

God as the Constructor of the Church

by Stephen Kaung

God is the Constructor of the Church, conceiving, planning, and building it through His creative act, using the redeemed and delivered as the material for the building.

Duration: 1:14:06

Scripture: Psalm 127:1, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 5:27, Hebrews 11:10, 2 Peter 3:15

Topics: "Church Growth", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a man who stumbled upon a book in his brother's shop and discovered it was the book of Psalms. This encounter led the man to start reading the Bible and he was convicted of his sins. The speaker emphasizes that God tests us to reveal our true nature and bring us to a place of surrender. He also highlights the importance of being transformed by God's grace in order to be used as material for building the church. The sermon concludes with a reference to the crucifixion of Jesus and how his sacrifice provides forgiveness of sins and new life for believers.

Transcript

Will you please turn to Matthew, chapter 16, verse 18. Matthew, chapter 16, verse 18. I think by now everybody memorized that verse.

And I also, I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and Hades' gates shall not prevail against it. Hebrews, chapter 11. Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 10.

For he who is Abraham waited for the city which has foundations, of which God is the Artificer and Constructor. Psalms, 127, verse 1. Unless Jehovah build the house, in vain do its builders labor in it. Unless Jehovah keep the city, the keeper watches in vain.

Let's have a word of prayer. Dear Lord, we want to thank thee for bringing us to this last full day of this conference. We thank thee for the past.

Thou has been so gracious, merciful, faithful to us. And we believe thou art the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega. So we ask thee, Lord, that during this last day of the conference, may thy presence be over us more than before.

Dear Lord, thou art the only one that we need, the only one that we worship, and the only one that we desire to know. So Lord, we pray that by thy Spirit thou will open our understanding, bring us within the

veil, allow us to see thy glory, and transform us, conform us to thy own image. Lord, we want to thank thee because thy word is power.

Thy word is truth. Thy word is light. Thy word is life.

So we just turn to thee and pray that whatever needs yet to be done will be done this day. O our hearts do long to see thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, that thou mayst be glorified. We commit this time into thy hands, trusting thee to bless it.

We ask in thy precious name. Amen. Thank God for bringing us to this last full day of ministry.

The theme of this conference is taken from Matthew 16, 18. On this rock I will build my church, and Hades' gate shall not prevail against it. This is the word of our Lord Jesus himself.

It is one of the greatest revelations ever given to man. As we said before, the greatest of all the revelations is what the Father has revealed the Son to us. Without the revelation of the Heavenly Father, no matter how clever we are, we will not be able to know the Son.

But thank God it pleases the Father to reveal his Son in us. And we are most thankful that he has done it in our lives. And on the basis of the Father's revelation of the Son, the Son is able to reveal something that is very dear to his heart.

And that is the church. So he said, I also say. The Father has said, and now I also said.

You are Peter. On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. It is a statement made by the Lord himself.

No matter how you feel, no matter what you see around you, what he said is true. And he will do it. And it will be done.

My responsibility on these mornings is on who is the builder. Now I feel it is rather strange that this question should be asked. Of course, God is the builder.

Our Lord Jesus himself said, I will build my church. But why is it that this question has to be asked? It is because instead of mentally we acknowledge that God is the only one who is able to build his church. And yet, somehow in our consciousness we do not quite agree with that.

We feel that we are able to build a church. And that is what you find in the two thousand years of church history. How man ignores this statement of our Lord Jesus, I will build my church.

And instead we try to build his church. And as we all have seen, what we have built is the tower of Babel, Confucian. God is the only builder.

We mentioned during the past two mornings that as the builder of the church, he is the one who is the originator of the building. That is to say, it is he who has the idea of having a church. The concept does not come from man.

Before the foundation of the world, before the ages, before God created the heavens and the earth, God already has conceived in his mind this thought. The Bible says he purposed a purpose in his son. He loved his son so much, he wanted to express his love towards his son.

And the best expression he can give to his son is the church. Because he knows his son wants a companion, a life companion. One who is his counterpart, his like.

