

Our Firm Foundation

by Stephen Kaung

The sermon emphasizes the importance of standing on the firm foundation of God, which is Jesus Christ, and seeking to withdraw from iniquity and live a life that honors Him.

Duration: 1:07:32

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 5:7, 1 Corinthians 5:13, 2 Timothy 2:19-21, Revelation 14:4

Topics: "Spiritual Revival", "True Worship"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the current state of believers and compares it to the time of the Apostle Paul. He emphasizes that many people claim to be pious but lack true spiritual power. The preacher encourages listeners to fix their eyes on the Lord Jesus and not be swayed by false teachings or worldly influences. He also urges believers to follow the Lamb wherever He goes and to meditate deeply on the Word of God in order to be spiritually revived. The preacher draws parallels between the corrupted temple in Jesus' time and the current state of the church, highlighting the need for repentance and a return to true worship.

Transcript

Will you please turn to 2nd Timothy, 2nd Timothy, chapter 2. We'll begin with verse 19 through verse 22. 2nd Timothy, chapter 2, verse 19. Yet, the firm foundation of God stands.

Having this seal, the Lord knows those that are His. And let everyone who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also wooden and earthen, and some to honor and some to dishonor.

If, therefore, one shall have purified himself from these, he shall be a vessel to honor, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work. But youthful lusts flee and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. Let's have a word of prayer.

Dear Lord, we do thank Thee for loving us so much, and Thou dost love us to the end, to the uttermost. We thank Thee for giving Thy word to us, to strengthen us, to comfort us, and to guide and lead us. So, Lord, we just commit Thy word back to Thyself.

Trust Thy Holy Spirit to make it living and working in our lives. O Lord, do open our ears that we may hear. Open our understanding that we may know.

Touch our spirit that we may follow Thee, and to Thee be all the glory we ask in Thy precious name. Amen. About two weeks ago, the Lord turned my heart to that portion that we have just read.

I meditated on it, and as I meditated, I was greatly encouraged, strengthened, and comforted. So this morning, I would like to share what the Lord has spoken to me. And I do hope, brothers and sisters, that your hearts will be opened, and your spirit will be quickened before the Lord, and meditate the word of God together with me.

You know, our problem is we may read the word of God, but we do not meditate on His word. And if this is so, we only touch the letter of the word. And the Bible said, the letter kills.

We need to touch the spirit of the word, because that quickens us. And unless we learn to meditate, that is, dig deep into the word of God, we will not be able to really touch the spirit of the word, and be quickened in us. So my prayer before the Lord is, brothers and sisters, I'm not here just speaking.

You're not just hearing. Oftentimes, we hear, and hear, and do not hear. The reason is, we do not take the word to our heart, and meditate upon it.

So I hope, by the grace of God, this will not be the case here. The Apostle Paul wrote this second letter to Timothy. This was his last letter before his martyrdom.

He was in a very difficult situation. Outside, there was the fierce, fearful persecution from the greatest empire in the world at that time, the Roman Empire. The emperor Nero, he burned the city of Rome, and he put the blame on the Christians.

To be a Christian is a crime, sentenced to death. The persecution was so fierce, Paul was rearrested after his first imprisonment in Rome for two years. He was brought back to Rome, put in a dungeon, waiting to die.

Because of this awkward condition, God's people drew back. Paul mentioned in this letter, all Asia forsook him. He spent so much time in Asia, and yet, they all left him.

They dare not stand with him. During his first defense in Rome, nobody stand by him to be his witness. He was left alone.

People were afraid. And not only that, within the church, Paul's teaching was rampant. People even thought that resurrection was already over, and destroyed the faith of many people.

You know, when he wrote 1 Timothy, he was just released from his first Roman imprisonment. And in that letter, in chapter 3, verse 15, he said, the church is God's house. The assembly of the living God.

The base and pillar of truth. But when he wrote the second letter to Timothy, it was just a few years apart. Things have so degenerated, changed, that he could not call the church as God's house.

The assembly of the living God. The base and pillar of truth. Instead, he said, it is a great house.

Outwardly, it may look great, but inwardly, it was a mixture. That reminds me of the Old Testament time. You know, the temple, at the time of our Lord Jesus, when our Lord began his ministry, he went into the temple to cleanse the temple.

He said, this is my father's house, and you make it a house of merchandise. You're making profit for yourself. Towards the end of his ministry, he cleansed the temple again the second time.

