

Foundations - Spiritual Life

by Stephen Kaung

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living for God's purpose and will, and the struggle between the spirit and the soul in the Christian life.

Duration: 51:48

Scripture: Genesis 2:7, Genesis 3:6, John 3:6, Romans 6:6, Romans 7:15, Romans 8:13, Galatians 5:16-17, Hebrews 2:7

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Victory Over Sin"

Description

This sermon delves into the creation of man, the purpose of God in creating humanity, the choice between living for oneself or living for Christ, the battle between the spirit and the soul, and the importance of defeating the enemy in our lives to fulfill God's purpose. It emphasizes the need to live for Christ, even in the face of difficulties, and to allow the life of Christ within us to grow and mature, enabling us to be used by God to overcome the works of the enemy.

Transcript

Will you please turn to the Gospel according to John. John chapter 3, verse 6. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Let's have a word of prayer.

Dear Lord, we do want to thank Thee again for the table. How we appreciate what Thou has done for us. Lord, Thou has bought us with such a price that we are no longer ours, we are forever Yours.

Dear Lord, we want to give ourselves totally over to You, and allow You to work out Your full purpose in each and every one of us, to the praise of Thy glory. We commit this time into Your hand. We pray that Thy spirit will quicken Thy words in our hearts, and bring us into all that Thou has provided for us, that we may be unto the praise of Thy glory.

We ask in Thy precious name, Amen. Dearly beloved, in order to help young brothers and sisters in the knowledge of God, our brother Watchman Nee prepared 52 basic lessons. These lessons will help young believers to see the full counsel of God.

So what he did at the beginning, he was to have these 52 lessons going every year, one lesson one week. And the brothers and sisters will gather together to hear these lessons, and not only to hear, but to receive these lessons into their lives. And by so doing, they will not only have the knowledge of God, but they will have His life within them.

So this is the purpose why our brother prepared these 52 lessons. And I was assigned to share with you three of these lessons. The first one will be spiritual life.

And we all know that God created man with a definite purpose. So let's begin from the very beginning. As we find in Genesis chapter 3, when God created man, He created man in three parts.

Number one, He took the earth and formed the shape of a man. So far as our body is concerned, it comes from the earth. Therefore, it is in touch with the earth around us.

We call it world consciousness. Our body gives us consciousness of the world around us, because they are of the same element. And then God breathed His breath of life into this form of man.

And the Bible says, man becomes a living soul. But in our Chinese Bible, I think it is more complete. Because it says, God makes us a living soul with a spirit.

Because that's what it is. The breath from God that was breathed into the form of man became the spirit of man. Because God is spirit.

In order to contact God, you cannot contact God with your body. I think you all remember many, many years ago, the cosmonaut went to space. And he came back.

And he said, I was in the space. I looked around. I could find no God.

Therefore, there was no God. That's nonsense. Because God is spirit.

How can you contact Him with your physical body? You have to contact Him with the spirit. So we know that the breath that was breathed into the nostril of man is the spirit of man. God gave man a spirit so that we can contact Him.

We can know Him. We can have fellowship with Him. And as the spirit touched the body, a third element came forth.

And that is the soul, which is ourselves. With the body, we have world consciousness. With the spirit, we have God consciousness.

And with our soul, we have self-consciousness. So, brothers and sisters, that was the creation of man. According to God's divine order, our spirit should take the lead.

Because our spirit should be in contact with God the spirit. And after that, our spirit will touch our soul and enable our soul to understand what God's will is. And our soul will take God's will from our spirit and command our body to work it out.

So that's the divine order when God first created man. But as we read the Bible, we find that after God has created man, He put man in a beautiful garden, the Garden of Eden. And in the garden, He planted all kinds of fruit trees for the food of man.

But in the midst of the garden, He planted the tree of life. In other words, God's intention was for man to receive his life and thus be united with God, commune with God, and do the will of God. But by the tree of life, there was another tree called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Now, sometimes we may think that this is a bad tree. It is because of our bad experience of that tree. But so far, the tree itself is concerned.

