

The Kingdom and the Christian

by Stephen Kaung

The kingdom of God is a gift that becomes a reward when we work for it, and it is built with living stones, not dead stones, through cooperation with God's working in us.

Duration: 1:05:44

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 3:11

Topics: "Kingdom Living", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being careful in how we build our lives. He uses the analogy of building with different materials, such as gold, silver, and precious stones, which represent the nature of God, the redemption of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, building with wood, grass, and straw represents the nature, beauty, and work of man. The speaker warns that if we build with the latter materials, our work will be consumed by fire and we will suffer loss, although we will still be saved. However, if we build with the former materials, even though it may cost us dearly, our work will be rewarded and we will enter into the kingdom of heaven. The speaker concludes by praying for God's guidance and thanking Him for His faithfulness throughout the conference.

Transcript

Will you please turn to 2nd Peter, 2nd Peter, chapter 1. We'll read from verse 3 through verse 11. 2nd Peter, chapter 1, verse 3. As his divine power has given to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us by glory and virtue, through which he has given to us the greatest and precious promises, that through these he may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But for this very reason also, using therewith all diligence, in your faith have also virtue, in virtue knowledge, in knowledge temperance, in temperance endurance, in endurance godliness, in godliness brotherly love, in brotherly love love.

For these things existing and abounding in you make you to be neither idle nor unfruitful as regards the knowledge of our Lord Christ. For him with whom these things are not present is blind, short-sighted, and has gotten forgotten the purging of his former sins. Wherefore thee rather, brethren, use diligence to make your calling and election sure, for doing these things you will never fall.

For thus shall the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be richly furnished unto you. 1 Corinthians chapter 3, 1 Corinthians chapter 3, we begin with verse 11 through verse 15. For other foundation can no man lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if anyone build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, straw, the work of each shall be made manifest. For the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire, and the fire shall try the work of each what it is. If the work of each, if the work of anyone which he has built upon the foundation shall abide, he shall receive a reward.

If the work of anyone shall be consumed, he shall suffer loss, but he shall be saved, but so as through the fire. Let's have a word of prayer. Dear Lord, we want to thank you for being with us these days.

We thank you because you're not only the beginning, you're also the end. So Lord, as thou has brought us to the last morning of this conference, we look to thee for the end. Thou art the end of all things, because all things are from thee, through thee, and unto thee, and be glory unto thee.

Lord, we just pray that thou will continue to open thy word to our hearts, speak to us, and bring us to where thou has designed. For us, we ask in thy precious name. We thank God for gathering us these days, for his word, and for fellowship.

And we thank God, being so faithful to us, bring us to this last few hours of the conference. Everything comes from him, and everything is returned to him. Now, in these mornings, we consider together on this matter of the kingdom.

Our Lord Jesus, when he was on earth, that's the message he preached. Even after his resurrection, before his ascension, during those 40 days, when he appeared to his disciples, he still spoke on the kingdom of God. And this is the message that our Lord Jesus committed to the church.

So from the very beginning of church history, we find that the message, the gospel of Jesus Christ, that they preach, is the gospel of the kingdom. In other words, the emphasis is always on the kingdom. Our Lord Jesus, who was slain, God has raised him up, seated him at the right hand of God, and anointed him to be the Christ and Lord.

God has appointed him to be the judge of all the nations. And even the apostle Paul, at the end of the book of Acts, of course we know the book of Acts has no end, but in the record, we find he was still preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and teaching the things about our Lord Jesus. Now unfortunately, today it seems as if the church has forgotten this message.

And I believe because of this, we find the present situation of the church. Because the gospel of the king, of the kingdom, has not been preached. So dear brothers and sisters, by the grace of God, this is something that we have been considering together, and hopefully it may really impress upon our hearts.

The gospel of the kingdom, the gospel of the kingdom of the heavens, is not just a theory, it is a truth. And brothers and sisters, if we know the truth, the truth will set us free. So we look to the Lord, that this truth of the gospel of the kingdom, of the kingdom of the heavens, will really deeply inscribed upon our hearts, and set us free.

That we may be living, literally, spiritually, everyday in that kingdom. And then we look forward to the coming, returning of our king. From eternity to eternity, our God is God.

Therefore his kingdom knows no end. His dominion is over all generations. Everything is under his rule.

