

Acts #8: The Church, Paul, the Local Aspect

by Stephen Kaung

The sermon explores the significance of Stephen's death and Paul's conversion, highlighting the growth and conflict of the church in its early years.

Duration: 1:04:26

Scripture: Acts 7:58 - 8:2, Acts 9:1, Acts 9:3-6, Acts 9:10-12

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of learning practical lessons before trying to fulfill a vision from God. He uses the example of Saul, who became the apostle Paul, to illustrate this point. Saul was blinded by a great light and heard the voice of Jesus, but he needed to learn the practical lessons of relatedness, submission, and fellowship within the body of Christ. God taught Saul these lessons by sending Ananias to restore his sight and guide him in his journey. The speaker encourages listeners to seek God's guidance and learn from Him before stepping out to fulfill their visions.

Transcript

Let's read from Acts chapter 7. Acts chapter 7, verse 68. And having cast him out of the city, that is, cast Stephen out of the city, they thrown him, and the witness laid aside their claim of the feet of a young man called Saul. And they found Stephen praying and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

And kneeling down, he cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their son. And having said this, he fell asleep. Chapter 8. And Saul was consenting to his being healed.

And on that day there arose a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem. And all was scattered into the country from Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And Pilate's men buried Stephen and made great lamentations over him.

For Saul ravaged the church, entering into the houses one after another, and driving off both men and women, delivered them up to prison. Chapter 9, verse 1. For Saul, still breathing out threatenings and slaughters against the disciples of the Lord, came to the high priest and asked him of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogue, so that, if he found any who were of the way, both men and women, he might bring them down to Jerusalem. But as he was journeying, it came to pass that he drew near to Damascus.

And suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven. And floating on the earth, he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. But rise up and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

For the man who was travelling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but beholding no one. And Saul rose up from the earth, and his eyes being opened, he saw no one. But leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus.

And he was there three days without seeing, and neither ate nor drank. And there was a certain disciple in Damascus by name Ananias. And the Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias.

And he said, Behold, here am I, Lord. And the Lord said to him, Rise up and go into the street, which is called Praise, and seek in the house of Buddha one by name Saul. He is a prophet.

For behold, he is praised, and has seen in a vision a man by name Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him so that he should speak. And Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many concerning this man how much evil he has done to thy faith in Jerusalem. And here is his authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon thy name.

And the Lord said to him, Go, for this man is an elect vessel to me to bear my name before both nations and kings and the sons of Israel. For I will show to him how much he must suffer for my name. And Ananias went and entered into the house, and laying his hands upon him, he said, Saul, brother, the Lord has sent thee, Jesus that appeared to thee in the way in which thou camest, that thou mightest see and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales. And he saw, and rising up was baptized. And having received these doctrines, and he was with the disciples who were in the master certain days.

And straightway in the synagogue he preached Jesus that he is the Son of God. And all who heard were astonished and said, Great not this he who destroyed in Jerusalem those who call on the name. And here was come for this purpose that he might bring them down to the feet of the priests.

But Saul increased the more in power and confounded the Jews who dwelt in the master, proving that this is the Christ. He mentioned before that the church, the body of Christ, is born on the day of Pentecost. And after it is born, it begins to grow.

And in the process of growth it is gradually being formed according to the heavenly pattern. In the process of growth there is bound to be conflict. This is the growing pain of life.

And first we find the conflict in the person of Stephen. Stephen is the one who has a vision. The vision of the Son of Man in glory.

And to him the church is not an earthly, physical, material thing. But it is spiritual and heavenly in nature. And because of that he comes into conflict with Judaism at that time.

Then we mentioned this morning that in the process of growth, again we find in the person of Philip. And here he is used of God to break through the prejudice of the Jews against the Samaritans. Because the very nature of the church is universal.

And yet there is a unity that must be found. And for this reason the Holy Spirit is withheld in his outpouring until the apostles come from Jerusalem and lay hands upon these believers. But I think no one gives more contribution to the church in its formation, more than the apostles.

In the process of formation you will find God used Stephen, a Hellenistic Jew. God used Philip, another Hellenistic Jew. And here God used Paul, another Hellenistic Jew.

