

1 Corinthians 3

by Stephen Kaung

This sermon reflects on the life and spiritual journey of a dear brother, emphasizing the importance of spiritual growth and maturity in Christ. It highlights the distinction between carnality and spirituality, urging believers to allow Christ to transform their lives and lead them in obedience to the Holy Spirit. The speaker shares personal experiences of salvation and the ongoing sanctification process, encouraging listeners to embrace the challenges of Christian life as opportunities for growth and preparation for eternity.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 3:1, 1 John 1:9, Colossians 1:27, Romans 8:30, Philippians 1:6

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Transformation in Christ"

Description

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Transcript

Dear brothers and sisters, before I speak, I would like to say a few words about our dear brother, José Roo, those who were at this conference before. I believe you must have missed him. I miss him very much.

Our brother went to be with the Lord on Wednesday night at 8.10. He went back peacefully to the Lord. I would like us all to sing a song, a song that our brother will always sing at the closing of the conference. We will sing this song in remembrance of our brother.

So will you please all stand up. Dear Lord, this is a song that our dear brother, José Roo, loves to sing at the closing of every conference, even though he is not here this morning, but we know his spirit is still with us. He is longing for every one of us that we will be ready for your imminent return.

May this prayer of our brother be answered fully among us, that every one of us here this morning, by thy mercy and grace, will be ready to welcome thee at thy return. Dear Lord, it is the cry of our hearts, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. We ask in thy precious name.

Will you please turn to 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians chapter 3, we read verse 1. 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 1. And I, brethren, have not been able to speak to you as to spiritual, but as to fleshly, as to babes in

Christ. I have given you milk to drink, not meat, for ye have not yet been able, nor indeed are ye yet able, for ye are yet carnal. For where is there among you humiliation and strife? Are you not carnal and walk according to men? Brothers and sisters, the apostle Paul had been working in Corinth for a year and a half.

Many were converted and came to the Lord Jesus. But in his first letter to them, he reminded them he could not treat them as spiritual. In other words, having been with them for a year and a half, having believed in the Lord Jesus, they ought to be spiritual.

Now we will think to be spiritual takes time, but so far as God is concerned, he who has saved us, saved us not to be carnal, but saved us to be spiritual. So in a sense, it is a regret to the apostle Paul that after a year and a half with them, these Corinthian believers were still carnal and not spiritual. You know, brothers and sisters, soon after the Lord has saved us, soon after he has given us his indwelled Holy Spirit, he has made every provision for us to be spiritual.

And that is what God is expecting of all of us. Among us, I believe many of us have believed in the Lord Jesus for a number of years. But can you say, by the grace of God, you are no longer carnal, but you are spiritual? That is what we ought to be.

But sadly, as the Corinthian believers, after Paul had been with them for a year and a half, but when he wrote the first letter to them, he still said, I cannot consider you as spiritual, but as carnal. Why? The Corinthian believers were very gifted. They have knowledge.

They have wisdom. But unfortunately, they were still carnal. How did Paul know? Paul knew they were carnal because there were divisions among them.

They boasted of their gifts, but they took sides with one another. Some say I am a paul. It was Paul who brought me to the Lord.

Others say I am Apollo, because it was Apollo who helped me to grow in the Lord. And some say I am of Cephas. I came from the original.

And others say I am of Christ. I am better, higher than every one of you. Brothers and sisters, Paul said, is this not carnality? True.

Paul planted. Apollo watered. But he calls them to grow is Christ.

Paul is nothing. Apollo is nothing. But Christ is all and in all.

And because the Corinthian believers remained carnal after a year and a half of Paul with them, he finally sent Titus to them. Now brothers and sisters, we know Titus came from an anti-Gentile family. But after he was brought to the Lord by Paul, this young man grew spiritually in the Lord.

He saw the Lord earnestly. He became a specimen of Christian character. You know when Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem for their Jerusalem council concerning a Gentile having become a Christian, should he circumcise or not.

Paul went to Jerusalem bringing Titus with him. If you read Acts 15, you find Titus didn't say a word, but he was there, a specimen, an example of what the Lord could do with a Gentile without being circumcised. So in this first letter to the Corinthians, Paul, noticing the carnal situation of the Corinthian believers, he sent

Titus to them.