He said, this is the house of prayer for all nations, and you make it a den of robbers. Brothers and sisters, when you read 2 Timothy, you get the same impression. The house of God, the Father's house, a house of prayer for all nations, has now become a house of merchandise, a den of robbers, a great house.

People love themselves. Lovers of self, lovers of the world, lovers of pleasure. No more, no longer lovers of God, and lovers of that which is good.

Having the appearance of piety without the power of it, dangerous days. Dear brothers and sisters, in a very, very real sense, our condition is no different, maybe worse, than at the time of the Apostle Paul. We who are living under such conditions, what should we do? How should we respond? Is there any way that the Lord has shown us? This is the way, go in it.

And brothers and sisters, as I meditated upon, I thanked the Lord, because he has given us his word. He showed us how to behave ourselves under such conditions. And this is my burden I want to share with you, dear brothers and sisters.

The Bible said, yet the firm foundation of God stands. I love that word yet, because it tells us that in spite of all the circumstances, in spite of all the changes around, in spite of all the declensions, the departure from truth, in spite of all these things, yet the firm foundation of God stands. You know, to me it is almost like in Ephesians chapter 2. You remember how we were dead in sins and transgressions? We were sons of disobedience, destined for death, no hope, but the Bible said, but rich in mercy and love.

So dear brothers and sisters, when we see everything around us is changing, the firm foundation of God stands. Our God is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. He changes not.

Everything can be shaken. His throne remains firm. Whatever he has purposed, he will accomplish.

Not because of outside situation, he changes purpose. He will have what he desires. When everything is changing and decaying, God is our firm foundation.

But I think the firm foundation of God stands here, has a specific application. Because if you read the context, you will find the firm foundation of God. Now what is that firm foundation of God? Now God himself is a rock of ages.

That's true. He is the same. He never changes.

He is our rock. He is our trust. But here you find there is a relationship there.

The firm foundation of God stands. Now what is that firm foundation? In other words, what foundation has God laid that is firm and stands in spite of all the oppositions, all the failures, all the weakness, all the persecutions? It never changes. Now what is that firm foundation that God has laid? If you read within the context, I believe the firm foundation refers to the foundation of the church.

You remember in Matthew 16, verse 18, our Lord Jesus said, On this rock I will build my church, and Hades' gates shall not prevail against it. What is the foundation of the church? The Lord himself. He is the rock.

The foundation of the church is not Peter. Peter is just a little stone to be built on that foundation. Our Lord Jesus himself is the rock, the foundation God has laid for the church.

And thank God that foundation never shakes. It is firm. It always stands.

It stands against all the assaults of hell. The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. It doesn't change a bit.

Not because of all the assaults. It alters. It changes.

It lowers the standard. No. Why? Because the foundation of the church is none other than Jesus Christ himself.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, tells us, No foundation can be laid other than that which has been laid, even Jesus Christ. So, dear brothers and sisters, we thank the Lord that he is the foundation of the church. Everything may shake.

Everything may change. But he changes not. He is the same yesterday, today, and to the ages to come.

You remember Hebrews chapter 1? The heaven and the earth will change. They will be rolled up. But the Bible said, He remains the same.

He never changes. In Hebrews chapter 13, Jesus Christ, yesterday, today, and forever the same. In 2 Corinthians chapter 2, So, dear brothers and sisters, I thank the Lord.

We thank the Lord. Because the church is not built on Peter. The church is not built on Paul.

The church is not built on anybody else. The church is built on Jesus Christ. He is the foundation.

And this firm foundation stands in spite of all the changes. Brothers and sisters, this is our comfort. This is our confidence.

Without this, we will falter. We will fall. We will change.

We will compromise. We will go with the crowd. We will be affected by everything outside.

Swayed by every wind of doctrine. But thank God, He changes not. I feel comforted.

I thank God for that. And brothers and sisters, when everything is changing, where should we look to? He is the only one whom we can look to. Look off unto Jesus.

Don't fix your eyes upon yourself. If you fix your eyes upon yourself, it weakens you. Don't fix your eyes upon brothers and sisters.

If you fix your eyes upon brothers and sisters, you will be offended. You will stumble. But don't blame them.

Because if you have your eyes open, you shouldn't be stumbling. Don't look at anything. Any teaching.

Any system. Any wind of doctrine. That will blow you off.

Brothers and sisters, the only one you can look to and fix your eyes upon and not shift from Him is the Lord Jesus. Look at the Lord Jesus. If you look at the Lord Jesus, you will not be offended.

