

# The Secret Of Christian Growth

by Stephen Kaung

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*This sermon emphasizes the incredible love of God in calling us His children, despite our past sins and hopelessness. It challenges believers to not only be content with being called children of God but to strive to be like Him, experiencing a transformation in their daily lives through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The speaker urges listeners to heed the still, small voice of the Spirit over the desires of the soul, highlighting the importance of faithful obedience in small things for spiritual growth and readiness for Christ's return.*

**Scripture:** 1 John 3:1, 1 John 3:2, 1 John 3:2, Psalm 139:23, Mark 9:24, Matthew 24:44, 1 Corinthians 15:58, Hebrews 12:1, James 1:22, Revelation 22:12

**Topics:** "God's Love", "Spiritual Transformation"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Will you please turn to 1 John, 1 John chapter 3. We will read 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 they knew him not.

Beloved, now are we children of God, and 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.

Now, let's have a brief prayer. Dear Lord, as we gathered here this morning, our hearts are full of gratitude. We want to thank thee for having loved us and loved us to the uttermost.

We thank thee because thou are willing to give thyself to us in such a way that we may be delivered from ourselves and be delivered unto thyself. Oh, dear Lord, how can we tell the love that thou hast bestowed upon each and every one of us? As we continue in thy presence, we pray that thy spirit will bring thy word to us, open our understanding, and bring us into the very thought that thou hast for us, and enable us to

follow thee in such a way that will fulfill all that thou hast ordained for each and every one of us. We commit this time into your hand.

Trust thy Holy Spirit to reveal thy mind to us and enable us to enter into thy fullness, to the praise of thy glory, we ask in thy precious name. Amen. We thank God for giving us another time together.

As the Apostle John said, see what love the Father has bestowed to us, that we should be called the children of God. Brothers and sisters, have we considered what the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God. This is a tremendous statement.

We who were once in sins and transgressions, we who had no hope whatsoever, and yet by the grace of God, today we are called the children of God. We are children of God. What a thought is that? We who were his enemies, we who were destined to eternal death, and yet by the grace of God, we are today called the children of God.

You and me, all of us, are being called the children of God. What a thought is that? To be children of God. We belong to him.

He is our Heavenly Father. He has given his life to us. He considers us to be his own children.

Brothers and sisters, can you imagine the wonderful grace that has been bestowed upon each and every one of us. We shall be ever thankful that people such as us, we are destined to eternal death, and now we are called the children of God. Brothers and sisters, I just cannot get over it.

What mercy, what love God has bestowed upon each and every one of us. And I think all of us have such a grateful heart to his God for what he has done for us. Only if God should do this much to us, to us it is more than enough.

Brothers and sisters, but God has something more for us. He does not simply want us to be his children. He has something far more for us than that.

He wants us to be like him. He has more work in our lives. I think brothers and sisters, sometimes when we think that we are now children of God, we will just sit back and say, Lord, that's enough for me.

As long as I'm thy children, I'm satisfied. Now I can relax and just wait for the time when thou shalt call me back to yourself. But dear brothers and sisters, this is our thought, not God's thought.

God's thought concerning us is much higher than our thought. He not only saves us, he wants to save us to the uttermost. That is to say, he wants us to be like him.

Not only saved by him, but to be like him. And that is a tremendous grace and mercy that is God will bestow upon us. So brothers and sisters, are we satisfied because we, the greatest sinners, are now the children of God? So far, human thoughts were concerned.

I think that should be quite enough. But God's thought is always higher than man's thought. God wants us not only to be called his children, but he wants us to be actually his sons and his daughters.

God wants us to be like him as he is. And that is the purpose of God. We should be satisfied by just being called the children of God.

Brothers and sisters, think of that. We who were sinners destined to eternal death, and now God, in his mercy, has come upon us through the redemption of his son, Jesus Christ, that he may call us his own children. What mercy, what grace this has been.

I think we are ever thankful for that. But that's us. So far as God is concerned, he's not satisfied by just calling us to be his children.

He wants something more for us. He wants us to be like him as he is. So he wants us to be like him.

This is God's thought concerning every one of us. Brothers and sisters, are you like him? Not only of him, but like him. Are you what he is? To be like him, to be one with him, that is the tremendous God for every one of us.

So the apostle John tells us, we are now called the children of God. What we shall be has not been manifested. But one thing we do know, when it is manifested, we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is.

Do you have this hope in you? Are you just satisfied by being called the children of God? Do you just sit back and say, now I can enjoy my life? I can do whatever I like because I'm a child of God. My destination is certain. If we have that kind of thought, then we really do not understand God's love for us because he wants us to be like him.

As he is, so shall we be. Do you think it is possible? Humanly speaking, this seems to be beyond our understanding. How can we, once the chief of sinners, to be like him as he is? But this is exactly what God wants us to be.

So this morning, we would like to go a step further. We would like to see, how can we be like him? Not only of him, belong to him, but to be like him. As he is, so shall we be.

And that is God's will for each and every one of us. And we would like to see how he is going to do that. Thank God, when we believe in the Lord Jesus, something happened in our lives.

You know, because of sin, our spirit was dead to God. God created man with a spirit. And with that human spirit, we will be able to contact God with our spirit.

But as you know, when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, their spirit was dead unto God. And it doesn't mean that they do not have a spirit, because they still have an organ called the spirit. How do we know that? We know that because, even though, because of sin, men have no contact with God, but men still have contact with spirits.

I think this is easily understood by the Chinese, because in China, even though we did not know God, but we had contact with evil spirits. I originally came from a heathen family, but thank God, one after another, God saved. But before we were saved, we contacted evil spirits.

