

1996 Christian Youth Conference - Testimony

by Stephen Kaung

The Holy Spirit's move is always towards a deeper understanding and experience of God's truth, and the church should prioritize living out the faith in a personal and practical way.

Duration: 1:19:26

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Philippians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:24, Revelation 3:16

Topics: "Evangelism", "Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of spreading the Gospel to the ends of the earth, just as Jesus commanded. He compares the 33-year period of the Book of Acts to the lifespan of Jesus on earth, highlighting the Holy Spirit's four moves that led to the spread of the Gospel. The speaker also addresses the concern of the Gospel dwindling in subsequent generations and offers advice on remaining faithful to what the Lord has revealed. He mentions that the Gospel is a three-fold message of grace, salvation for sinners, and discipleship in the kingdom of God.

Transcript

If time allows, you know, but there are so many questions. We do want to reserve maybe five, ten minutes toward the end of this session, just to give young people some spiritual encouragement from God's Word. OK? So, we'll give our time to our brother.

First of all, I feel in my heart that actually this question and answer period should be given to our three brothers who were the main speakers. Because I think it is only natural that after you have heard from them that you may have some questions you want to ask of them. So, to me, I feel it's a little bit awkward that I should be answering questions and questions not directly related to the theme of this conference.

But, in obedience to my brothers, I feel I have to do what they want me to do. So, I just ask your forbearance. There are a number of questions given to me.

And I will try my best. And then probably I'll ask... Where are they? They're not trying to avoid. Come on, Dana.

And probably I'll ask my brothers to help me out. Now, here is the first question. Considering that many moves of the Spirit in church history have dwindled after the second and the third generations, how do we avoid falling into the same situation? How do we remain faithful to what the Lord has indeed revealed to

us? How do we avoid becoming lukewarm like the Neolithic Saints? I'll read it again.

Considering that many moves of the Spirit in church history have dwindled after the second and third generations, how do we avoid falling into the same situation? How do we remain faithful to what the Lord has indeed revealed to us? How do we avoid becoming lukewarm like the Neolithic Saints? I think this is a very, very good question. It mentions the moves of the Spirit. Now, we know that after the ascension of our Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Gospels, came to this world.

And the Spirit of God moves on this earth for one purpose. He is here to complete the work that our Lord Jesus has begun while on earth. Our Lord Jesus finished the work of redemption on earth.

And now the Holy Spirit came to fulfill, to realize what the Lord has done and make it real to His own people. So we find throughout church history that the Holy Spirit is moving all the time. He never ceases to move.

But at different times we see a fresh, a new start, as it were, of the move of the Spirit. And He is always moving towards one direction. He always moves to complete that which our Lord Jesus has begun.

To put it another way, the move of the Holy Spirit is to complete the work of God throughout the centuries. In a very real sense, God has only one work. Now we think of this work, that work, many works, but so far as God is concerned, He has only one work.

You remember, one day after our Lord Jesus multiplied the bread and the fishes and fed five thousand, many people tried to follow Him. They sought Him out. And then the Lord said, Now do not seek for the food that perishes, but seek for the food that does not perish.

And then immediately the crowd began to say, Well, what should we do that we do the works of God? And you notice, when they say, What should we do that we do the works of God? The works there is plural number. Many works. There are many works that we think we can do for God.

And yet it is strange. You'll find the answer of the Lord is, Believe on Him whom God has sent. This is the work of God.

So you'll find that the answer of the Lord is, There is only one work. And that work is, you just believe. You believe on the one whom God has sent.

To put it in another way, unless we believe and receive what the Lord has done for us, we cannot do any work of God. So the Holy Spirit, He is here on earth to work towards the completion of the work of God. And our brother mentioned in his message, What is God's work? Now God's work is to sum up all things in Christ Jesus.

God's work is to complete a body for the head, Christ Jesus. That is God's work. So we find that this is what the Holy Spirit is doing on earth today.

And every move, every fresh move of the Holy Spirit is always in that direction. We thank God for the move of the Holy Spirit. You know, if you read the book of Acts, you'll find that on the day of Pentecost, that is the first move of the Holy Spirit.

He came down, and the hundred and twenty believers that were assembled in that upper room for ten days, praying with one accord. And the Holy Spirit came that day. And in the one Spirit, these hundred

twenty believers were baptized into one body.

That is the beginning of the church history. Our Lord, when He was on earth, He prepared the material. He said, I will build my church upon this rock.

And the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. He was preparing. And then the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost.

And in one Spirit, the hundred and twenty were baptized into one body. They were no longer just one hundred twenty individual believers. They became a body of hundred twenty members.

And you know that is a tremendous difference. Thank God, in that same Spirit, we have all been baptized into one body. We are no longer just individual believers.

We are, in a sense. Our individuality never leaves us. We remain as an individual to eternity.

And yet, that individualism is gone. We are no longer independent of one another. We become members of one body, related, interdependent to one another.

And that is what we are today. And this is the first move of the Holy Spirit. And then if you read the book of Acts, you'll find He made a second move.

And the second move is in chapter 11. When you find that the Holy Spirit make a new move in Antioch. Now, in Jerusalem, those people who were baptized into one body, and on that same day, three thousand were added, they were all Jews.

Whether Hellenistic Jews or Hebrew Jews, but they were all Jews. And maybe some proselytes. But anyway, you'll find that the church in Jerusalem was composed mainly of the Jews.

And in a sense, it was not able to be freed completely from Judaism. You remember in the beginning, the world looked at those who followed the Lord Jesus as a sect of Judaism. They thought that in Judaism there were a number of sects.

The Pharisees, the Sadducees, and they thought that those believers of the Lord Jesus were another sect. Because they were all Jews. So here you'll find the Holy Spirit make a new move.

In Antioch. Mostly Gentiles. They came to the Lord.

They continued in the Lord. They were disciplined. They were taught in the Lord.

And then the world looked at them and said, who are they? They are. They are not Jews. They cannot be a sect of Judaism.

Then who are they? And they said, well, they are Christians. The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. Christ, man, and woman.