You will not be stumbled. Whatever your environment may be, whatever your circumstance may be, whatever changes around you, if you fix your eyes upon the Lord, you are firm. You are able to stand.

Otherwise, you will fall. To put it another way, where is our way out? What is the way that God has shown us when we are under such conditions? Follow the Lamb wherever He goes. That is the only way.

Follow the Lamb. If we follow the Lamb, and if we are willing to go wherever He goes, we are saved. You remember in the Old Testament times, during the time of Eli, the Ark of God was taken and captured by the Philistines.

But the Ark was able to protect itself. So the Ark was sent back to Israel. But remember, since that Ark left that tabernacle, it never returned to it.

When you see the Ark and the tabernacle are separated, where do you go? The Ark represents the presence of God. The tabernacle with its great altar represents God's work. But when the Ark and the tabernacle are separated, wherever you go, Solomon, the love of God, he went to the great altar in Gibeon to sacrifice, forgetting the Ark just next to him in Zion.

But after the Lord appeared to him, you know what he did? He went to the Ark. Brothers and sisters, follow the Ark. Not the tabernacle, but the Ark.

Not the great altar, but the presence of the Lord himself. Thank God, yet the firm foundation of God stands. This is our standing.

This is the way that the Lord, his word, show us. Then it follows with, having this seal, the Lord knows those that are his. Having this seal.

We know seal in the Bible has a significant meaning because whoever seals, put his seals over anything, it shows that that thing belongs to that man, to that person. Thank God you remember in Ephesians chapter 1, we are all being sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise. God has claimed us as his inheritance.

And the seal of the Holy Spirit is a guarantee, a down payment. We who have the indwelling Holy Spirit is God's down payment, saying that you are mine and I'm going to make you wholly mine. Thank God we are all sealed by the Holy Spirit.

But the seal here is different. After God said the firm foundation of God stands. That's on God's part.

Then it follows that having this seal, the Lord knows those that are his. What does it mean? Of course, all who believe in the Lord Jesus, they are his. But this is not a meaning here.

This meaning is connected with the firm foundation of God stands. In other words, whoever stands on the firm foundation of God, whoever follows the Lamb, wherever he goes, God puts his seal on that person and says you are all mine. God knows who are his.

We are his, and yet sometimes we are not his. We do not know human hearts. Nobody can tell you that you have this seal.

Only God knows the heart. That is the reason why Paul said, I do not even judge myself before the time, because God is the only one who judges me. He knows your heart.

He knows whether you really stand on the Lord Jesus and nothing else. He knows if you stand on something else, that something else is shaken and you too are shaken. He knows who is following the Lamb wherever he goes.

Not follow the Lamb wherever you please, but wherever he goes. If he goes to Calvary, to the cross, you go too. He knows.

Thank God, in spite of everything visible, God has his hidden ones here and there, putting his seal upon them and said, you are mine. How I long to have that seal upon me. It is not enough just to be a believer.

We must be his, exclusively, wholly, absolutely. He never fails us. How can we fail him? And then, it is followed, and let everyone who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity.

It seems strange to me when I first read it. All, anyone, everyone, who names the name of the Lord, of course we do. All who are saved, all who believe in the Lord Jesus, we name the name of the Lord.

And, are we not supposed to be those who have already been delivered from iniquity? He has borne our sins, carried away our iniquity, cleansed us from all our sins and transgressions. Why is it here you find everyone that names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity? I asked the Lord about it. I said, what is it? The firm foundation of God stands.

Having this seal, the Lord knows who is his. And then follow with an open calling. All who name the name of the Lord, including every believer, God calls us to withdraw from iniquity.

What is iniquity? Iniquity in the Scripture means lawlessness. In the New Testament sometimes it means unrighteousness. We will say, sure.

We who name the name of the Lord, sure, we have already withdrawn from lawlessness, from unrighteousness. Of course we do. But do we? Probably iniquity here has a deeper meaning.

Lawlessness has a broader meaning. Unrighteousness has a more stricter meaning. So I began to meditate on it.

Searched the Scripture and Matthew 7 came to me. The Lord said, not everyone who calls me Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of the heavens. Many shall come to the Lord and say, Lord, we have preached in thy name.

We have even cast out demons. We have even done great works of wonder in thy name. The Lord said, I do not know you, you workers of lawlessness.

Meditate on it. What does it mean? What is lawlessness? We are doing God's work. We are preaching.