One who can be united with him in one. One who can share with him in responsibility and in glory. Brothers and sisters, so God, before the ages, he conceived this thought of the church for his son.

Now if this is the case, you can see how important is the church. How important it is in the heart of God. How important it is in the heart of our Lord Jesus.

And dear brothers and sisters, we wonder how much is the place of the church in our heart. So this is something for us to really consider very carefully before the Lord. We also mentioned that God is the builder of the church.

He is also the planner. This thought of the church is so glorious, he will not allow anybody else to plan for it. He himself is the planner.

And the pattern, the blueprint he has in mind for the church is none other than his only begotten son, our Lord Jesus. Brothers and sisters, the pattern of the church is not technical, is not organizational. It is not legal.

It is not something external. God uses his only begotten son as the pattern for the church. Even in the type, when God built the woman, he uses Adam as the pattern.

None of the animals that were led to Adam was his like, his counterpart, that could answer 100% to Adam's heart. He could name them, but he could not be joined into one with them. So finally, God had to put Adam to sleep.

And out of his sight, God took out something. Now, in our Bible, it usually says, took out a rib. But actually, in the original, God took out something of Adam.

And God used something out of Adam and built a woman. You remember the apostle John? He was the only one of the apostles who stood at the foot of the cross of our Lord Jesus. He saw the soldier came.

They broke the legs of the two robbers to speed them to death. But when they came to the Lord Jesus, he was already dead. But to make sure that he was dead, you remember a soldier took his spear and thrust the spear into the side of our Lord Jesus.

Open up that side. It touches the heart, and out of it comes out blood and water. And John emphatically said, I witnessed to this.

I saw this. It is true. Now, why is it that John put such emphasis on this matter? Because out of the side of our Lord Jesus comes out blood and water.

Blood for the remission of our sins. Water to give us life. His life is poured out for us and to us.

And with that which comes out of him, he builds the church. Now, this morning, we would like to consider God as the constructor of the church. He not only conceives the idea, he not only plans for it, he actually builds it.

Now, our dear brother John Saunders, his responsibility is, how is the church built? So, I do not want to step into his area. But when we talk about building, actual constructing, now what can you do? So, I think probably I will deal with this matter from a different angle. And that is, we will look at the building itself from the viewpoint of God himself.

In other words, we will see how in the building of the church, in the actual building of the church, we will see the skillfulness of his hands. You know, that word is found in Psalm 78, verse 72. And somehow this word came to me, the skillfulness of his hands.

Now, in the building of the church, you do see the skillfulness of the hands of the Lord. Do you think that aside from God, there is anyone in the world that is so skillful that can build the church? So far as I understand, God is the only one who has the skill, who has the power, who has the ability to build the church. There is no one else.

Now, why? Because in building the church, he is exercising his creative acts. God is the only creator in the universe. What is creation? Strictly speaking, creation is calling something into being out of nothing.

That's creation. When God created the heavens and the earth, it was a creative act, because he calls not-being into being. There was nothing.

There was no material of any kind. And yet out of nothing, God created the heavens and the earth. Wonderful.

Now, who else can do it? We may be able to make something out of something. We may be able to manufacture something with raw materials and make it a finished product. But there is no one in the universe, not even the angels, that can call nothing into something.

And not only that, when that something appears, it was wonderful, glorious. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork. He is the only creator of him, by him, and for him are all things.

To God be the glory. Now, brothers and sisters, in the building of the church, do you think it will be less creative than the creation of the old heavens and the earth? It just cannot be. How can God build a church less than that creative skill of his hand in creating the old creation? That will make the old creation more excellent than the new creation.

But thank God, the new creation is far, far more glorious than the old creation. Not only in the sense, you know when God created the heavens and the earth? The Bible said, in Colossians chapter 1, verse 16, In him all things were created. It's all created in him.

And because it was created in him, therefore, the whole creation reveals the power and the divinity of the creator. How divine he is. No human can do that.

