the viewpoint of death through the death of the senior members of Victory Presbyterian Church whom I had privilege to serve until their deaths and even their funeral services. When I look back on my own life from the death perspective and deeply think about what kind of death I would like to have in the future, I would like to think how good it would be if I would be led by the Lord’s calling and being used by Him as His instrument in fulfilling His mission and go to Him peacefully. But at the same time, I cannot help but think about my beloved family. I often think about what life would be like for my beloved wife and three children when I leave this world. Of course, I think about their life of faith. I hope and pray that they continue to live for the glory of God. It seems like there isn’t much that I can do for them. So what I can do for them is to entrust them to God and the word of His grace. Thus, I pray to God for them. I entrust everything to God in prayer. As the Bible 1 Peter 5:7 says, “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you”, I am casing all my anxiety on the Lord my God. The reason is because God loves my family more than anyone else in this world. I am taught to entrust my family to God, especially to the word of God’s grace (Acts 20:32). My responsibility for that is to convey the words of God’s grace to my family, "the gospel of the grace of God" (v. 24), and to teach them to dwell in the grace of God’s salvation. Then when I leave this world, my family will be firmly stand on the words of God’s grace and will be able to receive the inheritance among all those who are sanctified (v. 32).

**Sixth, I want to show my beloved family that I am working hard without covetousness.**

Look at Acts 20:33-34: “I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothes. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me.” Why did Apostle Paul say this to the Ephesian church saints as we was preaching his farewell sermon to them? Wasn’t it because there were so many temptations that were tempting the Ephesian church elders? Maybe it was because a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis (19:24) would tempt the Ephesian church elders with money.

Maybe that was one of the “trials” (20:19) that Paul went through when he was in Ephesus for three years. If such temptation was with the Ephesian church elders, Paul would entrust them to God and the words of God’s grace, so that they might not be tempted by such temptation of covetousness and commit the sin of idolatry (Col. 3:5). Then the Ephesian church saints who see their elders overcoming the temptation of covetousness would be able to overcome the same temptation as well. And maybe the good way to overcome that temptations was to work hard with their own hands as Paul did (Acts 20:34). Above all, if the Ephesian church elders truly loved their brothers and sisters in Christ of the Ephesian church, then they would have obeyed the Moses’ Ten Commandments “You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor” (Exod. 20:17). And they would have worked diligently like Paul, earning their own money. If I as a church leader be without covetousness and be cleaned, what precious life of faith will that be?

I still remembered what my father said when I asked him for an advice regarding my own struggle. At that time when my wife and mother-in-law were preparing for our marriage, buying some furnitures, I kind of stuck between both women and I didn’t know what to do. So I asked my father what I should do. And he said to ‘go beyond material’. In my mother-in-law’s position, she wanted to do lot for us, buying some good and expensive furnitures for us but my wife didn’t want to because they were too expensive. So I didn’t know what to do between two women. That was why I asked my father what to do. I still remembered that my mother-in-law won and she bought us undeserved furnitures for us. Another thing I still remember is when we got married my wife told me ‘How the evangelist could eat the Korean BBQ.’ Haha. Perhaps my wife thought that the evangelist shouldn’t eat expensive ribs. Haha. But eventually I ate the ribs. As I think about living a life of thrifty, going beyond material, being free from all the material temptations, not covetousness but being satisfied by Jesus alone, I want to learn to be content whatever the circumstances (Phil. 4:11-12). So I want to show my beloved family that I am satisfied with the Lord alone. And I want to show my family that I am doing my ministry diligently, without greed. So when I leave this world, I hope and pray that my beloved wife and three children will think ‘My husband/my father was without greed but was satisfied with the Lord only and worked hard for the Lord, His church and His Kingdom and passed away peacefully.’

### **The seventh and the last, I want to be an example to my beloved family.**

Look at Acts 20:35 – “In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” Apostle Paul showed an example to the elders of the Ephesian church. The reason why he couldn’t covet was because he remembered that the Lord Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (v. 35). That was why Paul didn’t fall into the temptation of covetousness, but was able to work hard with his own hands to his own needs and to the men who were with him (v. 34). Not only that, but Paul by working hard he helped the weak (v. 35). Paul, who showed this example, preached the farewell sermon to the Ephesian church elders and told them that they too should follow his example and work hard to help the weak (v. 35). The reason is because it is blessed life (v. 35).

I want to show what a blessed life is to my beloved family. I would like to show my beloved three children how living in action rather than mere talk is a blessed life in the sight of God. I want to show them how I have enjoyed God's gracious blessings in my life through my appearance from behind. If I could show them an example of the truth that it is more blessed to give than to receive, then I think even if I close my eyes, my beloved children will be able to open their spiritual eyes and follow my footsteps (1 Pet. 2:21). Especially, I want to leave a beautiful footprint to my beloved family by living and working hard until the day when I cannot work and helping the weak people, those who are in need. Therefore, even if I leave this world, I hope and pray that they can follow my footsteps that are written on the tablets of their hearts.

I have come across one of the TV news that touched my heart. It is the news about Josephine Smith who became a New York city firefighter like her father. Her father was a firefighter in the 9/11 incident but passed away. But thirteen years after her father's death, she became the firefighter after completing all tests and all tough training. When I was watching that news, I couldn't forget two scenes. The first scene was that firefighter Josephine Smith was smiling brightly on a building ladder, wearing her firefighter uniform and hat. Another scene was a picture of her father who passed away. Her father's impression looked good. At the age of 47, he was killed by the 9/11 incident. So I guess that his daughter Josephine Smith was in a high school. I thought about her heart when she lost her beloved father in her adolescent year. I thought about how much she loves her father that she also became a firefighter after her father. When I think of Josephine Smith who is a firefighter and serving a New York City like her beloved father, I also think that I should become an example to my three beloved children as well. I want to pursue the change of my character by shifting that thought into practice and becoming habitual. I would like to show my beloved family that I keep on getting rid of all my covetousness and working hard for the Lord and His church. Also, I want to be profitable to my family by showing them through my appearance from behind that I am serving the Lord humbly and faithfully with passion and patience as I am led by the Lord's calling and mission. As I entrust my beloved family to God and to the word of God's grace, I want to imitate Jesus Christ until I die so that I may be able to leave Christ-likeness footsteps on the tablets of their hearts.

Thinking of my beloved wife and three children Dillon, Yeri and Karis,

James Kim

(November 21, 2014. As I pray that I will follow in the footsteps of my both side of parents who are exemplary)

## **Let's do our best to prepare for the funeral in advance.**

**“She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. ... But Peter kept saying insistently, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And they all were saying the same thing also.” (Mark 14:8, 31)**

Have you ever thought about your funeral? Are you preparing for your funeral? If “Yes,” how are you preparing? How do you hear the title of meditation on the Word of God (QT), “Let's do our best to prepare for the funeral in advance”? Perhaps it may sound a bit absurd to brothers and sisters in Christ who are not married. The reason is because they may think that it is time to prepare for the wedding in advance, not the time to prepare for the funeral. But as we all know, no one can predict the future. We don't know when and how we will leave this world. Nevertheless, young people think that they live longer in this world than old people, so they think more about weddings than their own funerals, and do their best to prepare for it. Then imagine what it would be like for the elderly. They say that they have few days or years left to live, but how do they prepare for their funeral? I don't know if they are doing their best to prepare for it. One of the three biggest lies is that old people say, “I want to die soon.” One of the books I'm reading these days is "The Art of Dying" by Rob Moll. While reading this book, there were some parts that I am sympathize with. One of them is that the age we live in is focused on the things we want to live, not preparing to die, as medical technology continues to advance and people live longer than ever before. Therefore it seems that we don't know how to well die in the Lord. As a result, it seems that we don't even know how to live well in order to die well. “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.” (Psalm 116:15).

I was reading the story of a woman who broke the alabaster jar in Mark 14, and my eyes stopped at verse 8 – “She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial.” The reason is because even though the apostle Peter, who had been following Jesus for three years, insisted emphatically, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you” (v. 31), but had in mind the things of men rather than of God (Mt. 16:23), a woman, who broke an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, or pure nard (Mark 14:3), poured perfume on Jesus' body and prepared for Jesus' burial (v. 8). Jesus' disciple Peter had already heard Jesus' teaching, “the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again” (8:31). Nevertheless, Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You” (Mt. 16:22). In contrast, the woman who broke the alabaster jar in order to

prepare for Jesus' burial with all her might (Mk. 14:8). Peter had in mind the things of men, while she had in mind the things of God. While she prepared everything in advance for the death of Jesus on the cross, Peter did everything in his power to prevent Jesus from dying (see Mt. 16:22), even by reaching and drawing out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear (Mt. 26:51). Then Peter cursed and swore (v. 74) and denied Jesus three times. Who has done something commendable in the Lord's sight? Jesus said to his disciples when he thought of a woman who prepared for His burial with all her might: "Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her" (Mk. 14:9).

What are you preparing in advance with all your might? Have you ever wanted to prepare in advance for your own funeral? Therefore, with the viewpoint of death, don't you want to live the life God has given you day by day, not according to my will but only according to God's will? Although we must live well in order to die well, we must also be well prepared to die in order to live well. And in order to be well prepared to die, we must have faith and hope in the resurrection. Also, we must prepare well for the second coming of Jesus. The bride church must prepare in advance for the second coming of Jesus, the Bridegroom. Like the five wise virgins who took oil and lamps and prepared well for the coming of Jesus, the church, the bride, should welcome Jesus, the Bridegroom, with joy as a glorious church (Eph. 5:27).

Between life and death, with longing for the second coming of Jesus Christ,

James Kim

(October 22, 2010, while thinking of my father-in-law who is suffering from disease)

# **“Put my tears in Your bottle”**

**“You have taken account of my wanderings; Put my tears in Your bottle  
Are they not in Your book? ...” (Psalms 56:8b).**

There are still tears in the bottle of my heart. They are the tears I will never forget. I still remember vividly the tears that flew in their eyes. They are the tears that are so precious to me. The tear that is written deepest in my heart is a drop of tears from my first baby Charis. When I held her first and last time in my arms, she passed away. And I saw one drop of tears in her right eye. Whenever I participate in the communion, I intentionally think of Charis who was in the Los Angeles Children Hospital Intensive Care Unit for 55 days and who had numerous needle marks in her body. And when I think about her, I remember one drop of her tears and it makes my heart moving. The second deepest tear in my heart is the tear of my beloved wife. I still remember clearly when my wife was crying in front of Charis. She was crying very hard because her baby Charis was slowly dying. I had never seen my wife look as beautiful as that time. Another unforgettable tear of my wife is when she shed her tears after she spread Charis' ashes in the water. It was inside the small boat in where my wife was sitting in front and I was in the back. Suddenly my wife who was looking at the front turned to me and said “Titanic”. I think she was joking, thinking about the movie “Titanic”. And when I saw her face, she was crying. Her tears were dropping from her eyes. I still cannot forget her tears that she shed at that moment. Another tear that is in the bottle of my heart is my grandfather's tears. I still remember when my grandfather was in St. Vincent Hospital Intensive Care Unit. It was Sunday morning when I visited him before I went to my friend pastor's church to preach. After I proclaimed the word of God to my grandfather during the worship, I prayed for him. After we prayed and when I opened my eyes, I saw tears on my grandfather's right eye. Although he couldn't speak because he was wearing an oxygen respirator, he shed his tears and I cannot forget that tears. That night he passed away as he was sleeping. I also cannot forget my grandmother's tears that she shed when I and my wife visited her in St. Vincent Hospital. I thought she was crying because she was afraid to die. So I asked her, 'Grandma, are you afraid of death?' She said 'No'. She said she was very thankful to God. So I asked her 'Why are you thankful to God?' She answered it was because the Lord raised several pastors in our family. She was so thankful for that. That was why she shed her tears. And her tears are in the bottle of my heart.

I have been thinking of tears in my heart as I have been living my faith. However, when I was reading the Bible yesterday night for today's Morning Prayer, my gaze stopped at Psalm 56:8 because the Bible says “... Put my tears in Your bottle ....” Obviously I would have read this Bible passage many times before, but I just passed that Bible passage until yesterday night. Then, during today's Morning Prayer, as I was preaching the word of God based on Psalms 56:4, I got more interested in verse 8. So as I am writing down this I am meditating the verse 8



again. Now my interest is to focus on the tears of the beloved who are in the Lord's bottle, rather than the tears that are in the bottle of my heart. I believe that the tears of the beloved in my heart bottle are already in the Lord's heart bottle. And I firmly believe that the Lord loves them much more than I am. So I am offering all those tears to the Lord who knows their tears best. How can I understand the meaning of the tears that my first baby shed, the tears that my wife shed and the tears my grandfather and grandmother shed. But since my omniscient God knows and fully understands the meaning of all of their tears that they shed, I hope and pray that the Lord receive all of their tears from the bottle of my heart. Also, I hope and pray that the Lord receives my three tears that I shed during our church college retreat in May 1987 because of the work of the Holy Spirit in my heart: tears of repentance, tears of devotion and tears of gratitude. I wish I could continue to shed these three tears in my life until I die. Therefore, I want to fill the bottle of the Lord with these tears.

# **When we are ill to death, When our illness is healed**

**“A writing of Hezekiah king of Judah after his illness and recovery”  
(Isaiah 38:9)**

How would you react if your doctor did a biopsy of you and told you, ‘You have cancer’? How would you react if he told you that it is also stage 4 cancer, not early stage cancer? When it comes to the fourth stage of cancer, most of us seem to think that we are ‘dead now’ as the terminal stage of cancer. But, is stage 4 cancer really the last stage and are we going to die? Even if that is true, do we have to give up life and wait for death? Today, I would like to receive some lessons on what to do when we are stricken with a mortal disease and are healed of a mortal disease, focusing on the words of Isaiah 38:9-20, which Hezekiah, who was sick to death, wrote when he was healed. As we receive those lessons and put them into practice, I hope and pray that you and I will be able to glorify God with praise.

## **The first lesson is that when we are ill to death, we must face death.**

Look at Isaiah 38:10 – “I said, “In the middle of my life I am to enter the gates of Sheol; I am to be deprived of the rest of my years.” God said to Hezekiah through the prophet Isaiah, “Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live” (v. 1). In a word, King Hezekiah received death sentence from God. When receiving such a death sentence, it is human nature to deny. The reason is because we fear death. But we should not be afraid of death. Rather, we must prepare for death. A Christian who prepares for death faces death rather than denying it when he receives death sentence. As Christians we prepare for death, we must face death.

## **The second lesson is that when we are ill to death, we must look back on our lives.**

Look at Isaiah 38:11 – “I said, “I will not see the LORD, The LORD in the land of the living; I will look on man no more among the inhabitants of the world.” When King Hezekiah received death sentence from God, he looked back on his life. And he thought about God and those whom he would never see again in this world before his death. We must learn to look back on life in the face of death. And when we look back on our lives, we need to think about whether we loved God with all our heart, all our soul and all our mind while we were on this earth, and whether we loved our neighbors who we will never see again on this earth as ourselves.