In other words, they were Christ-centered. They gathered around the name of Christ. They loved Christ.

They talked about Christ. They lived for Christ. And they worshipped Christ.

Christians. A new move of the Holy Spirit. And then if you read the book of Acts, you'll find he made a third move.

And the third move was he made Ephesus a center of his work. Paul remained in Ephesus for three years. And all Asia, no, not Asia Continent, but Asia Minor, a Roman province, all Asia heard the Gospel.

And many came to the Lord. And the Lord made a mighty move there. A church was raised up there, composed of both the Gentiles and the Jews.

And finally you'll find he made another move in the book of Acts. And it was in Rome. In a very strange way, God sent Paul to Rome as a prisoner.

But he was not only a prisoner of Rome, he called himself a prisoner of Christ Jesus. He was there for two years. In his rented apartment, even though he was a prisoner, he got certain freedom.

He was always tied, locked with another soldier, the imperial guard. And two years he was there, given liberty to receive anyone who wanted to hear the glad tidings. And the whole imperial guard heard the Gospel.

Why? Because one after another was locked with him together, chained with him. They could not help but hear the Gospel. So God, in a very strange way, you'll find that there was another move of the Holy Spirit in Rome.

And as a matter of fact, in those days, Rome was considered as the center as well as the end of the world. Every road leads to Rome. So you'll remember our Lord Jesus said, Go and preach the Gospel.

From Jerusalem to Judea, through Samaria to the end of the world. So briefly in about 33 years, that is the period of the book of Acts. You know, our Lord Jesus was on Earth 33 years, and then the book of Acts is about 33 years.

In that generation, well, we sometimes think of a generation as 30, and sometimes as 40. But anyway, you'll find that in that one generation, the Holy Spirit made four moves, and the Gospel spread to the end of the Earth. It was a glorious, wonderful beginning.

Well, if you read the epistles, you will find that towards the end of the life of Paul and Peter, we are now to the 60s, and you'll find that in the 60s, there seemed to be a declination in the churches. You read Paul's letter to Timothy, especially the second letter, and you'll find he mentioned that we are living in a very perilous day. And you will find people who are lovers of self, lovers of pleasure, lovers of money, and he was talking not to the world.

Now, it is no surprise if the people of the world were lovers of pleasure, because that's all they get. Or lovers of self, because they are self-centered. And lovers of wealth.

But when Paul mentioned these things, he was talking to believers. Now, even in these last days, you will find that even believers become lovers of self, lovers of money, lovers of pleasure, instead of lovers of God and lovers of good. A general declension coming into the church.

And the same thing you'll find in 2 Peter. He mentions that in these days, there were people who were even denied the Lord who bought them. In the 60s, at the end of the first generation, we may say, you begin to see there is something.

First and second generation. For instance, Paul, you remember Paul? In his last journey to Jerusalem, he was so anxious to reach Jerusalem that he called the elders of the church in Ephesus to meet him in Miletus, and then he told them that for three years he was with them and he preached to them publicly and in private and with tears. And he had not withheld anything that is possible to them during those three years.

He shared with them the whole counsel of God, but at the same time he told them, he said, you will not see my face anymore. In other words, those elders in the church in Ephesus never saw Paul anymore. After Paul was released from Roman prison, he visited Ephesus again, but you'll find in Ephesus the old generation of the elders were all gone.

And that's the reason why you'll find in 1 Timothy, he told Timothy to appoint elders and the qualifications of the elders, new elders are to be coming up. But anyway, you'll find that when you come to the 60s, it is, the first generation is passing off, and the second generation is coming in. And during that period, you do find there was some kind of declension there.

Now skip another generation, and you come to the 90s, the end of the first century. And this is when you read those writings of the Apostle John, because Apostle John among the twelve apostles, he was the last one living. He lived to about 100 years old.

And there you'll find in his writing, in Revelations chapter 2 and 3, the letter to the seven churches, you'll find there is real falling down. Even in Ephesus, they have lost their first love. And when you come to Laodicea, you'll find that it is a lukewarm church, neither cold nor hot.

And the Lord said, He will spue them out if they do not repent. So, here you'll find the church seems to be going down, when you come to the end of the first century. But thank God, if you read church history, you'll find because of the general declension, the Spirit of God arranges circumstances.

So in the second and third centuries, you'll find persecutions. Persecutions came to the church. From the human standpoint, persecution was not a very welcoming thing.

And yet, from the spiritual standpoint, you'll find when God allowed persecution to the church, usually persecution will revive the church. Not only in the second and the third century, even today. Wherever you find persecution, the church prospers.

And I think one reason why we find such lukewarmness in the church in this country, probably because we don't have persecution. Now, we are not trying to say that we welcome persecution, because when it comes, it's not easy. But anyway, you'll find that the Spirit of God is always moving, trying to recover, to restore what God is really after.

A people who are Christ-centered. A people who absorb Christ. A people who express Christ.

A people who are like Christ. Now that is God's purpose. That Christ may be glorified in the church throughout the generations.

So you'll find the Spirit of God is always making move all the time. So, first of all, I would like to encourage brothers and sisters that in spite of the fact, now this is a very keen observation, actually, to observe that a move of the Holy Spirit, usually in the first generation, and then in the second generation it seems to begin to fall and in the third generation it's almost gone and it becomes just a tradition, a dead thing. Now it's a

very keen observation.

It is, I would say, almost, sadly, almost true. But I have to say that this is not the will of God. The will of God is that we go from glory to glory, from strength to strength, from grace to grace.

Now that is God's purpose. God's will is that we can go on, on and on, until it is a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any of such sort, to be presented to Christ as His bride, His wife. The will of God is that we all be conformed to the image of God's Son, Jesus Christ.

That is God's will. It is never God's will that the first generation should be fresh and living and the second and the third generation becomes dead. Now that is not God's will.

So do not think because it happens in church history, therefore it's bound to be God's will. And then you expect it to happen every time. Now, that is not true.

We should stand with God against anything that is falling away from the will of God. It should be from glory to glory. So, I think that is something we need to remember.