Probably the reason is they are not so bound by the traditions of the Father. In a sense Paul was, but in another sense, no. But anyway you find that when the church is going through the process of formation, in its formative years, it seems as if God uses certain vassals that are more suitable for him to break through.

And Paul, in a sense, is an entirely new vassal. He is not one of the ten apostles. He is not one of the seven who served the table.

He is not even a follower of Jesus. On the contrary, he is a blasphemer and a persecutor of the church. So God uses an entirely new vassal for the formation of the church according to the Heavenly pattern.

And I think that is the wisdom of God. The wisdom of God. So, in a sense, continue where Stephen leads us.

You know when Stephen was thrown, he saw a man in glory. He saw the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God in glory. That was where he left off.

And you find in chapter 9, that was where Paul took off. Because on the road to the Master, he saw that heavenly man. So in a very real sense, what God begins with Stephen, is continued in Paul.

Now first of all, the first mentioning of Paul was when he was Saul of Tarsus. The first mentioning of Saul was in Acts chapter 7, at the time when Stephen was thrown to death. Now we know that Saul, he was born in Tarsus, a Roman city.

You know, during that time, the Roman Empire conquered the whole world. And in certain big cities, the Roman Empire made these big cities, Roman cities. And being made a Roman city, all those who were born in that city, enjoyed the privilege of the citizenship of the Roman Empire.

In the Roman Empire, most people were slaves, conquered people. But only the Romans and those cities that were made Roman cities, people born there, were born Roman citizens. So, Paul's Roman citizenship was born, not bought.

He was born in Saul of Tarsus. And then when he was in his teens, probably at the age of 12, because during his time, during the age of 12, that was the day, the time of Misbah, which is to be made a son of the law. So probably during that time, he was brought to Jerusalem to learn the law.

So he was real in Jerusalem. He was taught in the strictest sense of Judaism. He became a Pharisee.

And he sat under the feet of Gamaliel. Now Gamaliel was the grandson of Phileas, the great teacher of Israel. So, Paul, as a young man, he was taught by Gamaliel, the great teacher of his time.

Young as he was, he was very zealous and earnest. And he told us himself that he was far more advanced than his contemporaries in Judaism. And he lived a Pharisee.

Now today we usually, when we think of a Pharisee, we do not have a good connotation to the word Pharisee. But actually, the set of Pharisees began with a very good reason. The law was actually taught by the set of the Pharisees.

But most Pharisees were Pharisees in name, not in reality. So that's the reason why our Lord Jesus denounced the Pharisees very strongly. Why? Because they were hypocrites.

Well, they taught. You're right. But they were not there for a finger to do it themselves.

They put a big burden upon, load upon others, but they themselves did not do it. But Paul saw that young man was different. He himself testified that he lived a Pharisee.

He was not only taught, educated as a Pharisee, but he was a true Pharisee. He lived the life of a Pharisee. In other words, he was very strict, he was very honest, and he was very real.

So he said, according to the righteousness of the law, he was like that. He was that kind of person. He knows that.

And of course, being a Pharisee and taught, he was very deeply involved in the traditions of the Father. Now that could not be avoided. Because as a Pharisee, they studied the law, but according to the traditions of the Father.

So at that time, Paul was very honest, very sincere, very real. But he was deeply involved, deeply occupied with the traditions of the Father. He looked at everything with the light of the traditions of the Father.

And according to that outlook, he considered Jesus as an imposter. He considered the followers of Jesus as worthy to be persecuted. And in persecuting them, he thought he was serving God.

So when we first find him in Ephesus, there he was, washing the clothes of those who stoned him to death. As a matter of fact, he was one of the 70 of the Jewish Council. In Judaism, the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Council, was the highest judicial authority.

And Paul, though he was a young man, he was one of them. Because he said, whenever they condemned anybody, he gave his vote. He had a vote.

And evidently he was maybe executioner of the decision of the Council. The Council decided that Stephen must be stoned to death. Because Stephen was a black Jew, worthy to die.

And Paul was executioner. He was there washing the clothes of those who stoned Stephen to death as the executioner. So you can see that Paul had really advanced very far ahead in Judaism.

But God, even before the foundation of the world, had chosen him. And Paul himself said, God has set him apart even from his mother's womb. He was not called until he was on the road to the Master.

