

Lenten Devotional Reflection

5th March, 2020 (Lent Day Eight)

Scripture: Galatians 5:2-15 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

² Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. ³ Once again I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law. ⁴ You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵ For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love. ⁷ You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth? ⁸ Such persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. ⁹ A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough. ¹⁰ I am confident about you in the Lord that you will not think otherwise. But whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty. ¹¹ But my friends, why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. ¹² I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves! ¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵ If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

Message

In the Galatian community, some of them emphasize that circumcision is very important. They believe circumcision is not only a liturgy but represents salvation by obeying the law (reference: Acts 15:1). However, Paul reminds us that God's salvation is complete. Man can receive God's grace without additional conditions.

Paul highlights trust in the Lord does not mean we can do whatever we want and we only focus on faith in our Christian life so we can ignore law and good deeds. He reminds us to do good deeds through the Spirit and by faith and to put our faith in action.

The freedom of Christian is a kind of freedom to stay away from sins and draw near to God as His children. This is not a freedom for self-indulgence. On the contrary, indulgence leads us to become the slave of desire and be bound by sins.

Reflection

1. What can help us put our faith in action instead of boasting our deeds?
2. Can you feel the freedom under God's grace?
3. Who is your neighbour in the epidemic of novel coronavirus? How can you serve them?

The Revd Augusta LEUNG Lai-ngor (Church of the Good Shepherd)