It is a good tree. In other words, it is a better tree than all the other fruit trees, even though it is lower than the tree of life. Because it gives man the knowledge of good and evil.

The highest knowledge in the world is not scientific knowledge. The highest knowledge in the world is ethical knowledge. To know what is good and what is bad, that is the highest knowledge in this world.

So this knowledge of the tree of life is not a bad tree at all. It is a better tree, but not the best tree. Now, God put these two trees in the center.

For what reason? Because God has given man a reasoning, a mind. And God wants man to exercise his mind, to choose what to eat. All the fruit trees are for nourishing his body.

But the tree of life is to give life, God's life, to man's spirit. Yet, the next tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, is to increase the knowledge of man, to know what is good and what is bad. You know, brothers and sisters, scientific knowledge is not the highest knowledge.

The highest knowledge is moral knowledge. It is the ability to know what is good and what is bad. Now, God put these two trees in the center.

Why? Because God has given man free will. What is free will? If you cannot choose, free will means that you are given the freedom to choose, to exercise your will, to decide what do you really want. Do you want the life of God, to be united with God, to do his will, fulfill man's destination? Or do you want to exercise the knowledge of good and evil, to decide what you want to do, and make yourself God? So, brothers and sisters, after God has created man, he has put man in the garden, with the two trees in the center.

As if God said, now you make the choice. If you want to eat the tree of life, that you may have the life of God, and be united with me, you will fulfill the purpose why I created you. But you can decide.

God did not make the decision for you. You decide what you want to do. If you do not want the life of God, do not want his control, you want to be yourself.

You can eat the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You are very knowledgeable. You are proud of yourself.

But unfortunately, we have the knowledge, but we do not have the life to do what we know what is right, not to do what is wrong. That's our problem. So in the beginning, God put man before these two trees, and allowed man to make his own choice.

What is free will? If you cannot choose what you want to do, since God has given us a free will, he will allow us to make our own decision. Unfortunately, man did not guard the garden as he should. We know the garden of Eden is a beautiful garden, but it has no wall.

Why? Because God wanted man to be that wall. Actually, God had commanded man to take care of this garden, to watch this garden, to be the wall of this garden, because outside the wall, the enemy of God was lurking there. He wanted to catch him, to tempt man.

Unfortunately, man failed to be the wall of the garden. Somehow, we found Adam and Eve were not together. They should be together, and together, they will be the wall of the garden of Eden.

But somehow, they were separated. Eve was of her own. Without Adam with her.

And the result was, it allowed the enemy to slip in, in the form of a snake. And Eve was tempted. He was looking at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

She saw what a beautiful tree it was. And he would give her knowledge, independence. He did not need to depend upon God.

He could make his own decision. And he was tempted by the enemy to take the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. There was her own decision.

And she affected her husband. Her husband knew all about it. Her husband knew the word of God.

But he loved his wife more than God. He was willing to give up God in order to get Eve. And that's how man fell into sin.

So brothers and sisters, that was what we have. In the beginning. God's purpose in creating man was noble.

Because he created man for his own purpose. He had an enemy to destroy. But for God to destroy his enemy, it was most easy.

God spoke a word and it would be done. But that doesn't give God the glory. Just as if an grown up person beating a little child, there was no glory in it.

So God created man a little lower than the angels. And led this lower than the angels man to so obey God that he would be used by God to defeat God's enemy. That was God's purpose.

But unfortunately, man fell into the hand of God's enemy. And that's what we find in the world today. We know what is good.

We know what is bad. But we do not have the power to do the good or to resist the bad. That was the human condition today.

You know what is good, but you cannot do it. Just like the apostle Paul, before he believed in the Lord Jesus, he knew what was good, but he couldn't do it. He knew what was bad, but he did it because he could not help himself.

So dear brothers and sisters, that was our human condition before we believed in the Lord Jesus. But thank God, he loves us. Even if we have failed, God still wanted to save us, to deliver us, that we may still be his instrument instead of being an instrument of God's enemy.

So we find how, even before the foundation of the world, now you must remember, God is the beginning. Before him there was nothing. And in the beginning, there was a consultation among the Godhead.