And yet in God's sovereignty, in God's election, he was chosen even before the foundation of the world. He was set apart from his mother's womb without disclosing anything. He was chosen by God with a specific purpose.

He was to be a master builder. A master builder. His spiritual life with God actually began at the time when he witnessed the death of Stephen.

When Stephen was stoned to death, Stephen said, I saw the heaven opening. I saw the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. His face shone like an angel.

Now Paul certainly did not see that heavenly vision at that moment. But he heard what Stephen said. And even though he did not see that vision, by seeing the face of Stephen, by hearing what Stephen said, he couldn't get away from a reality that was there.

Now at least he was a sincere, honest person. People who were false, you know, might listen to these words and nothing registered. But being an honest and sincere person, he was misled, that was true, misled by the traditions of the fathers.

And yet he was honest and sincere in everything he did. So when he was faced with a spiritual reality, he couldn't escape from that. He didn't see the vision, but he saw Stephen dying.

And he saw Stephen giving up his spirit to God and pray for forgiveness for those who stoned him to death. He couldn't get away from that. So we will say that the blood of Stephen germinated, he said, into life.

At that church Stephen was stoned. The persecution of the church in Jerusalem began. And who was the chief persecutor? Saul persecuted the people of the way.

With such goofiness, he would enter into every house and drag men and women and put them to prison. Now that wasn't like the action of a gentleman. Now Saul certainly was brought up to be a gentleman.

A true Pharisee should be a gentleman. And yet the way he acted was almost like a mad person. He would not only drag the men, he would drag the women.

There was no kindness, no gentleness in Saul. Now I wonder why he did such a thing. Why did he persecute the people of the way in such an un-gentlemanlike manner? Why? Was it because his conscience was troubled? You know, when a person's conscience was troubled, he tried to fight against his conscience.

In fighting against his conscience he would do things that he would not do ordinarily. He was trying to drown his conscience by these cruel acts. He was trying to convince himself that this was serving God.

So most likely the martyrdom of Saul had done something in his life. He was not able to get away from that. And in fighting against that conscience, you know, he tried to do things in a double manner, you know, trying to drown the voice of his conscience.

And he persecuted believers. Not only in Jerusalem, but in the cities of Judea. And even to the extent he asked for documents from the priests, that he would go to Gentile cities.

Damascus was a Gentile city. And he would even go to, went to a Gentile city with the documents from the Jewish authority that he may seize upon anyone that was in that land and took them to Jerusalem to be condemned. So you find that Saul, evidently, the Spirit of God was fighting with him at that moment.

But he was fighting and fighting and fighting back. Then as he was on the way to the martyrdom, always reaching the days of the martyrdom. You see, God was never in a hurry.

God allowed Saul to go as far as he could. Then, at no time, a great light shone upon him and his father. And they all fell.

And there he saw the heavenly vision. Now, that was the turning point in the life of Saul. It began with the death of Satan, but on the road to Damascus, there was a complete, even to the very end, towards the end of Paul's life.

His testimony to King Agatha was, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. His whole life and ministry is explained by the heavenly vision. And that heavenly vision actually was the vision that Stephen saw when he died.

So that's why we say Paul just picked up what Stephen left off. And actually you will find his ministry, his work, as to his contribution to the formation of the church was actually in the same line as Stephen. Now, what is this heavenly vision that Saul, who later was named Paul, saw on the road to Damascus? I think there are at least a few essential elements in that heavenly vision.

Number one, of course. A great light shone upon him and he fell upon the ground. All his followers saw the light.

They heard the sound, but they didn't hear the voice. Only Saul heard the voice. Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? You know it is hard for you to kick against the ground.

Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the ground. Now, of course, when Saul heard that, he knew what it meant. Because with the Jewish people, when they plowed the field, they did not have machines to plow the field.

They plowed the field with ox or horse. And they put an ox or a double, two oxen, you know, under a yoke. And then they attached the yoke to the plow.

The father would put one hand on his plow to guide the plow, pulled by the ox under the yoke. And in his other hand, he would have a sharp instrument called the goat. It is a sharp instrument.

And as he guided the ox in plowing, of course in plowing you have to keep the plow straight so that the furrow will be straight instead of zigzagging. But sometimes the ox has its own will. So when an ox was not following the direction, the direction of the farmer, the ox was going to the right or to the left, then the farmer would use the goat and just prick the leg of the ox with the goat.