And everything expresses his kingship. That is his character. That is the kingdom of God.

But as we have mentioned, unfortunately, there were rebellions. Not only of the angels, but even of man. So strictly speaking, the kingdom of God is where God really rules over a people who listen to him, who obey him.

That is the reality of the kingdom of God throughout the centuries. Even though overall, his kingdom is over everything. Over Satan, over the world, over man, over everything.

But those who are really representing his kingdom, are those who submit themselves to the authority, the rule of God. And allow God to work out in their lives, his own nature character, that they may be like him. And we also mentioned the second morning, the term, the kingdom of the heavens.

That is the literal translation. The kingdom of the heavens. Now this special term refers especially to one section in the kingdom of God.

It begins with the first coming of our Lord Jesus. The king of the heavens has come to this earth. So that begins the kingdom of the heavens.

While he was on earth, he was the king. He was born to be king. And he came to this earth to bring heaven upon earth.

The rule of heaven upon earth. But in the beginning, the message is, the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh. Even though he was already here, but he still said, the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh.

Why? Because he does not have a people to rule over. To enable him to impart to them his life. And to share, to be partakers of his divine nature.

But these days are very short. Because very shortly, our Lord Jesus said, the kingdom of the heavens is to be taken by violence. And the violence sees on it.

In other words, our Lord Jesus began to have his disciples. Those who are under his teaching, under his training, under his discipline. And these become the kingdom of the heavens on earth in spiritual reality.

So dear brothers and sisters, from that time onward until today, the kingdom of the heavens is now here. In the hearts of those who not only believe in the Lord Jesus, but also obey him, trust him, commit themselves to him, allow him to work out his character in their lives, so that they will be like him, representing him on this earth. That is the kingdom of the heavens now.

But of course we know, we are looking forward to the day when the kingdom of the heavens shall be publicly manifested on this earth. That will come at the second coming of our Lord Jesus. That's the day that we are waiting for, when he shall reign over this earth.

The kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of his Lord and of his Christ. Now thank the Lord it is coming. And then we consider together on this matter of the relationship between the kingdom and the church.

The kingdom builds the church. The reason why the church today is not built as it should, or to put it in another way, our Lord Jesus said, I will build my church. He is the builder.

But why is it that the building is still unfinished? Not because the builder is not skillful, is not able to. It is because he is not built with dead stones. He's built with living stones such as we are.

And we are the problem. He will not do anything against our will. He respects our will.

Now brothers and sisters, isn't that tremendous? That God respects our will. He will not force us, even when we rebel against him. We will not listen to him.

He will persuade. He will beseech. And even as in Romans 12, he will throw his apostle bag, but he will not work without our will, willing to be his people.

So that's the reason why the work is delayed. But thank God, he will finish what he has begun. Our God never does anything unfinished.

It may take longer time, but eventually he will finish it. So we mentioned that it is the kingdom that builds the church. We need to submit ourselves to the authority of our King.

As our brother mentioned last night, present our bodies a living sacrifice. Not in the sense of working for him. That will follow.

But in the sense of allowing him to work in us. There is so much in us that is unfit for the kingdom of the heavens. And all these things have to be dealt with.

The only material that can be built into the kingdom of the heavens is his life. That is the only material. And his life has to grow in us.

We grow up individually, and we grow up together. And that can only be done when we are under the headship of Christ. If we continue to be our own heads, this work will be delayed.

But if we are willing to bow before him, and take him as our head, our King. Obey him, follow him in all things. Then the work will speed up, and it will be done.

So dear brothers and sisters, this is what authority means. There is no authority except God. Do not think that any one of us has authority in ourselves.

We don't have it. Our duty is to submit, to obey. God is the only authority.

He may dedicate his authority to man. But that dedication is not according to position. That dedication is according to his life.

In other words, it is the life of Christ in us that is authority. Other than that, there is no authority. And brothers and sisters, our concept of authority is so foreign to God.

Because our concept of authority is the concept of this world. You remember even the disciples with our Lord Jesus in those days. In their mind, authority is to take the highest position.

To sit on the right hand and the left hand of our Lord Jesus. Then you are in authority. Then you can command, and everybody will have to yield to you.

Oh, how we long for that authority. The twelve disciples always thrive and struggle among themselves. Who is the greatest? And we are no different.