But sadly, it is true. Almost true. Now there are exceptions.

For instance, the first generation of the children of Israel. They came out of Egypt, but never made it into Canaan. It was the second generation that made it into Canaan.

So the second generation has hope. So, it is not always the same way, but when you study church history, sadly, it seems to be like that. So, what we want to do is to find out why.

Why is it when the Spirit of God makes a new move, you have a generation living, vibrant, living testimony. And yet, the second generation comes in, the third generation comes in, and you find gradually something is falling away. Until finally, it becomes just a shell.

Now, why? Why is it? I think to know the reason why is more important than to accept the observation of what happened in church history. When the Holy Spirit makes a new move, some people begin to receive a new light. Now, as a matter of fact, you'll find that towards the end of the first century, the revelation of God is completed.

So we have the completed revelation of God in this book. But sadly, you'll find when God reveals His mind to His people, in the beginning it is living faith. But gradually, as it handed down from generation to generation, it becomes a tradition.

For instance, we cannot go through 2,000 years of church history. I'll keep you here for a long time. You are not able to go home.

So, we are not going to do that. Now, suppose we say, in the beginning of the 16th century, that is what we call the darkest of the Dark Age. The Dark Age comes into this world.

That is, all the truth revealed in the Bible were lost to the so-called Church. The Church is full of superstition and tradition and ritual and truth, living faith, were gone. Now, people were not even allowed to read the Bible and as a matter of fact, at that time, people did not have the Bible.

Only in a monastery, or only in some other places, they had the Bible, and the Bible was changed in a monastery. So, people were living in superstition. And here you'll find God make a move.

The Spirit make a new move through the Reformers. And Martin Luther is the representative of the Reformers. He was a monk.

He was a professor. And then when he was convicted, you know, he once, when he was traveling, a lightning came and he was almost struck to death. And also a friend of his suddenly died.

And these things began to stir him. And so one day, he said goodbye to the world, and he knocked the door of a Augustine monastery and asked to be accepted to be a monk in order to seek for salvation. And he knew nothing better than others.

And all they want to do is try to afflict themselves and beat themselves and put their bodies into afflictions, trying to save their soul. But he couldn't do that until the Lord gave him a light. The just shall live by faith.

Now, to us today, it is very simple. We are saved by faith in the work of our Lord Jesus. Not by our own merits or our own works.

But at that time, everybody was thinking that you could only be saved by merits. If you have enough merits, after you die, you go to heaven. Now, if you don't have enough merits, you go to purgatory.

And some of the saints, they have more merits to go to heaven, so if you pray to these saints, they can share some merits to you and get you out of purgatory quicker. And you can even buy indulgences. You pay a certain amount of money and then certain sins will be forgiven.

And you know the story during the Reformation time. A robber, he decided to rob the messenger of the Pope because he collected lots of money. And he decided to rob him.

So he first bought an indulgence, and then he robbed. And when he was caught, he showed his indulgence, so he was free. So you find that's the situation of Christianity during the beginning of the 16th century.

And no wonder, when light came to Martin Luther, it was such a light. Now, it was not new. It is in the Bible, but it's newly discovered.

It is a new move of the Holy Spirit. And what a price he paid. Those Reformers, they pay a tremendous price for the revelation that God has given to them.

So in other words, you find to them, it is life. It is life. They are willing to lay down their lives for the revelation given to them.

Now, that's the first generation. They receive revelation from above. Not something extra to the Bible, but what is revealed in the Bible is revealed to their heart in a living way.

And having seen this revelation, they are willing to pay any price to see that this revelation, this truth, will be worked out in their lives. But then, you find the first generation, when they came into such light, they all paid a price. So it was very real to them.

It's their life. But then the second generation came. Or maybe it was the end of the first generation.

Now, having such light, they begin to think, how can we preserve this light? And in order to preserve this light, they try to organize. You know, just like if you have a new wine, and how are you going to preserve the wine? Well, you need a wine scheme to preserve the wine. So here you find, they begin to try to organize something around that light, around that revelation.

And then you find second generation coming into that organization. Some may still receive revelation. Others, they just enter into the good of what has been revealed.

They do not have a personal experience. They only have the teaching. They receive the teaching.

They enter into the organization. And then, when you come to the third generation, you find the wine is gone. And all that is left is the steam.

Or we may say, it's a tradition. So that's the reason why you find even though God's purpose is from glory to glory, and yet because of the weakness of man. It is not the will of God.

It is the weakness of man. Whenever something comes to the hands of man, man always spoils it. So, briefly, we find out the reason why.

The reason is, with the first generation, there is revelation and a cost paid. With the second generation, they enter into the teaching and the organization without the need of paying a cost. So even though they keep the teaching, and yet, it is in their mind, it is not in their life.

And when you come to the third generation, then you'll find sometimes even the teaching is getting diluted, adulterated, and changed. So it just became an empty tradition. And thank God, when such things happen, you find in church history, God makes another move.

Another recovery. So, from 16th century to our present time, you'll find God is always moving on. Always moving on.

And moving on towards His purpose. Now, how can we avoid falling into the same situation? Suppose God has given us some revelation of His will. And we are obedient to it.

Now, by the way, having a revelation from the Lord, on the one hand, it is a glorious thing. On the other hand, it is very costly. Now, you want God to reveal Himself to you? Do you really want Him to reveal Himself to you? Do you really want to know His will? His purpose? If you do, be ready to pay a cost.

Truth is very costly. A teaching, a doctrine, may not be costly, but truth is costly. And yet it is truth that sets us free.

So, how can we avoid falling into, say, the second generation, the third generation, and falling away from what God has revealed to us? Number one, we should never be contented just with the teaching we have. However precious is that teaching, we should not be contented with just knowing what it is. We need to seek the Lord for a first-hand experience.

In other words, when you hear a teaching, do nothing because you understand it. Therefore, it is yours. When you hear a teaching, go to the Lord.

Of course, you go to the Bible to see if the teaching is of God. And then you go to the Lord and ask the Lord to make that teaching a living experience to you. That it is not just something you have heard, or

even something you see.