But of course, he will just prick the goat against the leg very gently, you know, just to make the ox feel that that was all, you know, so that the ox will learn to be obedient and submissive. But the ox sometimes was very stubborn. And instead of pricking the leg, the ox will kick against the goat.

And in kicking against the goat, of course, the ox was hurt. But because it was hurt, it learned the lesson of obedience. You know, so the whole picture behind the word was this.

God had a purpose on this life. Even before the foundation of the world, God had already chosen him. When he was in his mother's womb, God had set him apart.

God had a purpose in this life. As if God had put him under a yoke, pulling apart, doing God's work. But he didn't know it.

And he rebelled against it. He wanted to go his own way. He wanted to do his own thing.

And because of that, God would just prick him very gently from time to time. But instead of taking the lesson, he kicked. He kicked and kicked, and he got hurt.

So God was saying to Saul, I have apprehended you, but you try to kick against the goat. You try to go your own way. You won't succeed.

You won't succeed. You better learn the lesson of obedience and submit yourself to me and to my purpose. So when Saul heard that, he instantly knew that it was no use to fight, to kick.

The only way for him to do was to... So he said, Lord, who are you? Lord, who are you? He knew that he had met a man, a man in glory, that he couldn't strive and struggle and fight with. He knew that before that man he was defeated. He was able to defeat everybody else.

And yet before that man, he knew he had to say, Lord, who are you? Even though I do not know who you are, but I know that you are my Lord. I know that. You have a hold upon my life.

I have to surrender myself to you. But who are you? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom you persecuted. Now at that moment, Saul began to see wonder.

And that is Jesus of Nazareth is Lord. That was the first part of the heavenly. You know, our conversion sometimes is not complete in the beginning.

You know, when we believe in the Lord Jesus, we accept him as our Savior. And it may take several years before we acknowledge him as our Lord. And because of that, you'll find our Christian life is very weak.

Because we only receive him as our Savior, but we do not see him as our Lord. But in the case of Paul, it's different. When he was saved, he surrendered his life.

You know, in connection with that, I'd like to tell you something about Berta Moon, because, I mean, probably some of you are interested in her. His conversion is almost like Saul's conversion. In 1920, he was 17 at that time, he was brought up in a Methodist church, and he studied in the Anglican Mission School.

But he had absolutely no interest in Christianity. He had his own plan for the future, and he was very, very brilliant. He could be a success in everything.

No doubt about that. And in 1920, a lady evangelist came to his native city, Dr. Dorothy, a medical doctor. And when this medical doctor was conducting a gospel campaign, Berta Moon's mother got saved.

And Berta Moon's mother was a strong character, very dominating, strong character. And Berta Moon saved his mother, because she, at one time, you know, mistreated her. But after the mother got saved, the mother came to Berta Moon's father and asked Berta Moon's father for forgiveness.

You know, in the family, she dominated everything. But after she was saved, she asked forgiveness from her husband. And that touched Berta Moon's heart.

So when he was invited to hear this lady evangelist, he went. He said, anyone who could convert my mother, it's worth a hearing, you know. So he went.

Nothing happened the first two nights. But the third night, the spirit of love began to come within him. But Berta Moon did not accept the Lord that night.

He struggled for some reason. And he told us himself, he said the reason why he struggled was not because he was not ready to accept the Lord Jesus as his Savior. He was ready.

But because he was not ready to give his life over and acknowledge Jesus as his Lord. He couldn't do that. He knew that he cannot accept the Lord as his Savior without giving his life to the Lord and to make the Lord his Lord.

He knew that wouldn't be right. It has to be both. Either both or nothing.

But he couldn't do that because he said he had a future all planned. He had a great future planned for himself. And to give up everything and surrender his life, he was not ready to do that.

So he struggled for a hearing until finally one night he was in his room. And he said the Spirit of God began to put before him all the sin that he had. He said he saw the blackness of his sin and at the same time the redness of the blood of Jesus Christ.

And he said at that time the love of Christ just constrained him. And he accepted the Lord as his Savior and at the same time he accepted Jesus as his Lord. Now that was his conversion.

