

The Results of Returning to Christ

by Stephen Kaung

Returning to Christ is essential for fulfilling the eternal purpose of God, discovering the fullness of God, and being transformed and conformed to Christ.

Duration: 1:16:35

Scripture: Isaiah 9:6, Daniel 7:13, Ephesians 1:9-10, Revelation 5:10

Topics: "Christ's Lordship", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by praying for God to search, purify, and possess the listeners. The theme of the sermon is summed up in the phrase 'summing up all things in Christ.' The speaker emphasizes the importance of this theme becoming a reality in the lives of the listeners. The sermon explores the mystery and purpose of Christ, stating that everything should bear His beauty, glory, and character. The ultimate goal is for all things to be summed up in Christ, with every knee bowing and every tongue confessing that Jesus is Lord. The speaker references biblical passages such as Philippians 2:8-11 and Daniel 7:13-14 to support these teachings.

Transcript

Will you please turn to 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, or sum up, all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth.

Romans, chapter 8. Romans, chapter 8, verses 28 to 30. But we do know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to purpose. Because whom He has foreknown, He has also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He should be the firstborn among many brethren.

But whom He has predestinated, these also He has called. And whom He has called, these also He has justified. But whom He has justified, these also He has glorified.

1 John. 1 John, chapter 3. The first three verses. 1 John, chapter 3, verse 1. See what love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God.

For this reason the world knows us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we children of God, but what we shall be has not yet been manifested. We know that if it is manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

And everyone that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure. And finally, Revelation, chapter 5. Revelation, chapter 5, verse 10. And may them, to our God, kings and priests, and they shall reign over the earth.

Let's have a word of prayer. Dear Lord, our heart's desire is to see Thy glory. We thank Thee that even though Moses was not allowed to see Thy face, but only Thy back, but today we can see Thy glory in the face of our Lord Jesus.

O Lord, show Thyself to us that we may be captivated, so captivated by Thee, that we will fully surrender to Thee, and allow Thee to be all and in all in us. O Lord, it is our prayer that it may be all of Christ and none of ourselves. Do deliver us.

We commit this time into Thy loving hands, trusting Thy Spirit to speak and to work in each one of us. Lord, Thou knowest everything is naked before Thee. We are naked before Thee.

Search us, purify us, and possess us. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.

We thank God for giving us this time the theme of summing up all things in Christ. And it is our earnest prayer that this does not just be a theme. Our prayer is that this may be a truth, a reality in each one of us.

Thank God for bringing us today, these few days, that we may be able to expose ourselves, as it were, to the light of His countenance, that He may shine upon us, remove anything in our lives that stands in His way, and allow Him to come in and fill us to the fullest, that God may be glorified. We talk about returning to Christ because we deeply sense that we, as individual believers, whether you are newly saved or you have been saved for a long time, there is room, much room, for us to return to Christ. The reason why sometimes we become so comfortable, so at peace, as it were, with ourselves, as if everything is all right, and if our Lord should come this day, we are able to face Him.

But how deceived we are, because our hearts are deceitful above all things. Who knows it? Only God is the one who tries the heart and examines if we really come under the light of His countenance. Brothers and sisters, no one can stand before God.

There is much we need to repent. We begin to realize how far, far away we are from our dear Lord. He has redeemed us.

He has paid such a price for us. And yet, where are we? We need to return. And the way to return is, first of all, to be awakened from our sleep, to realize that we have departed in His light.

We see light. Dear brothers and sisters, His light is the only light that can reveal our real conditions. That we may repent, for we have come short of the glory of God.

And as we repent, then we take a positive step to return. Just like the prodigal son, when he remembered when he recalled there was plenty in his father's house, and now he was starving, dying, unnecessarily, he rose up and returned home. So brothers and sisters, we hope that at this hour, every one of us, no one is accepted, brothers and sisters, that we are on our way of returning to Christ.

Returning is returning to Christ. Return to the finished work of Christ. But through the finished work of Christ, we return to Christ Himself.

You know, the letter to the Galatians is the battle-axe of Martin Luther. He used that letter to fight against the Roman Catholic system. He said, I'm married to that book, because that book shows us justification by faith.

These Galatian believers, they began to depart from the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. They were enticed into another gospel, which is not a gospel of Galatians, because they began to trust in the works of their own flesh, thinking that they can keep the law of God. And fallen from God's grace.

