

**June 9, 2019**

## **Apostolic Church**

**2 Timothy 2:1-2**

2:1 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,

2:2 and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

### **1. Vessel of the Truth**

The Apostles' Creed confesses the Church as the "holy and catholic church," while the Nicea Creed confesses the Church as the "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church". The word "apostolic" has the meaning "stand in the truth." The truth has been transmitted to the apostles by Christ, and the apostles have transmitted it to their successors, who have also transmitted to the next person. The "apostolic church" says that the church was chosen to keep the truth of salvation that can be traced back to apostles and Christ.

The church was given various things to be the vessel of the truth by God. Let me list some of them. First, the church has witnesses of Jesus Christ. Jesus himself wrote neither a book nor a letter. All the teachings of Jesus Christ were spoken verbally, and the disciples heard it and memorized it. Two thousand years ago, there was no way to record what Jesus had done in the film, so those who saw Jesus' work recorded it in mind and expressed it in words. The church has kept the truth and conveyed it by direct witnesses of Jesus Christ. Also, the direct witnesses of Jesus Christ eventually passed away, but later people met Jesus Christ by faith and became "witnesses of

Christ.” The church is still a “witness” of Christ in this 21st century, as in Hebrews 12:1 says, “We are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses.”

Second, the church has the Bible. The Bible is the bestseller in the world, and many people translate the Bible, study it, write dissertations, and write books, whether with or without faith, inside or outside the church. However, even if written by people who are not Christians, although written in an interesting way, I feel like they are unintended in important places. Those are just preaching the Bible as an education, not guiding people to faith, giving hope, and not talking about the Bible to be used for love. It is impossible to understand the Bible as the Word of God without the Holy Spirit who is the true author of the Bible, the teacher. The Church has produced, preserved, translated, and revealed the Bible through the Holy Spirit. And keep the truth.

Third, the church has the organization, order, and tradition. The church was initially taught by the apostles, but as the number increased and spread over the land, the church appointed overseers, elders, pastors, teachers, deacons, etc. When doctrinal problems arise, the apostles and elders meet, hold a meeting and draw conclusions.

The apostles also gave instructions on the specific issues of the church. Many of them were verbal instructions. 2 Thessalonians 2:15 and 3:6 say, “So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.” “Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from

us.” The word translated as “teaching” in the New Japanese Bible was previously translated as “tradition.” Because Jesus admonished that the Jews “voided the word of God by their tradition that they have handed down,” (Mark 7:13), the word “tradition” is taken negatively. Then the new version translated as “teaching.” However, it’s very important to have the holy and healthy “tradition” for the church. The church has kept the order and the truth by the “tradition.”

And, above all, the church has the Holy Spirit. The church was born by the Holy Spirit and led by the Holy Spirit. In the resolution of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, there is a word, “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements.” (Acts 15:28) The resolution of the church council was more than human agreement. It was the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

## **2. Witness of the Truth**

I said, “The church is a vessel of the truth,” but some people say, “If we have the Bible that is the word of truth, we will be saved without the church.” When I was young, I listened to a Christian radio program, studied the Bible in a correspondence course, and learned that Jesus Christ was the Savior. That was before I went to a church. However, both the radio program and the correspondence course were prepared by the church. In particular, the churches in the United States were sponsoring and operating for postwar Japan’s salvation. So we can not say that if we had the Bible, we would not need the church.

The Bible is the Word of God, the ultimate authority of faith and life. Although the church produced the Bible, it must also be subjected

to the authority of the Bible. The Bible contains everything we need. The Bible is not just a book, it is the holy and living book. It leads us to the salvation and nurtures those who are saved. However, in the faith there are something that cannot be conveyed by books alone. God, who is a person, must be manifested and witnessed not only by letters but by persons. So, God uses the people belong to the church.

Paul wrote many letters to the churches. Paul's faith, way of life, and passion were also marked in the letters. However, Paul thought that writing a letter was not enough. Paul sends Timothy to Corinth, to Ephesus, to Philippi, and to Thessalonica. 1 Corinthians 4:17 says, "That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church." Timothy taught, guided, comforted, and encouraged the churches on behalf of Paul. People saw Paul's heart in Timothy's personality. The church has the Word of God and the Holy Spirit is in the church. But at the same time, the church has the people who lives the Word of God and is filled with the Holy Spirit. God uses these "people."