He knew that this young man, not by his eloquence, but by his life, would show the Corinthians wherein they were wrong. And he and Titus agreed. After a certain time, they would meet together at Church.

So at that appointed time, Paul went to Church, but he didn't find Titus there. There was opportunity, openings, for Paul to work there. But because he couldn't find Titus, he left Church and went to Macedonia.

Now why Titus was delayed? Because this young man was a very thorough person. He was among the Corinthians, highly intellectual, quarrelling among themselves as this young man said before them, showing them what Christian character is love, that they should love one another instead of quarrelling against one another. But it takes time.

So that's the reason why Titus was delayed. He was a person who did a very thorough work, not work half done. So he stayed there, set an example before the Corinthian believers until these Corinthian believers began to realise what Christian character really is.

They began to repent of their quarrelling. They began to seek for oneness among themselves. And after Titus saw what had been done among the Corinthians, he felt his work was done.

So he left and met Paul in Macedonia. When Paul realised what had happened with the Corinthian believers, after the ministry of Titus, he sent Titus back to Corinth to finish the work there. So we thank God for this young man, Titus.

You know, during the lifetime of the Apostle Paul he was not only used by the Lord greatly, but he had a talent. He knew how to help the young people. He knew how to surround himself with promising young people, train them, help them, send them out for the work of God so that a second generation might be raised up after the first generation had gone.

There was a special ministry of Paul. Brothers and sisters, what is carnality? Carnality is that which comes of our fallen soul. You remember when God created man.

He created man in three parts, spirit, soul and body. After man's sin his spirit was dead to God. Now it did not mean that he did not have a spirit.

Spirit as an organ was still there, but as his proper function it wasn't there. God created our spirit for God is spirit. He created man with a spirit that we may communicate with God the spirit.

The only thing that communicates with God is our spirit. But unfortunately because of sin man's spirit was dead to God. Now that doesn't mean man's spirit does not exist anymore.

Spirit as an organ is still there but its proper function is missing. You know in China people can communicate with the evil world but they cannot communicate with God. I remember when my grandfather died I was in Hong Kong.

We had been praying for him for many years. We have talked to him, testified to him. He always said, I'm too old to change my religion.

But strangely when he was sick he would put the Bible under his pillow. He would not allow anybody to talk to him about Christ but my aunt was able to talk to him about the Lord Jesus. I was in Hong Kong at that time when I heard the news I said Lord we have been praying for our grandfather for many years and testified to him.

Will he be saved or not? Now how do I know? You know in China when a person dies you can ask for a witch or necromancer to come to you and say you want to talk with the dead one. And indeed the voice of the dead one will be heard by you. You thought he wasn't dead and he will usually tell you how he suffered in Hades.

He wants you to burn some money paper paper money so he won't be in such poverty. Now you who came from China knew about all these things. So my grandfather had a concubine he did so many good things to people and people were grateful to him.

So a person insisted to have his daughter to be his concubine. My grandfather every afternoon would go to his concubine but he never stayed there he always came back at night. So after my grandfather died the concubine being a Buddhist he asked for a necromancer he wanted to talk to my grandfather.

You know what happened? After he had used her magic he got a result. He said don't call me, I do not belong to you. Thank God my grandfather was saved.

He belonged to the Lord not to the devil. So brothers and sisters after we are saved now what salvation initially means probably we will think that to be saved means to have our sins forgiven. Thank God he did.

But to be saved is more than that. To be saved is our dead spirit was quickened into life. That is to say our spirit became alive to God.

And that is the reason why when you are saved your prayer was heard by God and immediately you felt there was a connection between you and God. Even though I was brought up in a Christian family my father was a pastor he loved the Lord. He had seven children.

Every night he gathered us in the sitting room he would pray for a big Bible a prayer from a big Bible and after that he asked all of us to kneel down and he would lead us in prayer. But he never asked any one of us to pray. Not until I was saved.

And then he began to ask me to pray too. So brothers and sisters what do you mean by being saved? From our standpoint the biggest thing to us to be saved is to have our sins forgiven. And that is true.