## **The third lesson is that when we are ill to death, we must believe that life and death**

**are in the hands of the Lord.**

Look at Isaiah 38:12-13: “Like a shepherd’s tent my dwelling is pulled up and removed from me; As a weaver I rolled up my life He cuts me off from the loom; From day until night You make an end of me. I composed my soul until morning. Like a lion--so He breaks all my bones, From day until night You make an end of me.” Here, King Hezekiah said, “He cuts me off from the loom” and “You make an end of me.” In a word, he said that life and death are in the hands of the Lord. No matter how much the doctor in charge declares death, we will not die unless it is given by God. But if the Lord has pronounced death sentence upon us, He will end our lives. That is why we must not take our own lives. Life depends on God. We must believe that the Lord is in control of our life and death.

**The fourth lesson is that when we are ill to death, we should look to the Lord even our eyes may grow weak.**

Look at Isaiah 38:14 – I cried like a swift or thrush, I moaned like a mourning dove. My eyes grew weak as I looked to the heavens. I am troubled; O Lord, come to my aid!” Even after King Hezekiah received death sentence from God, he wept and prayed to the Lord who was in control of life and death. After receiving God’s death sentence through the prophet Isaiah, he turned his face to the wall and wept bitterly and prayed to God (vv. 2-3). He prayed, “O restore me to health and let me live!” (v. 16), asking God to remember how he had walk before Him in truth and with a whole heart and what he had done what was good in His sight (v. 3). In a word, King Hezekiah wept bitterly and looked to the Lord until his eyes grew weak (v. 14). Even after we have received death sentence, we should weep and pray to the Lord who is in control of life and death. We should cry out to God even if we are ill to death because God may change His will and extend our lives.

**The fifth lesson is that when we are ill to death, and when our illness is healed, we should give glory to the Lord.**

Look at Isaiah 38:15 – “But what can I say? He has spoken to me, and he himself has done this. I will walk humbly all my years because of this anguish of my soul.” When Hezekiah wept bitterly and prayed to God until his eyes grew weak, God heard his prayer and saw his tears, and then added fifteen years to his life (v. 5). Hezekiah, who received this life extension, glorified God. He did so by confessing that God had fulfilled His promise to him (v. 15). He never glorified himself by extorting the glory of God. The reason is because he knew that God had extended his life. We need to know too. We must not forget that when we live at the crossroads of life and death, it is only the grace of God. Only God can extend our lives. Only God can heal our illness. Therefore, we, who have been healed of a mortal disease by God’s grace, must walk humbly before the Lord like Hezekiah for the rest of our lives (v. 15).

**The sixth lesson is that when we are ill to death, and when our illness is healed, we must realize that the only way for man to live is the word of God.**

Look at Isaiah 38:16 – “Lord, by such things men live; and my spirit finds life in them too. You restored me to health and let me live.” King Hezekiah came to understand that God's word is for people to live after being healed of a deathly illness according to the word of God's promise. In other words, he came to realize that the life of his soul was entirely in the word of God. That's right. Our soul's life is entirely in the word of God. Our life is only in the word of God. We must know that “man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord” (Deut. 8:2). And we must live according to the word of God.

**The seventh lesson is that we must realize the will of the Lord who allowed us to suffer from our fatal illness when we are healed of it.**

Look at Isaiah 38:17 – “Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back.” What does it mean that God allows us to suffer the great suffering of a mortal disease? King Hezekiah realized that the will of God was to forgive all his sins, so that he could have peace. How great is God's blessing and grace? What great blessing and grace is this if, even through death, the problem of our sins can be resolved (forgiveness of our sins) and as a result we can enjoy the perfect peace that God gives us. We should long for the forgiveness of sins more than the cure of illness. And through the forgiveness of sins, we must enjoy the peace of God that the world cannot give.

**The eighth and last lesson is that we should give thanks to the Lord and praise Him when we are healed from our fatal illness.**

Look at Isaiah 38:18-20: “For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth. The LORD was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD.” Here, King Hezekiah is grateful for being able to praise God for being saved from his illness (Park). He praised God for His faithful grace and love for him being saved from his sin. The Christian who have experienced God's grace of salvation in this way are thankful and cannot but praise God. I hope and pray that we too, like King Hezekiah, experience the grace of God's salvation, so that we can give thanks to God and praise Him.

Thinking of the loved ones who experienced God's grace of salvation even in their illness to death,

James Kim

(July 30, 2011, with a prayerful heart, remembering the souls I love who are still suffering from illness)

# When it's time for me to die

**“The LORD said to Moses, ‘Now the day of your death is near. Call Joshua and present yourselves at the Tent of Meeting, where I will commission him.’ So Moses and Joshua came and presented themselves at the Tent of Meeting.” (Deuteronomy 31:14)**

In a little while today, I will be attending the funeral of a certain sister in Christ. I heard that she suffered from a chronic disease for several years and then fell asleep peacefully. Unfortunately, it is said that her husband, the elder of a church, took care of her with the utmost sincerity. To some extent, according to the elder's son-in-law, it was indeed “labor of love” (1 Thess. 1:3). When the elder returned to the house after participating in the wedding ceremony, he saw her fell asleep peacefully. When I think about what that elder must feel, I can't quite imagine. After I heard the news about her death, and saw my wife sleeping last night, I had this and that thoughts. I saw her sleeping well even though I came into our room, turn on the light and was reading a book. As I watched her sleeping, I thought about how I would feel if my wife left me first. The death of a loved one is truly hard to accept and very sad indeed.

In Deuteronomy 31:14, we see a scene where God said to Moses, “Now the day of your death is near.” So God commanded Moses to bring Joshua to the tabernacle. The reason was because God had a word to instruct Joshua (v. 14). As I meditated on this word, I came to think of Moses' position when the time of death was over. The reason is because God said that Moses' death was near, and that he would not enter Canaan, the Promised Land he wanted to enter, and would die without seeing it, and that he knew that after his death the Israelites were sure to become utterly corrupt and to turn from the way God had commanded them and would provoke God to anger (v. 29). He knew it because God had told him: “You are going to rest with your fathers, and these people will soon prostitute themselves to the foreign gods of the land they are entering. They will forsake me and break the covenant I made with them. On that day I will become angry with them and forsake them; I will hide my face from them, and they will be destroyed. Many disasters and difficulties will come upon them, and on that day they will ask, 'Have not these disasters come upon us because our God is not with us?' And I will certainly hide my face on that day because of all their wickedness in turning to other gods” (vv. 16-18). Moses knew that when the Israelites entered the land of Canaan, “and they have eaten and are satisfied and become prosperous, then they will turn to other gods and serve them, and spurn Me and break My covenant” (v. 20; 32:15). As a result, Moses knew that God would be angry with them and forsake them, hide His face, and bring them many disasters and difficulties (31:21). So Moses said to the Israelites, “Assemble before me all the elders of your tribes and all your officials, so that I can speak these words in

their hearing and call heaven and earth to testify against them” (31:27). Moses knew that after his death the Israelites would corrupt themselves, depart from the way God had commanded them, do evil in the sight of God, and provoke Him to wrath (v. 29). Knowing this fact, Moses had reached the end of his death. So, how did Moses feel?

How will the parents who believe in Jesus feel toward their children when the time of their death is near? In particular, how would they feel when they know that their children are still pretending to live a religious life by coming to church because of them, but their children would leave the church and live as worldly people when they die? Can they properly close their eyes comfortably? In the midst of this, what can the parents do? We, the parents, must look to the God of the covenant, who is true and faithful, with faith and pray to Him. God will have compassion on our children (32:36). When our children suffer difficulties because of the God’s discipline of love and there strengthen is gone (v. 36), when their foot slip (v. 35), God will have compassion on them (v. 36). And God will make atonement for our children (v. 43). Therefore our children, His people, will rejoice (v. 43). May God grant us wisdom to understand this fact and to discern what their end of our children will be (v. 29).

Reflecting on the moment of my death through the funeral service of the late sister in Christ Bok-hee Lee who died on her knees,

James Kim

(March 7, 2016, remembering those loved ones whom I am praying to God for the salvation of their souls)

# Even at the crossroads of life and death

## 3 reasons to thank God

### [Psalms 23]

It's a Sunday evening here now. Outside, I can hear my favorite sound of rain. Now, I am going to write this down again in the church's pastoral room after declaring the words of Psalms 23 that I exhorted to the late brother in Christ Dok-II An last Friday, during the Thanksgiving worship. Previously, I could not write down the meditation on this word of God except only the title of the meditating on His word, "Even at the crossroads of life and death, 3 reasons to thank God". But now with this strength, I sit in front of the computer in the shepherd room alone and listen to the rain while writing down this meditation of the word of God. The reason I am doing this is, first, not to forget the three lessons that God gave me through the life and death of the late brother in Christ Dok-II An, second, to commemorate him, and last, I want to share it with you.

Last Friday, I said to the daughter of the late brother in Christ Dok-II An through KakaoTalk, 'Pastor, can you come to the hospital? I don't think my dad will not be here for long.' After receiving this message, I hurriedly went to the hospital where brother Ah was hospitalized. Brother An, who was in the intensive care unit on the second floor, moved to the comfort care (hospice) on the first floor and was lying on a bed in the hospital room. We were in the hospital room with Mrs. An, his daughter, and his younger sister who came in a hurry from Korea, and I approached the bed with brother in Christ Dok-II An who was lying and praised God. Even then, brother An was very conscious, so he understood everything I said and nodded his head. So, while I was praising God, I read Psalms 23 to him and gave him three words of exhortation.

#### **First, I exhorted brother An to confess to God, "my cup overflows."**

Look at Psalms 23:5 – "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows." I encouraged brother An, who was lying on the bed of the hospice ward, to look back on his seven or eighty years of his life. Although he was in pain while wearing a respirator on his face and injecting various medications, I encouraged him to look back on his life and think about the abundant grace that God has bestowed upon him. In the midst of this, I prayed for the grace to overflow in his heart through the great and abundant grace that God has given him. Therefore, like the psalmist David, I prayed that brother An would also confess, "my cup overflows" (v. 5).

#### **Second, I exhorted brother An to confess to God, "I shall not be in want."**

Look at Psalms 23:1 – “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.” I told brother An that in the original Hebrew word for Psalms 23:1 is ‘I shall not be in want because the Lord is my shepherd.’ Then, I shared with brother An that I had delivered this message of Psalms 23 to the last sister in Christ Jin Young Park’s older sister, younger brother and sister Jong-mi Lee when I went to Korea for a sabbatical in June of this year and went to a chanel house with them where the late sister Jin Young Park’s ashes was laid to rest. How can we confess, “I shall not be in want,” while worshiping God after letting go of a loved one. The reason is because the Lord is our shepherd. The lesson I learned this time through the late brother Dok-II An was that in the 2nd verse of the Korea hymn “All the Way My Saviour Leads Me” is “Gives me grace for every trial.” Truly, since our God gave brother An sufficient grace even when he was in trouble, which I got a glimpse of that grace, I also confessed “I shall not be in want” like the psalmist David. I hoped and prayed that brother An and I can confessed that the reason is because ‘The Lord is my shepherd’. In particular, since only the Lord is our satisfaction, I hoped and prayed that we, like the apostle Paul, would learn the secret of contentment (Phil. 4:11-12) and confess, “I shall not be in want” in any situation.

**Third and last, I exhorted brother An to confess to God, “I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”**

Look at Psalms 23:6 – “Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.” I exhorted and encouraged brother An, who was lying in the hospice room, to look only at the Lord, who is our hope. I exhorted him to look only at the eternal kingdom of heaven, where there is no more pain. So, I read to him the Bible Psalms 27:4 based on the lyrics of my favorite English gospel hymn, “One Thing I Ask”: “One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.” After reading this word to brother An, I exhorted him to ask the Lord for one thing. I encouraged him to live in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, and to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him. Therefore, even though brother An is at the crossroads of life and death, I prayed that he would confess in his heart, “I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever,” like the psalmist David, because of the goodness and love of God will follow him all the days of his life.

As I write this, I can hardly hear the rain outside anymore. As I look back today, on Thanksgiving Sunday 2016, I have delivered the words of three lessons that I exhorted to the late brother in Christ Dok-II An last Friday to all the members of Victory Presbyterian Church (Korean Ministry, English Ministry, Hispanic Ministry) while the bereaved family of brother in Christ An was sitting. Then, a little while ago, the Hispanic Ministry members had another service separately, had a meal, and then all left the church. As I sat alone in the church pastoral room, thinking of the beloved brother An, I meditated on Psalms 23 and wrote it down again. Like the late brother in Christ Dok-II An, even at the crossroads of life and death, I want to confess, “my cup overflows’ because of great and abundant grace that God has bestowed on my life, “I shall not be in want” because the Lord is my good Shepherd, and “I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” because goodness and love will surely follow me all the days of my life.



Praying that the Lord alone will satisfy me,

James Kim

(On November 20, 2016, in commemoration of the late brother in Christ Dok-II An, who received the word of God and said “Amen!” even at the crossroads of life and death)



# **They may rest from their labors.**

**“And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, 'Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them." (Revelation 14:13)**

On Thursday morning yesterday, I went to the hospice where one of the presbytery pastors was hospitalized. When I went there, another presbytery pastor was there and there were two women. So I wrote these words while waiting alone in the hallway of the hospital room: ‘At the end of the year, I came to the hospital (hospice) where the presbytery pastor was hospitalized. At the end of the year, I think about the end of my life. When I think of my own death, I cannot help thinking that I will be parting for a while with my beloved family, church members, friends, co-workers, and many brothers and sisters in Christ. But I am not afraid of death. Rather, I am afraid that I will not be praised by the Lord when I stand before the Lord and settle account.’ Then, I saw another presbytery pastor coming out of the hospital room, and after greeting him, I went into the hospital room and saw the pastor who was suffering from cancer. I knew that one of the two women in the hospital room was the pastor's mother, so I greeted both women and talked to the pastor’s mother about the pastor. During the conversation, the pastor's mother told me a lot of stories while the pastor was in the mission field. In fact, I was delighted to hear that the mother went to the mission field of her son several times and told the story of what she had witnessed firsthand. I was happy and grateful to know more that the Lord used the pastor so well that he preached the word of God to many people and brought many graces to them. After the conversation, I approached the pastor, held his hands, prayed, and went straight to the parking lot and returned to the church. However, after a while, I heard the news through my father that one of our relative pastor’s wife passed away from stomach cancer. For me, I can't forget her husband pastor because the Lord used that pastor to listen to the words of John 6:1-15 at our church college retreat, so that I was saved and decided to become a pastor. So when he passed away (year 2002), since I was in Korea at that time, I took my wife and three children from Korea to the United States to attend his funeral. Finally, after hearing the news that his wife was in critical condition, I wanted to visit her. But an elderly person in my family persuaded me not to visit her because when was having a hard time. So I was unable to see her and heard the news of her passing.

I am reminded of Psalms 90:10 – “The length of our days is seventy years-- or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.” It is indeed a world full of toil and sorrow. It is the world where people are keep on dying, and it is the world in which we have no choice

but to work day and night. But in Revelation 14:13, the Bible says that they will cease toil and rest. Who will cease toil and rest? They are “the dead who die in the Lord” (v. 13). The Bible says that those who die in the Lord are blessed (v. 13). And the Bible says that when they die, they will cease toil and rest. Then, how did those who died in the Lord, who had ceased toil and rested, live on this earth? In other words, who are they? I would like to briefly meditate on in in five ways:

### **First, they are the pure ones.**

Look at Revelation 14:4 – “These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. ....” Here, “those” are the 144,000 saints who have been redeemed (saved) from the earth (v. 3), and refer to those who are pure who have not defiled themselves with the strong temptations of worldism (“women”) (v. 4) (Park). Just as a virgin bride keeps her chastity to welcome the groom, the bride church doesn’t serve the world and sin by waiting to receive Jesus, the bridegroom (Park). Therefore, the church must be pure. The church is to be built holy and without blemish, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing as a glorious church (Eph. 5:27).

