

# The Cross and the Flesh, 3 of 3

by Stephen Kaung

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*The sermon emphasizes the necessity of dying to self through the cross to fulfill God's eternal purpose and manifest Christ's life within us.*

**Duration:** 1:28:46

**Scripture:** Genesis 2:7, Matthew 17:4-5, John 12:24-26, 2 Corinthians 4:9-10

**Topics:** "Flesh"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of Jesus as the grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies in order to bear much fruit. He emphasizes that Jesus came into the world to demonstrate what man should be and to show the way to eternal life. The preacher also mentions a conversation between Jesus, Moses, and Elijah about Jesus' exit from the world, indicating that Jesus' death was necessary for his life to be released and given to all. The sermon concludes with a reminder that in order to experience the life of Christ in us, our own self must go through a process of dying to self.

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## Transcript

Will you please turn to the Gospel according to John. John chapter 12. We'll read from verse 24 to verse 26.

John chapter 12, verse 24. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die. It abides alone, but if it die, it bears much fruit.

He that loves his life shall lose it, and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. He that loves his life shall lose it, and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. Let's have a word of prayer.

Dear Lord, our hearts bow before Thee. Thou has once again exhibited Thy great love towards us. Thou has placed before us the cross and You crucified.

Dear Lord, Thy love has constrained us. There is only one way before us. We must follow Thee.

Do show us once again the way of following Thee. We want to follow Thee as close as possible. Deliver us from the world.

Deliver us from the law. And deliver us from our flesh. That our whole being may be possessed by Thee.

May Thy name be honored in us. Prepare us for Thy return. Lord, we long to see Thee.

Lord, we long to see Thee. Lord, we ask Thee to come quickly. In Thy precious name we pray.

We thank the Lord for gathering us together these days. Even though we seem to be talking much about the cross, but, brothers and sisters, we must remember that it is Him crucified. He is the one who makes the cross what it is today.

The cross is only a way, a means. The only way, the prescribed way of God. And this way will lead us to Christ.

This way will lead us to the eternal purpose of God. So what should be always before us is God's eternal purpose. Christ and His church.

So may the Lord through these days, by going in the way of the cross, that we may really arrive at God's eternal purpose. We talk about the cross and the world. Why must we be delivered from the world? That Christ may be our world.

We talk about the cross and the law. Why? That Christ, His grace, may be our law. And we talk about the cross and the flesh.

Why must we be delivered from our flesh? Why cannot be ourselves? It is because we want Christ to be all and all to us. So dear brothers and sisters, let us have Christ always before our eyes. And as we look steadfastly upon Christ, He will give us strength to take up our cross and follow Him.

We first talk about the cross and the old man. The old man is Adam. But that Adam is a corporate person.

All who were born into this world are in Adam. This was our position before. But thank God, when our Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross, the Bible tells us that our old man was crucified with Him.

Thus we are delivered from the power of sin. That we may be able to serve our God. This is a position that we have in Christ Jesus.

We today are no longer in Adam. We are in Christ Jesus. And because we are in Christ Jesus, we were dead to sin and made alive unto God.

This is a position that we must always maintain by faith. And then we talk about the cross and the flesh. From our position, we now come to our condition.

From the eternal truth, we now come into experience in the Holy Spirit. They who are of the Christ have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts. We know that the deeds of the flesh, the works of the flesh are very manifest.

We know that the deeds of the flesh and the works of the flesh are very manifest. They can easily be seen. But thank God, those who are in Christ Jesus, they will walk by the Holy Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit will strive against the flesh. And deliver us from our flesh. That we may live according to the Spirit.

And there will be life and peace. Now this morning, we would like to go a step further. We will fellowship on the cross and the self-life.

The self-life is the life of the flesh. In other words, the cross deals not only with the works of the flesh. The cross will go deeper into the very life of the flesh.

Unless the life of the flesh is being touched. Even though the deeds of the flesh have been dealt with, you find that the work is still unfinished. So we find that in the work of the cross of our Lord Jesus, and the work of the Holy Spirit, He will go very deep into the very life of our flesh.

That Christ really will be our very life. Now in order to understand this, for the sake especially of the younger people, probably we need to go back to the very beginning. And that is to the time when God created man.