How powerful he is. I remember when I was in China, there was a sister, greatly used by the Lord. As a matter of fact, she was one who began this work in China with our dear brother, Watchman Lee.

She was an atheist. An avowed atheist. Very intelligent, highly intelligent.

And he even told people, he would never believe in God. There was no God. But one year, there was a pestilence, plague in Nanjing, China.

And she was there as the dean of a girl's school. And they had to send all the students back to their homes. So she took some of the students and traveled along the Yangtze River, going downward.

To send the students to their different places. She was sitting at the front of that boat. And as the boat went through the Yangtze River, she looked around and she saw the beautiful sceneries all around her.

Somehow, she was convicted that there was a God. Who could create such beauty? Who could create such massive mountains? No human can do that. It cannot come by chance.

There must be a God. And thank God that turned her completely around. She served the Lord many, many years.

Dear brothers and sisters, Why? Because this is the creative act of God. It came out of the skillfulness of His hand. It demonstrates to us who He is.

His wisdom, His power, His glory. But when He created man, The Bible said He created man according to His own image, after His own likeness. When He created man, He had in His mind that this man, one day, will be the life companion of His beloved son.

And that's the reason why He created man in His image and after His likeness. To give them the capacity, the potential of receiving the life of God into them. And thus, be able to be united with Christ, His Son.

So when He created all things, all things were created in Christ. But when He created man, He created man as He. To be His like.

Dear brothers and sisters, Did it ever come into your mind that the church is a new creation? If anyone be in Christ, a new creation. Now, Brother Sparks used to correct us. He said, if anyone be in Christ, He is a new creation.

He said, in the original, you don't have He is there. If anyone be in Christ, a new creation. There is a new creation.

In other words, God has exercised His creative act. And by creation, He means, out of nothing, bringing in something. Now, do you believe that the church is a creation? New creation? Now, probably, this idea, even though we know the Bible said, you know, if anyone be in Christ, there is a new creation.

And even though in Ephesians chapter 2, He said, God has put the Gentiles and the Jews together to be a new man. Now, even though we do have some kind of idea that the church is a new creation, but does it ever occur to you that this new creation is all new, is all created? It is truly a creative act of God. Now, do you believe that? Well, you may say, I don't think so.

Why? Because we already have this poor man as the material. So he's not out of nothing, into something. But, dear brothers and sisters, let me tell you, this creative of God is even more marvelous than out of nothing into something.

Why? When God created man, He did have in His heart that man should be the like of our Lord Jesus. To be His bride, one with Him. That's why we are created in His image, after His likeness.

But unfortunately, man sinned. Man was cast out of the Garden of Eden. That material that God had in mind for the building of the church was a waste.

It was broken on the wheels, cast out, totally useless. Not only that, sin has entered into man. The enemy of God has a foothold in man.

His dominion is over man. As our brother said, his hatred against God and against God's purpose is implanted in the mind and heart of man. For no reason, man hated God.

I have another co-worker in China. When he was young, his family sent him to Russia to study. He became an atheist.

He participated in the Russian Revolution and got awarded. When he came back to China, what was his mission? His family was very rich. The Japanese took some of their property and made an airfield out of it.

So he didn't need to work. He had nothing to do. But he told me he had one job, anti-Christianity.

He went from house to house to preach against Christianity. There was only one church building in his city, and he was the one who closed that building. He was very clever.

He employed a number of children. When people stood up to pray, these children were going and took all the seats out. And when they were singing, these children would throw sands into their mouth.

And it was so difficult to meet again, so finally the door was closed. He was that kind of a person. He didn't know why, but he hated it.

One day it was raining. He was in his brother's shop. His brother had a gold shop.

He had nothing to do. So he tried to look around for some book to read, and strangely he found under the counter a book. So he took it up, opened it, and read it.

He said, there's something there. The good man is like a tree planted by the river. The bad man is like a chaff blowing away by the wind.

Well, that's reasonable. He couldn't sleep that night. The next morning he got up.

He went to that church building. It was, of course, closed. He pushed the door.

