

# Pursuing Christ

by Stephen Kaung

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of pursuing a personal and mature relationship with Christ amidst worldly distractions and the support of the church community.*

**Duration:** 1:13:29

**Scripture:** Matthew 7:13, Romans 11:29, Philippians 3:15

**Topics:** "Christ"

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## Description

In this sermon, Paul encourages believers to have the mind of Christ and to be open to God's revelation. He emphasizes that each person's journey with God is unique and that comparing oneself to others should not lead to discouragement. Paul also addresses the concept of the gift of God, stating that once given, it is not taken back, but warns against misinterpreting this as a license for destructive behavior. He concludes by urging believers to have a personal and intense pursuit of Christ, being completely captivated by His glory and love.

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## Transcript

Will you please turn to Philippians chapter 3. We will read from verse 15 through verse 21. Philippians chapter 3 verse 15. As many therefore as are perfect let us be thus minded and if you are any otherwise minded this also God shall reveal to you.

But whereto we have attained let us walk in the same steps. Be imitators altogether of me brethren and fix your eyes on those walking thus as you have us for a model. For many walk of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ whose end is destruction, whose God is the belly and their glory in their shame who mine earthly things.

For our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens from which also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as savior who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory according to the working of the power which he has even to subdue all things to himself. Let us pray. Dear Lord we want to thank thee for bringing us to this last full day of ministry.

Thou has been faithful, thou has been good to us. It is the prayer of our hearts that whatever thou has predetermined, prepared, revealed by thy spirit to us will become reality in each of our lives. Dear Lord we do not want to miss thy purpose.

We do not want to miss anything that comes short of thy glory. We praise and thank thee thou the Lord of glory and thou will lead many sons into glory. This is thy will and Lord by thy grace we will pursue that mark.

We commit this time into thy hands. We look not to man, we look to thee. Speak O Lord, thy servants heareth.

We ask in thy precious name. Amen. We are sharing together on this matter of towards the mark.

We are talking about how do we pursue after this mark. And dear brothers and sisters of course before we know the Lord Jesus we were pursuing after something. We were pursuing something that we thought it will give us satisfaction, fullness, joy.

But we find out one thing, that whatever we might pursue after, it might give us a temporary pleasure. It costs us lots of labors and vexations, but we discover all is vanity. Vanity of vanities.

But we do praise and thank the Lord that he really have mercy upon us and he deliver us from such pursuit. He revealed himself to us as our savior. He turned us around.

Instead of pursuing after the things under the sun, he presses us to pursue after the thing in heaven. And we have mentioned again and again that what we pursue is none other than a person. A living person.

The son of God. The son of man. One who has accomplished salvation for us and one who is leading us into glory.

It is Christ Jesus whom we are pursuing. In the beginning we only knew of what he had done for us. It was tremendous how he gave himself on the cross to bear the sins, our sins, upon his own body.

How he shed his blood for the remission of our sins, that we may receive eternal life. What grace, what tremendous salvation this is. But brothers and sisters, the day will come when we realize that we are no longer after his work.

Indeed, we are still enjoying what he had done for us. And we are thankful. But instead of seeking after blessing, we seek the Lord himself.

And this was the experience of the apostle Paul. He said, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, I counted all things but trust. And brothers and sisters, we need to have a vision of our Lord Jesus.

He is more than our savior. He is our Lord. We are not seeking him for ourselves.

That we may receive all blessings, that's not what we are after. We are constrained by his love. And we are seeking to know him.

Because to know him is eternal life. Brothers and sisters, is this what we are pursuing today? Step by step. He will lead us into himself.

But brothers and sisters, this pursuing Christ is intensely personal. In other words, nobody can pursue Christ for you. In a very real sense, there is no second generation.

Everyone must be of the first generation. And that is to say, each and every one of us must one day see the glory of Christ and be completely taken up. You know, there is a word called, once caught, no escape.

One day when the vision of Christ, when the glory of the Lord appear to you, your whole being is being caught. And there will be no escape. This must be true with each and every one of us.

You have to be so arrested by the loveliness of Christ. His love will so constrain you that you will really forget everything to follow him. Just as Peter says, where should we go? Whom should we go to? You have the words of eternal life.