We find that in Genesis 2, verse 7, God used the red earth, the dust of the earth, to form a human body. The psalmist said, Our body is fearfully and wonderfully made. Think that God could take the most common, cheap material, and make a human body, which is a masterpiece.

And by this body, we have world consciousness. Because by this body, by the five senses, we are in touch with the world around us. And the Bible tells us, God breathed his breath of life into the nostril of that form.

There is the breath of life coming out of God himself. And that reaches into that earthly form. And that breath of God becomes the spirit of man.

Because God is spirit. So he breathed into man. And that breath becomes the spirit of man.

That man will be able to communicate with God. So our spirit gives us God consciousness. And then when God's spirit, God's breath, enters into that earthly form, a third element was formed.

And the Bible said, Man became a living soul. A living soul. Because soul is where our personality dwells.

With our soul, we know ourselves. It gave us self-consciousness. You are what you are.

You know what you are. It's because you have a soul. Through your thinking, through your emotion, through your will, your opinion, you express yourself.

So the Bible said man becomes a living soul. There is a created life in man. So there is the created life in our soul.

And make us living. That is how we are being created. Now when we are created, so far as God's order is concerned, our spirit should be at the top.

Because it is by our spirit we are in touch with God the spirit. Because so far as our soul life is concerned, when it is created, it is neutral. That is to say, it is neither sinful nor righteous or holy.

Because at that time, that living soul does not have the knowledge of good and evil. So it has to look to the spirit for direction. It is dependent upon the spirit.

And by the spirit, he knows God's will. That he may be able to obey God. And work it out in his body.

So that was how we were created. And then you remember God put man in the Garden of Eden. It is a garden of pleasure.

Because God created all kinds of trees. All kinds of fruit trees. To prepare to be the food for the physical body of man.

And then you remember in the midst of the garden, God planted a tree. It is called the tree of life. Now God has already given people a created life.

We become living souls. Now why is it that God should put a tree of life in the midst of the garden? Because that tree of life represents the very life of God. It is the divine life, the uncreated life of God.

That shows that God's heart is to give his own life to man. Man was created in the image of God and after his likeness. In other words, in the whole creation, man is the only one who has the capacity of receiving God into him.

And it is God's will that man should receive his uncreated life into his created life. And that will enable him to fulfill all the missions that God has commissioned him. And man will fulfill God's purpose for man.

But by the tree of life, God planted another tree. It is called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now some people think that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is a bad tree.

Because God told man, of all the trees in the garden you can freely eat, including the tree of life. But this tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat. Because on the day that you should eat thereof, you shall surely die.

So people think that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil must be a bad tree. I wonder if you will agree with me. I feel that God will never put a bad tree in that garden of Edom.

So it cannot be a bad tree. To me, I feel it is the second best. The tree of life is the best.

Because it gives us God's own divine life. And if we should eat that tree, that divine life will come into our spirit and become the life of our spirit. And this tree of the knowledge of good and evil, is actually the food for our soul.

As all the other trees are food for our body. There is no knowledge that is higher than the knowledge of good and evil. Scientific knowledge, philosophy, they cannot be compared with the knowledge of ethics of good and evil.

That tree will be the food of the soul of man. Because our soul longs for knowledge. Our soul is satisfied with knowledge.

With the knowledge of good and evil. Now why is it that God forbids man to eat the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Number one, because he wants us to eat the tree of life. Number two, because he knows that without the life of God, and if you have the knowledge of good and evil, it will bring you to death.

Because you know what is good, but you do not have the life, the power to do the good. You know what evil is, but you will yield to evil. And the result will be death.

So that is the reason why God wants people to seek after the life of the spirit. And by that life, he will be able to live to fulfill God's purpose. But if man should take the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he will himself decide what is good and what is evil.

He will become independent of God. And as Satan suggests, you will be God. And the result is death.

But unfortunately, our forefathers, instead of eating the tree of the knowledge of life, they took the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And because of that, the Lord said, on the day that you should eat, you shall surely die. But Adam lived nine hundred some years.

And he has many sons and daughters. In other words, you find his body seems to be living. And his soul seems to be living.