It opened. He went in, and going to the puppet, he saw a big book there. He didn't know what that was.

He opened the book. It was Psalm 1. All he said is from this book. So he took the book and took it home.

That was the first time he steal. He started to read the book. He was convicted.

He was the leader. He was in Manchuria during the second revolution in China. When he was escaping for his life, the Japanese wanted him.

One day in the morning, he knelt down and prayed. His tears wetted the carpet. Then the word of God came to him one after another.

He was wonderfully saved. He served the Lord until he died. But, brothers and sisters, this man, when he persecuted Christianity, he didn't know why.

The hatred is dead there. Brothers and sisters, do you think we, the natural man, the sinful man, could be the material for the building of the house of God? It's less than nothing, worse than nothing, because there

is opposition there. The natural man does not understand.

There is no desire for it. There is a natural opposition to it. So, brothers and sisters, the Bible says all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

The religious, the moral, the high class, the sinful, degraded are the same. No material for the building of the house of God. When our Lord Jesus came to this earth, according to the gospel of John, why did he come to this earth? He came as a bridegroom.

He came to seek for his bride, for the bride was nowhere to be seen. All he saw, the desperate, the blind, the deaf, the crippled, the dead, ye must be born again. He told Nicodemus, the moral, the religious, the teacher of the Jews, ye must be born again.

Do not think because you are religious you are moral. Therefore, you are almost in the kingdom of God. That's what Nicodemus thought.

One more step, one more instruction, little more education, and you are in. But the Lord said, verily, verily, I say unto you, unless you are born from above, you cannot see the kingdom of God. Not only you cannot enter in, you cannot see.

You do not even know anything about the kingdom of God. You haven't seen it. You must be born of the water and of the spirit.

For that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. So, brothers and sisters, let us see. In the building of the church, the Lord said, I will build my church.

Now, why did he not say that in the beginning of his ministry? Why did he say it towards the end of his ministry? Because in the beginning of his ministry there was no ready material, no material available to build the church. He has to redeem, to deliver, to save people out of sin, out of the world. Deliver them, set them free, give them new life.

It is a new creation, nothing old. If anyone be in Christ, there is a new creation. All things have passed away.

Everything is new, and everything is of God. So, brothers and sisters, you know that in the building of the church, the skillfulness of the hand of God surpasses that in building the heavens and the earth. Worse than nothing.

And yet, he is able to build something, a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle or any of such sort. Holy and blameless. Do you see the skill of his hand? But that is only the beginning.

We think that after we are saved, that God can just go ahead and work and finish it quick. Not so. Our Lord Jesus says, Simon, by Jonah, you are blessed.

Why? Because this is not something shown you by flesh and blood. It is my Father who is in heaven who has revealed it to you. And I also said, you are Peter.

On this rock, I will build my church. You know, brothers and sisters, when in the beginning, Andrew, his brother, took his older brother, Simon, to the Lord Jesus, now in John chapter 1 it is said, when Andrew took his brother, Simon, to the Lord Jesus, before Simon was able to open his mouth, now usually he is

the first one to open his mouth, but before he was able to open his mouth, our Lord said, you are Simon, but you shall be called Peter. Simon, a man made of dust, earthly, natural, no matter how good your temper is, or how bad it is, no matter who you are, you are Simon, the natural man, the man of the flesh, you shall be called Peter.

All your hope is in Peter, not in Simon. He will deliver us from our natural man, and he will give us a new life, a new creation, make us a Peter, a stone, a different element, not so loose as the earth, but solid, something that God can build with. So, dear brothers and sisters, the Lord does not say, you are Simon, on this rock I will build my church.

He couldn't do that, because Simon wouldn't be able to be identical to that massive rock, our Lord himself. Simon is a different material, polluted, defiled, sinful, corrupted, opposing every step of God's Word. How can you use Simon to build upon the rock Christ himself? Impossible.