### **Second, they are the ones who follow the Lord wherever He goes.**

Look at Revelation 14:4 – “... They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. ....” Here, the phrase “wherever he goes” implies that the direction of the map isn’t known in advance to the non-leaders. Even on this map where the direction seems uncertain, the pure saints who have been saved from the earth obey the Lord who is the “Lamb” (Park). It was Abraham who showed this act of faith. In Hebrews 11:8, the Bible says, “By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.” Therefore, the pure church must obey the lead of the Lord (“Lamb”) who is the head of the church. When the Lord asks the church to come, the church must follow the Lord wherever He leads and go with Him.

### **Third, they have been purchased.**

Look at Revelation 14:4 – “... They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb.” The “144,000 who have been redeemed” (v. 3) are those who don’t follow the Antichrist (“the beast”) but follow the Lord, the Lamb, wherever He leads them. Also, the saints, unlike the followers of the Antichrist, have the name of Jesus and God’s name written on their foreheads (v. 1). It is a symbol that they belong to God and are protected by God (Park). That is, they belong to God and the Lord (v. 4). The church is not of the world, but the Lord has chosen it out of the world (Jn. 15:19). Therefore, the church belongs to God and the Lord. The church is the church of God (1 Cor. 10:32; 2 Cor. 1:1, 1 Tim 3:5) and the church of the Lord (Mt. 16:18).

### **Fourth, they don’t lie and are blameless.**

Look at Revelation 14:5 – “No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.” Liars are those who

deny that Jesus is the Christ and are antichrists who deny God the Father and Jesus the Son (1 Jn. 2:22). They are liars and belong to the devil, the father of lies (Jn. 8:44). However, the saints who have been redeemed by the shed blood of Jesus on the cross belong to God and the Lord. Therefore, they don't lie (Rev. 14:5). Even the apostle Paul, a faithful witness, didn't lie (Prov. 14:5; 2 Cor. 11:31). The church, the community of faithful witnesses, must not lie either. The believers in the gospel of Christ must be truthful. Also, the believers in Jesus must be without blemish. This doesn't mean that they commit no sin. But they are those who have been forgiven of their sins through the death of Jesus on the cross and justified through His resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 4:25). In other words, those without blemish refer to those who are considered flawless before God (Park). The church received the forgiveness of sins and justification through the grace of God and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ on the cross. The church is blameless in the sight of God. The church without blemishes must be truthful and faithful in the sight of God and people.

### **Fifth and last, they are the ones who keep the commandments of God and the faith in Jesus.**

Look at Revelation 14:12 – “This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.” Here is the patience endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints (13:10). They lead the whole world astray (12:9), are the accuser of our brothers (v. 10), “ancient serpent called the evil, or Satan” (v. 9). Because he knows that his time is short, the devil has gone down to us (v. 12), prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Pet. 5:8), those who obey God's commandments (12:17; 14:12) and hold to the testimony of Jesus (12:17), those who keep their faith in Jesus (14:12), and those who remain faithful to Jesus (14:12). They overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, but didn't love their lives so much as to shrink from death (12:11). Therefore, like the Apostle Paul, by fighting the good fight, finishing their course, and keeping the faith, they believe that “from now on there is prepared for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that day” (2 Tim.4:7-8).

Blessed are those who die in the Lord. Those who believe in the Lord and die are blessed. They are pure, follow the Lord wherever He leads them, belong to God and the Lord, they don't lie, are blameless, and keep the commandments of God and the faith in Jesus to the point of death. When these people die, they will cease their toil and rest forever in their eternal sanctuary.

“Drawing nearer to that city Yet seen by faith alone, Longing for the Father's mansions  
And rest before the throne, All unworthy though I be There is welcome there for me,  
For the King is our own Jesus, Lord and Savior of His own.”

(Hymn “The Bright, Heavenly Way,” lyric 3)

Wanting to be truthful and faithful in carrying out the missions and duties that are entrusted to me by God's grace until the day that the Lord calls them.

Pastor James Kim Sharing

(December 29, 2017, living in a world full of toil and sorrow, praying and waiting for the toil and sorrow to cease, and dwelling forever with the beloved Lord and my brothers and sisters in Christ in our eternal sanctuary)

# **I want to close my eyes in peace.**

**“Therefore I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place.’ So they took her answer back to the king.” (2 Kings 22:20)**

What would you like to see before you die? Also, what do you never want to see before you die? I want to see the glory of God saving the dying souls whom I am praying for before I die. But what I never want to see before I die is the wrath of God upon my children. Of course, I already saw my baby, whom I never wanted to see, die in my arms. But God also made me see the birth of my other three children Dillon, Yeri, and Karis, God’s gifts of love and grace. I remember one day, while having a conversation with my wife about the death of one of saint whom we know. I said: 'I'm so glad he died without seeing this.' It was only after he died that his son-in-law committed a crime and was sent to prison, and eventually the daughter and son-in-law were divorced. What parent would want to see this happen to their children?

In 2 Kings 22:20, the prophetess Huldah (v. 14) speaks to Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Micaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king’s servant (v. 12). This is the word of God's promise that King Josiah would not see with Josiah's eyes all the calamity that God would bring upon Judah, and that he would be gathered to his ancestors and would be buried in peace (v. 20). This cannot but be a word of blessing. Why did King Josiah receive this blessing from God? The reason is because King Josiah was a king who completely obeyed all the laws of Moses toward the Lord with all his heart, all his soul, and all his strength (23:25). King Josiah tore his clothes (22:11) because of the disaster (v. 16) the Lord’s anger that burned against all the people of Judah (v. 13) because their fathers have not obeyed the words of the Book of the Law, which Hilkiah the High Priest had found in the temple of God (v. 8). When he heard the words of God's wrath and curses recorded in the Book of the Law, his heart was softened and humbled himself before God and tore his clothes and wept (v. 19). Then he gathered to him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem (23:1), and told all the men of Judah, all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the the priests, the prophets, and all the people who were assembled in the house of the Lord, all the words of the book of the covenant that he found in the house of the Lord. After reading all the words in their hearing (v. 2), he made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all their hearts and all their souls (v. 3). Then King Josiah carried out the Reformation. He removed all idols from the land of Judah (vv. 4ff). But God didn’t turn from the fierceness of His great wrath which His anger burned against Judah (v. 26). The reason was because of all the provocations with which Manasseh, the grandfather of King Josiah, had provoked Him (v. 26). However, God

didn't bring down all His wrath during the reign of King Josiah, but promised that he would close his eyes in peace (22:20). How precious is this blessing?

No one wants to see the wrath of God come upon their family members before they die. No one wants to see the souls of their own family perish before they die. How can we close our eyes to see the wrath of God come upon our family members and the souls of our family members to perish? But God the Father was watching His only begotten Son, Jesus, who received all His wrath and was nailed to the cross, the tree of the curse. Why did Heavenly Father do this? The reason is because God wants to save our souls. The reason is because God loves us until He sent His only begotten Son to die on the cross. How should we live as we know this love of God and grow deeper, higher, and wider? Like King Josiah, we must fully obey all the words of God toward God with all our heart and all our strength. In particular, we must rend our hearts and return to our God, not only for our sins revealed through all the words of God, but also for all the sins of our ancestors, and all our relatives and family members, church members, and all our sins (Joel 2:13). We must return to our Heavenly Father with deep weeping and repentance. And we must put away all the sins of our families, relatives, and members of the church. Then we will not see God's wrath and His coming curses and calamities. Then, God will allow us to close our eyes in peace. May this blessing be with us and our families.

I want to close my eyes in peace,

James Kim Sharing

(May 5, 2011, Children's Day morning, thinking of my beloved Charis, Dillon, Yeri, and Karis)

# **There will be no more death.**

**“and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:4)**

The Bible Ecclesiastes 7:2 says, “It is better to go to a house of mourning Than to go to a house of feasting, Because that is the end of every man, And the living takes it to heart.” As this word says, we all have no choice but to die. Therefore, we must keep this fact in mind while we are alive and seriously consider how we are going to live the rest of our lives.

The late Grandma Bun-nam Choi experienced the deaths of four of his beloved family members while she was still alive. Not only did the death of his beloved husband, but also three of his six children passed away first. I still remember vividly that her crying when she found out that her son, who was living with her passed away in the living room a few years ago. After that, when she came to church on Sundays, she often cried. How heartbreaking and sad.... So, when I think of the late Grandma Bun-nam Choi, Revelation 21:4 comes to mind: “and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” One day, I visited the apartment where Grandma Choi lived, and we sat at the table and talked. At that time, Grandma Choi, who was suffering from physical pain, had no appetite and was not able to eat well. Then I told him about the kingdom of heaven that is spoken of in Revelation 21:4: ‘Grandma, when you go to heaven, there will be no tears, no pain, no sorrow, no more death. Grandma, do you want to go to heaven?’ At that time, Grandma Choi listened to me and said, ‘I want to go to heaven.’ After hearing that answer, I asked her the most important question again: ‘Grandma, do you believe in Jesus?’ At that time, she answered, ‘I believe.’

This Monday, at 9 am, at St. Vincent Hospital Intensive Care Unit (ICU), Grandma Choi’s family members and a few church members gathered and we had final worship before her death. Grandma Choi, who had not been able to open her eyes until the previous day, opened her eyes and recognized us during the worship that day. I was very grateful. After the service, I said to Grandma Choi “I love you” in Korean. Even though it must have been very difficult for her at the time, she nodded her head to me. Although I found out later, my wife was also talking with Grandma Choi and probably asked her, ‘Grandmother, do you want to go to heaven?’ and she nodded her head, saying ‘I want to go to heaven.’



Although Grandma Choi lived in this earth for over 80 years, the late Grandma Choi suffered a lot of pain and shed a lot of sorrow and tears when she met the death of her beloved husband and three children. But now she is free from all of them. Now, the late Grandma Bun-nam Choi no longer has to suffer pain, sorrow, and tears in the kingdom of heaven that she always wanted to go to. The Lord wiped away all her tears from her eyes. Now, Grandma Choi will live forever in heaven with the Lord. Now, she will no longer have to suffer the death of loved ones again. In addition, Grandma Choi will never have to suffer her own death again. Although her body will be cremated after this service, I believe that Grandma Choi's soul is already in heaven. On the day Jesus comes back to this earth, when the last trumpet is sounded all over the world (1 Cor. 15:51), the soul and body of Grandma Choi will unite and she will receive a sudden transformation. Her perishable body will be clothed with the imperishable, and her mortal body with immortality (v. 53). She will be put on a glorious body. Therefore we will not grieve like the rest of people who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13). Since we believe that Jesus died and rose again (v. 14), then the dead in Christ will rise first (v. 16) when Jesus returns from heaven to this earth. After that we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (v. 17). So we will be with the Lord forever in heaven (v. 17). With this hope, I hope and pray that the bereaved family members and all of us who are gathered here will advance toward the kingdom of heaven by believing in Jesus.

1. I'm pressing on the upward way, New heights I'm gaining ev-'ry day;  
Still praying as I'm onward bound, "Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."
2. My heart has no desire to stay Where doubts arise and fears dismay;  
Tho' some may dwell where these abound, My prayer, my aim, is higher ground.
3. I want to live above the world, Tho' Sa-tan's darts at me are hurled;  
For faith has caught the joyful sound, The song of saints on higher ground.
4. I want to scale the utmost height, And catch a gleam of glory bright;  
But still I'll pray till heaven I've found, "Lord, lead me on to higher ground."
5. My Lord I'll follow, till I stand Erect upon that lofty land;  
And, blest forever, sing His grace, Who led and set me in this place.

[Chorus]

Lord, lift me up and let me stand By faith on Heaven's tableland,  
A higher plane than I have found; Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.  
<Hymn "I'm Pressing on the Upward Way">

Looking at God who values the death of His saints (Ps. 116:15),

James Kim

(On January 16, 2015, As I think about Grandma Cho, morning after her funeral service)



# If there is no resurrection of the dead?

## [1 Corinthians 15:12-20]

In the new year of 2015, there were funerals for two of the Korean ministry members of our church so far. The late Grandma Bun-nam Choi held a funeral service in January (15-16th) and the late Grandma Bonghee Lim held a funeral service in March (26-27th) last month. It has only been three months since we celebrated the New Year, and we have already held the funerals of two sisters in Christ. These two sisters in Christ are the people who loved our Victory Presbyterian Church very much. So, the two of them came to our church and worshiped God with all their might until the day when their physical health was exhausted and thus they couldn't come to church anymore. Grandma Choi didn't go to other churches even when she could go, but insisted on attending only our church. And Grandma Lim served our church very diligently until she was able to. When I confessed 'I love you' to Grandma Choi after offering the last service to God in the Intensive Care Unit of the hospital, she looked at me and nodded. Grandma Lim is the sister in Christ whom I kissed on her forehead when she was in the nursing home while she was still alive. I delivered the message of 1 Corinthians 15:19 today while giving a sermon to the bereaved family members and mourners while offering Grandma Lim's viewing service to God: "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men." Based on this verse, I said that if there is no resurrection of the dead, we the Christians are to be pitied more than all people.

If there is no resurrection of the dead, we are the most pitied people in the world. Why? The Bible says that there are four reasons:

### **The first reason is that if the dead were not raised, then Christ was not raised.**

Look at 1 Corinthians 15:13, 16 – "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ... For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either." Do you believe in the truth (fact) that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the grave on the third day? The Bible 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 clearly states this: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." Clearly, the Bible says that Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day. We who believe in this truth have no choice but to believe in the truth that because Jesus rose again, we who believe in the resurrection of Jesus will also rise from the dead. The reason is because the resurrection of Jesus is our resurrection. In other words, because Jesus Christ rose from the dead, we Christians who believe in Jesus will also rise from the dead. Look at Romans 8:11 – "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you."

The Bible clearly tells us that if the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in us, just as God raised Christ through the Holy Spirit, He will surely give life to our mortal bodies as well. We believe in this truth.

Today Jesus is asking us this question: "... I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (Jn. 11:25-26)

**The second reason is that if the dead do not rise again, then Christ has not been raised, and our evangelism and faith are useless.**

Look at 1 Corinthians 15:14, 17a – "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ... And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile ...." The gospel of Jesus Christ that we believe and preach is true. The true gospel is that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (vv. 3-4). However, if the dead don't rise again, Christ has not been raised from the grave, so the gospel of Jesus Christ we believe in and our preaching is useless. How can we believe and evangelize Jesus, who has not been raised again? Where is this vain faith and vain evangelism? This is false faith and false evangelism. In a word, we will be false witnesses about God (v. 15).