But what is it that was dead? His spirit was dead. His spirit lost the ability to communicate with God the spirit. What is death? Death is the cessation of communication with his proper environment.

When the body is dead, it has lost its communication with the world around. And when the soul is dead, then he is dead to himself. And when the spirit is dead, it has lost its communication with the world around.

It has lost its communication with God. So you find that in a fallen man, what is the condition of a fallen man? You find his spirit is dead. It doesn't mean that the spirit does not exist.

The spirit is still there. But it has lost its proper function. So that's why you find people can communicate with evil spirits.

But they cannot communicate with God the spirit. So man becomes flesh. Becomes soul and body without the spirit.

And what about the life of man? You know in the Bible, sometimes the word soul is used as representing man. For instance, when Jacob went into Egypt, in Genesis it is said, 70 souls entered into Egypt. Because the soul represents the man.

The soul is I, is me. Where my personality dwells. So you find that after man fell, this living soul, the life of that soul, is now not only contaminated but even dominated by sin.

And you find that instead of man looking to God for direction, man falls into himself. So what kind, what nature, what kind of life is that, is there in man? We find that man is a fallen man. Man is a man of the flesh.

Man is a selfish, self-centered person. So self is the very life of the soul. That is our situation.

So brothers and sisters you find, if you only deal with the deeds of the flesh, it is just like you are dealing with all the branches. You have to deal with the very root of the tree. So we find how the cross of our Lord Jesus, how does it deal with the very life of our fallen man.

The life of the flesh, which is self. So this is what you find in the Word of God. We find that in the Word of God, in many, many places, life and soul are the same word.

For instance, our Lord Jesus say, if you love your life, you will lose it. And that life can be translated as soul. If you love your soul, you will lose it.

If you lose your soul in this world for the Lord's sake, you will gain it to eternity. So this matter of soul and life, are one. And it is actually self.

It is I. It is me. Myself. So that is our conditions.

And you find the cross of our Lord Jesus, had to dig deep into the very core, the very life of our flesh. This very life of the soul, which is self, must be dealt with. In John chapter 12, we remember that at the time, our Lord Jesus entered into Jerusalem for the last time.

And when He entered into Jerusalem, great crowds followed Him. And even some of the Greeks, that came to the festival, they wanted to see Jesus. It seems as if the whole world now went after our Lord Jesus.

It was the most glorious time in the life of our Lord Jesus when He was on earth. So when these Greeks asked the help of Andrew and Philip, what did our Lord say? In chapter 12, verse 23. But Jesus answered them, saying, The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.

Maybe even with the disciples. They thought, well, this is the time that our Lord will be glorified. He will now sit on the throne.

He will rule over the whole world. But then strangely, immediately after our Lord said, The time of my being glorified is now here. He continued and said, Verily, verily, I say to you.

Except the grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone. But if it should die, it will bear much fruit. In other words, the time of my being glorified the time of being glorified to our Lord is His death.

He is the grain of wheat. In the whole world, you have only tares, donalds. Because all who are in Adam are donalds, because all who are in Adam are donalds.

Our Lord Jesus is the only grain of wheat. God became man. The Word became flesh and tabernacle among man full of grace and truth.

He is the grain of wheat. He said, If the grain of wheat fall into the ground but abide alone, it falls into the ground. But it does not die.

It abides alone. He speaks of himself. Because he is the grain of wheat that falls upon the ground.

Because he came into this world and he takes up the form of a man. But if he should live in this world for thirty-three years or even shorter than that, he demonstrated to the world what man should be. What is the man that God is after? He demonstrated it.

But if he should die, he should not die. Suppose that on the mount of figuration and suddenly you find he was transfigured. Glory filled him.

And Moses and Elijah appeared and talked to him. And they were talking about his exit. How will he go out of this world? He came into this world by emptying himself and took up the form of a man.

Now how will he be exit, exiting from this world? They were talking about this matter. And as they were talking suddenly Peter woke up. And he saw that Moses and Elijah were going to leave.

And he wanted them to remain. So he blurred it out. Lord, it is good to be here.

Let us make three tabernacles. One for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah. And we would just stay here.

