

A person of strong faith is the key person.

It is very difficult for any group to become one. However, we often hear stories of how they overcame crises as one. When I see a couple living together in harmony, I like that scene very much because I could not experience in my marriage. However, in reality, it is very difficult for a husband and wife, a parent and child, or an employer and employee of a company to become one.

Therefore, it is very difficult for churches to become one, too. Why is that? Because there are so many differences in age, gender, upbringing, experience, culture, education, career, financial situation, facing problems, strength of faith, and so on. The church is an amazing gathering in the world as the family of Christ. So, it is very difficult to be united, but our goal is to be united as the body of Jesus Christ.

Verse1 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.

Paul is saying that we who are powerful and strong in faith are the key here. The conflicts in the Roman church at that time were fought over the issues of whether to eat idol food or not, whether to drink wine or not, whether to keep the Sabbath in the traditional Jewish way or the day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and whether to circumcise or not. He says that those who are strong in faith in these situations should wait, praying and not judging the deeds of those who are weak in faith.

Verse2 Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up.

I think this God's Word is really full of love. When a problem happens in the church, we who are strong in faith should please our neighbors and try to enhance the virtue of those who are weak so that it will be for their benefit. We should not look for the offender, saying that it is someone else's fault.

Today, we have Mrs. Sanae's party to thank her for her hard work in MJCF. Mrs. Sanae always understood each person's individuality well and always thought in the direction of enhancing their virtues. When Kenta and Taishi were bullied at school in Surrey, Canada, I took advantage of her kindness and moved to a place near her house, New Westminster. Of course, it was also close to Mrs. Miwako's house. Today is Sanae's party, so I will talk about her story. At that time, I was in a very critical and was not as calm as I am now. Whenever I opened my mouth, all I could talk about was my disappointment with my family, my experiences of being victimized by my ex-husband, and the struggle of raising my children. The biggest problem was that I was having a hard time finding the good in my children. Sanae always listened to my story for hours with patience. And her conclusion was, "Kenta and Taishi will help you when they grow up. They will grow up to be good children. Both Kenta and Taishi

have good things. They are kind boys.” However, although I repeatedly complained, but she was always trying to enhance the virtues of me and my children. And also she gave me various wisdom for the benefit of me and my children.

Today, Mrs.Sanae will no longer come to MJCF to devote herself to serving the Baptist Church. We all feel sad and lonely, but I feel honored to send such a wonderful fellow Christian as a servant to another church. She was a servant of God in the long history of MJCF. We believe that no matter where she goes, she will do her best for the Kingdom of God with confidence as an alumnus of MJCF.

Verse3 For even Christ did not please Himself but, as it is written: “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.

This verse, Psalm 69:9, is a Messianic prophecy of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ lived for others without pleasing Himself during His lifetime.

Verse4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

The Bible written of the past means the Old Testament. We can learn a lot through the life of Jesus Christ, who lived according to the prophecies of Jesus Christ written in the Old Testament. The Bible gives us perseverance, encouragement, and hope. **2 Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, for reproof, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”**

Verse 5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had,

The Apostle Paul prays that each believer would be like-minded toward one another, following the way of life of Jesus Christ. ‘The same attitude of mind’ does not mean the idea that we should all eat food offered to idols with the same mind. He is saying that we should have the same love for Jesus Christ and the same gratitude for having been saved for His sake.

Verse 6 so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our worship of God is to worship God with one heart and one voice. The church is not a place where we gather to help the poor. The church is not gathered to build world peace. The church is not there to give good health care and education. The church is for worshipping God. Do not be confused about what this church is. Each member of the congregation is to worship God who sent the Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world with one heart and one voice. **John 4:23 “At a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”** Our hearts should be united as worshipers with a sincere heart for God. After that, we should rescue people, make peace, heal

the sick, and educate people.

Verse7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

As we learned last month, Jewish Christian should accept the Gentiles as God accepted and saved the Gentiles. Remember God who told Peter to eat the unclean animals in the four-cornered container. But it is really difficult in practice. It is difficult to accept people who disagree with us. But if we accept each other prayerfully, it will be to God's glory.