But the Jesus we believe in is Jesus who is the resurrection and the life (Jn. 11:25). Our Jesus Christ died on the cross, was buried, and rose from the dead three days later. We are believers in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And we are God's witnesses who preach the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Look at Acts 1:8 – "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." We are witnesses of Jesus Christ. We who believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are preachers of the good news of Jesus Christ. The gospel we preach is true, and our faith is also true. This is because God raised Christ Jesus from the dead through the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us. So we must believe and preach the death and resurrection of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**The third reason is that if Christ had not been raised, we would still be in our sins, since there was no resurrection of the dead.**

Look at 1 Corinthians 15:17b – "... you are still in your sins." Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures (v. 3). In other words, Jesus took on all our sins and died on the cross in order to forgive all our sins. This is what the Bible Romans 4:25 says: "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." Through the death of Jesus, our sins are forgiven, and through the resurrection of Jesus we are justified. However, if we say that there is no resurrection of Jesus, then we are not justified, and we still be in our sins. Then, as Jesus said, we are bound to die in our sins (Jn. 8:21). Without the resurrection of Jesus, we are still in our sins and are bound to die eternally. If Jesus had not been raised from the dead, there could be no forgiveness of sins, no salvation, no reconciliation, no spiritual life now or forever.

But we are no longer in sin. The reason is because through Jesus' death and resurrection on the cross, we have already been forgiven of our sins and justified. Look at Romans 5:9 – “Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!”

**The fourth and final reason is that if Christ had not been raised, those who have fallen asleep (dead) would have perished as there was no resurrection of the dead.**

Look at 1 Corinthians 15:18 – “Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.” What does it mean? If there is no resurrection of the dead, all the saints, all the Christians in the Old Testament have perished. The reason is because their faith is vain, they are still in sin, and their destiny is eternal punishment. They are bound to be miserable forever. But Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Therefore, those who died in Christ never suffered eternal punishment and never will be eternally miserable. Rather, they receive the eternal life that Jesus promised (Jn. 10:28), so that they will not perish forever, but rather live forever with the Lord in the kingdom of heaven.

But the Bible is clear. Look at 1 Corinthians 15:20 – “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” According to the Scriptures, Jesus Christ rose from the dead. God raised Jesus from the dead through the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit dwells in us who believe in Jesus. In the last day, God will also give life to our mortal bodies through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us (Rom. 8:11). We will surely be resurrected. At the last trumpet we will all be changed. We will no longer put on our weak bodies, our corruptible bodies, and our bodies that sin. We will suddenly change and put on a strong body, an incorruptible body, and a glorious body. On the last day, those who fall asleep in the Lord will also be resurrected and put on glorious spiritual bodies. And we will all go up together to the eternal kingdom of heaven and dwell with the Lord forever (1 Thess. 4:17). I hope and pray in the name of Jesus that we all become victorious members who live by faith with this hope of resurrection and eternal king of heaven.

In this world where death is piled up, I have more earnest anticipation in the midst of sorrow as my loved ones fall asleep through faith in the resurrection of Jesus, who is my hope,

James Kim

(In the afternoon of Easter Sunday, April 5, 2015, in the shepherd room, thinking of the beloved saints who have gone to heaven first)

# He will also give life to your mortal bodies

Someday we will all die (Eccle. 7:2).

We are made up of a body and a spirit (Rom. 8:10).

In other words, our bodies are mortal (v. 11).

The reason why our spirits as well as our bodies die is

Because of the sin (original sin) of one man, Adam (5:12).

But if Christ is in us through the Holy Spirit,

The body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is alive (8:10).

When we die, our bodies return to the dust but our spirits go to heaven.

Christ Jesus has been raised from the dead

And He became the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (dead) (1 Cor. 15:20).

Jesus was resurrected.

The Bible says that since Jesus was resurrected,

We who believe in Jesus and who belong to Christ (v. 23) will also be resurrected.

Jesus' resurrection is our resurrection.

God who raised Jesus from the dead

Will also give life to our mortal bodies through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11).

Because the resurrection is the work of the Holy Trinity (v. 11)

We will surely be resurrected.

When Jesus comes (1 Cor. 15:23), when the last trumpet will sound (v. 52),

We will be resurrected with a glorious body like the resurrected body of Christ (Phil. 3:21; 1 Jn. 3:2).

How shall we who believe in the resurrection of Jesus and our resurrection live?

We should let nothing move us and always give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

# Hope of resurrection

## [1 Corinthians 15:51-58]

Do you believe that Jesus rose from the dead?

Today's text 1 Corinthians 15:35 raises two questions within the church in Corinth: (1) How are the dead raised? (2) With what kind of body will they come? As I meditate on the words of the Apostle Paul who answer these two questions, I hope and pray that all of us can be filled with the hope of resurrection.

The Bible, 1 Corinthians 15, gives us two hopes of resurrection:

### **First, the hope of resurrection is 'You will be raised' (1 Cor. 15:35-41).**

Look at 1 Corinthians 15:36 – “How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.” This verse is Paul's answer to the first question that arose within the church in Corinth, “How are the dead raised?” Paul's answer is that unless we die, we cannot experience the resurrection, just as the seed that is sown does not come to life unless it dies. What do you think of this word of Apostle Paul? Do you believe that people can live again without dying? Paul says that we cannot experience the resurrection without passing through the gate of death. Look at 1 Corinthians 15:3-4: “... that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” Jesus died on the cross for our sins “according to the Scriptures” and He was buried and rose again on the third day “according to the Scriptures”. What does it mean? It means that Jesus died “according to the Scriptures” and was resurrected “according to the Scriptures”. The fact that this Jesus died according to the Scriptures and rose again according to the Scriptures gives us eternal hope. That eternal hope is that we will rise from the dead just as Jesus rose from the dead.

### **Second, the hope of resurrection is 'You will bear the likeness of the man from heaven' (1 Cor. 15:41-46).**

The second question that arose within the Corinthian church was, “With what kind of body will they come?” Apostle Paul's answer to this question is written in 1 Corinthians 15:42-44: “So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. ....” The Scriptures tell us that the resurrection of the dead is that firstly a perishable body will be resurrected into an imperishable, secondly, a dishonorable body will be resurrected into a glorious body, thirdly, a weak body will be resurrected into

a powerful body, and fourthly, a natural body will be resurrected into a spiritual body. In a word, the resurrected body of the dead is referred to as “the body that will be” (v. 37). This body that will be was not planted by man (v. 37), but “God gives it a body as He has determined” (v. 38). What is the body that will be that God will give us according to what He has determined? Look at verse 49: “And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.” What does the likeness of the man from heaven here refer to? Look at Philippians 3:21 – “who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”

So, there is something we are looking forward to. What is it? It is “the last trumpet.” Look at 1 Corinthians 15:51 – “Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed--.” Since when the moment the last trumpet sounds, we will all change in an instant, we are waiting for the last trumpet to sound. At the moment of the sounding of the last trumpet, the dead will be clothed with an imperishable, immortal, glorious spiritual body (vv. 52-53). With the hope of this resurrection, I hope and pray that we all become more and more diligent in the work of the Lord without being shaken in our faith, giving thanks to God.

Believing that Jesus’ resurrection is my resurrection,

James Kim

(April 27, 2011, Being led by the hope of resurrection)



# About those who fall asleep

## [1 Thessalonians 4:13-21]

In a column titled "What the Bible has to say about life after death in 11 verses", a British Christian newspaper *Christine Today's* columnist, Allana Francis, said it is important to have right understanding about death and the life after death (Internet). Francis said that many people talk about their last wishes and funeral plans before they die, and death is something we all have to face it someday, but most of us are not prepared practically and spiritually. She also said that many people think and say death is uncomfortable experience. Most conversations about what happens after death tend to focus on the most negative ending. But for Christians, there is another bright, hopeful view of death. Death will bring the end of many things, but it will gain more than we can get from earthly life. As Christians, we are not only guaranteed a promised life after death but also eternal life that they will live with God forever. When we think about death, we have to leave our family and friends as death-facing beings, and in a broad sense we are afraid of death. But we can receive great comfort through the Word of God. Francis emphasized that death indeed leads to eternal life, and a better understanding of death is an important part of our faith journey (Internet).

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church saints: "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope." Here, the phrase "those who fall asleep" refers to those who are already dead which is more appropriate translation to the original Greek. According to John 11:11, Jesus said to His disciples "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep," knowing that Lazarus was sick (v. 3) and died. Then the disciples heard His word and said to Jesus, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better" (v. 12). Although Jesus had been speaking of Lazarus' death, but His disciples thought He meant natural sleep (v. 13). So Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead" (v. 14). In this way the Bible says that Jesus is the One who referred to the dead as one who had fallen asleep. But beside Jesus, there are other Bible writers who referred to the dead as the one who had fallen asleep. The writer of the book of Acts Luke also referred to the dead as the one who fall asleep. Look at Acts 7:60 – "Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep." Apostle Peter also referred the dead as the one who fell asleep in 2 Peter 3:4 – "and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." Among the Bible writers, Apostle Paul is the one who mostly expressed dead as the one who fell asleep. Not only he expressed it in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 but also in 1 Corinthians 15:6, 18, 51: "After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; ... Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ... Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed." So Paul repeatedly referred the

dead as the one who fell asleep. In fact, Paul told the Thessalonian church saints about “those who fall asleep” in 1 Thessalonians 4:13, but in verse 16 he said “the dead”. In the end, Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonian church saints, saying in 4:9-12 ‘about brotherly love’ and then in verse 4:13-21 ‘about those who fell asleep’ (already dead). And then he went to chapter 5:1-11 and told them about ‘about times and dates’, that is the time of Jesus’ second coming. Then the question is ‘Why did Paul write a letter to the Thessalonian church saints about those who fell asleep’, those who were already dead? The reason for this was because Paul didn’t want them to grieve like the rest of men, who had no hope (4:13). Here “the rest of men” refers to all who are in this world besides the Christians who believe in Jesus. In other words, “the rest of men, who have no hope”, who grieve because of those who fall asleep are all non-believers in this world who do not believe in Jesus. Paul didn’t want the beloved Thessalonian church saints to grieve like the non-believers who had no hope because of the death of the saints who believed in Jesus.

The non-believers who do not believe in Jesus says “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (1 Cor. 15:32). So they eat, drink, marry and take life easy like the people in the day of Noah entered the ark (Lk. 12:19; 17:27). The reason is because they believe death is the end. In other words, the non-believers grieve without hope as they eat, drink, enjoy and die because they don’t believe in the world after death. But Christians who believe in Jesus are not. In other words, we should not grieve like the non-believers who have no hope. In the meantime, Paul explained why we shouldn’t grieve in 1 Thessalonians 4:14 – “We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.” So I want to mediate 1 Thessalonians 4:13-21, under the title "About those who fall asleep", and think about why we shouldn’t grieve like the non-believers when our beloved fellow brother or sister in Christ dies in two ways:

**First, we shouldn’t grieve like the non-believers when our beloved fellow brother or sister in Christ dies because we believe that Jesus died and rose again.**

Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:14a: “We believe that Jesus died and rose again ....” Do you believe the truth that Jesus rose from the grave three days after he died on the cross? Or do you only believe that Jesus died on the cross but not His resurrection? Some of the Corinthian church saints said that there was no resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:12). If there was no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ had been raised (vv. 13, 15, 16). And if Christ hadn’t been raised, then Paul’s preaching is useless and so was the Corinthian church saint’s faith (vv. 14, 17). More than that, Paul and his co-workers who were preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ found to be false witnesses about God (v. 15). “Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost” (v. 18). “We believe that Jesus died and rose again” (v. 19). However, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:20 – “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” The gospel of Jesus Christ, which Paul preached to the Corinthian church, was “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (vv. 3-4).

Apostle Paul went to Thessalonica and went into a Jewish synagogue, “an on three Sabbath days he

reasoned with them from the Scriptures” and proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ. Look at Acts 17:1-3: “When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. ‘This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ,’ he said.” As a result, some of the Jew were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women (v. 4). So Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4:14, “We believe that Jesus died and rose again.” In other words, both Paul and the Thessalonian church saints believed that Jesus died and rose again. Therefore, Paul encouraged the Thessalonian church saints not to grieve as the non-believers who didn’t believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus because of “those who fall asleep” (v. 13).

Until we believed in Jesus, we were without hope and without God in the world. Look at Ephesians 2:12 – “remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.” “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ” (v. 13). We were saved by the grace of God by believing in Jesus Christ (v. 8). Only by the grace of God we have received eternal life as the gift of God (Rom. 6:23), believing in Jesus Christ who died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3-4). So now we have hope. And that hope is “the redemption of our bodies” (Rom. 8:23). At the last trumpet, we will all be changed (1 Cor. 15:51-52). Look at 1 Corinthians 15: 52-53: “in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.” Therefore, we are listening to Scripture Romans 8: 24-25 carefully: “For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”

**Second and last, we shouldn’t grieve like the non-believers when our beloved fellow brother or sister in Christ dies because God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him.**

Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:14 – “... and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.” The Bible says that “hope that is seen is no hope at all” (Rom. 8:24). “But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently” (v. 25). Indeed, the Thessalonian church saints were patient with their endurance inspired by hope in their Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 1:3). In other words, they waited for His Son Jesus from heaven, whom He raised from the dead (v. 10). Before the gospel came to them with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction (v. 5), they were idol worshipers (v. 9). God loved and chooses such idolaters (v. 4) and called them into His kingdom and glory (2:12). Therefore, the Thessalonian church saints became Paul’s hope, joy and the crown in which Paul will glory in the presence of his Lord Jesus when He comes (vv. 19-20).

Our hope is the second coming of Jesus. And the patience of our hope is to pray, expect, and wait for His second coming. Do we have this kind of waiting? We who wait for His second coming, we don't grieve like the non-believers when our fellow brethren dies (4:13). The reason is because we believe that Jesus died and rose again (v. 14). Furthermore, we don't grieve because we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him (v. 14). In short, we who are waiting for the second coming of Jesus are joyful in hope, patient in affliction and faithful in prayer (Rom. 12:12). Also, the Thessalonian church saints's endurance of hope was to live a holy life. So when Paul prayed for them who were his hope, joy, crown and glory, he asked God to strengthen their hearts so that they would be blameless and holy in the presence of God and Father when Lord Jesus comes with all His holy ones (3:13). The reason why Paul prayed like this was because it is God's will for them to be sanctified (4:3). Paul urged the Thessalonian church saints to avoid sexual immorality, to learn to control their own bodies in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who didn't know God (vv. 3-5). The reason was because God didn't call them to be impure, but to live a holy life (v. 7).

