

# Return to Christ - the Need to Return

by Stephen Kaung

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*The sermon emphasizes the need to return to Christ, examining our hearts and seeking Him with all our hearts to fulfill God's purpose for our lives.*

**Duration:** 1:03:28

**Scripture:** Ephesians 1:9

**Topics:** "Repentance"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the concept of 'summing up in Christ Jesus.' He explains that this phrase means gathering together or head up, and it is God's eternal will that all things should be summed up in Christ. The speaker draws a parallel between the commandments of God, which are all summed up in the word love, and the summing up of all things in Christ. He highlights that God created all things in Christ, by Christ, and for Christ. The sermon also touches on the history of the children of Israel and their tendency to rebel against God despite His love and care for them.

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## Transcript

Will you please turn to Ephesians, the letter to the Ephesians, chapter 1, verses 9 and 10. Ephesians, chapter 1, verses 9 and 10. Having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself for the administration of the fullness of time, to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth, the prophet Hosea.

Hosea, chapter 6, the first three verses. Come and let us return unto Jehovah, for he has torn and he will heal us. He has smitten and he will bind us up.

After two days will he revive us. On the third day he will raise us up and we shall live before his face. And we shall know, we shall follow on to know Jehovah.

His going is assured as the morning dawn and he will come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain which watereth the earth. 1 Peter, 1 Peter, chapter 2, verse 25. 1 Peter, chapter 2, verse 25.

For ye were going away astray as sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls. Let's have a word of prayer. Dear Lord, as we meet in thy presence, we do look to thee to speak to us.

These are the days that thy words are few. There is such a hunger for thy word. So, Lord, we pray that thou will speak to each one of us.

Give us the spirit of wisdom and understanding that we may know thee in a living, real way. Lord, we desperately need thee in this last hour. Hear our cry.

We ask in thy precious name. Amen. We thank God for giving us this year the theme of summing up all things in Christ.

I think there is no better theme than this in this last hour. It is the eternal will of God that all things should be summed up in Christ Jesus. Our brother last night had already mentioned that this summing up or gathering together or head up actually means the same thing.

Even before the foundation of the world, God, according to his good pleasure, He has purpose, this purpose in himself. And that purpose is that all things should sum up in Christ. Things in the heavens and things upon the earth.

Our brother has already mentioned that in Romans chapter 13, you have the same word, sum up. And probably that word give us the cue to understand what it means by summing up. Now, this morning, I feel I would like to reinforce what our brother has already mentioned last night.

Because I do feel the importance of really understand what this summing up in Christ Jesus really means. There are many commandments, and yet all these commandments of God, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not covet. Now, all these commandments are summed up in one word, and that word is love.

Because love is the whole law. In other words, all these commandments come to us in letter, but the letter kills. The spirit behind all these commandments is love, and the spirit quickens.

Love is the spirit, the reality behind all God's commandment. And the same thing is true here. God created all things, things in the heavens and things upon the earth.

But these are things, the spirit, the reality behind all these things is Christ. In other words, when God created all things, He created all things in Christ, by Christ, and for Christ. In other words, when He created all things, all things are created out of Christ.

All things are expressions of Christ. All things are supposed to glorify Christ. They are for Him, and that is the reason behind all things.

Our Lord Jesus is the reality of all things, the destiny of all things, the spirit of all things. So, summing up all things in Christ simply means that everything will exhibit the glory of Christ. That is the only reason for all things, the real meaning of all things.

Everything will express something of Christ, because that is the will of God. Now, why is it you're finding efficiency, it says, in the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, as if it is something that is not there yet? You have to wait until the fullness of time, and then all things begin to exhibit Christ, to glorify Christ, to speak nothing but Christ. Now, that tells us something had happened, because when God created all things, all things are summed up in Christ.

All things manifest His glory. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament show His handiwork, and man is the masterpiece of God's creation, created according to His image and after His likeness. That is the beginning.

That is the will of God. Everything will speak of Christ, because He is the center, the focus of God's eternal purpose. The Bible tells us that all things subsist, all creations, all things subsist in Him.

In other words, all things find its cohesion in Him, gathered together in Him. But unfortunately, something happened. All things began to fall away from Christ, disintegrated, entering into emptiness and corruption, because sin has entered into this world.