We know that you are the son of God. Dear brothers and sisters, are you stuck with Christ in such a way? Are you still looking around, looking after things other than our Lord Jesus? Or are your whole being taken up by the excellency of his knowledge? So in a sense, brothers and sisters, this pursuing after the Lord is most personal. It is a personal experience.

You have to experience yourself. It is more than a mental understanding or knowledge. It is a being caught by the Lord Jesus.

And then you will pursue him with gladness. And brothers and sisters, we have mentioned again and again, this pursuing after Christ is not an easy thing. When our Lord Jesus said, come and follow me, it demands that we leave all and follow him.

In the most spiritual sense, in the very heart, our very heart, when our Lord Jesus said, come and follow me, there is no way to follow him, except by leaving all and follow him. Humanly, this is impossible. But thank God, this is possible with him.

He has sufficient grace. He has that excellent knowledge, beauty, that has so attracted us that we cannot but go on and pursue after him. When you pursue after Christ, actually you are traveling in the way of the cross, because you are going against current.

The current of this world goes one way, and in following Christ, you have to go against it. But this is life. If a fish is dead, it follows the current, flows with it.

But if a fish is alive, it swims against the current. There is life there, resurrection life there, power there. And by the grace of God, you're well able to rise above all the obstacles that may be on your way.

Oftentimes, when you are really pursuing Christ, you will find that you're not only against the current, of the world as it is, but you are actually pursuing, running against the current of the so-called religious world. If you really love the Lord, you will be misunderstood, not only by people of the world, but even by religious people. They may think you are too extreme.

They couldn't understand you. When our Lord Jesus was on earth, he is the heavenly man upon this earth. How he was misunderstood, how he was persecuted, and how he was rejected.

And brothers and sisters, this way of the cross is a lonely way. Oftentimes, you will find that you are the only person, as it were, in this world, walking this way. It is intensely personal.

But thank God, at the same time, you will find it is extremely cooperative. It is true that so far as your experience goes, you may feel that you are the only person who pursues Christ. But do not forget, that this pursuing is a corporate thing.

We are pursuing together. Why is it so? Our brother already mentioned last night, because we are the body of Christ, and you are only one member of that body. Our Lord Jesus, the head, he is the fullness of

the Godhead.

All the riches of God, whatever you can think of what God is, and what God has, they are all bodily dwelt in Christ. It is just impossible for any one person to contain all his riches. It takes a body to contain all the fullness of the Godhead.

We remember in Ephesians chapter one, how God raised Christ from the dead. And how he was ascended to the throne in the heavenlies. How he was above every principalities and authorities and powers.

How God put everything under his feet, and God has made him head over all things. Listen, to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all and in all. So dear brothers and sisters, even though in our personal experience, you may find you are the only one, and yet in the will of God, you find there are numberless people, all members of the body of Christ, who are going the same way.

One member is limited in his capacity. We cannot limit Christ. We will have his fullness within our limited capacity.

But his fullness overflows to all the members of the body of Christ. You learn something of Christ. I learned something of Christ.

He is everything to me. He becomes everything to you. And when you add all believers, all who are members of his body, then you find it is the fullness.

So brothers and sisters, in this pursuing Christ, even though you may feel you are alone, and yet there are multitudes and multitudes, countless people who are cheering us, it is corporate. Why? Because the will of God, the purpose of God, the eternal purpose of God is whom he has foreknown. He has predestinated to be conformed to his son, that his son might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Our Lord Jesus is to lead many sons into glory. So do not forget that in this pursuing of Christ, you have to be involved personally. And yet, you are actually pursuing together with many brothers and sisters.

We are all pursuing after Christ. Now we come to Philippians chapter 3, verse 15. As many therefore as are perfect, let us be thus minded.

Thank God, the Apostle Paul, he gave to us his personal experience of his pursuit of Christ. This in no way he was trying to show off himself. We remember that when God gave him revelation at one time, he said it was after 14 years that he began to share with his brothers and sisters.

He was not a man who tried to boast of himself. But thank God he was humble enough to tell us what happened to him in his pursuit of Christ, not to show off himself, but to encourage us. So he said, as many therefore as are perfect, let us be thus minded.

Now here you'll find this word perfect. The word perfect in the scripture, it doesn't mean seamless perfection. No one is seamless perfect, except one person, our Lord Jesus.

He is the only one who does not know sin. Not only not know, not committing sin, but he doesn't know what sin is. He is above that.