We who wait for Jesus' second coming should live a holy life. If we pray, expect and wait for Jesus' return, we must live the holy life according to God's will. Paul, who was praying to God with thanksgiving in his heart whenever he remembered he remembered the Thessalonian church saints' endurance of hope in prayer (1:2-3), told them about the saints who died already not to grieve like the non-believers who had no hope because they believed that Jesus died and rose again and God will bring with Jesus those who had fallen asleep in Him (4:13-14). This presupposes that "t he Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first" (v. 16). In other words, those who are already dead in Christ will be resurrected first in the Lord's second coming, and then God will bring His resurrected saints with Jesus. Why is Jesus coming back to this world? Look at John 14:1-3: "'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.'" The reason Jesus will come back to this world is to take the redeemed children of God to heaven. In the end, Paul told the Thessalonian church saints that those who had already died in Christ were be resurrected and that God will bring them with Jesus (1 Thess. 4:14). After that, those who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (v. 17). Therefore, Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints to comfort each other with these words (v.18). Let us believe in the truth that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him when we grieve because of the death of our beloved brother or sister in Christ. And let us believe that the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Let us believe that after that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Let us believe that we will be with the Lord forever. I hope and pray that we may comfort one another with this sure and clear eternal hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are not only guaranteed the promised life after death, but also promised eternal life with God. When we think about death, we have to leave our family and friends as death-bearing beings, and in a broad sense we are

afraid of death. But we can receive great comfort through the word of God. The Word of God says that we should not grieve like the non-believers because of the death of our beloved brother or sister in Christ. The reason is because we believe that Jesus died and rose again. Jesus' resurrection is our resurrection. When the Lord Jesus returns, the saints who have already died will be raised again, and the living saints will be suddenly transformed and be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And we will be with the Lord forever in heaven. May the Holy Spirit comfort you with these words.

Praying, expecting, waiting for the Lord's return,

James Kim

(June 3, 2018, Believing in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, hoping to be reunited with the brothers and sisters in Christ who have already fallen asleep in the Lord through the Second Coming of Jesus)

## **My death ...**

Our death should reveal the glory of God (Jn. 11:4).

We must face death that is beneficial to our families, relatives,  
church members, friends, and neighbors(vv. 50-52).

## **I contemplate my death.**

I went to a funeral.

After a funeral service, and after I saw a deceased lying in the coffin,

I was about to say something to comfort the bereaved family members (wife and three children)  
standing next to the coffin.

But when I saw the wife and two daughters crying a lot,

I just bow down my head to the wife and two daughters,

And then shook hands with the son who read the eulogy.

Then I came back home.

I thought about the heart of the crying wife who sent her beloved husband Pastor first,

And their children's hearts who lost their loving father.

Then I thought about a scene where I am lying down in the coffin

And my wife and my three children (Dillon, Yeri, and Karis) stood by the coffin and greet the mourners.

It was time for me to contemplate my death.

## **We have to think about our own death.**

What we who are alive should keep in mind is that

The end of all people on this earth is death (Eccle. 7:2).

We should go to funerals rather than weddings to think about our own deaths.

As we ponder the end of life

We must think carefully how we should live the rest of our lives to please the Lord.

There will come a time when we will all have to get off the train at the terminus of all our life trains.

# **From January 1st of the new year...**

New Year 2016,  
Eventhough I expected to hear the news of the death of loved ones,  
I didn't expect to hear from the first day, January 1st.  
Indeed, for us living in this world where death is piled up,  
We acknowledge and confess that Jesus is the only true hope.

## **End of life?**

At the end of the year,  
I came to a hospital (hospice) where one of the pastors of the presbytery was hospitalized.  
As I wrap up this year, I thought about the end of my life.  
When I think of my own death, I cannot help but think about parting with  
my beloved family, church members, friends, and co-workers for a while.

## **If I ever get to a situation where I have to rely solely on a ventilator...**

One day, while driving my wife to the airport and talking to her inside the car, I said to her:  
'If there comes a situation where I depend only on the ventilator, I would like it to be removed.'  
Then my wife heard me and said "Me too" straight away without any hesitation. Haha.  
Hearing her response, I laughed and said that we don't have to be afraid to die because we have eternal life.  
Then my beloved wife agreed with me. So I exhorted her that since we have eternal life,  
let's not have any regrets in this world in the face of our deaths, but let's long for heaven more and more.

## **I must be a gran of wheat ...**

When I think of my death,

I think about whether I am faithfully carrying out the work (mission) that the Lord has entrusted to me.

And I think about what people will say about me after my death.

I must become a grain of wheat and die ...

## **Even death ...**

I want to be used by the Lord even in death.

Only for the glory of God...

## **Death**

We have to think about death.

We must face death.

We have to have a death perspective.

Even if we die now, we should be able to die with gratitude without regret.



# About meditation on death

It is better to avoid sin than to escape death.

Unfortunately, the longer we live, the more likely our sins will increase.

If you are afraid to die, you should know that living long is more fearful.

Therefore, be ready for death at all times (Lk. 21:36).

Blessed is the man who keeps the hour of his death always in mind, and daily prepares himself to die.

Don't postpone the salvation of your own soul until later,

and don't depend on your friends or neighbors.

It is a pity that we do not live to the fullest even though we can have eternal life.

To be sure of death, make the flesh to submit through repentance.

Who will remember you when you are dead? Who will pray for you?

Act now, dear soul; do all you can

While you have time, gather the riches of everlasting life (Lk. 12:33).

Think only of your salvation, and care only for the things of God.

Daily direct your prayers and longings to Heaven,

that at your death your soul may merit to pass joyfully into the presence of God.

[Thomas A. Kempis, "The Imitation of Christ" (Ch.23 "A Meditation on Death")]

## Need to experience death seriously?

'There are good reasons to be completely engrossed in someone's grief.

When you truly experience death seriously,

You will be able to experience the wonder of being alive.'

(Robert Veninga)

# **“If you were given life again, how would you like to live?”**

A scholar named Tony Campolo published the results of a study on the problem of the elderly. He surveyed 50 elderly people over the age of 95,

‘If you were given life again now, how would you like to live?’

They were asked to give three answers. The three answers to this were as follows:

First, I will live a life of reflection every day.

I've been living without a mind all this time, and I can't even think about why I'm living.

I'll be more mindful.

Second, I lived a very cowardly life.

I lived in compromise with injustice, and lived with the eyes of others.

From now on, I want to live more courageously.

Third, I want to live knowing that there are days like today.

I want to think of death and live. What happens to me after I die?

I regret what I will leave behind.

I am confessing in common that I regret that I bought it without thinking  
(Internet).

## **Let's live with the death perspective**

Now that I have the death perspective again (Eccle. 7:2),

I don't really care about these and other issues.

# **We must have the death perspective.**

Thinking about our parents,  
We need to deal with them every day  
With the thought of not knowing when they will die.

As we deal with them with the death perspective  
We don't want to miss out on every moment of the day.  
Death Perspective, Eternal Perspective.

"It is better to go to a house of mourning Than to go to a house of feasting,  
Because that is the end of every man, And the living takes it to heart" (Eccle. 7:2).

We must live with the death perspective.  
Furthermore, we must live with the eternal perspective.

# **I should live with this perspective ...**

Not only do we have to live each day with the death perspective,  
We must live with the perspective of meeting the Lord ...

## **The death of Jesus Christ on the cross...**

The death of Jesus Christ on the cross is nothing sad.

Actually, we should be happy.

The reason is because His death on the cross is a glorious death.

The death of Jesus Christ on the cross revealed that God is God.

Especially to us, it is death that reveals that God is love.

Therefore, when we think of Jesus who was crucified and died,

We cannot help but thank, praise, and rejoice because of God's perfect love.

And we cannot but love our neighbor with the perfect love of God.

Like the Lord who loved us until He gave His life,

We cannot but love the Lord even to the point of giving our lives,

And devote ourselves in loving our neighbors.

We are rather rejoicing because of the love of the Lord's cross,

Which makes it possible to live a life of love for God and neighbor even to the point of death.

## **The death of a loved one ...**

The death of a loved one makes me immerse myself in memories.

The death of a loved one makes me seek Heavenly Father.

The death of a loved one makes me miss that heaven even more.

The death of a loved one makes me yearn for eternal life even more.

## **Through the death of a loved one**

Through the death of a loved one

I am meditating on the death of Jesus

And am grateful for the eternal life that Jesus gave me as a gift.

# Diary of a martyr's wife

From the book "The Gates of Glory" (author: Elizabeth Elliot), this is the diary of Barbara Euderian, the widow of five young North American missionary martyrs:

Tonight the captain told us they found four bodies in the river.

One was wearing a T-shirt and jeans. Roger was the only person in such an outfit.

Two days ago, God gave me the words of Psalm 48:14 –

“For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.”

When I heard the news of Roger's death, my heart was filled with hymns.

He was worthy to go to his homeland. ‘Lord, help me to do both mother's and father's roles.

Help me to know ‘Your training and instruction’ (Eph. 6:4)...

Tonight Beth asked me to pray for her dad who went to heaven.

She asked me whether her dad can come down from heaven since she wanted to write a letter to him.

I said, 'He can't. Daddy is with Jesus.' Beth said, 'But Jesus can help him to come down.

God will hold Daddy's hand so that he doesn't slip.'

I wrote a letter to the missionary supporters, explaining the peace I enjoy.

I want to free myself from self-pity. Self-pity is a Satan's tool that gnaws a life.

I am convinced that this is the perfect will of God. ....

I was challenged and still being challenged while reading this diary written by the wife of a martyred missionary.

I am praying continually with the thoughts of offering my beloved wife and three God-given children to the Lord in my heart. This week, I heard the news that the second daughter of my friend pastor at a seminary, who was 10 years old, had suddenly died of an illness. Maybe one day I too will have to let my wife and children go first too.

I don't want to love my wife and children more than the Lord. I want to offer them to the Lord.

That's why this missionary wife's diary is a great challenge for me.

I want myself, my wife, and my children to be worthy of going our heavenly home.

I don't want to fall into the "self-pity" that this missionary wife said in front of her beloved family members.

I want to see more glory. My wife and three children are precious gifts that the Lord has given me by grace.

It is natural to offer to the Lord what is the Lord's.

Rather than self-pity, I want to be immersed in the glory of our heavenly home.

I hope that one day my wife will be able to write this kind of diary that this missionary wife wrote.

Of course, I myself must be prepared to die for the name of the Lord.

“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace” (Acts 20:24).

# Isn't love supposed to be stronger than death?

Today, I heard the news that two friends broke up with their wives.  
Both of my friends got married late, so they have young children.  
One of the friends who was injured in an accident and was paralyzed for over a year,  
and passed away last week about a month after divorce with his wife in agreement.  
I am sure his heart must have been very hard before he died.  
Another friend said that he had been divorced for about two months.  
Since he asked me earnestly to officiate his wedding, I did.  
But when I heard the news that he was divorced, I feel a little sad.

I think of this and that.

When I think of my dead friend, I think of how hard it must have been for his heart more than his body.  
I wonder what it would be like to have agreed to break up with his wife.  
Shouldn't couples be more together in times of crisis ... I just think this to myself.  
Maybe a couple's love can be known more in times of crisis.

(Thinking of my dead friend's wife, I thought how difficult it has been for her to make such a decision.  
How she is going to get through her life in America with her little son without any family or relatives ...)

## How does a cancer patient feel?

There is a funeral for one of our presbytery pastors today.  
It is said that he fell asleep two months after he was found to have last stage liver cancer.  
However, another pastor in the presbytery sent an email to all the members of the presbytery of his death,  
even though the pastor himself was diagnosed with stage 3 stomach cancer.  
I thought about how he felt when he had to send the email with a funeral schedule for another pastor of the  
presbytery who passed away from terminal liver cancer.

## **“For love is as strong as death”**

It reminds me of the saying, “For love is as strong as death” (Song 8:6).  
As I look back on this year, 2016,  
the love he left deeply in my heart was truly a love as strong as death.  
Even though that loved one has left us,  
the love God showed me through him is engraved on the plate of my heart.  
Although there were many sorrows and pains of parting,  
I rather experienced God's love more deeply.  
In particular, as I meditate on the love of God the Father,  
who sent his only begotten Son, Jesus, to this earth  
God allowed me to experience the love in sending him this year.  
I keep that precious love in my heart.

## **Forgive before you die**

‘Forgive yourself before you die. And forgive others.’  
- From ‘Tuesdays with Morrie’ by Mitch Albom –

Forgiveness only after death is not forgiveness.  
Forgiveness while you are alive is true forgiveness.  
Forgiveness is the only way to save me and live for each other

You must forgive before you die.  
Failure to forgive myself and others even in the face of death is not a beautiful death.  
What is unforgivable in the face of death? All must be forgiven.  
In order to do this, we must remember the death of Jesus on the cross.  
And we must face death with an attitude that commemorates His death.  
That is, just as Jesus died on the cross to forgive all my sins,  
We must forgive ourselves and others in the face of death.  
We must do this true forgiveness even in the face of death.

# **You must reconcile before you die.**

At the funeral, I saw that the bereaved families were not at peace.  
I've mostly seen children quarreling at the funeral of one of their parents.  
I don't know what to say, but it wasn't good example. It was a sad sight.  
On the other hand, before leaving this world,  
Another man contacted each person whom he had a bad relationship with,  
Asked for forgiveness and reconciled before leaving. It was beautiful.  
But the sad thing is that at his funeral,  
One of his brothers told his nephew to remove the mourners' flower from the funeral home.  
Although he who left reconciled with everyone before he died, it seems that one of his brothers didn't.  
To die well, and to give glory to God and to give grace to all mourners, and have a memorable funeral service,  
We should learn the lesson from Romans 12:18 –  
“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

## **If we don't, we will regret it for the rest of our lives.**

Today I went to the funeral of the mother of a college junior sister in Christ.  
After the service, the bereaved family stood next to the coffin, and mourners lined up  
and walked towards the coffin to offer condolences to the bereaved family members.  
I stood in line with her college roommate.  
I greeted the bereaved family members, but my college junior sister in Christ  
who had left her mother was crying a lot.  
I just shook hands with her who was crying and said to me, “Thank you, Pastor,” hoping that she would be strong.  
Later, while having a meal with the junior's college roommates at a restaurant, I learned that my junior sister in  
Christ confessed her love to her mother, who was lying in the intensive care unit, before her death.  
Hearing this, I encouraged her that she did a good job with thankful heart.  
What made me think again today is that, before letting go of the person whom we love,  
we must say what we really want to say in our hearts to our loved ones before they die.  
If we don't, we will regret it for the rest of our lives.



# **Death is not the end.**

Death is not the end. When we die, it isn't that we are no longer without pain.

If we die without believing in Jesus, we will suffer eternally in Hell.

# **Even death is beautiful.**

'Even death is beautiful.

Even death is beautiful in the midst of sorrows.

Even death is beautiful because there are tears of love.

Even death is beautiful because there is living hope of eternal meeting in heaven in the midst of momentary separation.

Even death is beautiful because we lived a beautiful life.

Even death is beautiful because we see Jesus' beauty.

Even death is beautiful because we praise the greatness of the Lord together.

Even death is beautiful because God's great glory is being manifested even in death.

# Truly we only have to love.

This is sad news.

With the news of the death of the late actor Joo-hyuk Kim (45 years old),  
While reading a news article that his lover Yoo-young Lee was shocked by his death,  
I had few thoughts that I wanted to share with you.

First, I was a little surprised to hear that an actor with a familiar face died so suddenly,  
as I remember seeing the drama in which the late Joo-hyuk Kim appeared.

Second, the late Joo-hyuk Kim is 45 years old, and it is regrettable that he left at such a young age.  
I thought that we, as a people, could not really look ahead.  
And I thought since I have been given today, I just want to give thanks to God, and live by depending on God.