But our Lord Jesus said, in this world, in the kingdom of this world, that is what authority is. You exercise authority over people. And people have to obey you.

But our Lord Jesus said, not so in the kingdom of the heavens. If you want to be the first, be the last. If you want to be the head, be the born man of all.

That is the way that God exercises his authority. He exercises his authority in love. He exercises his authority in humbling himself, emptying himself, to become low, lower and lower.

Our Lord Jesus said, I'm the one who serves, not the one who is served. That is authority. So dear brothers and sisters, authority is life.

Authority is love. Authority is sacrifice. Authority is service.

It is not taking a high position and commanding other people. So brothers and sisters, with this authority of life in us, we minister, we serve to one another. And that's the way the church is to be built.

And thank God, the church is also the instrument used by God to bring in the kingdom. The whole creation is groaning. They are under corruption, unwillingly.

They are crying out for liberty. But when will that come? When will all creation be restored to God's original design? Not until the manifestations of the sons of God. So brothers and sisters, we have a tremendous responsibility.

Now this morning, as the concluding, we want to consider together on this matter of the kingdom and you. The kingdom and I. In other words, we do not want to be just talking about the kingdom. We want to make it personal.

Make it practical. What does the kingdom of the heavens mean to you and to me? What is our attitude towards it? How do we respond to the truth of the kingdom of the heavens? And whether our response will determine our future, our destiny. Now brothers and sisters, these are very personal and very important to us.

Before we can solve, answer these questions, probably there is something that we have to understand. And that is the matter between gift and reward. Now to many Christians, in their mind, there is only gift, grace.

All is grace. Now thank God, God is a giver of all things. That's true.

And this matter of reward is almost foreign. But the bible says, God is the rewarder of those who seek after him. So our God is not only a giver, he is also a rewarder.

Now what is the difference between gift and reward? Gift depends wholly on the giver. It has no condition upon the receiver. It all depends upon the pleasure of the giver.

If he wants to give, he gives. And we just receive it with thankfulness. Reward involves both.

It involves the one who works for that reward. And also it depends on the one who gives, dispense the reward. Gift is free.

No condition, no discrimination. Free for all who are willing to receive it. But reward gives only to those who are worthy.

Gift is pure grace. The grace of God. Reward is work.

You have to work to receive a reward. If you do not work, fulfill the conditions, you are not rewarded. So brothers and sisters, these are two things you find in the word of God.

The word of God tells us, God is the great giver. He is the giver of all good things. He loves to give.

There is no condition. Free for all. Open, if anyone wills, let him come.

And drink of the river of life. That's grace. But brothers and sisters, in the Bible, you do see this matter of reward.

You have to work for it. If you don't, you lose it. So the question is, is the kingdom a gift or a reward? If the kingdom is a gift, then all you need to do is to receive it by faith.

And all is yours. No matter how you live the rest of your life. It has nothing to do with it.

Because it's a gift. Free gift of God. But if it is a reward, then brothers and sisters, if you don't work for it, you may lose it.

Now what is it? Thank God, the kingdom is both a gift and a reward. Initially it is a gift. Potentially it is a gift.

Positionally it is a gift. You remember our Lord Jesus said, fear not little flock, for it is the good pleasure of the Father to give you the kingdom. The kingdom is given.

And it is according to the good pleasure of the Father. Therefore, do not be afraid. It's yours.

But strangely, in the same breath, our Lord said, seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Seek. Work for it.

Cautious one tells us, by his grace he has delivered us out of the power of darkness. And has translated us into the kingdom of the son of his love. So you are there.

You haven't done anything. How are you delivered from the power of darkness? You haven't done anything. You are under that power.

But there is one more powerful than darkness. Than the one who holds darkness. And he delivers you out of it.

Grace. And he brought you into his own kingdom. So brothers and sisters, the kingdom is basically, primarily a gift.

It is grace. We don't deserve it. All the potentials of inheriting the kingdom have all been given.

You know in 2 Peter chapter 1, we are told, his divine power has given to us. Now notice the word, has given. His divine power has given to us all things which relate to life and godliness.

It is his divine power. And his divine power is so powerful that he has given to us all things concerns life. That means his divine life.

And godliness. Godliness simply means like God. Not only he has given you his life as a gift.