He is seamless perfect. And because he is seamless perfect, he is qualified to be made sin for us, that we might have the righteousness of God. But aside from our Lord Jesus, even with us believers, even though you may be believing him for 60, 70 years, you are not seamless perfect.

So the perfect in the scripture doesn't mean seamless perfect. It means matured, grow up. Brothers and sisters, you'll find the same word in 1 Corinthians chapter 2. You remember Paul, he went to Corinth.

Before he went there, he made a determination. You know Corinth at that time was a very cultured city. The Corinthians were famous for their eloquence, and they were all also famous for their immorality.

So before Paul went to Corinth, he made a determination before God that after he arrived there, he will know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. The cross of our Lord Jesus, how he bore our sins, how he became a substitute for us, how he redeemed us from all our sins, how he saved us. Paul went there, labored for a year and a half among them.

But during all those times, he kept back something from them. In 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 6, he says, but among the perfect, we talk about wisdom. Not the wisdom of this world, but God's wisdom in a mystery.

You know, he couldn't share with the Corinthian believers about this wisdom of God. Why? Because they remain as babes after they believe in the Lord Jesus, and they are really saved. And yet they still live according to their flesh.

That's babyhood. A baby looks very lovely, but he wants everything for himself. Very self-centered.

He does not mind if at midnight he cried to disturb other people. When he was hungry, he wanted right at once, if you are a little slow, he cried. And the Corinthian believers are like that.

Now, dear brothers and sisters, this is not God's purpose. God's purpose is not to have babies alone. God's purpose is to have sons, grown up, people matured, who are able to bear responsibility, who is not self-centered, but Christ-centered.

Because this is the will of God. Brothers and sisters, we cannot emphasize too much. On the contrary, we find that it is being neglected.

To many Christians, they think by being saved from their sins, they have the passport to heaven, and that is all. They live in this world afterwards, waiting to be fed, satisfy their own lust. And that's it.

It is a very wrong concept, thinking that we as Christians could remain as babes and just live for ourselves. This is not what God save us for. This is not the will of God towards us.

He saves us in order to lead many sons into glory, to share his responsibility with him, to rule with him. That is the will of God. But unfortunately, unfortunately, we find that there are so many who believe in the Lord Jesus, and their whole life afterwards are just wanting something from Christ for himself.

They never grew up. They can only drink milk, because milk is like pre-digested food. Somebody has digested it for you.

You have not the facilities to digest it. You cannot eat solid food. That is to say, you have to exercise yourselves in order to digest solid food.

You know, just like what we mentioned in chapter 6 of John. These people, they look after Christ for food. When Christ tried to lead them heavenward, they say it is too hard, and they left him.

You know, dear brothers and sisters, it is a matter of great tragedy that among Christians today, there are more babies than grown up. Christians should be alike. God has delivered us out of this world, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love.

We who believe in the Lord Jesus, who receive the same life, resurrection life, we shall all arrive at the goal. And the goal is that Christ may be formed in us. We may be conformed to him.

We become his brethren. He is the firstborn among many sons. Dear brothers and sisters, this is the will of God.

Are we really seeking to fulfill that will? Or are we just contented to sit back and say, I'm saved after all. I'm going to heaven after all. Are you just satisfied with that? Contented with that? You may, but Christ is hurt, just like your parents.

When the baby was born, they were so happy. They sacrificed everything for that baby. What was their hope? They hoped that the baby would grow up, and bear responsibility, and be a man or a woman.

But if the child never grows up, what a sadness, a tragedy, a waste that is. And if the earthly parents feel that way, how much more our Heavenly Father will be hurt for our not growing up. Now it is true, if we can remain babes, no responsibility, taken care of by everybody, that seems to be very easy.

But brothers and sisters, that's tragic. Among Christians, there should be no difference. We differ from this world, people of this world, and people of God.

But unfortunately, you find in the very Word of God, that Christians now are divided into two groups. One, the imperfect, the other, the perfect. One, the babes in Christ.

The other, the grown-up sons of God. One, spiritual Christians. The other, carnal Christians.

Now this division should never be there. According to the will of God, this is not so. But our condition is such, that it seems that there are so many in the first class, the imperfect, the babes, the carnal, and very few in the second class, the perfect, the grown-up, the spiritual.