We are casting out demons. We are doing great works of wonders. But the Lord does not recognize.

The Lord does not approve. He is not grateful. Instead he said, you are workers of iniquity, of lawlessness.

Why? Because they are doing that in his name. But not in him. Still in their flesh.

In their own way. Lawlessness is against the law of God. Whether it is natural, whether it is written, God has his law.

God has his principle. God has his way. And if we do not seek the mind of the Lord and do things for God, the Lord said, you are workers of lawlessness, of iniquity.

Serious. Then I began to think of Luke, chapter 16. There is a steward.

And the Lord said, he is an unrighteous steward. Why? Because he is using his masters property to profit himself. Unrighteous.

Therefore the call is there. Brothers and sisters, it is a call to all who name the name of the Lord. We are called to withdraw from iniquity.

Have we answered that call? The seal comes from God. He seals us. But withdraw from iniquity is our responsibility.

That's what we need to do. But still I think the meaning is not clear. I waited upon the Lord, meditate on it, and then I began to see the application.

Actually, what we have mentioned in the past are principles. Now you see the application. And the application is but in a great house.

You see the connection. You see the relationship. The whole thing is related to the church.

But in a great house. There are vessels of honor and vessels to dishonor. There are vessels of gold and silver.

There are vessels of wooden and earthen. And the Bible says, if therefore one shall have purified himself from these. Now this word purify himself occurs in the New Testament only twice.

Once in 1 Corinthians 5. I think it's verse 7. You remember there's a brother who had committed grievous sin. Even the world does not see. And remained unrepentant.

And even the whole church does not deal with the situation. As if it is nothing. And Apostle Paul said, purge out the old leaven.

That's the first time that word is used. And here purify himself is the same thing as purge. It's the second time.

Now remember in the first occasion it has nothing to do with the world. It has everything to do with the church. Purge out the old leaven from the church.

Why? Because the church is a pure and leavened loaf unto the Lord. And yet the leaven has come here. If you allow the leaven to continue it will affect the whole flour.

So the Bible says, purge out the old leaven. Dear brothers and sisters, this man has sinned and unrepentant. But we know that after he was being dealt with in 2 Corinthians probably that's the man that has repented.

And Paul said, forgive. That's the first occasion. It is within the church.

And now the second occasion. In 2 Timothy 2. Purify yourself from these. Who are these? What are these? Not the word.

In the great house there are vessels to honor and vessels to dishonor. Brothers and sisters, we are all vessels. We are not the end of our life, the purpose of our life.

We are a means to an end. We are vessels. We are to serve God's purpose.

That's what we are. We are to do God's will. But there are two kinds of vessels in a great house because the purity has gone.

There are vessels to honor. We are all supposed in the church of God every vessel is to honor. But now in a great house there are vessels to dishonor.

Vessels to honor. Why? Because they are gold and silver vessels. Vessels to dishonor because they are wooden and earthen.

Gold, the nature of God. Silver, the redemption. In other words, these vessels, they are made of the nature of God.

They are the result of the redemption of Christ. Wooden, earthen. Wood represents the nature of man.

Earth represents the work of man. In other words, even though they are the Lord's and they are vessels for the Lord and yet they live by their own flesh. They live by their own nature instead of the new life, Christ, in them.

They remain kind. And brothers and sisters, the result is one is to honor and one is to dishonor. Now I begin to ask, Lord, what do you mean to honor? What do you mean to dishonor? Does it mean that being gold and silver vessel, then they are honorable? Or does it mean that if they are wooden and earthen, they are dishonorable? I think not.

The honor of dishonor is connected. Whether this will honor the Lord or whether it will dishonor the Lord. Not your own honor but His honor.

If we are earthen and wooden vessels, we dishonor the Lord. Why? Because we do not do His will. We are not serviceable to the Master.

We are not sanctified. But if we are gold and silver vessels, we honor the Lord. Suitable for the Master's use.

But dear brothers and sisters, naturally speaking, we are all wooden and earthen vessels. That's what we were. It is the grace of God that delivers us from ourselves.

The old man was crucified. Our flesh with His passion and lust had been crucified together with Christ. We are willing to deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow Him.

We dare not have confidence in ourselves. We allow Him, allow His grace to work in us, to transform us. Brothers and sisters, that is what is meant here.

Withdraw from iniquity. That is what is meant here. Purify yourself from these.

It simply means you will not be contented just to live by your own lives. Be contented to do things of God on your own strength. You are willing to deny yourself.