And God cut him off. A cloud of glory overshadowed him. And they heard a voice.

This is my beloved son in whom I have my delight. Hear him. And suddenly Moses and Elijah disappeared.

When they opened their eyes they see Jesus only. Brothers and sisters, if our Lord Jesus should make his exit from the world on the mount of transfiguration, then there will be only the grain of wheat. But thank God our Lord Jesus refused to make his exit on the mount of transfiguration.

Instead, he came down from the mountain and faced to Jerusalem. Because this grain of wheat not only must fall upon the ground but it must die. And if it dies it bears much fruit.

In other words, the outer shell of that wheat must be decayed. In order that the life within it may be able to come forth. And multiplied into many grains.

So our Lord Jesus explained this parable to us. And in verse 25 he that loves his life shall lose it and he that hates his life in his world shall keep it to life eternal. Our Lord is the first grain of wheat.

And you find that how he falls into the ground and dies. His outer man was decayed. So, the life within him was able to be released.

And then will produce many fruit. And you and I are the result of that. The soul life of our Lord Jesus is without sin.

His soul life is selfless. But even he he must go to the cross and die. So that his life may be released and be given to all of us.

Now how much more that our soul life our soul self must go to death. Because if our soul life does not go to death then the life of Christ in us will have no opportunity to bear fruit. So our Lord Jesus said now if you love your soul life that is yourself you will lose it.

And if you hate your soul life in this world you will keep it to life eternal. In this world if you hate your own life that is soul life you must keep your soul life. Let us use another illustration.

If you would turn to 2 Corinthians Chapter 4 2 Corinthians Chapter 4 We will read from verse 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the surpassingness of the power may be of God and not from us. Every way afflicted but not straightened. Seeing no apparent issue but our way not entirely shut up.

Persecuted but not abandoned. Cast down but not destroyed. Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body.

For we who live are always delivered unto death on account of Jesus that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So that death works in us but life in you. Brothers and sisters we who have believed in the Lord Jesus we are but earthen vessels.

Look at ourselves even if this body is so wonderfully made and yet it is earthly in nature so we are but earthen vessels but thank God He put a treasure in the earthen vessel. I always wonder now if you have a treasure will you put that treasure in an earthen vessel? You will not. You will put a treasure maybe in a golden box but that is the wonder of God.

He is willing to put the treasure in the earthen vessel and the treasure of course is our Lord Jesus. God puts Christ Jesus into you the earthen vessel into me the earthen vessel but the purpose of putting the



We will read from verse 37. You know our Lord Jesus told His disciples. He said, now do not think that I come to send peace upon the world.

He said, I have not come to send peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man at variance with his father and with his daughter, and a daughter with her mother, and a daughter-in-law with her mother-in-law. And they of his household shall be a man's enemies.

Now verse 37. He who loves father or mother above me is not worthy of me. And he who loves son or daughter above me is not worthy of me.

And he who does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. He that finds his life, that is his soul, shall lose it. And he who has lost his life for my sake shall find it.

He that finds his life, that is his soul, shall lose it. And he who has lost his life for my sake shall find it. Our Lord Jesus knows that our soul life, our self, needs to be purified.

Even in this matter of love, human love, which is the highest, noblest expression, you'll find behind it is self. It is not pure love. It is governed by self, selfishness.

So our Lord Jesus wants to purify even our emotions. So he said that if you love your father or mother, brother or sister, husband or wife, children, even your own life, you are not worthy of me. You know, this is a very strict demand.

If you want to follow the Lord, if you want to follow the Lord, you have to be like your Lord. You have to love Him above all these loves. So sometimes you'll find after we believe in the Lord Jesus, there will be times when the Holy Spirit will so arrange our circumstances.

Now God wants us to love our father and mother because this is the first commandment with promise. In the Old Testament time, if a child does not love his father or mother, even curse his father and mother, he should be killed. So we find that God wants us to love our father or mother.

But God wants to purify our love from self. So there will be times when the demand of our Lord Jesus and the demand of our parents seem to cut across each other. And when you find such situation, what will you do? Will you love the Lord even more than love your father or mother? It doesn't mean that you should not love your father and mother.