Now it is true that to grow up, there is the growing pain you have to go through. But how many shrink from pain and remain as babes? You know, in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, Paul said, among the perfect, we speak of God's wisdom. Not just initial salvation, but the full counsel of God.

It is God's wisdom in a mystery. That is to say, it has to be revealed. If it's not revealed, nobody will know it.

It is God's wisdom in a mystery formed before the ages. Even before God began to create the heavens and the earth, God already had this in his mind. In other words, while he has been working all these times, he has the one purpose in view.

The Bible said, it is predetermined before the ages for our glory. Will you jump for joy thinking that what God has in mind for us is not merely saved, but glory? Now, what is glory? Glory is a word that is very difficult to define. But you find in the Bible, whenever God appears, there is glory.

Or as Brother Spock said, when God is satisfied, then glory appears. Dear brothers and sisters, what is glory? God is glory. But when we are being transformed and conformed to the image of God's Son, then there is glory.

That is why our Lord is to lead many sons into glory. That is the mind of God. And this is something that eyes have not seen, ears have not heard, and has never come into any human mind.

But it is God who prepared all these for those who love him. Not only he prepared it, but thank God he revealed it. He reveals this to his own.

By the Holy Spirit, dear brothers and sisters, do we have the mind of Christ? This is the mind of Christ. And Paul said, we have the mind of Christ. Because the Holy Spirit, who knows the depths of God, explained it.

So, brothers and sisters, do not be contented to remain as babes. You may think that being a babe, you have an easy time. But what a loss! As many, therefore, as are perfect.

Let us be thus-minded. Do you have this mindset in you? Are you minding this? That you may know him, that you may know the power of his resurrection, that you may fellowship with his sufferings, that you may be conformed to his death, and you may arrive at the out-resurrection from among them. You possess what he has possessed you.

This is the testimony of Paul. And he is trying to encourage every one of us. Be thus-minded.

If you are so-minded, you're on the right track. Go on. And he said, and if any, if, if you're any otherwise-minded, this also God shall reveal it.

Oh, dear brothers and sisters, hopefully you are not otherwise-minded. You have your own mind instead of mind of Christ. If you are, Paul said, God will reveal this.

May God reveal this to each and every one of us. But of course, when we are pursuing, we have different steps. Some may be in the first step.

Some may have gone a little further. And because you may be in the first step, and you look at others who are in the second or third or more steps, don't be discouraged. Do not think that you will never arrive there.

And then you stop. Don't do that. In whatever step you are, remain faithful and press on.

This is what we ought to do. Thank God. There are many brothers and sisters throughout the centuries and even in our time that are pursuing with passion after Christ.

Many have already arrived. Even the apostle Paul, when he wrote 2 Timothy before his martyrdom, he knew he had arrived. And the crown of righteousness was waiting for him, but not only for him, but for all who loved the appearing.

Brothers and sisters, we have witnesses surrounding us, as you'll find in Hebrews chapter 12. In chapter 11, we find there is a whole list of those who are pursued, who are attracted by the glory of God, and they follow, and they have arrived. They have the witness given to them.

But the Bible says they will not be perfected. They are waiting for us because the body is of many members, not just one member. So, dear brothers and sisters, take courage and press on.

Verse 18. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross, the apostle Paul gave us a warning. He warned about this often, but when he wrote this letter, it was a tear of sympathy.

He was not judging how he hoped, how he labored, how he loved to see that all those who believe in the Lord will arrive, will pursue, will be thus minded. But he discovered they are still many many who are otherwise. They might think they were clever, avoiding the cross, and will get to heaven.

But Paul knew the consequence. He wept for them. He wept for the imperfect.

He wept for the babes. He wept for the carnal believers. He longed that they will grow up, they will be spiritual, they will arrive at the goal, the purpose of God, because this is God's will.

But when people refuse to do that, he warned them. He said, they are the enemies of the cross. Can you imagine that a believer, one who has accepted the work of the cross for them, that they become enemies of the cross of Christ.

Why? Because they refuse to accept the cross to work in them, for them, yes, not in them. How serious this is, that we believers, we have enjoyed the grace, the blessing of the Lord, the finished work of Christ, and yet we can become enemies of the cross of Christ. You know, before when I read this, I thought it refers to unbelievers.

But the more I read it, the more I realize this is speaking to Christians. Christians, you can be enemy of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction. Am I speaking that you can lose your eternal life? You can be saved and unsaved again? Is the gift of God conditional? If you behave, you retain it.