But it becomes something that is living and real in your life. Now, if you have this kind of attitude, you will avoid falling into the second or the third generation. Or put it another way, you are in the first generation.

First-hand experience. So that is something that is needed. Now, how can we avoid looking like the church in Laodicea? Now, first of all, when you read Revelation 2 and 3, and if you read it with a prophetic view, we will say that the church in Laodicea, prophetically speaking, it speaks of the last stage of church history, before the coming of the Lord.

So far as Christianity is concerned, it is like Laodicea. You will find that it is lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, and so forth. But if you study church history prophetically, you will find that Laodicea actually is a church that is falling out of the church in Philadelphia.

The church in Philadelphia is a church of brotherly love. A church that knows the truth, denies not the name of the Lord. A church that is approved by the Lord Himself.

A church that is rich in truth, in life. But then you'll find when it falls, it becomes Laodicea. That's the reason why you'll find the church in Laodicea says, I'm rich.

I have everything. Because they have a rich heritage. They receive a rich heritage from the first generation.

And they boast of their riches. They do not know that they are poor, blind, naked. They don't know that.

In other words, they have lots of good teachings. Lots of good traditions. And they think that because they have these things, so they have it.

But the Lord says, you don't have it. You're poor. You're blind.

You're naked. You need to buy. You need to pay a cost.

So remember, if you don't pay a cost, what you have is not really yours. You need to pay a cost. Now, are you ready to pay that cost? The Lord Jesus said, unless you deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple.

There's a cost there. So with the Laodiceans, you'll find the reason why they become lukewarm. It is because they are proud of their heritage without themselves paying a cost to have it firsthand.

That's the problem. So how can we avoid this? First of all, we need to have a holy discontentment. Brothers and sisters, never be contented with what God has already given to you.

Now, on the one hand, we need to be contented. Priority with contentment is great gain. That is true.

But on the other hand, there needs to be a holy discontentment. Never be satisfied, contented with what you have already had or heard, but always pressing on, seeking for something more. Why? Because our Lord Jesus is inexhaustible.

He is infinite. What we have is just a tiny little bit. And do you know that it takes eternity for us to know Christ? And that is why eternity is thrilling.

Some people say, well, what do you do in eternity? And as our brother Lance usually tries to describe it in very graphic terms, he says, you are there playing the golden harp and just singing and that's it. No. Eternity is thrilling because we will be discovering Christ in such a way much more effective and double, triple, even more, the way to know Christ.

And it takes eternity to know Him. No end. There is no end to it.

Now, wonderful, isn't it? So, first of all, I think we need to have a kind of holy discontentment. Whenever you are contented, ah, you settle down and say, now, that's it. And as our brother mentioned, then if God really is merciful to you, He will disturb your nest.

You know, and let you try to fly again. So, that's the first thing. And the second thing is to avoid such situation is that the Lord will keep us always humble before Him.

Pride always brings in fall. So, if we are kept in humility before the Lord. I believe God is able to keep us.

You know, we cannot keep ourselves. But God is able to keep us from falling. And how? To whom? To those who are humble.

Whenever we get proud, spiritually proud. Proud of our spiritual conditions. That's the beginning of fall.

So, if the Lord will keep us really humble before Him, I believe He is able to keep us always in the first generation and never falls into the second or the third generation. I think this is something I would like to share and I will ask my brothers to add something more to it. I ask my brothers to sit here because I need their support.

And if they refuse to support me, I will fall. Well, I would just like to say in a sort of larger overview of these things, we do thank the Lord that the Holy Spirit is so faithful. The Holy Spirit is like a mother in regards to the church.

And our God just does not give up on His people. When you look at the history of the church, despite the declensions, you find very mercifully out of the tragedy of the declension comes a new reviving of a generation to stand for the testimony again. And so, even when the outward shell deteriorates and declines, still by the Holy Spirit, out of that shell comes a new generation who captures again and yet adds something to what has gone before.

And so, there's always a regeneration because the Holy Spirit is faithful. He just will not allow a generation to go by with nothing. And so, if you're looking at an individual company of believers, let's just say, well, we don't know what the future of that company will be because pride can enter in.

Often, very practically, one of the great problems with a company going on in a living way is the leadership. And the leadership, their vision dims or they begin to grasp things. And so, there's this decline.

But, you know, the Lord is not just only concerned that that company of believers remain together in that form, in that building, forever and ever and ever. And sometimes, although His Spirit has to leave this particular building, He doesn't leave His people. And out of the ruins of sometimes shameful declension, still, there are some people who came from that, who received something from that.

And they in a brand new way, and yet in a continuity, if you understand what I'm saying, stand up for the Lord in the new generation. So, I just share one little testimony. And again, it's just indicative of what

happens many places.

Recently, in my recent past, I've been to India a few times and been among brothers and sisters who surely stood with the Lord in a very costly way upon the ground of the Lord Jesus. And in simple fellowship, baking bread at great cost and great persecution, not only from the world, but from the denominations around. But there has been quite a bit of declension as the years have worn on.

A very difficult situation there. And it's been great declension. So that now the older generation is just about passed away where the whole thing began.

The second generation is almost non-existent. When you visit the assembly, those people in their 40s and 50s, you almost don't see them around. And so, this move of God seems to be in decline.

But, there is a third generation. They're a little older than you are. In their 20s, up to 30 years old.

And this generation really is grasping something of the Lord in a new way. They want the Lord. They're willing to sacrifice to the Lord.

They're willing to pay a cost because this generation is the first generation in the church, in this way, who are educated. They've been to college. They have responsible jobs.

There's doctors and nurses and engineers and all that. But they're standing for the Lord where they are. And they're paying a price again.

And you sense the ferment. And you realize the Holy Spirit just will not let this matter fall into the ground and die. It does fall into the ground, but out of it comes a new generation.

So, may that always be our testimony. Even when we fail, the Holy Spirit is up to something. And He will bring something up out of the ashes that will be more purified.