And Apostle Paul tried to bring them back to see that we can only be justified by faith in Christ Jesus. When the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sins and convinces us that Jesus is the only Savior of the world, then we turn to Him, believing in His redeeming blood and of being justified before God. But, brothers and sisters, what is justification? Just as we have never seen in the sight of God that we can stand before the righteous God, what makes it possible for us to have such boldness before God? Because we are closed with Christ.

When God looks upon us, He sees Christ. We are hidden in Him. And that gives us ground, boldness to stand before God.

So in the strictest sense, fullest sense, justification is not just an act that we be justified. Our sins are forgiven, that we can stand before God. No, not on our own, but in Him.

He is our justification. So, brothers and sisters, you find that returning is not just return to what He has done for us. We return to the One who is the Justifier.

In reading this letter to the Galatians, we often thought that it was very negative. But when you read this letter, you find there is a very positive message to us. And the message is, by justification, you return to Christ.

For instance, in Galatians 1, verse 16, it says, It pleased God to reveal His Son in me. That is the gospel. The gospel is not just being justified.

The gospel is, it pleases God to reveal His Son in me. And then it goes on, in chapter 2, verse 20, I am crucified with Christ. No longer live I. It is Christ who lives in me.

And now I live in the flesh by faith, not my faith, but the faith of the Son of God who loves me and gave Himself for me. It goes on to say in chapter 4, verse 17, that Christ may be formed in you. So, brothers and sisters, what is the gospel? What does justification lead us to? It leads us to Christ.

Christ revealed. Christ lived. And Christ formed.

This is returning to Christ. When you look at 1 Corinthians, another depressing letter, as it were, these Corinthian believers, when Paul wrote a letter to them, saying he was sanctified, called saints. Think of that.

These Corinthian believers were sanctified by God. They were called saints. Now, today, if somebody comes to you and says so-and-so, what will be your reaction? Oh, I'm not worthy.

But you are. You are called saints. Justified.

Sanctified. By our Lord Jesus. But look at these Corinthian believers.

They are carnal. They live according to the flesh. They were not different than the people of the world.

They went into gross sin. They defrauded one another. They even accused one another in the worldly court.

They loved eating and drinking. Even in a meeting, there was disorder. In faith, they did not believe in resurrection.

They are corrupt. Life. The only redemption is in Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Sanctification is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It is His cross working in our lives, putting the flesh, the work of the flesh, to death. Putting the world to death.

Putting sin to death. That Christ may live in us and be our sanctification. God has made Him wisdom, justification, and holiness, and redemption.

So, brothers and sisters, for the Corinthian believers to return to Christ, it means that they are to be completely delivered from their flesh through the cross of our Lord Jesus. That Christ may be their sanctification because it is Christ who lives in them. You go to the letter of Colossians.

The Colossian believers sought for perfection. They wanted to be perfect. And because of their desire to be perfect, they were being led astray to the so-called Colossian heresy.

It is a strange mixture of mysticism and ritualism. You will think that these are two worlds apart, but strangely, oftentimes, you find mysticism and ritualism in John Hans, and they sought perfection. Or, if we use another word, glorification through that kind of heresy.

So, the apostle Paul tried to lead them back to see that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily, and ye are complete in him. It is Christ in you, the hope of glory. So, brothers and sisters, what is glorification? Glorification is Christ formed in you.

The measure of the formation of Christ in you is the measure, the degree of your being glorified. In the letter of the Philippians, there is no letter that reveals the inner life of Paul than this letter to the Philippians. In this letter, he shows us the secret of his Christian life.

And what is the secret? Very simple. For me to live is Christ. That's the secret.

Second Corinthians is the one letter that reveals the ministry of the apostle Paul, the secret of his ministry. And what is the secret? The secret is ministry is not just doing a work. Ministry is imparting Christ.

He is but an earthen vessel, but there is a treasure in that earthen vessel. For the radiancy of the light of that treasure to shine forth and to bring life to others, the earthen vessel has to be cracked and broken. And this explains the secret of Paul's ministry.

He was a broken man. He died daily. He bared the dying of Jesus in his life that the life of Jesus may be in him and also in other people.

So dear brothers and sisters, what is returning to Christ? Returning to Christ is returning to what he is. Enable him to be everything to us. Now this morning, we would like to consider together on the results of returning to Christ.