But he has also given to you all things that concerns godliness. In other words, that life will develop into life. Not in a sense of joining the deity.

No. But in a sense of taking upon ourselves his character. Brothers and sisters, it is all given.

Not only that life is given. We all know that. But even godliness is given.

All the potentials are there. It just need to be developed. That's all.

Just like the children of Israel. God delivered them out of But that's not God's purpose. God's purpose is to bring them into the promised land.

Flowing with milk and honey. That is the purpose of God. And God has already given that land to them.

Is theirs. And not only that. But God has already brought them to the border of it.

And he has all power to bring them into the promised land. All the potentials are there. But they need to go in.

Put their foot down. Their feet down. And wherever they tread upon is theirs.

Now that's it. So in other words, it is a gift. But with the gift, it becomes a reward.

You have to work for it. Now the two tribes, they do not want to give, go into the land. They are satisfied with the land on the east side of the river Jordan.

Why? Because they have many cattle. They would rather stay with the cattle and be satisfied than go into the fullness of God's. How many of Christians today are like that? All has been given.

All the provisions are given. Thank God he never gives an order or command without first provide and supply the power to fulfill it. So dear brothers and sisters, you find the kingdom is a gift.

But it is also a reward. But even though it is a reward, it is still a gift. Why? Because it is grace.

Now we, in our mind, we think grace and work are contradictory. Gift and reward are opposite. But in the word of God, you'll find that gift and reward, grace and work, they are complementary.

As our brother mentioned last night, God first work in. Not only the willing, but the working. And then we work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

So after all, it is grace. We have nothing to boast of. The only difference is some people abuse the grace of God or bury the grace of God.

But other people, they respond to grace. They use grace from grace to grace. Brothers and sisters, that's the difference.

So here you'll find in 2 Peter, everything has been given concerning life and godliness. And he has given us many precious promises to encourage us. It is all through the knowledge, living knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may be partakers of his divine nature.

Then immediately following that, he said, for this very reason, because it is such a gift, it is such a provision, therefore use diligence to make your calling an election sure. Because if you don't use diligence, then you're blind. You forget your sins have been forgiven.

What grace has been given to you. But if you are diligently seeking, then the result is, you will enter into the everlasting kingdom of our God and our Lord Jesus Christ. Now that is what God wants us to do.

So dear brothers and sisters, take courage, knowing that after all, it is not our doing. It is his working. But he works in us.

We must learn to cooperate, to submit ourselves, to allow him to take charge over us, over our lives. Then he will work out the full salvation. Brothers and sisters, the kingdom is coming very soon.

You know when Miss Barbara, Margaret Barbara, was on earth, one day at the end of the year, Brother Washman Lee and Miss Barbara were praying together. And this sister, she waited for the Lord. She told Brother Lee, she said, maybe when you turn the corner of the street, you meet him.

Brothers and sisters, our Lord is coming. His kingdom is coming to set up upon this earth. Are we waiting for it? Are we longing for it? Are we praying for it? Are we cooperating with it? Today, if we live in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens, then when that kingdom comes, you will be there.

But if not, you will not be there. Today determines your future destiny. You remember in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, the apostle Paul said the foundation is laid.

And there is no other foundation but Jesus Christ. But we are building on him. We are that extension as it were.

Of our Lord Jesus. But the apostle wants us, be careful, how do you build? With what material are you working with? If you build with gold, silver, and precious stone. Or you can build with wood, grass, and straw.

Gold, the nature. Silver, the redemption of Christ. Precious stones, the work of the Holy Spirit.

If our lives and our labor are according to God, out of Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, that is the way you build. Or you can build with wood, grass, and straw. Wood, the nature of man.

Grass, the beauty of man. Straw, the work. If we still live according to our old nature, according to the flesh, using our natural strength, and build, there are differences.

Today, those who build with wood, grass, straw, build very quickly. And can build very big, huge buildings with almost no cost, little cost. It will be seen, it may be admired and praised today.

But one day, the fire shall appear. If you build gold, silver, and precious stones, it costs everything. It costs your life, your self-life, as our brother said last night.

And you cannot build very big. People may not even notice it and see it. But the difference is, one day, our work will be tested.

Fire will appear. You know, brothers and sisters, we do thank God, because our Lord Jesus, on Calvary's cross, he took our judgment upon himself. And because he was judged in our stead, we will not be judged before the great white.