First, we have the rebelling of the archangels, and then we have the fall of man. All things come under corruption. They do not represent the glory of Christ anymore.

All things rebel against Christ. They have lost their meaning, their center, but thank God, His purpose never fails. Once He purposed, He will accomplish.

As a matter of fact, in God's heart, in this matter of summing up all things in Christ, man has a very important part in it. In the first place, when God created man, according to His image, after His likeness, why? Because God wants to use man as His instrument to bring all things back to the feet of Christ. That's why you find after He created Adam and Eve, He put them in the Garden of Eden, and He said, subdue all things.

All things are not in their right place. Now, you are commissioned to subdue, to bring back all things to the feet of Christ, that Christ may be manifested, expressed, glorified in all things. But the first man fell.

God sent His only beloved Son into this world to be aware, and as the Son of Man, He subdued all things to God. On Calvary's cross, our Lord Jesus subdued everything and bring them back to God. But He wants His redeemed people to have a part in this tremendous mission.

As a matter of fact, this is the greatest mission God has commissioned His redeemed people. We as His redeemed people, brothers and sisters, it is God's will that we be the instrument in His hand to apply the victory of Christ over all things, first in our own lives, and then bring all things to the feet of Christ Jesus. A tremendous responsibility.

That is the reason why we feel, in this conference, we would like to consider together before the Lord very seriously on this matter of summing up all things in Christ. Because we, the redeemed of the Lord, play a very important part in it. If it does not happen to us first, it will never happen to all things.

We have to take the lead. God has to do this work in us first, and then, through us, bring all things to the feet of Christ. That is how important it is.

So I do hope that, brothers and sisters, that when we gather together these days, it is not something just for us to talk about as a theme, hear something, and then forget everything. It is something that should really enter into our very being and transform us from now on, by the grace of God. That's our prayer.

Now, our brother Dana's burden is presenting Christ, and what is assigned to me is return, returning to Christ. And our brother Lance will speak on ready for Christ. So, brothers and sisters, returning to Christ, by this very phrase, it implies that we are not where we should be.

Because if we are where we should be in the will of God, then there is no reason to return. So it presupposes already that something is not too right in us. A departure, a drifting away from Christ.

You know, as you read the Word of God, God said to say, from the very earliest day of human history, there was the need to return. Adam and Eve were put in the Garden of Eden, the Garden of Pleasure. God came to fellowship with them.

We do not know for how long. And then, when God came, man hid themselves among the trees. They could not face God.

And God said, Adam, where are you? It is God's cry to man, return, return to me. In the history of the children of Israel, God redeemed his people out of slavery. Bring them unto himself.

God revealed himself to them, spoke to them, gave them the laws, that they might be his peculiar people. A nation of priests to serve God and his purpose. But look at their history.

Even when they were in the wilderness, in spite of all that God has done for them, God revealed to them how loving, how caring is God. And yet, they tempted God ten times. They rebelled against God to such an extent that the first generation died.

In the wilderness. In the mercy of God, God allowed the second generation to enter into the promised land. But look at their history.

Not long after Joshua passed away, and the first generation of elders who knew God passed away, very quickly, they departed. During the time of the judges is a sad, tragic history. God raised up judges to relieve them for a time.

But after that judge died, they went back to their old ways. They went back to their old ways. They went back to their old ways.

During the time of the kings, God has to send his prophets to call them back. You know, brothers and sisters, the prophetic voice of all these prophets that God raised up for his people, they all have one message. Return.

Turn back. Do not be stubborn. Stiff-necked.

Hard-hearted. God wants you back. Think of Hosea.

In the time of Jeroboam, we just read in Hosea chapter six, God called them to return to him. True, God has disciplined them. But why? God disciplined because he loves.

He wants them to come back. He will heal. He will return.

He will revive them. He will raise them up. He will come to them as morning dew, as letter rains.

You can see the heart of God. Later on, God raised up Isaiah. And as you read Isaiah, you'll find again and again, God said, return.

Seek me and you shall find. Even during the time of the last day of Judah, God raised up Jeremiah. He wept, calling the people to return.

And if only they return, God will spare them, because God's heart is for them. But they don't listen. Even after 70 years, by the mercy of God, a remnant returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, to reinstate, as it were, the testimony of God on earth.