You do not want to be a vessel to dishonor. You purify yourself. The word here is purify yourself.

You have to take the initiative. You have to have the will to do that. By the grace of God, you see it.

For His reason, for His honor, you want to do it. Brothers and sisters, this is the way of the cross. It's a must.

And this is what is meant by purify yourself from these. It is not to separate yourself physically from other brothers and sisters. No.

It is an inward separation. Other people may. You cannot.

You are bound to the Lord. And if you do that, you will become a vessel to honor. It is grace.

Nobody can boast of it. So the Bible says, He shall be a vessel. It's up to you.

God's grace is there. The redemption of Christ is there. The power of the Holy Spirit is there.

Now it's up to you. Are you contented to be a vessel to dishonor, earthen and wooden? Or you have that holy dissatisfaction? No. I must be a vessel to honor God.

It's up to you. What do you mean by a vessel to honor? It is explained here. Sanctified.

Sanctified simply means separated from everything devoted purely. That is sanctification. Sanctification is the work of God.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit. But sanctification is also our responsibility. So when you are purifying yourself from these earthen vessels inwardly, in your spirit, you are sanctified.

And being sanctified, that is not the goal. Serviceable. That is what a vessel is for.

Serviceable to the Master. Not to yourself. Not to anybody else.

To the Master. Are we serviceable, prepared for everything? In the Bible, good work always means one thing. God's will.

That is good work. Anything that is good in human eyes, but not in God's will, it is lawlessness. Remember this.

And when you are so purifying yourself from these, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work, whatever the Lord's will is, you are available. God can use you. Dear brothers and sisters, and then, finally, an exhortation.

Flee, but use for lust, flee, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. We are all exhorted to flee from useful lust. What are these useful lusts? What are the lusts that are especially open to the young people? I do not say the older ones are completely delivered from it, but what are these useful lusts? You go to 1 John chapter 2, and there it says, young man, you are strong in the Lord.

You overcome because the word of God is in you. Love not the world, nor the things of the world, for the things of the world are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These are the things of the world.

If you love the world, the love of the Father is not in you. The world and all its things are passing. Dear brothers and sisters, the Bible says flee from useful lusts.

Do not be so foolish as to think you are strong enough to court it. You can go into it and not be tempted by it. No one can do that.

The Bible says flee. Flee from useful lusts as flee from a serpent. How we need to be delivered from the world.

Older brothers and sisters, we are not exempted. We need to take this word in heart. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added to you.

Do not go for these things of the world. They are changing. They are passing.

They do not last. But we live for eternity, not for today. Flee from useful lusts.

That's negative. And then the positive. Seek.

Pursue. We need to pursue. Brothers and sisters, we cannot afford to be complacent.

Especially we are living in the last days. How can we just lay back and say there is still time? The Lord is not coming yet. Who knows? He may come today.

He may come in a time that we are not ready. Older brothers and sisters, wake up. We are so laid back.

We are so occupied with the things of this world. We have our own interest. These things first.

God's things next or last. This is time that we should gird up our loins. Be diligent.

Seeking things eternal. Lay a hold on eternal life. Pursue.

Pursue is with effort. You have to apply yourself. Force yourself.

Stretch yourself. Just like Paul says. He is stretching out towards a goal.

The high calling. Are we doing that? Pursue. What do we pursue? Righteousness.

Faith. Love. Peace.

Not as virtues but as the character. Pursue Christ. Win Christ.

Gain Christ. May that be our passion. We cannot go alone.

We need our brothers and sisters. So pursue with those that call upon the name of the Lord out of a pure heart. The Lord is looking for purity.

No mixed motive. Purely for Him. Nothing for ourselves.

Thank God He has His hidden ones everywhere. You can find them. Pursue with them.

May we be those who call upon the Lord with a pure heart. This is the day of impurity. A day of mixture.

A day of compromise. But the Lord's calling, the Lord's desire is purity. Purely.

So dear brothers and sisters, when I meditated on this portion, I was greatly helped. I repented before the Lord. I looked for His mercy and I warned dear brothers and sisters, let us seek the Lord exclusively.

Purely. He is the only one who is dependable. Who never changes.

You can trust Him for your eternity. Let us pray. Dear Lord, when you look upon will we break your heart or will we share your heart? Speak to us.

Do not let us go. Do not allow us to drift anymore. Lord, wake us up.

That we may count all things but dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Lord, we want to win thee. To gain thee.

Because thou art worthy.

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