We will not be judged for eternal life or eternal death. That judicial judgment is past. Thank God for that.

But that doesn't mean that as Christians, as a family of God, as in the kingdom of the heavens, that there will be no more judgment. No. The Bible tells us, one day, at his coming, we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 10, we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. And we will be judged according to our works. Romans chapter 14 verse 10, we shall all appear before the judgment seat of God.

It is a time of reckoning. Reckoning from the day you believe in the Lord Jesus. Reckoning from the day you come into the family of God.

Reckoning from the day you are transferred into the kingdom of the son of his love. How do we live? How do we work? All these things will be judged. It is the judgment seat of Christ.

Not a throne which is judicial. Life and death. But a seat with his family.

Family judgment. To be rewarded or to suffer loss. And there is the fire.

Our Lord is a consuming fire. He will judge us according to himself. Judge us according to Christ.

How much he has given to you. How much he has revealed to you. To those who receive much, require much.

Brothers and sisters, we will be judged. And if it is wood, grass, straw, just the material for the fire, burn up, consumed. In other words, with all that God has given so graciously to us.

With all the potentials and the provisions that God has already given to you to fulfill, you still live on your own. Without submitting yourself to the Lord all these years. That doesn't mean you are not saved.

He said you are saved. You are still saved. But barely saved.

But on the other hand, brothers and sisters, if you build a gold, silver and precious stone, it may cost you dearly today. But thank God, when the fire tests you, it glows with glory. In other words, you will enter into the kingdom of the heavens and reign with Christ for a thousand years.

Because you are fit. Now brothers and sisters, the Bible uses different ways to tell us what the reward will be. Now it is true, even today if you follow the Lord, on the one side you seem to lose a lot.

But on the other side, you are rewarded. Because you are rewarded by the smiling face of our Lord Jesus. You are rewarded with the peace and the joy in the Holy Spirit.

You are rewarded by the Lord himself being with you. Brothers and sisters, but the reward that the Bible especially emphasizes is in the coming kingdom. All the promises, the rewards God, our Lord Jesus promised to the seven churches, basically, primarily, fully, they are all fulfilled in the thousand years.

Our God uses various ways to attract us. Crown, crowned of glory. If we are faithful in what God has committed, we will receive the crown of good, crown of righteousness.

If we look forward, waiting for his return and finish our course, fight a good fight, keep the faith, then we will be crowned with the crown of righteousness. Or we will be crowned with the crown of life, if today we suffer, endure sufferings, tribulations for Christ's sake. If we endure temptations, overcome it, we will receive the crown.

If we finish our race, we will receive the incorruptible. And sometimes the Bible use throne, sitting in the throne with our Lord Jesus, as he sits with his Father in the throne. Or sometimes it is said, five cities, ten cities, to rule and reign for the Lord, according to him.

And sometimes he said, come and enter the joy of the Lord. Being invited and attended the marriage feast of the Lamb. Brothers and sisters, you find our Lord Jesus try to encourage us.

He knows, today we have to deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow him. So he encourages us. He said, there is something waiting there.

Some people said, if you work just for reward, that's selfish. So they say, we don't want any reward, we just love the Lord. Very spiritual.

But brothers and sisters, it is true. If your eyes are on the reward only, but to desire what the Lord is pleased to give, and you despise it, that's wrong too. We need to seek to be rewarded.

Why? Because it pleases him. That's the way he wants to do. After all, it is his doing.

We haven't done anything. We just receive his grace. Allow his grace to work through us.

That's all. But it pleases him, even that to reward us, as if we have done it. Now isn't that wonderful? Isn't our God so gracious, so loving, so kind, so generous, so brothers and sisters? Thank God we have a blessed hope.

What are we waiting for? The world is not our home. We are passing through. And thank God he is coming.

Therefore, the Spirit and Christ said, come Lord Jesus. And may we respond and say, thank God, he said, dear Lord, indeed, even though we have not seen thee, but we love thee. We believe in thee.

But we do look forward to the day when we shall see thee face to face. Our prayer is that when we see thee, we will not be put to shame, but we will gladden thy heart. Thank God you have called us, you have supplied us, every need.

Now Lord, may thy Spirit work it out in each and every one of us, that there will be no regret, but only praise and worship in thy precious name.

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