Third, looking at the news article,  
I saw the article that the cause of death of the late Joo-hyuk Kim was myocardial infarction.  
So I searched the Internet a bit about myocardial infarction.  
The reason is because even a pastor younger than me I know has a heart problem.  
In the case of that pastor, I heard the doctor said it was because he was so stressed.  
As I read the article about the death of the late Joo-hyuk Kim,  
I wondered if he had a myocardial infarction because he was too stressed.  
At the same time, I thought that many young people in Korea  
and I am worried that they are under too much stress in many ways.

Fourth, I wondered how Yoo-young Lee, who left her lover Joo-hyuk Kim first, at the young age of 27,  
would feel now after hearing this shocking news about her lover's death.  
The reason is because I often wonder what my wife will think of me when I die,  
or, conversely, because I think about what my heart would be like if my wife die before me.  
So I am praying that the Lord will call me and my wife to heaven together.  
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, let us give thanks to God for what we have today.  
And let's be thankful for the existence of our lovers/spouses/children/parents, etc., whom God gave us as a gift.  
Let's not forget that someday, no matter how much we love our spouses,  
there will be a breakup for a while on this earth.  
Truly we only have time to love.

[2017. 10. 31.]

# The touching story behind the sinking of the Titanic, revealed by the surviving vice-captain

After many years of silence, the then-surviving vice-captain finally revealed the story of the accident behind the sinking of the Titanic.

April 14, 1912 was a day of terror. The accident killed 1,514 people and rescued 710 people.

Charles Rachtler, second mate of the Titanic, who was 38 at the time of the accident, was the only crew member rescued to take charge of the rescued passengers. Below is a 17-page memoir that details the details of the tragedy of the Titanic by Charles Rachtler.

After the captain gave orders to rescue women and children ahead of the sinking, many female passengers chose to remain instead of being separated from their families. Although I called out loudly, 'Women and children, come here!' few women and children were about to abandon their families and get into the lifeboats alone.

'As long as I live,' says Rachtler, 'I will never forget that night!'

The first lifeboat went down to sea, and I said to a woman on deck. 'Madam, get on the lifeboat!'

She shook her head unexpectedly. 'No, I will stay on the boat.'

The woman's husband heard this and said, 'Don't do that, get on! Honey!' she replied in a calm tone of voice.

'I will not go alone. I will stay on this ship with you.' That was the last time I saw the couple.

Astor IV (then richest man in the world) sat on deck with his five-month-old wife in a lifeboat, holding a puppy in one hand and a cigar in the other, shouting at the boat going far away. 'I love you, honey!'

When one of the crew members evacuating the passengers asked Mr. Aster to get into the boat,

Mr. Aster refused. 'Shouldn't a person have at least a conscience.'

Then he yielded one last remaining seat to an Irish woman standing by. And a few days later,

Aster's body, torn by the wreckage of the ship, was found by the crew while searching for survivors.

Although he was wealthy enough to build a teenage Titanic, he refused every chance he had to survive.

It was the only choice of the great man who defended his conscience with his own life.

Guggenheim, a successful banker, said this while changing into a fancy evening dress even when life was threatened.

He said, 'Even if I die, I will keep my body and die like a gentleman.'

The note left by Mr. Guggenheim to his wife contained these words.

'There will be no woman on this ship who died without being rescued because of my selfishness.

I will die like a gentleman if I have to live a life that is not even worth it.'

Strauss, the founder of Macy's in the US, was the second richest man in the world.

No words could persuade him to get his wife, Mr. Rosalie, into the lifeboat. 'I always went with you wherever you went,' said his wife, Rosalie. 'I will go anywhere in the world with you.' She stubbornly refused to leave her husband and board the ship. The crew in charge of lifeboat number 8 advised Strauss, 67, to board the lifeboat, saying, 'No one will object to an old man riding a boat.' Hearing this, Mr. Strauss showed a detached appearance even at the moment of life and death, saying, 'I will decline the offer to get on the boat before other men.' Then he took the arms of his 63-year-old wife, Mr. Rosalie, and slowly sat down on the deck chair, waiting for the last moment. These words are written on a monument to the Strauss in the Bronx, New York: 'A love that could not be sunk by seawater.'

The French merchant Watyeol left the two children on the boat and left them on the boat to say goodbye to them. The two sons were rescued in this way and were able to be reunited with their mother by posting successive photos so that newspapers from all over the world could find them. But they were never seen again with their father, who was left on the ship.

Reedapas, who went on a honeymoon to the United States with her husband, embraced her husband and refused to be left alone. Her husband had no choice but to stun her with her fists.

When she regained consciousness, she was already in a lifeboat floating on the sea.

She never married her whole life and she missed her husband.

At a survivors' meeting in Lausanne, Greece, Mrs. Smith recalled the woman who gave up her seat to her.

At that time, when my two children got on the lifeboat, it was full and there was no seat for me.

At that moment, a woman got up and pulled me into a lifeboat and said: 'Come up. Children need moms!'

The great woman did not leave her name behind. Her people erected her 'her nameless mother' monument for her.

Among the victims were billionaire Asted, prominent newspaperman Hempstead, Army Major Bart, and distinguished engineer Luovour, amongst others notable figures in society. But all of them gave up their seats to the poor rural women who stood by them. Of the 50 main crew members of the Titanic, all except the second mate Rachtler, who was responsible for the rescue, gave up their seats and died with the ship.

At 2 am, they were each ordered to run away, but operator No. 1 John Phillips still sat in the computer room and entered 'SOS' until the last minute and did not leave his position. When the back of the ship began to sink into the water, in the last moments of life and death, people shouted to each other. 'I love you! I love you!' That day, we all showed what great love is. I want you to know how much I love you.

But there were exceptions. Japanese Railways deputy chief, Hosonori, dressed as a woman and boarded lifeboat No. 10 full of women and children. He was retired immediately after returning home. All Japanese newspapers and public opinion publicly condemned him, and he ended his life a decade later with regret and shame.

White Star Line, the shipping company that built the Titanic in honor of the 1912 Titanic, said of the victims:

'There are no maritime rules that require the sacrifice of men. It was just their actions that showed concern for the weak and their personal choice.'

# A will of a Mongolian sister in Christ

Hello? Greetings to all who read this letter with the love of Jesus Christ.

I am with God and I hope that no one will grieve over me.

I'm just going home a little bit earlier than you guys.

Please make my funeral a Christian funeral. Pastor A.T. Amar presides over my funeral, and Attena leads the praise. 'Attena, 1. 227 2, 36 3, 236 4, 360 I want you to sing this praise.'

\*Mother, please forgive this daughter. I love you a lot. And I haven't been able to fulfill your role as your daughter. But Mother, believe in Jesus even more fervently. Then you will receive from God abundant love that no one else in this world has ever received. I will always pray for you and your family.

\*I'm sorry, my older brother Soto and younger brother Alga. I love you a lot. Please forgive me for not being a good sister. I want you to know that my death is no one's fault. I have chosen this path of mine. Brother Soto I have one last request for you. I want you to believe in Jesus Christ, whom I believe in and who loves me very much. So I hope to see you again in heaven. My younger brothers and sisters, my last request is that I hope you will meet God. He is alive.

\*Thank you so much Aunt Nagi. Thank you for being a bridge for me to meet Jesus. Uncle Soira, I will always pray for you. Believe in Jesus Christ and become like "Paul".

\*Big Uncle Aya, Uncle Damjin, I would like to thank you all. You too believe in Jesus and forgive me if I hurt you two. Never miss a Sunday. I believe God will work through your home.

\*Sister Baatchchek and my younger sisters, I really, truly, truly love you. Older and younger sisters, I sincerely hope that your life will be governed by God. I hope that my three brothers, Soto, Sorto, and Alga, will all become pastors. Be a pastor, and go to a seminary.

\*I sincerely love all of my sisters and brothers in Christ who are members of the Eternal Love Church. I confess that your love encouraged me, gave me courage and strength. My "Eternal Love Church" will truly become a church of love, a church that saves many suffering people and gives hope. I believe that God will help and be with you in this as well.

\*Thank you very much to the teachers. Pastor A.T. Amar was my spiritual father. And thank you, Missionary Hyang-sook Yoon, for being my spiritual mother. Now I want to go see my heavenly father. Thank you for everything you have done for me.

\*Mother, give my clothes to the children of the church or give them to the poor children. And please give all the books I used to the church. Mother, I really love you. I am truly grateful for the love you have given me.

\*Uncle Ganba, I forgive you. Uncle, please believe in Jesus. There is a God who forgives our sins and loves us. Mom, please pass on these words to Uncle Ganba. And I earnestly ask that Aunt Holana, Softaimo, Dawahui, Minde, and Suhae all welcome Jesus Christ. So let's all meet in heaven with joy.

I love everyone with the love of the Lord.

September 12, 2013 Oh, written by Sofdeungchek.

# Death

A week ago, during a Bible study on Easter Sunday afternoon, I had a discussion about “death” with the church members. When I asked them, ‘How do you want to die?’ Most of the adults over 60 answered that they wanted to die without pain, not wanting to cause trouble to their children out of love. So I replied, ‘Well then, it’s a heart attack.’ In contrast to these people, the believers in their 40s and 50s don’t seem to have thought deeply about death. So I challenged them with a special emphasis on death. I wanted them to think deeply and pray about how they want to face death. And in order to die well (to face a beautiful death), I challenged them to live well every day.

I spoke with a sister in Christ who was grieving after hearing the news of Brother Mark Dubrin's imminent death. When I made a phone call while I was on a messenger, I heard the sound of sobbing in grief. And once again I wrote down the things I was thinking about “death” this morning.

I think death is a moment where sadness and joy intersect, at least from the perspective of a third person who sees the brother in Christ in front of death. When I think of Brother Mark Dubrin, who leaves the words “See you in heaven,” on the one hand, we have sadness and a heavy heart that we don’t know. On the other hand, I feel my heavy heart is lightened and my sadness is turned into joy when I think of Brother Mark Dubrin who is convinced that he will go to eternal heaven because he has received Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior while he was in Korean and was attending Seohyun Church English Ministry.

I remember sharing the beautiful death with the church members during the Easter Sunday Bible study. The beautiful death I want to face is at the funeral attended by many brothers and sisters in Christ who have experienced the image and love of Christ through me. On the one hand, they are saddened by my death because I no longer exist with them in this world. On the other hand, they gather to praise and worship God because I went to heaven to meet the Lord whom I loved and longed to see so much. I am dreaming and praying for such a funeral like this for me. However, in order to face such a beautiful death, one cannot help but feel the heavy responsibility of living a beautiful life day by day, here and now.

Brother Mark Dubrin is a brother in Christ who took on such a heavy responsibility with joy in the community of Seohyun English Ministry (SEM). He went to church more than me (I remember it every day; I even got a question from the senior pastor, 'James, did you quit the church?') and met a lot of people in Sasa (meaning: ‘Those whom we love) coffee shop, just like the name of the church cafe. He was the channel of the love of Christ who loved them with the love of Christ. I think that the sister in Christ who wept over the phone today was also one of the sisters who received that love from Brother Mark. Although she said that she had done nothing to Brother Mark, I think she did well by humbly received Mark's compelling love with joy. Yes. Brother Mark wanted to give love, and I think that the best gift for Brother Mark is that we who receive that love simply accept it with joy and humility like a child. Because I couldn't do it, I confessed to him that I was wrong and asked for forgiveness more

than once. My complaint against him was that he knew how to give love but didn't know how to receive it. So there were times when we had some arguments. That's why I'm confessing that I was a person who didn't love Mark properly more than the sister I spoke to today.

If we knew the end of life, that is, when we would leave this world and meet the Lord, we would think about how we would live today. Will we try to live a little differently than we do now? I will still do 'Cyworld ministry'. The reason is because I believe that this ministry will be the foundation for my beautiful death.

The end of the beloved Brother Mark is probably not far from now. However, towards that end point, it seems that he is making the last call of love to those whom he loves day by day during this precious time left in this world. While receiving that love with joy and humility, I earnestly hope and pray that we will not only treasure the traces of Christ's love that Brother Mark left in our hearts, but also become a messenger who conveys that love to others.

Received the love of the Lord through Brother Mark

James Kim

(April 22, 2004, With a heart with those who were loved by Brother Mark)



# Conversation with children

A few days ago, on a Sunday morning while driving to church, I played a gospel song in the car.

My daughter Yeri said, 'I know that song,' maybe because she might hear the word "God," and said, "God Is So Good." And then she said, "I want to be God."

I was a little surprised because I thought she meant she want to become like God, which is the core of New Age thinking. But my wife corrected Yeri's word by asking her, 'You want to be with God?'

Here's the conversation with my son Dillon:

Yeri: I want to be with God.

Dillon: Then you must die.

Yeri: Are you going to miss me?

I laughed as I listened to this conversation of the children.

After Brother Mark Dubrin's death, I taught the children that Uncle Mark is now with God in heaven.

Perhaps Dillon thought that he had to die to go to heaven and be with God.

On the one hand, I laughed because of the simple-minded children's conversations

On the other hand, like Brother Mark, I want to be with God in heaven.

[July 18, 2004]



# The death of the first baby

Seven months after marriage, in November 1997, in Thanksgiving season, I went to Good Samaritan Hospital in Los Angeles with my pregnant wife. A nurse inspected my wife and said that something was strange. So the nurse wanted to take an ultrasound. After seeing the result, the doctor told us that something was wrong with our baby. The doctor told us that the baby didn't have diaphragm on the left side so that the intestine went up and there was no left lung. And the heart was pushed toward the right side. And her spinal cord was in "S" shaped. My wife and I were very surprised. However, my wife gave birth to our first baby who was a gift from God on March 3, 1998 [My father gave the baby the Korean name "JooYoung" which means "the glory of the Lord". And I gave her the English name "Charis" (meaning "grace" in Greek). As soon as the doctor received the baby, he let my wife to hold her few seconds. And then he took Charis from my wife and then put her in the incubator that the medical team had prepared. And they took the baby to an ambulance in order to take her to the larger Los Angeles Children Hospital intensive care unit. And she was there for 55 days.

Every time I visit my baby for 55 days, I sang the hymn "Jesus Loves Me" to my beloved baby Charis. I have never heard any sound coming out from Charis' mouth because she had tube in her mouth all along. So I couldn't even hear her crying in tears. And there were so many needle marks everywhere (even on her head). We couldn't imagine how much Charis was suffering all along. We just wanted her to live so we cried out to God for a miracle. Charis had about two major surgeries and the doctor told us each time that the surgery went well. So I thought that God was going to save her. But on the 54th days, on Sunday (the date of our wedding anniversary) my sister went to the hospital and came back to the church and said that Charis was in critical condition. She said that the Charis' whole body looked a like black maybe because there was no blood circulation. At that time, when we heard the news from my younger sister, my wife immediately went to the Children Hospital intensive care unit room. But I went after I finished my ministry because I remembered my friend's testimony even though my heart was really wanted to be there with Charis. When I arrived at the hospital, the doctor called me apart and gave me two options: (1) Will you let your baby die slowly or (2) Will you let her die quickly? At that time, I answered her to let Charis die slowly because I did not release the cord of hope. Then I came home later and talked to my wife. We did not want the child to suffer anymore, so we decided to send the baby quickly.