But listen to the voice of Malachi. God said, return to me. But they say, shall we return? We see no reason to return.

We are fine. We are all right. Do we not have the synagogue, the temple rebuilt? Do we not have the law read? Even the prophets read? Do we not have prayer in the temple? Do we not have the priest serving? Do we not have the scribes and the Pharisees to teach us the law? We are the most religious people in the world.

Where shall we return? Brothers and sisters, sad history. Very sad. You know, when you come to the New Testament, to me, I think it is rather strange.

Because when you come to the New Testament, the word return, in the sense of returning to God, does not seem to appear very much in the New Testament. First Peter, chapter 2, verse 25, is one of the rare instances. Return to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

But when you read the New Testament, you find another word being used as a word instead of this word return. Maybe it is a more blatant word. Return seems to be too soft.

So you'll find instead the word in the New Testament is repent. A drastic word. Repent.

For 400 years, God was silent to his people. And then suddenly a voice, in the wilderness, John the Baptist. And what is the message? Repent.

For the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh. And this message is for God's people. Not for the world.

Of course, the world needs to repent. But this word is for God's people. Chosen people.

Repent. Do not think that you are right. Do not think that your position is right.

Do not think that you are acceptable in the sight of God. Do not think that you are religious. Therefore, you are perfect.

You are far from it. Repent. Make 120 degrees turning.

Why? For a positive reason. For the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh. The days of playing around is finished.

The days of reality is coming. Be serious about it. You have to be prepared for the coming of the kingdom of the heavens.

Even when our Lord Jesus began his ministry, he gave the same message. Repent. For the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh.

After ministry, so perfectly, for three long years, what's the result? You have ears, but you do not hear. You have eyes, but you do not see. Your hearts are hardened.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how I want to put you under my wings, but you do not. Brothers and sisters, that's God's people. Thank God he raised up a new people, the church, you and me.

We are God's people. He entrusts his own testimony, his name to us. He commissioned us to join with him in completing the work of bringing all things under his feet.

In the beginning, thank God. Look at the early church, how they honored the name of the Lord Jesus. How they continued in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles.

In breaking of bread and in prayers, what powers they exhibit to the world, spiritual power, not soulish power, not worldly power, the power of God, the Holy Spirit. How pure they live. They were called Christians because they are not only followers of Christ, they are like Christ.

Christ has summed them up in himself. They are summed up in Christ. They are head up by Christ because they put themselves under the headship of Christ.

They gather together unto Christ. It is Christ all and all to them. But towards the end of the first century, in Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3, our risen Lord as the high priest of the holy sanctuary, not made of hand, that is to say, he is the minister of the church.

And as he walked among the seven churches in Asia, what did he see? Ephesus, that glorious church that has such a glorious beginning. The mighty word of God, the mighty work of God were manifested in that city. They were a people of first love.

Even when Paul was in Roman prison, writing that letter to the Ephesians, he was able to share with them the whole counsel of God, not withholding anything, not because they are more intelligent than the Colossians, but because they have a heart, whole heart for God. In the end of that letter, Paul said, grace to those who love God with undying love. They love God with undying love.

That's Ephesus. But very soon, if you read Revelation chapter 2, it makes you weep. Awkwardly, everything goes on as usual.

Our Lord said, I know, I know your labor. I know your work. I know your endurance.

I know your knowledge. But where is love behind your labor? Where is faith behind your works? Where is hope behind your endurance? They were, they were not conscious that they have departed. They thought they were still in their first state.

Everything was fine. But our Lord looks upon the heart. He searches the heart.

He knows our innermost feeling. He said, I'm against you. That's a strong word.

I'm against you because you have lost your first love. When you are in your first love, I'm everything to you. You do everything because of me.

You endure because of me. But now, you have lost sight of me. You just go on on your own.

Nobody notice it. You may not see it, but I am hurt, deeply hurt. Unless you repent, do the first work.

Otherwise, I will remove your lampstand. You no longer represent me. Brothers and sisters, sad history.

Look at Laodicea. They even boast, I'm rich. I lack nothing.

I have everything. Neither hot nor cold. Look.

And the Lord was standing outside the door and knocking. Brothers and sisters, the Laodicean church represents, prophetically speaking, the church at the last hour. That is where, where, when we are.

Are we today in this state? We can cheat people. We can even cheat ourselves. But we cannot cheat him.