Now we have returned to Christ. And what are the results? First of all, the primary and the chief result of returning into Christ is to fulfill the eternal purpose of God. Brothers and sisters, our God is purpose-oriented.

In the beginning, even before the foundation of the world, he purposed a purpose in himself. This is called the mystery of the ages. He is a God of purpose.

He never does anything by chance. According to the good pleasure of his will, he purposed a glorious purpose in himself. You know, unfortunately, we are not naturally purpose-oriented.

We naturally are need-oriented. Because we are need-oriented, therefore we are self-centered. What is for me? But God is purpose-oriented.

He is for us. So in returning to Christ, there is a great change in our orientation. It delivers us from need-oriented to purpose-oriented.

It delivers from self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness. You know, the Bible said there is a mystery, a secret, a secret in God's heart, hidden throughout the centuries. But all his works are governed by that secret.

He never did anything outside of that secret purpose. And because it is such a glorious secret, he is not able to share it with man right away. But here and there, you'll find he tried to drop, as it were, some indication of what that mystery of the ages, that purpose of eternity, that secret will of his really is.

As a matter of fact, if you read the Old Testament, you'll find that he has dropped that secret in pieces and bits here and there, some hints, giving us some idea of what really he is aiming at. For instance, David. You know, David is not only a king, he is a prophet.

And if you read Psalm number 2, you will find in Psalm number 2, from verse 6 to verse 8, And I have anointed my king upon Zion, the hill of my holiness. I will declare the decree. Jehovah has said unto me, Thou art my son.

I this day have begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee nations for an inheritance, and for thy possession the ends of the earth. He said, You are my son.

This day I have begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give you nations for your inheritance, and for your possessions the ends of the earth. And then if you turn to Proverbs, chapter 8. Proverbs, chapter 8. The wisdom of Solomon, David's son.

In chapter 8, you find the Son of God is personified as wisdom. But if you read, say verse 22, Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from eternity, from the beginning, before the earth was.

When there were no depths, I was brought forth. When there were no fountain abounding with water, before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth. While as yet he has not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the beginning of the dust of the world.

When he prepared the heavens, I was there. When he ordained a circle upon the face of the deep, when he established the skies above, when the fountains of the deep became strong, when he imposed on the earth his decree that the earth, that the water should not pass his commandments, when he appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by him his nursery, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him. The Son, the nursling of his love.

And in some translation, the artifice, the artist, the architecture. Why? Because all things were created in him, and by him, and for him. So here you find another drop of heat, the Son.

And then if you turn to Isaiah chapter 9, you find another hint there. Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6. For unto us a child is born, unto us his Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government, and of peace, there shall be no end.

Upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with judgment, and with righteousness, from henceforth, even forever, the zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this. Another hint of that secret. Turn to the book of Daniel.

Daniel chapter 7. Daniel chapter 7, the night visions begin with verse 13. I saw in the night visions, and behold, there came with the clouds of heaven, one like a son of man. And he came up, even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, and all peoples, nations, and languages shall serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that shall, which shall not be destroyed. So, brothers and sisters, you find that mystery of God, the secret of God, that concerns the eternal purpose of God.

What is it? The Son. How he will give everything to the Son. The Son is the heir of all things.

All kingdoms, glory, power, dominion, belong to him. And that is the mystery. And thank God, one day that mystery broke open.

When our Lord Jesus came into this world, the word became flesh, and tabernacle among men, full of grace and truth. He, who was equal with God, he is the exact image of God. And that is not something to be grasped at.

He emptied himself. He emptied himself of all the glory and honor surrounding his God, Godhead, his deity. He emptied all in order to take up the form of a born slave.

As he take up the fashion of a man, he was obedient. That's what man was supposed to be. Man was created to be obedient to God.

And here you'll find the typical man, the only man. He's obedient. He humbled himself and was obedient to the Father, even unto death, and that the death of the cross.

And because of this, the Father highly exalted him and has given him a name that is above every name. And in that name, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to sum up all things in Christ. The mystery manifested.

And then if you read the epistles, the mystery fully revealed. There you'll find the eternal purpose of God is that His Son should be the sum of all things. Everything shall bear something of His beauty, His glory, His character of Him.

Nothing is to manifest itself. The heavens will not just be heavens. The heavens is to declare the glory of God.