If you don't behave, he takes it back. Is that gift? The Bible says the gift of God knows no repentance. Once he freely gave to you, he will never take it back.

But what does it mean? Whose end is destruction. It cannot refer to eternal destruction, but that would be against God's own word, his nature, his faithfulness. Thank God.

But do you remember when you read the Sermon on the Mount? In Matthew chapter 5, when the crowds came to the Lord, the Lord retreated to the mountain. And then his disciples came to him, and he opened his mouth and taught them. So the Sermon on the Mount is not for unbelievers.

It's for his disciples. And yet, in Matthew chapter 7, verse 13, go into the narrow gate, but many are going into the broad, wide gate, broad way. But this broad way leads to destruction.

Many are in it. Very few even find the narrow gate, the straight way. But it leads to, brothers and sisters, the destruction here does not refer to eternal perishing.

The destruction here refers to believers. If you try to walk the broad way, it's easy. Many are there, but it leads away from the mark, and you lose God's purpose for you.

As the Bible says, to reign with Christ for a thousand years, for the sake of a few years of easing your soul, whose God is the belly, and their glory in their shame. In actuality, their God is the belly. That is to say,

they worship themselves, satisfy themselves, seeking for themselves, and they consider their shame as glory.

They make a boast of it, boast in the flesh. Look, what an easy life I have. I have all the blessings, prosperity, and you get all the suffering.

You are cursed by God, and I'm blessed. Ah, your mind earthly. Brothers and sisters, this description should not be applied to Christians, but they do.

So, dear brothers and sisters, where are you? Are you dust-minded, or are you otherwise minded? Our mind determines our destiny. Are you seeking Christ or are you seeking self? Oh, brothers and sisters, if you otherwise might weep for yourselves, you remember the ten virgins, five virgins who have extra oil, life governed by the Spirit? They pay their cost, and when the bridegroom comes, they welcome him and enter into the marriage feast. But the five foolish virgins, yes, they are virgins.

They have been cleansed by the blood of the Lord Jesus. Yes, they have their lamp, and they have their oil. In other words, they have the indwelling Holy Spirit, but in their extra vessel, no oil.

Filled with other things, things of this world that they think are treasures. And when the bridegroom comes, their lamp is going up, and they are kept in darkness. Brothers and sisters, we believe the Lord is coming.

He can come at any time. The Bible says he will come as a thief. Do you think a thief will blow a trumpet and say, I'm coming? Strangely, a thief knows the exact time when you are not watching.

And what will the thief steal away? Will the thief come and steal your garbage? I hope they will come every night. But strangely, a thief always knows where your treasure box is. Without your knowing, he comes and goes, but something goes with him.

Brothers and sisters, our Lord Jesus will come as a thief. He will steal away the treasure of his heart, but those who remain, thank God, the Apostle Paul ends with a positive note. He said, you know, in this version, verse 18 and 19, all in parentheses.

In other words, this is something inserted by the Spirit of God. But not really is what the Spirit of God is trying to say. Because he tried to encourage us, not to discourage us.

But a warning has to be given. So it's put in parentheses. So the thought continues on.

For our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens. Paul reminds us that our citizenship is in heaven. Our association is in heaven.

Now, who is in heaven? In Colossians chapter 3 says, think of the things above, where Christ is seated. And we are seated with him in the heavenlies. So brothers and sisters, don't forget, even though we are still on earth, and we are still traveling, we are still running, we are still pursuing, but our citizenship, our association, our relationship, we belong to heaven, where Christ is.

He is our life, and we are running, just like Enoch. He walked with God for 300 years, and God took him. So here you'll find, if you pursue him as the mark, what will be the result? Even this mortal body, corruptible body, this body of humiliation, when he shall return, he will transform it, conform it to his body of glory.

And he has the power to do it. And he will do it. So dear brothers and sisters, what an encouragement.

May we all, by the grace of God, forgetting what is behind, stretching forward, pursuing with passion, with love for our Lord Jesus. He is worthy. Let us pray.

Dear Lord, we do want to thank thee for calling us. Thy calling is an all-high calling. Thou art there waiting for us.

Thou art encouraging us. Thou hast told us to look off everything unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. O Lord, be it so by thy grace to every one of us here, not for ourselves, but for thee, we ask in thy precious name.

Amen.

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