The next day, on Monday morning, I read the Bible, and the words of Psalm 63:3 came to my heart and shared it with my wife: "They lovingkindness is better than my life, and my lips shall praise Thee." As we believed the eternal love of God is better than the 55 days life of Charis, we went to the hospital. After informing our doctor about our decision, I contacted my parents, my older brother and my younger sister and they all came to the ICU and worshiped God first. And then everyone went to the next room, and I held Christ in my arms first time and walked toward the next room. At that moment, I thought I was going to die by not able to breathe because of my cry out. When I went to the next room with baby Charis, everyone was crying except my father. My father asked me to give

Christ to him so I did. And then he held Christ in his arms and put his one hand on her head and memorized the Bible John 3:16. Then another doctor came and checked Charis' heart and told us that she passed away.

After few days later, my wife and I cremated deceased Charis and went to the water with the baby's ashes. We borrowed a small boat and drove the boat into the water. My wife who sat in front of the boat with a small box containing the baby's ashes spread the ashes into the water. Then, as we were returning to the ground, my wife suddenly turned her head to me who was steering the boat and said "Titanic." At that time, tears flowed from her both eyes. When I saw her, I looked up the sky and praised God "My Savior's Love" (or "I Stand Amazed"):

- (v. 1) I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene,  
And wonder how he could love me, A sinner, condemned, unclean.
  - (v. 2) For me it was in the garden He prayed: "Not My Will, but Thine."  
He had no tears for his own griefs, but sweat drops of blood for mine.
  - (v. 3) In pity angels beheld Him, And came from the world of light  
To comfort Him in the sorrows He bore for my soul that night.
  - (v. 4) He took my sins and my sorrows, He made them his very own;  
He bore the burden to Calvary, And suffered and died alone.
  - (v. 5) When with the ransomed in glory His face I shall last see,  
Twill be my joy through the ages.
- (Chorus) O how marvelous! She is so wonderful! And my song shall ever be:  
O how marvelous! She is so wonderful! Is my Savior's love for me!



# **“What is the lesson you learned from God?”**

**March 15, 2013, Friday afternoon.**

After I dropped my son Dillon and my daughter Yeri at the church (because there was a pre-teen class), I went to my wife’s workplace with my youngest daughter Karis. It was because I promised to pick up my wife from her workplace and have dinner with her in Japanese town. I don’t know how the conversation started between Karis and I when we were waiting for my wife to come out to the car. But Karis talked a mother who had three children and said to me ‘She has a lot of children.’ So I said to her, ‘Your mother had four children.’ Haha Then I told Karis about the first baby, Charis, who died. After a while, she asked me: “What is the lesson you learned from God?” When she asked me that question, I answered right away ‘It was God’s love.’ I actually experienced God’s love in depth through my first baby Charis’ death, I told Karis that I learned God’s love. So Karis asked me how God could kill the baby and how could you learn God’s love through Charis’ death? In Karis’ perspective, she can surely ask this question. When I heard that question, I hesitated to answer little bit because I wasn’t sure how to explain to Karis the deep love of God that I learned from God. At that time, I heard Karis saying to herself ‘God killed the baby as God killed His Son Jesus ....’ Perhaps Karis seemed to try to understand what I said. At that moment I saw my wife coming out of her workplace. So I told Karis ‘There she comes.’ So she looked outside through the back window and we waited for her to come to the car. Haha When my wife rode in the car, I told her about Karis and my conversation so that my wife could answer Karis’ question. But Karis told me not to say any more about what we talked about. So I told my wife in Korean that she asked about what I learned from God through the death of our first baby, Charis. And then I told her that I couldn’t answer Karis. I told her that Karis seems like she doesn’t want me to share it with her. Then my wife told me that ‘Maybe Karis just wanted to talk to you.’ As we were heading toward the restaurant for dinner, we no longer talked about the first baby, Charis. But I wanted to tell Karis in my mind: ‘Although God took Charis away from mom and daddy, God gave you Karis as a gift.’

# “Don't worry, Mommy!”

**September 22, 2010, Wednesday evening.**

On Wednesday evening,

my beloved wife had dinner with their three children and told them that their Arizona grandfather (maternal grandfather) had cancer.

The reaction of the children was astonishing:

Really?', “Cancer?”, ‘O no’, ‘O my gosh’, etc.

Then our eldest daughter Yeri said: ‘I guess God wants him in heaven faster.’

Then Yeri comforted her mother and said: ‘Don’t worry, Mommy! You are going to die too.’

Then Yeri hugged her mother. Haha.

My wife laughed and shared this conversation over the phone with me at her parents’ house in Arizona.

The reason my wife laughed was probably because

the children were surprised to hear that their grandfather had cancer.

Further, the reason why my wife laughed is because

Yeri said to her, “Don't worry, Mommy! You are going to die too.” Haha.

She is a bit interesting kid. Haha.

When I heard this story, I thought:

‘I think even children know what cancer is.

Since I took them to a nursing home for two years or so, I think they know a little about death

(Note: We used to visit two grandmothers in our church at the nursing home,

and the children also know that both of them passed away).

For some reason, Yeri doesn't seem too worried about death, even her mother's death... . etc.’

We should never take death lightly, but neither should we take it too seriously.

I'm thinking that it might not be desirable for some reason.

# 'I'm going to put my dad on cremation'

**January 23, 2015, Friday afternoon.**

I don't think I need to worry about my funeral. The reason is because I have my youngest child, Karis. Haha  
When Karis was younger, she said she would bury her father and mother in the backyard of the house.

And this time she said that she will cremate me. Haha

On a Friday afternoon, I ate Vietnamese noodles with my children (we moved from Wednesday to Friday) and, as usual, went to the Korean market next to the Vietnamese noodle house and gave Dillon and church friend Joon \$5 to go into the market and buy some fish-shaped buns.

And while I was waiting in the car with Yeri and Karis, a KakaoTalk message came from my fourth uncle.

The content of the message was that a friend of my uncle died of a disease in his early 60s, and my uncle asked me to translate the Korean words he had written into English for his friend's unbelieving Vietnamese wife.

So, after seeing the message, I briefly told my beloved daughters Yeri and Karis about the message, and then told them that my uncle's friend also did cremation (Actually, I already told them that our church Grandma Bun-nam Choi was put on cremation after passing away a while ago...).

Then, the youngest daughter Karis, who was listening to that, said that she would put me on cremation. Haha.

So I told her that I had to make a will (I mean, it's not something you decide to do this way or that, it's what this dad should do ... Haha). After hearing that, Karis asked me what I wanted to do.

So I said to Karis, 'I don't really care whether you put me in the grave or cremation.

Then Karis said that she would cremate me. Haha. So I asked her why she wanted to cremate me.

She said that the reason was because she didn't like having bugs on my body when I was under the ground (in the grave). Haha (Perhaps from Karis' point of view, she didn't even want to imagine a bug moving on the corpse of her beloved father).

After a moment's silence, I told Yeri and Karis that even though it would be sad if this daddy and mommy died, they should be happy. Then Yeri, who was sitting next to Karis, asked how she could be happy.

Then I remembered the words of Philippians 1:22-24 and told Yeri that we wanted more to leave this world and be with the Lord whom we missed.

So I told her that since this daddy and mommy will live with the Lord forever in heaven where we want to go when we die, she should rejoice.

Towards the end of the conversation, Dillon and Joon came out of the Korean market and Joon show the number "6" with his finger. That means they paid \$5 and got 6 fish-shaped buns (even though I told them to try and get 7 of them lol). Even if I have to die, I want to eat the fish-shaped buns deliciously... Haha.

# Grandma Jang's kiss

This Monday (September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2007), I visited the nursing home for the first time in almost 3 weeks and visited our beloved church Grandma Chun-hee Park and Grandma Eul-soo Jang.

Grandma Park, who had 100% dementia, was sleeping when I visited her again.

So, after seeing her for a while, I went to the ward where Grandma Jang was, who was also sleeping.

But she woke up I think because she sensed my presence and then warmly reached out and shook my hand vigorously. After reporting to Grandma Jang that I had a good trip to Korea and Mongolia in God's grace, I praised her favorite hymn "How Great Thou Art."

She told me that she forgot her favorite hymns "How Great Thou Art" and "Call'd of God, We Honor the Call" and her favorite Bible verse Psalms 23 for three weeks.

So on that day, I repeated the hymn "How Great Thou Art" lyrics 1 and 2 and sang it several times.

And Grandma Jang sang along with me, and I saw how her memories came back.

And then I put my hand on her head and prayed to God because she said her head was hot.

When I was praying for her, Grandmother Jang said "Amen, Amen" still vigorously.

When it was time to leave, Grandma Jang held out her hand and I also reached out to shake her hand vigorously.

Then, suddenly, she raised her head and kissed the back of my hand.

So I also kissed the back of Grandma Jang's hand.

Grandma Jang, who is eagerly waiting for Jesus to call her as soon as possible, is also earnestly praying for the Lord for her to fly away and be embraced by the Lord.

I believe that the Lord will call Grandma Jang in His time, will embrace her in His arms, and will kiss her just as the father kissed his prodigal son when he came back (Lk. 15:20).

[September 13, 2007]



# I want to hurt together and cry together.

Last Sunday (February 12, 2012) afternoon,

I visited our church beloved couple with my father who is a retired pastor and mother.

I did this because I thought that if I take my father to see the couple before my father returning to the mission field again, the couple would be happy and be comforted.

When we went to the house of our beloved brother in Christ Kim,

Brother Kim was lying down, who was suffering so much from cancer.

But he got up from his bed, put on his clothes, came to the living room, sat down, and worshiped God with his wife and their two children.

When my father sang the hymn he liked, Brother Kim said that he wanted to sing the hymn "I'm Pressing on the Upward Way."

So we repeated the song twice together and sang praises to God.

And my father read the words of Psalms 23. And we prayed for Brother Kim, whom we dearly love.

After the service we sang "Happy Birthday!" because that day was the birthday of Brother Kim's wife.

Brother Kim and his wife were sitting facing each other.

Although it must be difficult for Brother Kim to sing the happy birthday song,

he sang it in a small voice to congratulate his wife on her birthday and she was looking at him.

When we parted, my father hugged Brother Kim. As his wife saw this, she smiled brightly, showing her teeth.

Her face was bright but she seemed very thin.

She came to church alone for the Wednesday night prayer meeting yesterday. And she told us that according to his doctor, it seemed that he had reached a situation where the doctor could no longer do anything.

Our only hope is the Lord!

When we left Brother Kim's house, we went to the nearby nursing home hotel where Grandma Bong-hee Lim, the oldest in our church, resides.

When we went to the nursing home, she she sat down after eating in the cafeteria.

She was very glad when she saw us out the window.

When my parents took Grandma Lim to the room, sat down and talked, and then we sang to God, "All the Way My Saviour Leads Me."

Grandma Lim thinks that people come to the nursing home before they die.

Even at the age of 91, her mind is still intact. But it seems that many people younger than her have dementia.

Perhaps because of that kind of atmosphere, Grandma Lim seemed to be having a harder time.

I remember visiting a nursing home before our church two grandmothers before they passed away.

I still remember that we sang praises together, prayed, talked, laughed, etc because those moments are very precious.

I joked and laughed with Grandma Lim. When we parted, Grandma Lim came out to say ‘Good bye’ to me. As I went to the parking lot, I looked back again. I still remember the back figure of Grandma Lim walking.

When I was at Seohyeon Church in Korea, I came to like and fall in love with young generation Koreans.

But when I came back to the United States and started serving in our church,

I came to like and love our church grandfathers and grandmothers.

And I learned the death perspective through them.

God was teaching me the death perspective as I was serving them.

So, there were many times when I remembered the first baby Charis, who fell asleep in my arms.

At the same time, it often made me think of my own death as well as the death of my loved ones.

And I often thought of them who have already gone to heaven in my prayers.

God made me grow even a little bit through the pain and tears of death.

And even now, the Lord is making me to look to my loved ones who are in fear, pain and tears of death.

I want to hurt together and cry together.

And as I want to look to the Lord together and pray together, I want to rejoice in hope together.

Every day, every moment, I want to make beautiful memories in the Lord and keep them in my heart.

[February 16, 2012]





# Grandma Bong-hee Lim

In our church, there is a 92-year-old grandmother named Bong-hee Lim.

Today, I called her daughter's workplace and got the nursing home address where she is, and visited her with our church elder. I was surprised to see her sitting in a wheelchair.

It's because she has grown so much older since I haven't seen her. She said it's too hard now.

So, together with the elder, I held her left hand and prayed to Heavenly Father together.

After the prayer, I stroked her back and encouraged her, who only says 'Thank you' to us, who loves the Lord, loves Victory Presbyterian Church, loves our church retired pastor, and loves me and our church members, to put her hope in the eternal heaven.

Grandma Lim, who wore pretty clothes as if they were bought by her children and cut her hair neatly, even though her body is getting weaker day by day and her heart is getting weaker day by day,

I believe that Heavenly Father, who loves her the most, will hold her and will give her strength.

The words of Grandma Lim before we parted are still in my heart: 'I have a lot of memories' -

Many memories that God has planted in her heart over the years

as God led Grandma Lim to Victory Presbyterian Church.

I still remember Grandma Lim walking down the street when she was healthy, picking up empty cans, selling them, and donating them to the church.

I remember one day while picking up a can, she fell and got a cast on her arm.

Although she couldn't read, Grandma Lim tried to obey God's word written on her heart with love for the church.

She proudly (?) said to me that she offered tithing even in the midst of a hardship,

and she made me coffee every time I visited her apartment.

I hugged her while stroking her cheek and saying 'I love you' before parting.

[2013. 3. 20.]



# Nail clippers

Thursday, July 24, 2014, lunch.

Today, I went to see Grandma Bong-hee Lim after a long time.

I went to her nursing home with our church's 34th anniversary gift nail clipper set.

But when I went into her room, she was sleeping on the bed (maybe she just closed her eyes).

I was going to put the chair in the room quietly next to the bed where she was lying.

But I guess she heard the sound, so she opened her eyes and greeted me warmly.

So I sat down with the chair next to the bed.

After I told Grandma Lim that I had brought a church gift, I showed her a set of nail clippers.

Then I told her that I wanted to cut her nails.

Although I knew that one of her daughters cut off the flesh around her nails twice while cutting her nails before, and she bled, I wanted to cut her nails and I wasn't afraid (?) to do so.

After saying, 'I can cut it better, Grandma,' I cut off her left nails first.

Then again I smoothed her nails with another tool (I don't know what it's called).

At least cutting her left nails seemed successful. But the problem was that while I was cutting her right nails,

I think I cut the flesh around her nails because her nails were thick and thus the nail clipper couldn't fit well.

I thought Grandma Lim was a little surprised and hurt when I cut her flesh little bit.

So I told her I was very sorry. I said to her boldly that I could cut her nails better than her daughter.

But in the end I cut the flesh near her nails like her daughter.

Nevertheless, Grandma Lim stood still despite my attempts to cut off the remaining four nails on the right.

I think maybe she was still because she couldn't do anything right now.

Since the oxygen respirator was not in her nose and was placed on her forehead,

I asked her, 'Grandma, don't you have to wear this in your nose?' and she said 'Yes.' So I put it in her nose.

She seemed to be unable to do anything on her own now. It seemed that she even forgot her own age.

When I ask her, 'Grandma, are you 92 years old?' and she said she doesn't know.