The conversion of soul was in this man. It wasn't just receiving forgiveness. You know, thank God that we do receive forgiveness when we believe in the Lord Jesus.

But that's very weak, you know. Very weak. Unless we see him as the Lord of all.

Lord. What shall I do? You are Lord now. You are Master now.

You know. Unless we see that, our beginning is very weak. It's very weak.

So in the conversion of soul, in the heavenly vision, the first part of the heavenly vision is seeing Jesus as Lord. He is Lord of all. Jesus of Nazareth is his name while he was on earth in humiliation.

He was crucified. But he rose from the dead and he is now at the right hand of the Father made to be Lord and Christ. Now this is the head of the church.

And this is what Saul saw in that heavenly vision. That's the first part. The danger is the second part.

He said, Lord, who are you? Who are you? He saw the Lord. That man in glory. But he did not recognize him.

So he said, why? And he said, I am Jesus of Nazareth. Why do you persecute me? When the Lord says, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? If Saul should use his mind at that moment, he could easily answer and say, I have never persecuted you. You are beyond me.

How can I persecute one in glory? I can only persecute people on earth. But you are a man in glory. You are beyond my reach.

I can never persecute you. How Saul could easily defend himself in that way. When you are faced with a heavenly vision, it is not a matter of trying to figure it out with your mind.

Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? But Saul said, I don't know who you are. You say I have persecuted you. I don't remember who it is.

How can I persecute you? Now who are you that I have persecuted you? You see, that part was false. Because he didn't understand. But here you'll find the Lord does not say, why do you persecute my followers? The Lord says, why do you persecute me? We will say, Saul persecuted the followers of Jesus.

But he had never persecuted the Lord. Thus, the Lord showed to Saul on the road to Damascus that the head and the body are mine. If anyone should touch the body, any part of the body, the head will complain and say, why do you touch me? Now suppose someone kick your leg, or kick you, your leg.

You do not say, why do you kick my leg? You say, why do you kick me? Saul was persecuting the members of the body of Christ. He was touching the members of the body in Jerusalem, in the cities of Judea, and now he was on the way to Damascus to do that. The head in heaven complained and said, why do you persecute me? So even on the way to Damascus, in that heavenly vision, it is not just the head that Saul saw.

He saw the one new man, with Christ as the head, with the church as the body, and the body as the head are mine. He realized that on the road to Damascus. So God dealt with him in the very first day, showing him the body, the body of Christ.

Anyone who touches any part of the body, because the head and the body, on the road to Damascus we may say, Saul met a universal man. Everywhere he went, he met that man. He met that man in Jerusalem.

He met that man in the cities of Judea. He will meet that man in Damascus. That man is a universal man that fills the heavens and the earth.

That's the vision, the heavenly vision. That big man, that big man, that fills the heavens and the earth. So on the very first day, he saw God.

He saw the body, the body of Christ, one with the head. It is everywhere. It is universal.

And then he asked a question. Lord, what shall I do? Now certainly, he was expecting the Lord to give him a direct answer. You know, Saul was a master of his own.

He knew exactly what to do. He was the head of everything. But here he was, completely shattered, broken.

He surrendered. He said, Lord, wash my hands. Now you are the Lord.

You give command. He was certainly expecting the Lord to tell him what to do. To have such a great Pharisee to serve the Lord.

Surely it would add honor and glory to the Lord. But the strangest thing was, the Lord did not tell him directly. But the Lord wanted it.

The Lord said, all right, you get out. You go to the master. And I will send someone to tell you what I want.

On the road to the master, at that moment, you know what would happen. The apostle Paul will be the greatest apostle, but the most independent apostle. Because he received his commission directly from the Lord.

He did not need anybody else. He will go out to establish the church. To build the body of Christ.

And yet he himself will validate every principle of the body. He became the body. He was so great that he will be the body.

So the Lord taught him a practical lesson. You were a great member, yes. You were going to be a great member in the body of Christ.

But remember, you were only a member. You needed other members of the body of Christ. You have to learn relatedness.

You have to learn submission. You have to learn fellowship. You cannot live without me, but neither can you live without your brother and sister.

Now that's a practical lesson. Paul had to learn. You see, otherwise, being such a good member, so gifted, he will certainly be a very independent member.