And it will continue on in the testimony. So, let's just be thankful the Lord keeps raising up reality. Even if for some reason or another, there's a decline.

And just remember this. The Lord cares nothing for a building or a fellowship name. I go to a place, we call ourselves, just so we have a name, Fellowship of Christians in Huntington.

This name means nothing. Nor the building that we meet in. But the saints in the town of Huntington.

The Lord loves them. And He wants a testimony there. So, the building, the institution, the organization is quite secondary.

What the Lord wants is people in this first generation, humility, light, and walk. I think Christian has something to say. He's looking at his Bible.

I was reminded of the book of Esther. You know the story of the book of Esther? How King Ahasuerus promotes Haman, which typifies which actually is a picture of our flesh. And then, if you give your ring to our flesh, and when our flesh is on the throne, then you know what happens.

Sooner or later it will wipe out all the people of Israel. Such that the testimony, the real testimony of God won't last. So, we all know the story of the teaching, or at least the lesson we can learn from the book of Esther.

Because in this book, you know the right man is out, and the wrong man is within. And Haman was on the throne, and Mordecai, who represents the Holy Spirit, is at a corner. It's outside.

So, only when one day, Haman was on the cross, in the gallant, and when Mordecai is on the throne, then everything just turned according to the will of God. So, the lesson from this book is very important, because if you know anything about this book, this book is among one of our recovery books. And it's very interesting.

If you study chronology well, you will discover actually this book was, the story of this book happened between the first generation of returning to Jerusalem from Babylon, and the second generation, just between that period. So, if Haman had his own way, then you know, when he really wiped out all the people of Israel, that will include Ezra and Nehemiah. They really represent the second generation of the Lord's recovery.

Because not only the rebels came back, they also came back. So, I think this is a very important lesson for us to learn. That is, if we want the testament of God to be secure, or if somehow the Lord can secure the second generation of the Lord's testimony, like Ezra, like Nehemiah, then you know that Haman ought to be a gallant, and you should invite Mordecai to the throne, and we should give our ring to the Holy Spirit.

So, I think this is a very important lesson from the Old Testament. That's why Esther is one of five recovery books in the Old Testament. So, not only Ezra came back, not only the rebels came back, Ezra and Nehemiah, they all came back to Jerusalem.

Then they came back to the center of the will of God. So, I think this is very encouraging. At least we can learn from one book among 66 books in the Bible that how the second generation of the Lord's testimony can be secured.

I do want to thank my brothers for help. There are some other questions related, but I think probably we have more or less covered somewhat, and because of time, I think probably we'll go to another topic for the time being. What's your take on the predestination-free will argument? Well, that's an argument that has been going on for 20 centuries, and I do not think we are able to solve that problem this morning here.

I'm no theologian, and well, I think what the Lord said, God reveals his will to the babes, and keep it from the prudent. So, probably, if we are babes, we may be able to solve that problem. If we take the attitude of being babes in Christ Jesus, and just look to him, and in a simple way, he may be able to solve that argument.

But anyway, you know, in the church, these two doctrines, the doctrines of predestination, and the doctrine of free will, seem to stand in opposite camps. And, in Christianity, you'll find that people group themselves around one or the other camp, and fighting each other on this matter. But, we have to acknowledge that both predestination and free will are taught in the Bible.

Just use an illustration. In Romans, chapter 9, you'll find predestination, election, predestination, taught there. And then, in Romans chapter 10, you'll find free will is taught there.

Now, Paul is not that absent-minded, that after he just wrote about predestination and election, and he forgot all together and come into writing on free will. And even if Paul is absent-minded, the Holy Spirit is never absent-minded. And we believe that it is the Holy Spirit that gives us these words.

So, if you read Romans chapter 9, it is all predestination. I think it is in such strong terms, you know, it said, verse 11, that is about Jacob and Esau before they were born. The children indeed, being not yet born, or haven't done anything good or worthless, that the purpose of God, according to election, might abide, not of works, but of Him that calls.

It was said to her, the greater shall serve the less, according as it is written, I have loved Jacob, and I have hated Esau. And then it follows, it says, now what shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Far be the thought, for He says to Moses, I will show mercy to whom? I will show mercy, I will feel compassion for whom? I will feel compassion. Verse 16, so then it is not of Him that wills, nor of Him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.

In other words, predestination is God's prerogative, God's right. Being God, He has the right to do anything that He likes. And, nobody can question Him.

Now, if you can question God, then you become God. So, in Romans chapter 9 it says, now, if you go on to read it, you will find in verse 19, Thou shalt say to me then, why does he find fault, yet for a fault? For who resists his purpose? Yea, but Thou, O man, who art Thou, that answer again to God. Shall the thing form, say to him that has formed it? Why has Thou made me thus? Or has not the authority over the clay, out of the same lump, to make one vessel an honour, and another to dishonour? In other words, that's God's right.

Being God, He can do anything He wants to. If He wants to show mercy, He can show mercy. If He wants to show compassion, He can show compassion.

It is up to Him. And, we are not supposed to question Him. Now, that is election.

Divine election. Even before the foundation of the world, we were chosen by God in Christ Jesus. That's Ephesians chapter 1. And you'll find even before Esau and Jacob were born, God had already said, He loved Jacob and hated Esau.

So, it is not a matter of what you do, it is a matter of the one who calls. That's divine election. Now, predestination is connected with divine election.

And in Romans chapter 8, we find that we are predestinated. Chapter 8, verse 29. Because whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated to be conformed to the inmate of his son, so that he should be firstborn among many brothers, many brethren.

Now, the problem today is, we misunderstand predestination. When we talk about predestination, people immediately think, well, you are predestined to be saved. And he is predestined to be lost.

In other words, we connect predestination with initial salvation. Now, if God has predestined me to be lost, then no matter how the gospel is preached to me, I will be lost. So, what's the sense of preaching the gospel to such a person? You don't need to preach the gospel anymore.

Now, if I'm predestined to be saved, then even if I haven't heard the gospel, I will be saved anyway. So, what's the sense of preaching the gospel? Now, when you come into that ultra-predestination, now that will, you will come to that kind of conclusion. But actually, you find the Bible never teaches such predestination.