But do you love the Lord more than your father and mother? You will follow the Lord or you will follow your parents? If your parents said you should not believe in the Lord Jesus, now will you just obey your parents or you obey the Lord Jesus? And you find a cross is constituted. And the Lord calls us to take up our cross and follow Him. So death will come into the love side of your self-life.

So that our love may be purified. And Christ will be able to express through our love. That is concerning our emotion.

Then you turn to Matthew chapter 16. In Matthew 16, our Lord Jesus revealed, God revealed our Lord Jesus to His disciples. And our Lord Jesus revealed the church to His disciples.

And then following that He said, I must go to Jerusalem and be killed. But on the third day I will be raised from the dead. And then you see what Peter did.

Peter got hold of the Lord and maybe shook Him a little bit. Don't do that. You should not die.

And our Lord turned back and said, Satan, get behind Me. Because you are not mindful of the things of God, but you are mindful of the things of man. And immediately following that, in verse 24, then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me.

For whosoever shall desire to save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake shall find it. And there you find our Lord Jesus is dealing with our natural mind. The mind of Peter is self-centered.

He did not want Jesus to go to the cross and die. Because He Himself did not want to do that. So you find that behind that mind is self.

So our Lord dealt with that. Because behind self is Satan. So we must learn to take up our cross in this area of our mind.

In order that we may be delivered from it. And then you turn to Luke 14. In Luke 14, our Lord Jesus turned to the cross and said, If anyone come to Me and shall not hate his own father and mother and wives and children and brothers and sisters, yea, and his own life, he cannot be My disciple.

And whosoever does not carry his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. And then following, He said, you sit down and count your cost. Are you able to pay the cost of following Me? Are you able to forsake all and follow Me? Not just being stirred up emotionally for a moment.

You sit down and count the cost. So that you make your decision. That is to say, our will has to be purified.

Now, if you are willing to do that, He will give you the power to do it. If you are not willing to do that, then you will not experience His surpassing greatness of power. So, brothers and sisters, why is it the Lord calls us to take up our cross and follow Him? It is because by doing that, the self-life, the life of the very soul of the flesh, may die.

And the life of Christ within us may be released and may be manifested. So, what comes out of you, you will be Christ and not yourself. So, first of all, the Lord said, deny yourself.

Our brothers have already mentioned about this. Giving up your right. Deny yourself.

Peter denied the wrong person. He should deny himself. But he denied Christ.

And how often we are doing the same thing. Brothers and sisters, who can deny himself? No one can. You know, Martin Luther said, I am afraid of the Popes and the Cardinals.

Martin Luther said, I am afraid of the Pope within me. It is myself. I am afraid of that.

Brothers and sisters, do we like Job? Job said, I abhor myself. How can we do that? Unless we see the Lord Jesus. If he should reveal himself to us, nothing is impossible.

Brothers and sisters, when we were having the Lord's table this morning, during the last few days, we have talked about Jesus Christ and him crucified. But at the Lord's table, Jesus Christ and his crucified are openly exhibited before us. He reveals himself to us.

If we see him, nothing is impossible. If we see him, we will deny ourselves. If we do not see him, we cannot deny ourselves.

Job saw the glory of God. So he abhorred himself. And repenting dust and ashes.

Brothers and sisters, this is what we need. We need to see our Lord. We need to see his bleeding hand.

We need to see his bleeding feet. We need to see his bleeding head. We need to see the blood and water coming out of his side.

We need to hear him say, My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me? We need to see his love. And only his love can constrain us to deny ourselves. And make us willing to take up our cross and follow him.

So may the Lord help us that we may not only know that our old man was crucified with Christ, but we who are of Christ have crucified the flesh with his passions and lusts. And we will be willing to lose our flesh and our self-life for Christ's sake. That we may follow him.

So may the Lord lead us in the days ahead. May he always be before our eyes. And if we give ourself unto Jesus, by his love, by his grace, we will be able to follow him.

Let us pray. Dear Lord, a sight of thee is all that we need. Reveal thyself to us.

That we may all rise up, forsake all, take up our cross and follow thee. May we be able to rise up, forsake all, take up our cross and follow thee. Where you are, there, by thy grace, we will be.

We ask in thy precious name. Amen.

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