He will certainly validate every principle of the body that he will be used to build. So God had to teach him some very practical lessons. Now you saw the vision.

Do you just go out and try to fulfill that vision? Now you saw the vision. You go to the Master and learn some very practical and small lessons before you launch out. You know, that's our trouble.

When God gave us a vision, a great vision, immediately we would say, all right, I will go out and work it out. You know, without first learning some practical lessons concerning that vision. And that vision cannot be first worked out enough.

We are not qualified to go out and try to work that vision out. So here you find God said, you go to the Master. And he went to the Master.

He was blind. Blind by the light. You know, I often hear people say, I see the light.

I know exactly what it is. Brothers and sisters, if you see the light, you will be blind. You can only say, well, I think I really see something.

But I really don't know. I really don't know. You see, you really see the light.

You know, he was blind for three days and three nights. And he was there fasting and praying. Now the heavenly vision did not stop on the road to the Master.

The heavenly vision continued to the Master. Because there in the Master, the vision continued. While he was praying, he saw a man by the name of Ananias coming in and lay hands on him.

Now remember, this was part of the heavenly vision that Paul spoke about. Our problem is, we confine the heavenly vision to what Paul saw on the road to the Master. But remember, that's only part of the vision.

On the road to the Master, he saw a big man. A universal man. A man in glory.

And that lifted him up. But that was not the whole of the argument. When he entered into the city of Damascus, he saw another part of the heavenly vision.

What is the other part of the heavenly vision? A small man. Not a big man. Not that man met him on the road to Damascus, you know.

But a small man by the name of Ananias. Ananias was unknown in Jerusalem. So was a more known person to the world than Ananias.

Ananias was a pious man, a believer. Probably a leading brother in the church there in Damascus. He was unknown, practically unknown in Jerusalem.

He was known in Damascus because he was a pious man. But in comparison with Paul saw, he was a small man. And yet here you find so sore in the vision that big man into, convinced himself into a small man.

And that small man came to him and lay hands on him. And made him sick. Now this is part of the heavenly vision.

Why? Because the church, the body of Christ, on the one hand is universal. We need to see that vision. We need to see the vision of the church universe, the body of Christ.

Everyone, anywhere, throughout the ages and generations who believe in the Lord Jesus, they are in that body of Christ. It is everywhere. You can touch that body everywhere.

It is universal with a head in heaven. Now we need to see that vision because seeing that vision will enlarge us. You know, otherwise we will be very narrow.

That would enlarge our capacity to see what God is doing. He is doing a big thing. A big body with a big head.

That is what God is doing. That enlarges us. But at the same time, we need to see that this body universe is condemned to be a local expression in every place.

And when you touch the local expression, it is like a small man. But that small man is most practical. Because it is the small man that comes and lays hands.

The small man that makes Saul see and know the will of God. So when you come to the practicality of the body of Christ, you have to see the continuation of the vision. That is a small man.

In the city of the body of Christ. Now brothers and sisters, I do thank the Lord. Because during the recent years in this country, with the people I meet and the writings I read, I do find that many God's people are beginning to see the body of Christ.

And they begin to talk about the body of Christ. And thank God for this universal body of Christ. But the problem is, they only saw that big man.

They do not see that small man. That is the problem. When they talk about the body of Christ, thank God for the universality of it.

But they do not know how to come down to practice. That this body of Christ has this local expression. And this local expression in comparison is like a small man to a big man.

But it is not another man. It is a big man come down. So when you come to practicality, all the lessons that we need to learn in the body must be learned in the local expression.

It is no use saying, I have fellowship with all the body of Christ. It is too late. You have to learn to be related to the brother and sister who live next to you.

If you cannot live with your brothers and sisters, related to your brothers and sisters next to you, how can you say, I am in fellowship with the universal body of Christ? That is impractical. Impractical. And I think the problem today is with this aspect.

We are talking about the body of Christ. So glorious. Oh, it is so glorious.

But we cannot get down to business, to earth, and to practice that life in the body. We cannot do that. Because in the case of Saul, you find, it is very humiliating for a big member as Saul to receive the help of a small member as Ananias.

But God has a purpose in it. God purposely refrained from telling Saul what He wanted him to do. But instead using another little member to convey to him the purpose of His calling.