Number one, predestination is God's prerogative, we already said. It is not your right. It is God's right.

Therefore, do not intrude into God's authority. Let Him do what He wants to do. And learn to submit yourself to His authority.

Number two, predestination in the Bible is not something so low, so mean. Predestination is God's right. And when God predestines, He has glory in view.

Now, to us, not to go to hell, but go to heaven, that is all. That is all we want. But to God, that is nothing.

He not only wants to save us from hell, and get us to heaven, but He wants us to get into glory. Our Lord Jesus is to lead many sons into glory. So, you can understand, if a doctrine of predestination is taught in the Bible, it has to have a very noble, high, and glorious purpose in it.

It cannot just be dealing with not going to hell or going to heaven. So, what is predestination? Predestination is God has predestined that those whom He has called, He will justify. And whom He has justified, He will glorify.

Now, that's predestination. Or to put it another way, if you are called, then God will justify you. Now, if God has justified you, will He just stop at justification? No.

He will continue to work in your life until you are glorified. Now, whom He has foreknown, He has predestined. God's predestination is according to His foreknowledge.

See, God knows everything at the same time. With Him there is no past, no future. It's always now.

He is omniscient. He knows everything now. Now, our knowledge is so limited.

Our knowledge is limited to now. We do not know the future. We may learn something of the past, of course, by reading or by hearing, but our knowledge is limited.

But God's knowledge is unlimited and at the same time He knows it all from the beginning to the end. That's God's knowledge. And according to His foreknowledge He predestined.

So predestination of God is not an arbitrary thing. God has His reason for predestination. And the reason is His foreknowledge.

He knows beforehand what will happen. If, say, the gospel is preached to you, what will happen? Whether you will continually resist it or whether you will believe it. He knows beforehand.

And it is on the basis of such knowledge He predestinated. Now let me use an illustration. Suppose you are a very alert person and one day you are sitting by your window and you saw a man walking back and forth before your house.

And his eyes are peeping here and there and looking very suspicious. Now being very alert, now you feel, well, probably this is a robber, a thief. Probably he will try to get into my house.

So you become very watchful. And surely enough at night, that man came. Now do you make him a robber or a thief? Because you foreknow that he may be a thief.

You don't. Not because of your foreknowledge. You make him a thief.

Now if that is the case then you are responsible for him being a thief. But you are not responsible. He is responsible.

He is a thief. But because of your foreknowledge, you predestine him. Now, this is the way that God predestined us.

He does not predestine you that you are to be lost or you are to be saved. By his foreknowledge, he predestined that when the gospel is preached to you, equally, universally, freely, some will receive and some will reject. And based on that foreknowledge, he predestined.

Now that's number one. Number two. Whom he predestined, he called.

Whom he called, he justified. Whom he justified, he glorified. Now to me, I feel predestination is one of the greatest doctrines, truth, in the word of God.

It strengthens me. It comforts me. Why? Because once God's hand is upon you, remember, no matter how you are, he will see to it that one day you will be conformed to the image of his beloved son.

Now that's God's purpose for us. Now, we need to thank God for that, do we? Thank God you are called. Thank God you are justified.

Now, will God also glorify you? When you look at yourself, you may find, well, I have been justified maybe for five years, ten years, twenty years, fifty years, or more. Well, there doesn't seem to be much glory there. Now, what is glory? Christ.

Formed, manifested. That's glory. Whatever it is of ourselves is shameful.

You do not see much glory there. But, remember, God does not give you up. He is still working by his Spirit in your life, and one day you will be like Christ.

God can never fail. You may fail, but he will never fail. Now, isn't that the greatest assurance we have? Thank God his eyes is upon you, his hand is upon you, his heart is upon you.

He will never give you up. He will complete you in Christ Jesus. One day we will all be completed in Christ Jesus.

That is predestination. Now, do you thank God for predestination? That's a wonderful, wonderful truth of predestination. Now, what is free will? Free will is you are free to choose.

That's free will. And in Romans chapter 10, you'll find Paul mentions free will. If you read, say, chapter 10, verse 8. But what says it? The word is near you in your mouth and in your heart, that is the word of faith which we preach, that if you thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord and shalt believe in thy heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

For with the heart is belief to righteousness and with the mouth confession made to salvation. He said the word of salvation is near you. It is in your mouth and it is in your heart.

Now, if you believe, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and if you believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, then you are saved. It is as if you exercise your free will, then it is yours. Now, that's free will.

Free to choose. Whether you will choose Christ or you will reject him. It's up to you.

Now, free will is man's responsibility. So here you find two areas. Predestination belongs to God.

It does not belong to you. You don't have the full knowledge. Therefore, you cannot predestine.

You cannot predestine that so and so, he is predestined to be saved. Or so and so is predestined to be lost. You cannot do that because you don't have the full knowledge.

It belongs to God. Now, don't try to play God. You know, that's the reason why we have to preach the gospel to everybody.

Because you do not know whether he is predestined to be saved or to be lost, or you know, he is to be chosen or called and justified and glorified. You don't know that. So, let's stay within our boundary as human beings.

God has given us a free will. And we are to exercise our free will to choose the right thing. To choose Christ.

So, if you believe in your heart that God has raised Jesus from the dead, why do we have to believe that God has raised Jesus from the dead? Because if he is not raised from the dead, how do we know his substitutionary work on the cross is accepted by God? We know when he died for us on the cross, his redemptive work is accepted, because God raised him from the dead, to prove that the work is done and accepted by God. So, we have to believe that God has raised Jesus from the dead in our heart. And then with our mouth we confess him as our Lord.

You are saved. Free will. So, I hope that we all exercise our free will in the right way.

Now, these two things, from the human standpoint, are in opposites. If there is predestination, there is no free will. If there is free will, there is no predestination.

But if we can see that they belong to two different areas, then it solves our problem. Let God have predestination. And we believe it.

And let us have free will. And we exercise it. And strangely you find that is the way that God works.