The earth is not just filled with things as it were, but everything will be brought in subjection to Christ. And man as the chief, the leader of the whole creation will be filled to the fullest with Christ. Brothers and sisters, so what is the meaning of returning to Christ? It is more than just a personal thing.

It is no more than just a personal privilege that we enjoy. Thank God it is. But that is a byproduct.

The one and chief thing is when we return to Christ, we are in a sense a step closer to the time when all things will be summed up in Christ. Therefore you find in Ephesians chapter 1 verses 21 and 22 Christ is made head over all things to the church which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all and in all. So brothers and sisters, you can see the immensity, you can see the importance of returning to Christ.

Because it is more than it will affect you personally. You will find that it actually affects the whole counsel of God, the whole purpose of God. You can be a person that delays, postpones the fulfillment of God's purpose.

Or you can be a person who hastens, quickens the fulfillment of God's purpose. Think of that. What a responsibility that we have.

How can we lay back? How can we comfort ourselves? Thinking that as long as we do not go to hell there is a chance to go to heaven. That's enough. But brothers and sisters, how do we offend God? Hurt His heart in this way.

We cannot afford to become complacent. Not for ourselves. For God.

For His purpose. May the Spirit of God pierce our hearts. How can we live so carelessly? You do not know what hurt, how harm you have done to God.

Brothers and sisters, why must we return to Christ? Not for our sake. For God's sake. Oh God, how He cries out through the centuries, pleading, begging.

Why? If today you hear His voice, harden not your heart. But of course, when we return, really return to Christ, we are blessed. Because all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him.

As you return to Christ, you return home. You return to the abundance, abandoned, abounding in Christ. the abundant, abundant riches, glorious riches of Christ Jesus.

He is the fullness of God. We cannot even imagine what the fullness of God is. We have tasted a little bit of His love, A little bit of His righteousness, a little bit of His holiness, a little bit of His beauty, a little bit of His glory, of His purity, just a little bit.

But there is so much more. He wants to bless us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. So we do.

By returning to Christ, we return to fullness. We begin to enjoy our Christ as never before. Then secondly, another by-product, when we return to Christ, we discover that Christ begins to transform us and conforms us to Himself.

You know, what is spiritual growth? We want to grow. Physically speaking, as a child, a child wants to grow. I remember my little sister and my little cousin sister.

One day, day two, they were little girls. They sat on the stairway and somebody heard them, overheard them talking. You know what they were talking? They were complaining about being the youngest.

We are so tiny. Look at our brothers, sisters, what they can do, and we can do nothing. They want to grow.

They want to be matured. But strangely, God's people do not feel that way. We don't want to grow.

How good if we can remain bathed in Christ throughout life. Then we will be taken care of, and we will have no responsibility whatsoever. Isn't that clever? But you cheat yourself.

God is not looking for babies. God is looking for sons and daughters. God is looking for people who can share responsibility with his beloved son.

But what is Christian growth? How do we grow in spiritual stature? We know how to grow in physical stature. We know how to grow in mental stature. But do we know how to grow our spiritual stature? Spiritual growth is the increase of Christ in you.

Not you increase, you decrease. But Christ increase. That is spiritual growth.

And because it is this process, it is very painful. You have to die that he may live. The more you go down to the cross, the fuller the life of Christ is manifested.

This is the work of the Holy Spirit today in our lives. He wants us to be changed, to be transformed until we are conformed to the image of Christ. And what does it mean by transformed to the image of Christ? What does it mean by Christ fully formed in us? It means none of I, but all of Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters, we start out with none of Christ, all of me. Then gradually we become some of Christ, and some of me, until finally it will be all of Christ and none of me. That is fully formed.

That is spiritual growth. And if we are measured by that standard, how far have we grown? So this is another byproduct of returning to Christ. And then thirdly, this is ready for Christ.

As our brother has already shared with us, how to be ready for Christ. The only way to be ready for Christ is as he is, so are we. That is to say, to be like him.

And to be like him is not to imitate him outwardly. To be like him is to allow him to live fully in and out of us. That's to be like him.

And that is the way to be ready for Christ, so far as we are conscious. We allow Christ to live in us, and to live out from us. Perfect love casts out fear, because we are as he is.

So in the day of judgment, when we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, there will be no fear. So that's the way to prepare ourselves for the coming of our Lord Jesus. He who calls us, he is faithful.