Why? It is because God wanted to teach Saul from the very beginning. Now he was to be the vessel for the building of the body of Christ. And being that vessel, he himself must first learn that lesson.

How he needed a little member. He could not be alone. He will never think without his brother.

He will never know without his brother. He cannot do without his brother. So in a sense, Ananias represents the church, the local expression of the body of Christ.

He is the master. And you know, this vision was confirmed because at the same time, Ananias received a vision. He received a vision.

The Lord told him to go to the street and find a man, Saul of Tarsus. And when Ananias heard that, he said, Lord, I have heard of this man. What he did in Jerusalem.

And he came here with a letter from the chief priest. He seen them. And Ananias was the chief prophet.

Saul and Ananias could never see each other in the natural. If they saw each other, one must be killed. They could not coexist.

And yet here you find. Ananias said, Lord, I couldn't do that. Because he came with that purpose.

And I was the one whom he was seeking. The first one. Saul will be seeking in the city of the master.

But the Lord said, this is my child. He will be the one who will be used to be my witness among the nations. Among the nations.

He will suffer much for my nation. And here you find Ananias. In his third hour, relying upon his logic, he trusted the Lord.

He went. And he wondered. You know, these two men could not meet on earth.

But there you find the beautiful thing. But the beautiful thing was, Ananias went into that house. He laid his hand on him.

That is, identify himself with Saul. Ananias identified himself. And he said, brother.

Brother. Brother. What a beautiful word that is.

They were enemies. But in the grace of God, they are now brothers. The Lord, Jesus, will appear to you on the road.

Friendly to you, that you may see. And be filled with the Holy Spirit. And immediately Saul fell down from his body.

And you know, when Saul opened his eyes, what did he see? He saw the brother. He saw a brother. That's what he saw.

So he remained with the disciples in the mosque for a few days. Now that's how Saul began. So you see, the heavenly vision is not just something big, something spectacular, something glorious and eclectic, but it has another part.

And that other part is most practical, down to earth. And because of that, throughout Paul's life, you'll find it. His whole ministry, his whole life, is for the building of the body of Christ.

He said he is willing to suffer that which is lacking in the affliction of Christ for the church that is for his body. That is his whole life and his whole ministry to build the body of Christ. That vessel through which the risen head is able to do and to teach.

That is his whole ministry and his whole life. But when he is doing that ministry, he is never one who is independent. He is always related to someone.

Even when he writes his epistles, you'll find he always has someone with him. Paul and Timothy and Silas. Suffering, you know.

And he goes, went to Jerusalem to seek salvation. Wherever he went, he sought salvation. He was never an independent agent.

The hermeneutization was very real to him. It worked out in his life. And because it worked in his life, he was able to use of God to build up the body of Christ.

Even to the end he could testify, I was not disobedient to the hermeneutization. It was now a matter of obedience, having seen the vision. But that vision I will re-emphasize.

Not only include that which is given to him on the road to Damascus, but also that which is given to him in the city of Damascus. That will complete the picture. So I do hope that we may see in the formation of the body of Christ.

You'll find God is leading his church into taking a heavenly spiritual position through Stephen. Through entry into the universal aspect in Philly. And now finally, through Paul, complete the pattern of the body of Christ.

It is put in a most practical way, and yet it is one with that glorious hermeneutization, glorious vision that he saw on the road to Damascus. So that is what is happening during the formative years of the church of the body of Christ as we find in the book of Acts. Our Heavenly Father, we do praise and thank you that thou art forming thy body according to the heavenly pattern.

Thou dost use various vessels to bring that body to that pattern. We thank thee for these people. We ask thee, Lord, that we may see thy body.

We may not only see, but we may experience it ourselves. And being seen and experienced, we may be able to use thy body for the furtherance of thy purpose. O Lord, during these last days, thou dost desire to see thy body fully grown, matured, that thou may come back and claim it as thy bride.

O Lord, great is the task. We humble ourselves before thee and ask thee to show us and to bring us into that practical experience of it and to use us for thy eternal purpose. To thee we give all the praise and the glory.

Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/0/SID0812.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/stephen-kaung/acts-8-the-church-paul-the-local-aspect/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net