He always works with two opposites. Now, how does he work it out? We don't know. But that is the way he always works.

Now, to use an illustration. Just an illustration. When we look at the sky and see all these planets, all these stars, moving in such speed.

And they all keep in their orbits. Why? And we are told that because they are maintained by two opposite laws. Two opposite forces.

Central spherule and central pendulum, is it? And these two forces, they are opposite forces. And yet they hold all the stars in their orbit. That is the way God works.

And I think the best illustration for us, I mean for us babes in Christ, concerning predestination and free will is used by D.L. Moody. You know, Moody is not an educated person. He was a shoemaker.

A shoe seller. But very successful shoe seller. And then the Lord called him out.

And become one of the greatest evangelists in the world. And he tried to explain these two things. He said, when you come to the door of salvation, you find it is written upon the door, whosoever will, whosoever will, come and drink freely of the water of life.

Whosoever will. So when he said, when you come to the door, and he said, whosoever will, then you say, well, it includes me. Now if it says, so and so will, then it may be somebody else.

Or maybe there are some people who have the same name, and you do not know whether it refers to you, or to the other person of the same name. But then God said, whosoever will, so that includes me. I will.

I exercise my free will. I will. So I enter the door.

After you enter the door, you look back, and you find on the back of the door it says, Blessed are you who are chosen. Now you do not know whether you are chosen or not, until you exercise your will and enter into the door. And after you enter into the door, you look back and say, thank God, you don't know that you were chosen even before the foundation of the world.

Now isn't that comforting? Isn't that assuring? Does it give you great strength? Knowing that you are even chosen even before the foundation of the world. That you may be holy and blameless before God in love. Now that is the grace of God.

So, probably the only way to solve the argument is, we don't argue, but we be based and accept whatever the scripture has said. Now I have to look on my brothers to help me out. I was supporting Steve and I was praying for him.

And I don't know what this is. This whole thing of predestination versus free will. They call it Calvinism versus Arminianism, because Calvin was a reformer and he was one of those great reformers that received revelation that the just shall live by faith.

The free gift of eternal life by grace. So they call it Calvinism, which is predestination. And Arminianism, free will, you have to make a choice.

I have read a number of things on this. And I have read some of Calvin. You know, the thing that blows my mind is that this is a truth that I believe the Lord would have us consider and search the scriptures ourselves, so that we are clear of our salvation.

And that God would show us this balance. That this thing is a covenant. It's a relationship.

It's two parties. God's part and our part. And we need clarity.

But just like any of these truths, we can turn them into a diversion. And in church history, this thing has really become a diversion to where people fight over it. I mean, if you read some of these debates, I mean, even some of the early Plymouth Brethren got caught in the middle of these frenzies, including John Nelson Darby, who was a Calvinist of the first degree.

anyway, I think Stephen has answered this question thoroughly. You know, one thought that comes to my mind as I'm standing here, and I pray it helps, is the gospel of Jesus Christ is really a three-fold gospel. First of all, it's the gospel of grace.

And that's the good news for sinners. That God saves sinners. And that's the gospel of grace.

It's the gospel of Jesus Christ. But it's also the gospel of the kingdom. And that's the gospel for disciples.

And I think this is where there's been a lot of confusion. I had friends in Christian Missionary Alliance that, dear, dear brothers and sisters, that would go forward every Sunday and get saved all over again. Because they said, well, what do you do with the scriptures in Hebrews? What do you do with this thing about losing your reward and judgment, standing before the judgment seat of Christ? And that unfaithful bondman that Dana talked about last night.

You know, he lost their salvation. But the gospel of Jesus Christ is, first of all, the gospel of grace. He came to save us from sin and make us saints.

And we are made saints. But secondly, it's to make us disciples. And that's the whole purpose why we're here this weekend, why we're learners.

Because we want to learn the kingdom, so we're ready for the kingdom. And that's discipline. That's growing up.

That's maturity. And that's the gospel of the kingdom. It's the same gospel of Jesus Christ, but the Lord preached the kingdom.

He wants disciples. And that's judgment and reward. It's not that you lose the gift of eternal life.

But once you see this, that the gospel of Jesus Christ is also the gospel of the kingdom, it makes so much click in the New Testament, from the gospels right through to Revelation, that this is not losing your salvation. That unfaithful servant who's cast out, or that person who comes to the banquet who's not dressed right. It's a case of not having learned the lessons of discipleship in this life.

And I think it would help if we were clear on that. We saw that distinction. It's the same gospel.

And not only that, it's also the gospel of judgment in Revelation 14. It's good news. It's good news for sinners.

It's good news for disciples, that the Lord wants to reward you. That's why he's training you. He wants you to be rewarded.

He wants to say, well done, good and faithful servant. But the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is also the gospel of judgment. He has to judge the earth.

He has to judge sin. And that's good news, because the foundation of his throne is righteousness and judgment. And it's his throne before his throne can be established on the earth.

There first must be judgment, and then righteousness. And that's good news. So, maybe it would help to just understand that there's a distinction in the gospel of these three aspects, so that you don't have to deal with this thing of always going to this extreme of free will, of, oh no, I lost my salvation.

I've got to get it back. But to really be secure in that and go on, press on and be a disciple. Since Brother Colin has borrowed something from physics as illustration, so I tried to add one more, probably will help you.

You know, light is a mystery. According to John Newton, no, not John Newton, Isaac Newton, this light consists of particles. So for a long period of time, people believed that light is just particles.

Then there's another Christian who is a very smart scientist called Maxwell. He believed that light is a wave. So this has been proved by experiments.

Light is indeed a wave. So there was an argument among scientists. Now, what is light? Some people, they admire Newton, they believe that these are just particles.

And some people, they respect the experiment, they believe that these are just waves. So for some time in Europe, you know, some teacher, high school teacher, they were torn between the two, so they don't know what to do. So they finally decided Monday, Wednesday, Friday, they teach that light are particles.

But then Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, they teach that light are the waves. So until today, in the 20th century, now what is right? Which one is correct? Now both of them are correct. So if you decide to accept both of them, now you stand on the side of truth.