Seeing Grandma Lim getting weaker and weaker, I said to her, 'Grandma, do you love the Lord?'

I already knew that she loves the Lord, loves our church, loves the retired pastor and his wife, etc.,

so I think it would be more accurate to say that "I said to her" than 'I asked her' a question.

After that, I told Grandma Lim about the memories of our Victory Presbyterian Church.

In particular, she remembered it well, so whenever I visited her,

I shared the memories I often shared with her.

She told me about her memory of diligently washing 4 pots of rice in the church kitchen with her hands.

Because of that, Grandma said that her fingers had become a little different.  
Also, when I was a bachelor evangelist, I used to pick up Grandma Lim and her husband and brought them to church and then drove them home with the church van.  
I remembered her husband asked me when I would get married inside the church van.  
Since Grandma Lim still remembers that and asked me,  
I told her that it's already been 17 years that I got married with a smile.  
I was talking with her about these and other memories,  
and then I talked to her about the late Grandma Young-hwa Kim (my biological grandmother) who went to heaven already.  
The reason is because I know that Grandma Lim received a lot of love from the late Grandma Kim.  
So I am sure Grandma Lim will never forget her for the rest of her life.  
I told Grandma Lim that if the Lord calls us to His heaven,  
we will fall asleep (after the Bible says that the death of our saints is asleep)  
and enter eternal heaven where there will be no more disease, pain, loneliness, and death.  
And I told Grandma Lim that we will also meet the late Grandma Kim,  
Grandpa Jong-hwan Lim (Grandma Lim's husband).  
And after saying that we would all live with the Lord forever,  
I sang the hymn "Since Christ My Soul From Sin Set Free" to God and prayed for Grandma Lim.  
Tears welled up in the corner of her left eye when I looked at her face after praying.  
Grandma Bong-hee Lim, who said "thank you" three times in conversation with me today,  
I kissed her on her forehead as I watched her grateful and peaceful image.

[2014. 7. 26.]

# Visiting the nursing hotel

After finishing my ministry in the church, I went to the nursing home where my beloved Deacon Dong Yoon Kim and Grandpa Seungkwan Kim were staying. First, when I went to the room where Deacon Dong Yoon Kim was, he was lying on the bed, opened his eyes, looked at the ceiling, and was listening to a Christian broadcast through the radio. It seems like he looks sicker and older today. As I entered the room, there was a chair in front of the bed where Deacon Kim was lying and said hi to Him in Korean. Then he reached out and held my right hand tightly. So I raised my left hand and grabbed his two hands with both hands. Deacon Kim, who is suffering from Parkinson's disease, is lying in bed like this at the age of 75 years old because his head is so dizzy due to drugs. After talking with him in this and that way, he said that he remembers his father and mother a lot, who have already gone to heaven. In particular, he remembered when coming down from North Korea to the south, and when his father brought him and his older brother down, his father had no shoes and carried him in an ice-like place and he was in tears. And every time he comes to our church once a month, he says that when he sees my mother (they are both of the same age), tears come to his eyes. It was a heartwarming meeting. Although I felt it before visiting grandmothers in nursing homes or intensive care units, I remember that they usually missed their fathers and mothers in such difficult circumstances. Even at such an old age, when I see how they miss their parents who have passed away, the love of the parents seems to be immeasurable. Before I parted with Deacon Kim, I put my hands on his forehead and was about to pray. Then Deacon Kim placed both of his hands on mine. And we prayed to our Heavenly Father, to God our Father. After praying, as I left Deacon Kim, I saw him continuously waving his hand.

Afterwards, I went to the room where Grandpa Seong-kwan Kim and his wife Grandma Yang-sook Kim were in the building next door and knocked on the door. After a while, Grandma Kim came and opened the door.

So I asked her whether I should knock on the door of Grandpa Kim, who was in the next room.

She told me to come this way and I went in. As soon as I entered, I saw Grandpa Kim, wearing a mask and lying on the bed. He looked at me and said, 'I am in very bad condition now.'

Since their daughter was also in the next room, I approached Grandpa Kim and held his hand and prayed.

While praying to the eternal God, I prayed for Grandpa Kim's faith and hope.

After praying to Heavenly Father so that our hope in the eternal kingdom doesn't waver in our faith in Jesus, I heard the words that Grandma Kim and her daughter asked me to sit down for a while. But I ran out. Haha.

It was a short meeting for 3-5 minutes. Both Grandpa and Grandma Kim, who had been attending our church for 7 years, moved to this nursing home and moved away from the church. So they're going to come out to our church once a month even though we can't promise tomorrow.

[September 29, 2013, Sunday afternoon]

## The late believer Jin-gu Lee, who has fallen asleep peacefully

After the Sunday English Ministry service today, I was surprised to hear from my church elder in front of the kitchen that a believer Jin-gu Lee had passed away. The reason I was surprised was because I had no idea that he would die so suddenly. At lunchtime, I asked sister in Christ Eun Hee Kim, the daughter of the believer Jin-gu Lee, how the believer Lee was doing and thus I was shocked to hear that he passed away like this. I hurriedly took the Bible and drove to brother in Christ Jeff Lee's house, who is the youngest son of the believer Jin-gu Lee. Upon arrival, I went into the believer Jin-gu Lee's room and saw him lying on a chair and had fallen asleep peacefully. I touched his hand and it was still warm, but a little cold. As I was looking him die like this, I praised and worshiped God together with his daughter sister in Christ Eun Hee Kim, his son brother in Christ Jeff Lee, and their children next to the body of the believer Jin-gu Lee. (When the late believer Jeong-hyo Choi, the wife of the believer Jin-gu Lee, passed away about 22 months ago, I and Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Lee worshiped God next to the believer Choi's body). We were able to worship God with thanksgiving because God loved and saved the late Jin-gu Lee. His children have been praying for the salvation of their father's soul, and at the funeral of their mother Mrs. Choi, who passed away about two years ago, God worked in the heart of Jin-gu Lee, opened the door of his heart, and gave him grace. And I vividly remember that Jin-goo Lee's, who came to know God's love, when I visited his home with my church elder and baptized him. In this way, at the end of the life of the late believer Jin-gu Lee, God allowed him to be received Jesus and be baptized. And then he has fallen asleep peacefully and died while he was sleeping. Therefore, we gave praise to God and worship Him in thanksgiving, and we will do the same at funeral services in the future. Only by the grace of God!

[2014. 8. 11.]



# Big uncle

This Sunday morning, before going to church, I stopped by the nursing home where my big uncle was lying because I don't know when he will die, whether today to tomorrow or so on. Upon arrival, I went into the room and found my big uncle's youngest daughter, my cousin, sitting alone in a chair. I was thankful to see my cousin who was at her father's side until the night because she wanted to protect her father so much. I was very worried about her, but it seemed that she is doing okay. With her consideration, I went next to my big uncle and saw that he was unable to breathe even though he was wearing an oxygen respirator. So I put my hands on his chest and prayed to God in my heart. Then, like last Sunday, after finishing the Sunday church ministry, I thought that I should look for my big uncle again. When I arrived at the church, I heard the news through my family's KakaoTalk room that my big uncle's blood pressure was very low. So I asked my church elder who is a doctor. He who regards my big uncle as his own uncle said that today is likely to be a turning point for my big uncle. So, even during the English Ministry worship service in the afternoon, I put my phone in my pocket just in case and checked the messages on the family KakaoTalk room from time to time before the worship service. After the service, my church elder who had already visited the nursing home at lunch time said that my big uncle was about to die. So I went straight to the nursing home with my Bible in hand. Many family members and relatives all gathered to worship. So, the elder and I worshiped God together with them. Then, my small uncle, who was leading the worship service, said that since the senior pastor of Victory Presbyterian Church had come, he wanted me to continue leading the worship service after his sermon. So I obeyed. I held my big uncle's left hand and prayed vigorously to God. Then I prayed the Lord's Prayer. As soon as I finished the Lord's Prayer, my cousin (my big uncle's first daughter) said that his father was not breathing. So I went to the nurse and asked her to check my big uncle's heart with a stethoscope. She hurried to find the stethoscope, checked my big uncle's heart and eyes, and told us that he had died. Like this my big uncle has left us. My big aunt said that the funeral procedure was entrusted to me, the senior pastor of Victory Presbyterian Church, in his will. My third uncle, Pastor Andrew Kim, asked me to lead the viewing service before he died and even gave me the text of the sermon. And now, even my big uncle too ... Haha.

The funeral home came to collect the body of my big uncle. I moved closer to my big uncle once again, who had fallen asleep peacefully, and touched his forehead, his cheek, and his hand. They got cold. His hands were very white. I said in my heart: Big uncle...'

[August 15, 2015, Sunday]



# **I shouldn't miss out on the given time.**

On a Sunday morning, I stopped by the nursing home where my beloved big uncle was lying down.

I saw him sleeping with a respirator on.

Seeing his shortness of breath, I put my hands on my big uncle's chest (heart) and prayed to Heavenly Father.

After the Korean Ministry service a while ago, I saw the writings in the family KakaoTalk room.

It is said that the family of my big uncle, his three children and six grandchildren are speaking their last words to their beloved father and beloved grandfather.

Also, I saw the writing that my youngest uncle, who was on a mission to Egypt, asking someone to deliver his last words 'Thank you and I love you' through the family KakaoTalk.

He's coming here tomorrow from Egypt on purpose to see his brother-in-law.

I am not sure whether my big uncle will be still alive then.

A few years ago, my youngest uncle, who was doing mission in India, was on a plane to see his third older brother, who was fighting cancer. But before he came to the state, his older brother passed away. So he just attended the funeral worship and returned to India. Maybe this time too. I am not sure he can see his brother-in-law before he passes away.

I remembered the word of Ecclesiastes 3:2, which says that there is a time to be born and a time to die.

"a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance" (v. 4).

"a time to love and a time to hate..." (v. 8).

I think about God's time.

I am sure I don't always have the time to confess my love to my loving parents.

I am sure I don't always have the time to forgive, and the time to ask for forgiveness.

I shouldn't miss out God's given time.

[August 17, 2015]



# I will miss him.

Yesterday Saturday, before the dying service of Evangelist Dok Il An, we were continuously praising God. And then I urged his family and relatives to approach him in the hospice bed and give him one last word. At that time, Mrs. An, who was about leave her beloved husband, wept a lot and spoke in her husband's ears. Then, Evangelist An's only daughter, who had cared for him with his mother for a long time, cried and said the last words to her beloved father. After speaking their last words to Evangelist An who was unconscious, we made the hospital room a sanctuary for God and gave praise to Him and worship Him. After the dying service, all but the family left the hospice. And about three hours later, I got a message from Evangelist An's daughter Jin Kyung through KakaoTalk. The message was that the beloved Evangelist An had fallen asleep peacefully and was embraced in God's arms. And later, she sent me another KakaoTalk message like this: 'Pastor, Thank you so much. Every time I asked for it, you came and comforted my dad and my family with praise and words. So I was able to send my dad comfortably into Heavenly Father's arms. The last appearance of the father was peaceful appearance. I'm glad.' I thanked God. This Sunday, I am ready to go to church. When I sit at the back of the church with coffee, I think I will remember the empty seat of beloved Evangelist An. I will remember him praising God with his beloved daughter in the back seat of the choir. I will miss him.

[November, 21, 2016]



# Grandma Bun-nam Choi

When we greet each other and shake hands after the Easter Sunday worship service,  
I approached Grandma Bun-nam Choi, who is over 80 years old, and was about to say hello to her.  
Looking at my face, Grandma Choi smiled brightly and said, 'I don't know when the Lord is going to call me.'  
I still remember.  
Grandma Choi's husband passed away a long time ago, and two of her six children also died.  
But his body was cold, and she found out that her son was dead. So she wept bitterly.  
After her son's funeral service, Grandma Choi came to me and said, 'I feel resentment at God.'  
I can't imagine the heart of Grandma Choi who sent three of her six children first.  
But after Easter Sunday worship,  
I am happy to think of Grandma Choi's smile, who wants to go to heaven.

[April 1, 2013]

## In memory of the late Bun-nam Choi

The place I went to was the apartment where Grandma Bun-nam Choi of our church lived.

I thought I would not be able to meet her. But thankfully I met her in the courtyard of the apartment complex.

So I followed her and went into her apartment.

When I sat down at the kitchen table, Grandma Choi took out a water bottle from the refrigerator and brought it to the table. Then, she removed one leftover green bean paste and gave me a new one under it.

To Grandma Choi, who has no appetite, can't eat properly, has a headache, and is in so much pain, and who told me that it is better to die than to live, I said, "There is no pain, there is no loneliness, there is no sorrow and death in heaven and we will live there forever and ever with the Lord."

Then Grandma Choi said that she wanted to go to that heaven quickly.

So I asked her, "Grandma, do you believe in Jesus?" She replied, "I believe."

After hearing the Grandma Choi's confession, I got up from my chair, approached her, put my hands on her shoulders, and prayed to God.

After that, I parted from her and walked to the door. And she was about to come out, and said to me "Pastor."

So I approached her again and hugged her.

Then Grandma Choi leaned in my arms and cried. I hugged her tightly.

[September 5, 2017]



# Conclusion

The end of all of us is death. No one can escape death. So we have to think and rethink about our own death. In order to do this, we must prefer going to funerals than weddings. And when we go to the funeral, we should not only think about our own death, but also we should think about how we're going to live and will end our lives well while we're still alive. And we should seriously consider what kind of death of a saint that is precious and beautiful in the sight of God, even through the death of loved ones.

In order for us to face the death of the saint that is precious and beautiful in the sight of God, we must have the death perspective. And with that death perspective, we must learn from the Bible what we should live for and how we should live during the days God has given each of us to live in this world. We must live according to the Lord's calling that the Lord has given to each of us, with a firm belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Of course, when we live according to the Lord's calling, there will be no shortage of suffering and adversity. However, like the Apostle Paul, we should value the Lord's calling more than our lives. And in fulfilling that mission, we should be willing to die, hoping for the glory that will be given to us in the face of adversity and hardship, and work hard and faithfully. Then, like King Hezekiah, we may become ill. At that time, as we deeply experience our human frailty and depend more and more on God in prayers, if God extends our life, we should have a more death perspective and live our lives only for the Lord with the sense of His calling. We must become the grain of wheat burning with a sense of His calling. Sacrifice will inevitably follow. But as we accept even that sacrifice as God's grace, we must earnestly pray for the fragrance of Jesus Christ to be manifested and the glory of God to be revealed even through our death.

As those who have the hope of the resurrection, we must live a life that honors Jesus Christ only until the day the Lord calls us while giving thanks to God at the crossroads of life and death. Before we die, we must forgive all whom we should forgive and reconcile with whom we should reconcile. In addition, we must cherish the time given to us and live by loving God and loving our neighbors more and more according to the twofold command of the Lord: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ... Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt. 22:37, 39). We should never do anything that we will regret. Realizing that we have only time to truly love, we must live by loving our family, church members, and neighbors more and more with the love of the Lord that is stronger than death. Then, when the Lord comes, we will finish our hard work on this earth and say goodnight to our loved ones, church members, and neighbors, and then we will fall asleep in the arms of the Lord peacefully. I earnestly hope and pray that our Christ-centered life on this earth after we leave this world will be left as beautiful memories for our families, church members, and those around us.