Faith is transmitted from "person" to "person." Just as the church is a vessel of truth, every believer who shapes the church is a vessel of the truth. We, as a vessel, may not be as good as a cup of gold or a plate of silver. It may not be as beautiful as a porcelain with a beautiful pattern. We are like unglazed pottery so to speak, it may be cracked. But God gave us such a treasure as the gospel.

There is a story. When Jesus returned to heaven, the angels greeted him and said, "Jesus, it's time to preach the gospel. Where will we go and how to tell the gospel?" Jesus answered. "No, preaching the

gospel has been left to my disciples on earth.” The angels are astonished, “Why not! Your disciples forsook you when you were crucified! And what happens if the disciples make the same mistake?” Jesus said to the angels. “The gospel of forgiveness of sins can not be preached or witnessed unless it is a person who has experienced it. It can not be done for innocent angels. Even if they fail, there is no way but to leave it to them.

The disciples would not have been afraid of persecution and preaching the gospel. But they were empowered by the Holy Spirit and fulfilled his mission. The gospel was transmitted from “person” to “person.” People were saved through the church. There will be a shortage in the churches on earth. There are short-comings, mistakes, failures, and sins. But the “apostolic church” has been trying to be the vessel of God’s choice to show people the truth of the salvation.

### **3. Succession of the Truth**

And the church tried to perform the mission as God’s chosen vessel through the succession of the truth. Not only did Paul called Timothy “brother” or “coworker,” he also called him “son”, “true son”, “beloved son”, and “faithful son.” This not only expressed Paul’s human love for Timothy, but also states that Timothy was a public agent and successor of the apostle Paul. Paul commanded Timothy, saying, “Entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2) . The truth inherited from Paul to Timothy is, in turn, taken from Timothy to “who will be able to teach others.” In that way, the Church was able to carry on the truth from the apostles to his successors, from his successors to the next successor. There are

teachers and learners, there are trainers and trainees, the learners become the teachers and the trainees become the trainers, in this way, from person to person the truth has been inherited. “Apostolic church” is a church that inherits the truth like that.

It is sung in Psalm 96:1-3. “Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth! Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!” There are two types of evangelism depicted here. One is evangelism that spreads from one region to another, as in “Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!” The gospel, which began in Jerusalem, spread not only to Israel but also across Asia, from Asia to Europe, from Europe to America, and back to Asia. The other is evangelism from generation to generation, as in “Tell of his salvation from day to day.” From the parents to the children, from the adults to the children, from the previous generation to the next generation, it is to convey the Word of God.

The great commission says, “Go and make disciples of peoples of all nations,” and the disciples transmitted the gospel to “Judea, Samaria, and the end of the earth.” The mission “to the end of the world” is something that the church should not forget. However, after churches rooted in various places, the church raise up the next generation, so that the truth is taken over to the end of time. “Evangelism” and “inheritance of faith” are not in conflict at all. Rather they help one another. Evangelism is to deliver the gospel to many people of the same generation. It is the inheritance of faith in the same generation. The inheritance of faith is to evangelism to the

next generation. If there is no inheritance of faith in the church, the church will end up with only one generation, only for a moment, no matter how large the church grows and has an influence on the area. “Apostolic church” is not such a church, but a church that conveys the truth of the gospel even to the end of the time.

Faith is often referred to as a “race,” but I think it is like a “relay race.” We should hand over the baton of faith from the previous one and run for myself, and then pass the baton of faith to the next person. We received a baton of faith from missionaries, pastors, parents and seniors. The church has nurtured, supported and guided faith, because the ones who built the church here have kept it, and more back, the first disciples of Jesus Christ took over the baton of faith to the next generation. So who do you pass this baton of faith to? Will you hand it over to your children, grandchildren, and the next generation? What can you specifically do to be able to do so? Let us consider seriously, pray, and firmly carry on the succession of faith as a member of the apostolic church.

**(Prayer)**

God the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Today we learned that the church is apostolic. Teach us, protect and guide us so that the church can keep the truth that was passed from the Lord Jesus, witness it, and take over to the next generation. We pray this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.