But that is not the biggest thing that God has done to us. When you are saved your dead spirit was quickened into life. In other words formerly your spirit was dead in sins and transgressions.

It has lost its contact with God. But now your spirit is quickened into new life. Immediately you sense a connection between you and God.

Now I was brought up in a Christian family. My father loved the Lord. Every night he gathered us seven children in the sitting room and he would read from the Bible and we would all kneel down and he would lead us in prayer.

I read the Bible when I was young. I knew about all the teachings but I was not saved. I was at that time 15 years old in high school.

I believed in the Lord Jesus as a son of God. But I said I don't need him. I was too good to be saved.

Let him save those sinners in the world. But thank God when I was 14 I was sick almost until death. My pulse became irregular.

At that time there was no medicine for such disease. It depended upon whether you could pull through. After four months I recovered and I had a natural mind.

I said it was God who healed me. I must do something to repay his kindness to me. And that was how it all began.

We began to organize Christian meetings in the school. At evening, before the evening study, we would knock the doors of the dormitories and ask our fellow students to come to the library for a reading. A number of them came.

Even the teachers came. And I was the one who would lead them in prayer. Even though I did not know God personally.

But that was easy for me. Because my father has a big library. I just went to his library, got a book on prayer, translated a chapter into Chinese, memorized it and then I went that night to preach on prayer.

And after I finished preaching on prayer, I said let's all kneel down and pray. So we all knelt down. Some students, some teachers.

But none of us were saved. So none of us prayed. After a little while some student began to laugh.

And I as chairman, I scolded them. I said we were before God. We cannot be so impious.

I also preached before I was saved. Every Friday after school, we would have a preaching meeting. And it was easy for me.

Because my father has a large library. I went to the library, got a book on preaching. I still remember after so many years.

It was a famous American preacher at that time. He had a book. It is called Noah's Ark.

I translated it into Chinese. Memorized it. And that Friday after school, I preached my first preaching.

I felt good about it. The only thing I regretted was nobody praised me. But brothers and sisters, thank God.

As I was trying to repay God for all his goodness the Spirit of God began to work in my heart. I began to feel myself a great sinner. From the head to the feet, there was nothing good.

As a young man, I could sit by my seat and wept for my sins. I longed to be saved. I knew the gospel but somehow it evaded me.

Whenever there was a famous preacher from the world coming to Shanghai to preach, they usually preached in my father's church. I went to hear. I was touched a number of times.

I went to the altar a number of times but nothing happened. This continued for a whole year until in the summer I decided to go to a summer conference in Shanghai to get saved. That was my only purpose.

I went there. Three young men from America came to preach to us. But after a few days I wasn't touched because what they preached I already knew.

There was nothing new. One morning I knew I was sitting in my room. I didn't know whether I was praying or I was speaking to myself.

I said, why are the people got saved so easily and I could not? And my gospel hardened. So I told the Lord, Lord, if you want to save me, save me now. Otherwise, goodbye.

That afternoon I went to the meeting. I heard Mr. Kirkpatrick speak on John 3.16. Now I knew this by heart. Nothing happened.

After he finished preaching he asked everybody to kneel down and pray. And an Indian brother came and kneeled by my side. But all he did was to persuade me to go to the altar.

Now I think I've been there a number of times and nothing happened. Why should I go again? But as a courtesy I went. I went to the altar.

I wept. I confessed. But nothing happened.

And the meeting was over. As I was walking out hundreds of people there. A Chinese pastor.

He wasn't a pastor yet. He was only a preacher at that time. He must be noticing me.

So he stopped me. And point blankly he asked me a question. Are you safe? I think he thought I must be safe.

But I must be honest. I said I want to be safe. So he stopped me there.

Hundreds of people left. We two were alone in the auditorium. He asked me do you believe the Bible as the word of God? I said I do.

From my youth. He said alright. Turn to 1 John 1 verse 9 and read it.

Put your name into it. If Stephen should confess his sin God is faithful and righteous to forgive his sin and to forgive all his unrighteousness. He asked me to read it twice.

And he said let's pray. So we knelt down. I knew how to pray.

So I started to pray. And you know brothers and sisters, again I confessed my sin. All the sins that I can remember.