But you are Peter, and because you are Peter, there is something similar. As our brother mentioned already last night, our Lord himself is the living stone, and as we come to him, we all become living stones, then build up together into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. But dear brothers and sisters, even after our Lord said, you are Peter, remember, you are Peter, it is with Peter that I will build you into my church.

But then in the same chapter 16, when our Lord began to reveal more to the disciples, he said, I must go to Jerusalem, I will be rejected, I will be killed. But on the third day, I will be raised from the dead. And here you are.

The Simon in Peter came out again. He took hold of the Lord and said, Lord, never. Don't do it.

You don't need it. You don't need to go to the cross. You can have the throne.

It's yours. And our Lord Jesus turned around and said, Satan. He said this word, Satan, not to Peter, but to Simon.

Because in Simon, Satan has his ground. In Peter, there is no ground. You are not mindful of God.

You are mindful of man. If anyone wants to follow me, deny himself. Take up his cross and follow me.

Dear brothers and sisters, even after Simon came to the Lord, even after he confessed the Lord, and the Lord said, you are now Peter. But unfortunately, the Simon in him still remains. It takes more work to do.

You remember towards the very end, when our Lord said, I'm going to be delivered and to be killed. And you will all be scattered. Simon Peter said no.

Others may, not I. I'm willing to die with you. And you remember, our Lord Jesus said, Simon, Simon. He does not say Peter, Peter.

He says Simon, Simon. Satan wants to sift you, but I have prayed for you. And when your faith is recovered, strengthen your brethren.

Dear brothers and sisters, we do not know how much Simon we still have in us. We do not know how much of the flesh, the natural, that ally of the enemy is still in us. It takes time for this to come out, for the Lord to deal with it, until he can get rid of all the Simon in Peter, all the self in Christ in us.

Because you can never build the house of God with Peter and Simon together. This is a spiritual principle that we need to understand. Brothers and sisters, the building of the church is, from the beginning to its end, a creation, a new creation.

Nothing of the old can be built into it. It is foreign. It will be rejected.

Only that which is of Christ in us can be built into the church of God. How much we need to be dealt by the Spirit of God. That's why the Holy Spirit comes, as our brother already mentioned.

The Holy Spirit who dwells in each one of us. He is with us all the time. He would never leave us.

You may grieve him. You may quench him. You may disobey him.

But you cannot drive him away. He is still there. Why? Because God's work has to be done.

The Holy Spirit is in charge of this work of fulfilling the building of the church. That's the reason why, dear brothers and sisters, you find God leads us. He allows us to enter into all kinds of situations.

Things that we dread of, we do not like to be in. But somehow God, in his wisdom, arranged our circumstances in such a way to expose, to bring to our mind what we are naturally. That's the reason why God led the children of Israel into the wilderness.

His purpose is to lead them into the promised land. But when he led them out of Egypt, he led them through the wilderness. Why? We think that wilderness really is a waste of time.

In a sense, it was. Because they should cross over the wilderness in two years. But unfortunately, they wandered around 40 years.

But that two years was necessary. Deuteronomy 8 tells us why. Because God tested us.

He tests us. He knew us, but we do not know ourselves. So he tests us and brings what is within us out to the open so we can see with our own eyes how ugly we are.

How totally useless we are. Even antagonistic to God we are. And be brought to the place where we are willing to let go.

Who is willing to deny himself? We love ourselves. We hold on. But the Lord said, let go.

Let me be everything to you. Because without this, he is not able to build the church. In the building of the church there is no foreign elements there.

Every foreign element will be rejected. Life rejects that which is not like it. So there is so much work God has to do in each of our lives.

Oh brothers and sisters, are we willing really to yield ourselves to the Lord and allow him to speed up that work so he may have the material fit to be built into the house of God? More than that. Not only to each of us, there is so much work to be done to illuminate that which is of the natural, of Simon, and to increase that which is of Peter, of Christ. Not only a living stone, a precious stone.

All the character of our Lord Jesus is being built into us. What a work that is. How skillful is his hand.

But dear brothers and sisters, there is more to that. Why? Because he is not building a monument with one stone. He is building a house with all these precious stones.