I know one parents who recently had a conflict with their children and the conversation has been cut off for about 4 years. One day they were contacted by their children. They suggested to their parents that they would be willing to talk to their parents if it was only through a counselor. When I listen carefully to what they say, I realized that they don't accept each other in a single way. But according these words, I'm sure God will be glorified when they will accept each other.

Verse8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed

Jesus Christ showed us this difficult thing by putting it into practice. Jesus is God's Son and God himself. And yet He was circumcised, a human practice. It was to save the Jewish people. Jesus did so in order to fully realize the Word that God promised to ancestors such as Apraham in the Old Testament. By doing so, Jesus became the Savior of the chosen Israel.

And also verses 9-12 repeat the story of Jesus Christ's coming into the world for the salvation of the Gentiles. The Apostle Paul examines the Old Testament one by one with examples.

Verse9 and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing the praises of your name."

This verse quotes Psalm 18:49. Through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has become the One who is praised by Gentiles who believe in Jesus. God is also praised by us Japanese.

Verse10 Again, it says, "Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people."

This is a quotation from Deuteronomy 32:43. We Gentiles are to rejoice with the people of Israel in the Lord God.

Verse11 And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; let all the peoples extol him.

This is a quote from Psalm 117:1, 12. The Lord Jesus Christ is praised by all nations.

Verse 12 Ande again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope."

This is the Messianic prophecy of Jesus Christ in Isaiah 11:10. Jesus Christ was born from the lineage of King David, the root of Essai. And Jesus Christ reigned even over the Gentiles and realized the Kingdom of God. And Gentiles like us are living in hope in Jesus

Christ.

We Christians live our lives putting our hope in Jesus Christ. Because Jesus Christ is alive today. He is not some fluffy, cloud-like, smokey, elusive presence. Jesus Christ is not some spirit of nature. The resurrected Jesus Christ is the One who still looks like us, living God. Jesus Christ, we believe in is the One who can commune with us.

Who has been the kindest, most loving and humane person to you in your lives? I remember that there was an eldest who used to volunteer to teach English at the Cedar Grove Baptist Church in Surrey. He told his students during the class. He said, "The only two people in my life who always helped me were my grandmother and my mother." I was a little surprised that there were only two people only in his life.

But in my case too, now that I think about it, neither my sister and my brother-in-law nor my father helped me, but the one person who gave me unfailing love and providing was my mother who lives in Vancouver. How about you? Mr. Taka said the other day that he still remembers and thanks the old man in Osaka who took care of him when he was young. One might be his father, or a school teacher.

Now, please try to remember that kindest person in your life. It made you feel warm and smile. Then, try to do x100 times, or even x1000 times to that person. Jesus Christ is hundreds or thousands of times kinder and more loving than that loving person you think He is.

Maybe you haven't met Jesus Christ yet because you've only been coming to church for a few years. Maybe you have been going to church for decades, but all you do is religious activities without actually coming into contact with the character of Jesus Christ? Think about it. When we encounter Jesus Christ, we surrender all of our life's hope to Him. It will be a complete 180-degree change from the way we live now, and we will live for the Lord Jesus Christ.

I ask you all to accept Jesus Christ, this gentle and omnipotent God, into your hearts now. But Jesus cannot come in unless you open your hearts. Jesus is a very gentle, so He will not force His way in. He is waiting for your response. **Revelation 3:20 "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me."** From the moment you believe in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, is in your heart. The Holy Spirit teaches you about Christ Jesus. Please experience Jesus Christ more realistically through the help of the Holy Spirit starting today.

Paul prays this way to the church in Rome.

Verse 13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I pray that each of us may overflow with hope, joy, peace and hope through the Holy

Spirit in Jesus Christ. I pray especially for Sanae's future ministry and each member of her family: Olivia, who is quiet but very kind; Yurian, who is extremely beautiful and gentle; Joseph, who is always calm and looks like a Hollywood actor; Paul, who looks like Carl Lewis with his excellent sports skills; and Chris, who is calm, smart and likes to play quietly, Mina, who is cheerful and caring, and Hana, who is the youngest and always adorable. I pray that the hope, joy, and peace of Jesus Christ will overflow to Sanae's family forever.

Let's pray together.