So I think this is a very good illustration, you see. In the Bible, you see in chapter 9 of Romans, you have a doctrine of pre-destination, or election, and then in chapter 10, you have free will. Now because this is all from the word of God.

So what? We have no choice. Even you can explain why. And fifth, these two, you cannot reconcile them.

Now you ask any modern physicist, they don't know how to reconcile whether light is a wave or a particle. But they believe that both are true. If you stick to one of them, you are wrong.

So I think this probably will be helpful, because I'm supposed to support my brother from my own profession. So I try to provide another illustration. It may be helpful to you.

I just want to share this because I think we only have very little time left. And I think we should ask Brother Kong to give us a word of exultation in courage to the young people, new generation, how we can go on, how you can go on. I think it would be very good if you would just give us a word.

There are too many questions. Now the other thing I want to ask you, do you think we should invite Brother Kong to come back next year as our guest? Yes. Thank you.

Just give the young people a word of exultation. I still have something for my brother yet, so he cannot escape yet. I reserved this for him.

There is another question. Let's go over very quickly and ask my brother to answer it. How can you be sure that you have the calling to a certain field of work, ministry in particular? And this is my brother's turn.

Pray for me. Just to help young people, just to reinforce what our brothers share regarding predestination and free will. The Pope came to me that God is not answerable to us, because he is God.

We as preachers, we are not answerable to him. So we have responsibility. Now regarding this call, I believe in this matter of serving the Lord, and this call sometimes comes in a progressive way.

Initially, we are not clear as to what area our ministry will be, or what would it be like. But down deep in our heart we know that we are all called unto something. Now that's the beginning.

Now we are all called. But as we respond to that initial call, then the Holy Spirit will do the rest. He will do the equipping, he will be a teacher, he will do the disciplining, and he will also provide opportunity to exercise that gift that he has called you to exercise.

It's all in the hands of the Holy Spirit. So brothers and sisters, don't dwell so much on gifts, but dwell very much in your life with the Lord, because he will direct you the way you all deserve him. That is the safest way.

Don't think about what you can do for him. Let him do first something in your life, because ministry is not what we do. True ministry is the person, the outflow of the life of Lord Jesus through that vessel that matters.

So I just feel for young people, we all have the sense of call. Thank God for that. But let's try to learn obedience in small things as we learn to obey, sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

As we mature, the Lord will show exactly what he will have us to do. So don't anticipate too soon what you should do for the Lord. That is in the hands of the Holy Spirit, because once we surrender to the Lord, once he is Lord, he is in charge.

And that's the best way. What I call, we have to obey the Lord. My brother asked me to say a few words to you brothers and sisters.

First of all, I want to thank the Lord for being with you all. I thank the Lord to see such a group of young brothers and sisters who really have a heart for the Lord. I think what I would like to leave with you, I will leave with you two passages in the Scripture that mean a lot to me.

As I look back through my life, these are the two passages that comforts me, strengthens me, encourages me. So I just want to leave them with you. One is 1 Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 5 verse 24. 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 24. He is faithful who calls you.

He will also perform it. Now thank God He has called you all. And He will also perform it.

In other words, what He calls you to is the very thing that He will perform it for you and in you. You are called as we have been sharing this time to be born men of righteousness. To be born men of Jesus Christ.

We are called to be that. And He will perform it. Now sometimes I think whether we are able to fulfill our calling.

Or sometimes we may fail in our calling. But whatever it may be, one thing is sure. God is faithful.

We may be unfaithful but He is faithful. And He will perform it. So don't trust too much on yourself as if you are able to be born men of righteousness.

Now from now on you will be right. Trust Him. He is the one who is able to keep you from falling, to present you faultless with exaltation in glory before Him.

He is able to save you to the utmost. So just remember this verse. It has been a real comfort to me.

Strengthening to me. And there is another verse, a passage I would like to leave with you. And that is Philippians chapter 3. Verse 12.

Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected but I pursued. If also I may get possession of it seeing that also I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus. In whatever stage of our Christian life may be.

Some of you may have gone a little bit further than the others. Some may just begin. But this kind of mind, of attitude must always be with us.

As Paul says, not that I have already obtained or am already perfected. No. But not because of that we gave up.

He said, I pursue. So dear brothers and sisters, I hope you will pursue. Never stop pursuing.

Pursuing Christ. That you may possess that which you are being possessed. Now, Christ has possessed you.

He has a purpose for you. And it should be our desire that we may possess whatever He has possessed us for. In other words, that we may gain Him fully.

So, dear brothers and sisters, I just want to encourage you all. You have been called. And He will perfect you.

He is faithful. But on your part, you need to pursue. You need to pursue after that goal.

You want to have everything that Christ has for you. And I believe if you pursue in this way, when He shall return, and you see Him, you will not be put to shame. So may the Lord bless every one of you.

This is about the end of our conference. And we just want to thank the Lord for bringing you, young brothers and sisters, to Cambridge for these few days of waiting before the Lord, seeking the Lord. And we hope, we trust the Lord will richly bless each one of you.

I hope when you go back, you have a fuller measure of Christ than when you came. That's our desire. This conference exists for one purpose.

It's for the increase of Christ in His people. This conference exists for one purpose. It's to bring people to God.

To know God. To bring God to His people for God to gain them for Himself. So we're very thankful this year to have Dana with us, Fr.

Christian, Fr. Michael. Particularly we are thankful for Fr.

Kong. And let's pray the Lord will continue to give our brother good health. If the Lord is willing, let's pray the Lord will give him a burden for this new generation.

We believe he has much that we can all learn from. So we're very thankful. The other thing we want to share is as far as next year's conference, we are not sure at the moment.

But we want you to go back and pray much about it. If you have a sensing from the Lord that we should go ahead and have another one. And indeed the Lord is using this conference for Himself, for His purpose.

Please get in touch with someone. Young brother and sister in responsibility, get in touch with them. Write a note to them or call them.

And we can be before the Lord as to when and where to plan for another conference. So I think we have some last minute announcements. Don't we, Steve?

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