So these stones have to fit in one with another. When Solomon built the temple, in 1st Kings chapter 6 it said, during the building process there was no sound of the hammer, nor of axe, of iron. Why? Because all the materials had been pre-prepared in the quarry.

In the darkness, every piece of these stones is cut smooth according to its number. Which stone will be on your right? Which stone will be on your left? Which stone will be underneath you? Which stone will be above you? Every stone is prepared in coordination with the other stones. So all those points that stick out, that will not fit in, has to be cut and smooth.

Everything is done in darkness. So when they are brought to the Mount Moriah, they just put one on another. Perfect fit.

No sound of the hammer. Brothers and sisters, the working of the cross is not only concerning each individual believer, the working of the cross has to work in a corporate way. It has to work in our lives so that not only we be perfect by His grace, but we be perfected with our brothers and sisters.

How much more work God has to do in us. You know, it is our strong points that we consider it is our strength. Even our spiritual strength.

Our spiritual gifts. Our spirituality. Even that which is given to us by God.

It is of God. But brothers and sisters, God never means that we should be independent. He means that we have to be fitted together and work together as one.

Peter needs John. John needs Peter. No one can say, I don't need the other one.

No matter how gifted you are, the more gifted, the more dangerous you are. And God has to deal with that. Joshua and Caleb, they have an excellent spirit.

They shall enter into the Promised Land 38 years ahead of the rest. But by the grace of God, they wander together with the rest so that they could go in with that new generation. Oh, brothers and sisters, that's what the overcomers are.

They overcome not for themselves, but for the whole church. We have to learn to bear and forbear with one another. We have to look, our brothers and sisters, as more excellent than we are.

We have to humble ourselves, not only before the Lord, but before our brothers and sisters. Love suffers long and is kind. So, brothers and sisters, you find, who can do such a work except God Himself? Only the Lord can do it.

Only the Spirit of God can do it. Nobody else can do this work. And finally, there is one phrase that came to me.

2 Peter 3, verse 15. 2 Peter 3, verse 15. And account the longsuffering of our Lord to be salvation.

Dear brothers and sisters, think of the longsuffering of our Lord. It is because of His longsuffering we have hope. One day, Brother T. Austin Sparks asked our dear brother, Watchman E. which passage in the Bible

that is most difficult to fulfill? And our brother said, Ephesians chapter 5. A glorious church without spot or wrinkle of any of the sort, holy and without blameless.

Can you see it? Is it nearer in the eyes of the flesh? It is drifting further and farther away. No hope. But brothers and sisters, will He feel He is working? Everywhere in this world there are His hidden ones, precious to Him.

He is working silently, secretly, hiddenly. But He never stops working. The longer I live, the more I appreciate the patience of God.

How He must suffer over me all these years. If He should lose His patience, I am finished. But His grace is still pursuing me.

He will not let me go until He finishes His work. I believe with all my heart the glorious church will appear. So dear brothers and sisters, we are living in a time when everything is shaking.

The Bible says, not only the earth, but the heaven will be shaken. All that can be shaken shall be shaken away, so that that which is unshakable, the kingdom of God, shall remain. The gates of Hades seem to swallow up, shake off, break down what we see as the church of God.

He couldn't. What He is able to break down is man's work, that which is natural of man. And brothers and sisters, my cry is, let it be shaken.

Let it go. There is nothing to long for. That which is unshakable, that which is of the new creation, will appear.

Oh, brothers and sisters, we are approaching that day. Suddenly, out of nowhere, out of almost nothing, the new Jerusalem appears. May we be there by His grace.

Dear Heavenly Father, what Thou has prepared for Thy beloved Son, Thou has worked through the centuries towards it. Oh, we pray that it will be done, fulfilled, realized, finished quickly. We acknowledge that we are the problem.

Lord, will not Thou take us in Thy own hand. Take away all the resistance, oppositions, foreign to Thee from us. And fill us with Thy beloved Son, that He will speed up Thy work.

And may the bride be ready. Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.

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