Because God is three in one, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And during the consultation, if we can use human language to describe it, God loved his Son so much, he wanted to do something for his Son. He wanted to give everything to his Son.

He was thinking of creating the universe and gave the universe to his Son. But God being God, he knew things from the beginning to the very end. He knew what would happen.

He knew that the enemy would come in and try to destroy his plan. But for God to destroy the enemy, he just speak a word and the enemy will be destroyed. But there will be no glory to God.

Just like a grown-up man to beat a little child. There was no glory in it. So that's the reason why God created man a little lower than the angels.

Brothers and sisters, we human beings are a little lower than the angels because we have a body. The angels didn't have a body. They are spirits.

So they can go anywhere at any time without restriction. But man with a body, we are restricted. If you are here, you would not be able in some other place.

That's our limitation. But that's not the problem. The problem is man has sinned.

Not only our forefathers, Adam and Eve, have sinned. But we who are his descendants, we have all sinned in them. We have his sinful nature in us.

We know what is good. We have the knowledge. But we do not have the power, the life to live it out.

That's our human problem. But thank God. Before God began creation, He knew all about it.

So if we may put it in human words, God was wondering whether He should create or not. Then the Son would step up and say, Father, if it is your will to do it, go ahead. I'm willing to give myself to be the substitute, to be the one who will give himself totally over in order to rescue man from death.

And it is on the basis of that God created the universe. Brothers and sisters, even though it took so many years for God to send His Son into the world to be the Savior of the world, but God's purpose never changes. Throughout the centuries, God was working towards their salvation.

In God's timing, 2,000 years ago, He sent His Son into this world. And Christ Jesus came, sinless, perfect, obeying God in everything. And yet, He took our sins into Himself and was crucified on Calvary's cross.

This is salvation. Brothers and sisters, we are saved today. It is because of what our Lord Jesus has done for us.

He who is perfect bears all our sins in His own body. And because of this, we who believe in Him, our sins are forgiven. We are given new life.

He that is born of the Spirit is Spirit. So this is what salvation really is. Dear brothers and sisters, we were destined for eternal death.

There was no hope, no way out. But thank God, He has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into this world to be the Savior of the world. And thank God, by the grace of God, we who are here this morning, I believe we have all believed in Jesus Christ.

And by believing in Him, we are all saved. Our sins have been forgiven. We are given new life, even the life of Christ in us.

And He is leading us all so that we may be used of God to defeat the enemy. So brothers and sisters, here we are. By the grace of God, we are all believers.

We have a new life. He that is born of the Spirit is Spirit. And with this new life, God is going to use us to defeat His enemy.

Now how? We are saved. But why is it that after we are saved, God did not take us immediately to heaven? You know, I used to think before, how good it would be if the moment I was saved, He would take me to heaven. That would save me from many sorrows and troubles in the world.

But God did not do that. Why He didn't do that? It is to complete us, to perfect us. Because He wants us on this earth to demonstrate the life of Christ in such a way as to defeat all the works of the enemy.

So as we find in Galatians chapter 5, the Spirit and the soul fought against each other. We have the Spirit of God in us. And our spirit is in touch with God's Spirit.

We know what is the will of God. What does He want us to do? And that's the way that God will use us to defeat His enemy. So brothers and sisters, we are here not just to live for ourselves.

We are here to live for God. We have a mission to be fulfilled. God wants each and every one of us to defeat His enemy in our lives so that God's purpose may be fulfilled.

Now how? The Bible tells us the Spirit strives against the soul and the soul strives against the Spirit. That is experienced in each and every one of us. We who believe in the Lord Jesus, we have the new Spirit.

Christ is the life of this new Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in our spirit. And the purpose He dwells in us is only one.

To see that the life of Christ will grow into maturity. So brothers and sisters, we thank God we have a new Spirit. Christ is the life of our spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the power to make the life overcoming the flesh in our daily life. And by that way the enemy is defeated. Brothers and sisters, do not think that you live on this earth for no purpose.