And then I told God there are many sins I have forgotten. But you know. Now I have done my part.

It's up to you. If you will keep your part and save me. Thank God when I pray in this fashion immediately a peace came into my heart.

I stood up. And N.U.G. asked me are you saved? I said I am saved. He said how do you know? I said I have such peace in my heart.

He shook his head. Immediately the word of God came to me. I said I know I am saved because God says so.

He said yes. Your feeling may change but God's word stands forever. And he asked me to go out tell someone what the Lord has done to you.

Brothers and sisters salvation is such a wonderful thing because it restored my dead spirit. Enabled me to communicate with God. And this has been happening over 80 some years.

God is true. His spirit is true. And is working in our hearts to bring us closer to himself.

Brothers and sisters what is spirituality? If canality is self then spirituality is Christ. Christ in you the hope of glory. We who believe in the Lord Jesus we do not rest our hope upon ourselves.

Whether we will be a good Christian or not we cannot. But thank God we have a blessed hope. Christ in you the hope of glory.

Thank God Christ is in every one of us. He is in our spirit. He is the life of our spirit.

And his spirit dwells in our spirit to guide and lead us in our daily life that we may grow in Christ. Brothers and sisters when you believe in the Lord Jesus that is not the end. That is the beginning.

You know often times people will think how good it will be if as soon as I am saved God will take me to himself. Then I will be delivered from all the temptations and the problems in this world. But brothers and sisters if that is the case heaven will be full of babies.

God wants grown up. Grown up in Christ Jesus. That's the reason why we are still here.

This is the opportunity for us to grow in Christ Jesus. After you are saved God is expecting you to obey the leading of the indwell Holy Spirit in you. And if you are cooperating and working with his inward spirit he will gradually sanctify you and enable you to be like him.

And that is Christian life. Brothers and sisters after you are saved do you notice something special? Do you notice that there is a voice within your spirit showing you as a Christian what you should do or not do. Go and not go.

Suppose before you believe in Lord Jesus you are a person who likes to talk. And whenever you talk you always boast it. You always say something more than real.

And you feel good about it. But after you are saved when you are starting to do the same thing what happens? Somehow you feel someone within you telling you it is a lie. It is not true.

Now you are a Christian you should not tell lies. But probably you will fight against it. But in the evening when you go to prayer you find your prayer was hindered.

You are not able to pray until you confess, have your sins forgiven and your relationship with God was restored. Brothers and sisters this is the way that the Lord will lead us on and on and on until we see him face to face. Every day there is a lesson to learn.

Every day has a day of growth in the Lord. That is the reason why the Lord has left us on earth after we are saved. He does not want babies he wants grown-ups he wants people like his beloved son full grown men and women whom he has foreknown he has called.

Whom he has called he has sanctified whom he has sanctified he will glorify so that brothers and sisters our days on earth after we have been saved are glorious days the Lord is preparing you for himself. He wants you to grow up as he. It begins with small things because he knows that we cannot stand if he begins with big things he usually will begin with small things something in our attitude something in our speech, something that we go, something that we do he will begin to deal with us purify us and enable us to grow in Christ until we are like him.

And that is the purpose of God so dear brothers and sisters, thank God for having saved us thank God for having left us behind thank God for giving us opportunity to grow in grace and in truth. Even though in this Christian life it is difficult sometimes it is a battle but by the grace of God we will follow him with us wherever he goes. And if we do brothers and sisters when we shall feel the call we can look up and go in peace just like our dear brother was there before so brothers and sisters, my last appeal is now you are saved follow the Lord in all things allow him to work out his fulsome measure in your life that when he shall return we will not only see him but we shall reign with him for eternity.

So may the Lord have mercy upon each and every one of us. Shall we pray? Dear Lord we want to thank thee for the home growing of our dear brother he is now resting before thee, waiting to be waking up and to receive his reward Lord we know that what thou wilt do with him thou wilt do with every one of us here so we commit ourselves to thee and pray Lord thou wilt take each and every one of us, work in our lives by thy spirit, lead us all in spite of all the difficulties we may have encounter, keep us faithful that we may follow thee all the way until we see thee face to face to the glory of God. We ask in thy name.

Amen.

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