He knows everything. So the question is, is there the need to return? Brothers and sisters, in the whole Bible, you'll find God calls his people again and again to return. Not only in the Old Testament time, but even in the New Testament time.

But as God's people, I think one thing we have to settle before the Lord. Otherwise, there is no need to continue. This conference.

Every one of us needs to settle this question. Do I have the need to return to Christ? Are we satisfied with our spiritual condition? On the one hand, do we know we are undone? Therefore, we give up. We cannot return.

As if we were saying, God has forsaken us. So we just go on as usual. But remember, God's heart is crying.

Come back. Return. Where are you? God miss you.

Are we in a condition like the Laodiceans? We so deceive ourselves as if there is no need to return. Where shall we return? There will always be two different kinds of reactions. When God calls men to return, you can have either one or the other reaction.

One reaction is, where shall we return? I'm okay. Am I not better than the world? Even though I'm not too different from the world. Do I not still read my Bible? Do I not still pray to fulfill my daily duty? Do I not still go to church? Look, I'm not perfect, but I'm much better than the people in this world.

Yes, when I have important things to do, then I say goodbye to God for a while. But that's usual. Nothing special.

Everybody's doing it. So why cannot I do it? Brothers and sisters, you can take that attitude. Just like the Pharisees and the scribes.

When John the Baptist called for repentance, they have no need for it. They feel all they need is a little improvement. To repent, that's too drastic.

Oh, brothers and sisters, you can take another attitude. When you read the Word of God, you remember Job. At the end, when he saw the glory of God, his self-righteousness were as filthy rags.

He was a righteous man. One man in the world at that time that God can challenge Satan with him. Have you seen my servant Job? Fear God.

Righteous. But there is something in him that is Job, not Christ. His self-righteousness.

God allows Satan to attack him, his friends to test him. He poured out what's within him. I'm righteous.

I can stand before God. Oh, that God will hear me. We will argue.

But brothers and sisters, a sight of the glory of God. God never argued with anyone. He just showed his glory.

That's all. And listen, Job said, I abhor myself. I'm afraid of myself.

I hate myself. I repent in dust and ashes. You remember David, the man after God's own heart, but he sinned.

And then he wrote Psalm 51. Oh, purge me. Give me a clean heart.

If God, you want sacrifice, I will bring it. But you don't want it. All that I can bring to you is a contrite, afflicted heart.

Brothers and sisters, listen to the prayer of Daniel. Strangely, you'll find all these great prayers are in Chapter 9. Daniel 9, Daniel's prayer. He was a man beloved of God, almost perfect.

But how he prayed, repent. You hear the prayer of Ezra, also Ezra 9. The prayer of Nehemiah, Nehemiah 9. All these people, brothers and sisters, that's the prayer of returning. Returning to God.

So you have a choice today. Oh, brothers and sisters, the greatest problem among us is because we see others. We see ourselves, but we do not see Christ.

A glimpse and a period, a revelation, a vision of Christ will bring us to our knees, fall upon our face. Like Daniel said, my beauty turned into corruption. I need to return.

Let me ask you a question. I ask this to myself, is my life summed up in Christ? Is my whole being gathered together, gathered up in Christ? My spirit and soul and body, my feeling, my emotion, my thought, my opinion, my will, all summed up in Christ, united together unto him? Am I? Am I? Is Christ first in my life? When anything happens, what is my first thought, my first consideration? Am I still willing to forsake all and follow him? Have I changed? Have I reserved something back? When I serve him, do I serve him out of love or out of compulsion, of duty? Is Christ all and in all to me? Where in my life, in any area of my life, Christ is standing at the door and knocking? Brothers and sisters, when I ask myself this question, how can I answer? Lord, have mercy upon me. Restore me to yourself.

That's my heart cry. And brothers and sisters, may this be the heart cry of every one of us here. He will revive.

He will raise us up. He will come to us as a morning dew, as a latter rain. Oh, God, have mercy upon us.

Dear Lord, do not allow us to be so stubborn, so deceived, as to think that we have nothing, nowhere to return. Lord, may thy spirit search each of our hearts. Open up our secret places and bring us to repentance.

Thank God, you are our hope. Christ in you, the hope of glory. Praise the Lord.

In thy precious name, Amen.

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