After we are saved, sometimes we may think, what is the purpose of our continuing on this earth? Since He just gave us trouble, why not rapture immediately after we are saved? But God has a definite purpose. He wants us in our daily life, on the remaining of our years, to so cooperate with God that the enemy will be defeated in our lives. How? Not outwardly, but inwardly.

Our soul, having been under the dominion of the enemy, still will defy the Spirit of God in our spirit. So dear brothers and sisters, we find in our daily life there is a struggle between the spirit and the soul. Just like the apostle Paul.

You remember after he was saved, he realized, he knew within himself what is the right thing to do. He knew it and he wanted to do it, but he found there is another power in his life that would not allow him to do it and to do the opposite. He had that inner struggle in his life as he depicted in Romans chapter 6 and 7. And brothers and sisters, I believe we all have that kind of experience.

Why is it that Christian life is so difficult? You know what is good. But it's hard for you to do it. You know what is bad, but unfortunately you always fall into it.

That is the battle between the spirit and the soul. You know, to use the Bible illustration, Adam had two sons, Cain and Abel. And these two sons represent the battle within us.

Cain was not a bad person. We find that he was a dutiful person. He worked in the field very earnestly.

He had produced and he did not forget God. Because after he had produced, he took the produce to God, to offer it to God. He was not bad at all.

He was doing the best that he could. But he forgot God's purpose. Abel, he became a shepherd.

And we all know that at that time they only eat fruit. They never had meat for their food. Now why is it that Abel became a shepherd? He couldn't eat the sheep.

So what did he do? We find that he did it to offer to God. Because he remembered how after their forefathers sinned, God slayed an animal and closed them with that animal. So, Abel became a shepherd.

Not to eat the meat, but to offer to God. In other words, Cain lived for himself, but Abel lived for God. Now brothers and sisters, let us ask ourselves this question.

We are all living. Whom do you live for? Do you live for yourself? Or do you live for God? You may be a good person, just like Cain. He was not a bad person at all.

He was dutiful. He was diligent. He planted his garden.

He had produced any thought of God to bring the best of his to God. He was not a bad person, but just himself. He lived for himself.

Abel lived for God. That's the difference. Dear brothers and sisters, how do you live? Do you live for yourself? The best of yourself? Or do you live for God? That's the difference.

If you live for yourself, you will find, like Cain, you thought God must be pleased with you. You try to please God with your good, but you find it was totally rejected. But if you live like Abel, you do not live for yourself.

You live for him. Then you find God will accept you because you offer Christ to him. So dear brothers and sisters, here we are.

We are still living. There is still a choice to be made. What is your choice? You choose to live for yourself, a good self, or you choose to live for Christ.

There is only one way for us to live. It is to live for Christ. Even if it may mean persecution.

And yet Lord knows he will accept your sacrifice. So my burden this morning is very simple. Brothers and sisters, it concerns each and every one of us here.

We do not doubt that you are saved. We believe that you are the Lord. But what we do want to emphasize is are you living for yourself or are you living for Christ? That will make a difference.

And it will make a difference for heaven and earth. So may the Lord have mercy upon us. Touch our hearts.

Enable us to give ourselves to Christ and to follow him. Even if the way may be difficult because you cannot do what you want to do. But thank God the life of Christ in you will grow into maturity.

And when you shall see him you will be accepted by him. So may the Lord help each and every one of us here. Shall we pray? Dear Lord, we want to thank thee for saving us.

We who were destined for eternal death and yet Lord thou hast died for us. Thou hast borne our sins in your own body and died for us that we may live. Lord for this we are forever grateful.

But Lord thou hast something higher than that. Thou want us to live to defeat thy enemy. Defeat thy enemy in our own lives.

Whatever that comes from the enemy in our lives by thy grace we will reject. We are willing to go through pains and sorrows. But Lord we want to be faithful to you.

So this morning we commit each and every one of us here into your hand and pray that thou will not allow us anymore to live for ourselves. Enable us to live for thee. To defeat thy enemy in our own lives.

To glorify your name that we may be accepted by thee. Oh dear Lord have mercy upon each and every one of us. We ask in thy name.

Amen.

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