He will perform. We cannot do it, but if we are willing to place ourselves in his hand, that's what he will do. And we believe that he is doing it, so that when we shall stand before him, there will be no fear, blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus.

That is my prayer. May the God of peace sanctify your holy, that your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved, blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus, ready for the King. And then finally, reward.

You know, brothers and sisters, there will be kingdom reward. What is reward? What is grace? What is gift? Grace is something that is freely given, universally given. It depends on the giver.

It does not depend on the receiver. It is free. Thank God he is the giver of all good things.

He gives and gives, and he gives his only begotten Son, his all. We do not deserve it. We have not worked for it, but it is grace, freely given.

But brothers and sisters, the Bible tells us there will be reward. And what is reward? If you get what you have done, this is work. This is not reward.

This is not gift. This is reward. Reward is selective.

Reward is not given to everyone, freely, without any cost. Reward requires work. Reward depends on the one who receives the reward, rather than the one who rewards.

And the Bible says our God is not only the giver of all good things. He is also the rewarder of all those who seek him earnestly. Is there any contradiction? No.

Today, we abuse grace. Today, we think of free grace in such an extent, to such an extent, that we do not have any sense of responsibility. He has done it all.

It's all freely given. So why should I bother? No matter how I act or react, he loves me. He will see to it that I be there in the kingdom when it shall come upon this earth, and to reign and rule with Christ for a thousand years.

Remember, that is not a gift. That is a reward. It is true.

Eternity is a gift. Eternal life is a gift. If you believe in the Lord Jesus, you are eternally saved.

Put it in a simple way. Heaven is yours for eternity. But remember, before heaven, there is the kingdom.

A thousand years. Our Lord Jesus shall come back to receive his kingdom. All the kingdoms of the earth will become the kingdom of God and of his Christ.

And he shall reign over this whole earth for a thousand years with righteousness. But when that kingdom comes, he will reward those who press on diligently towards the goal. Those who have been transformed and conformed to Christ.

Those who have returned to Christ. Those who are ready for him. The overcomers, if you want to say.

If today, we die with him, we shall reign with him in the days to come. Brothers and sisters, that's a reward, not a gift. It is not freely given to everyone.

It is given to those who deserve it. But does it mean that reward and gift are contradictory? No. They are complementary.

Why? Because when the gift is given to you and you receive it, you receive the grace of God. But after you have received the grace of God in you, do you know this is not the end? Do you know that grace, first of all, means there is something in that person that is so pleasing, so attractive, so rewarding? That is the beginning of grace. God is a God of grace.

Our Lord is full of grace. He is so attractive, so beautiful, so glorious, so rich, so shiny. That's the origin of grace.

And then when this grace comes to man as a gift, free, believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved. Freely given, we receive the grace in us. That's the second step.

But grace has the third step. After you have received grace in you, that grace shall so change you that you become also graceful. You are able to be gracious, just like he is gracious.

So, brothers and sisters, what is reward? Yes, reward is your work. But what kind of work is it? It is he who works in you and in me. So, it is your grace.

It is grace being manifested. It is not your work. It is his work.

He works in you. He works through you. You allow his grace to pour out from your life.

And brothers and sisters, on that basis, he will reward us. So, after all, it is all grace. There is nothing we can boast of.

So, that's why Paul said, I am what I am. It's by the grace of God. But thank God he is so gracious that he will even reward us even though he does all the work.

And brothers and sisters, that's a byproduct. But if it is his desire that we should win that reward, then who are we not to try? How he looks forward to the day of Christ. He looks forward to seeing the Lord face to face.

And in order to do that, he pressures on. He forgets the past. He wants to possess that which he has been possessed by Christ.

That's the attitude we should take. And if we take that kind of attitude, don't worry about the reward because our God is righteous and faithful. And brothers and sisters, there is so much involved when we return to Christ.

Most and above all things, the eternal purpose of God concerning his Son will be fully realized. And that's what the scripture means. In the fullness of time, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth.

May the Lord be glorified. Dear Lord, we bow before thee, model at thy ways, model at thy purpose. Lord, we thank thee for allowing us to be involved, even in that great mystery of the ages.

Wake us up to see our privileges and our responsibilities, that we may all return to Christ, that Christ may be all and in all to us. And to thee be the glory. In the name of our Lord Jesus.

Amen.

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