I remember my grandfather. He was a very kind person. He did so much for other people that someone insisted to give his daughter to him as concubine.

But his concubine was not a believer, because at that time, my grandfather had not yet really come to the Lord. After my grandfather died, in China, you know, people wanted to contact the dead person. They could do that.

Through necromancy, those evil spirits, they could contact the dead one. You can really hear the voice of the dead one. And usually, the dead one would require you to burn some more incense, because they were so much lacking in Hades.

After my grandfather died, now we had been praying for our grandfather for years. I was the grandson that he loved most. I was very close to him.

After I was saved, I talked to him. But he always told me, I'm too old to change. But we did not give up.

We continued to pray for him. I was in Hong Kong when he died. I wondered before God whether our years of prayer for our grandfather had been answered.

There were some indications, but we were not sure. And after he died, his concubine wanted to talk with my grandfather, because she was not a believer. So he asked a necromancer to come.

And through some kind of magic, he could literally hear the voice of my grandfather. And that's how people in China were deceived. He was actually the evil spirit, not the dead person.

But thank God, you know what happened? After she called the necromancer, wanted to talk to my grandfather, the voice came. The voice said, don't call me. I do not belong to you.

Oh, brothers and sisters, that gave us great comfort. After years of prayers for my grandfather, we got the proof that he no longer belonged to the evil one. He belonged to God.

So, brothers and sisters, it is the will of God that we are not only saved as children, but he wants us to grow up to be like him. This is the purpose of God for every one of us. We know what is meant to be saved.

To be saved means not only that our sins have been forgiven. To be saved means that our dead spirit was renewed into life. And that's the reason why when you are saved, you begin to have real contact with God.

Now, I was brought up in a Christian family. My father loved the Lord. We had family meeting every evening before supper.

He would gather seven of us children in the living room. He would write on a big Bible on the table. And he would ask all of us to kneel down.

And he would lead us in prayer. But strangely, he never asked any one of us to pray. He always prayed himself.

But after I was saved, he began to ask me to pray too. Because he knew I'm the Lord's. But anyway, when you are saved, what do you mean by being saved? It not only means that your sins have been forgiven.

It also means that your dead spirit was renewed into life. Because of sin, your spirit was dead to God. It was alive to the evil spirit.

But had no contact with God. But when you are saved, this wonderful thing happened. Your spirit began to be in contact with God.

I was brought up in a Christian family. I received much Christian teaching. Outwardly, I believed.

But inwardly, I was not. Even though I did pray, but I had no contact with God. God was far away from me.

But thank God, the moment he saved me, immediately my contact with God was made. I knew I was saved because my contact with God was made. When I read the Bible, it was a dead book to me.

But when I was saved, I remember I went into my room, opened the Bible. I read 1 John. And everyone speaks to my heart.

Because my contact with God was made. Our spirit was brought into new life. And with our new spirit, we are now in contact with God.

So brothers and sisters, everyone of us here who have believed in the Lord Jesus, your spirit, their spirit, was brought into new life. Your contact with God has begun. That's why we Christians pray.

Because it is not a formality. It is real. When you pray, your spirit is in contact with God.

And that is the secret of Christian life. How can we be like Christ? It is through the working of God in our spirit. And when you are saved, Christ came to dwell in your new spirit, to be your life.

So remember, brothers and sisters, you who have been saved, you have a new life. You do not live your old life any longer. You have a new life.

And you are supposed to live by that new life. But how? How does that new life in you live? Thank God. When your spirit is renewed into life, Christ came into your spirit.

He became the life of your spirit. But that doesn't mean, because of this, your whole being has been changed. No.

This is just the beginning. What happens when you are saved is only happen in your spirit. Your soul hasn't changed.

Your body hasn't changed. Only your spirit has changed. But that's the beginning.

In your spirit, you are now in contact with God. Christ became the life of your spirit. But unfortunately, at that time, your own soul was still the life of your soul.

So here we begin what we call Christian conflict. In your spirit, Christ is your life. And his spirit dwells in you.

Now, what is the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit? The only work of the indwelling Holy Spirit is to bring you deeper into Christ. The Holy Spirit who dwells in you is to be your life guide after you have believed in the Lord Jesus. Now, before you believe in the Lord Jesus, how do you live? You live by your soul.

By how you feel yourself. What you want to do, you do. Because your spirit was dead.

But now your spirit became alive. And the Holy Spirit in your spirit has now become your life guide. He will guide you in following the Lord Jesus.

So dear brothers and sisters, after you are saved, have you experienced the working of the Holy Spirit in your spirit? Have you experienced the conflict in your life? Before you are saved, you just go one way. The way that you feel. But now after you believe in the Lord Jesus, you cannot go anymore the old way.

You find there is a conflict within you. We call it the conflict of the spirit and the soul. In the spirit, in your spirit, the Holy Spirit is leading you to God.

But in your soul, your self, he is still trying to lead you into himself. So every believer begins with the conflict of the spirit and the soul. Thank God.

If you have not experienced this conflict between the spirit and the soul, it shows that you have not been saved yet. If you have been saved, this month you will begin to see the conflict between your spirit and your soul. We are told by John, physical exercise is profitable.

I think especially in our days, the young people began to realize how important is physical exercise. I remember when we were young, we didn't care much about physical exercise. But young people today are really very careful about physical exercise.

Because physical exercise is profitable. It helps us. It not only helps our body, it even helps our mind.

It makes us more alert to things. But the Bible says physical exercise is profitable, but a little. Why? Because it is unlimited.

Its profit is mainly for today. Its profit is greatly for the body. It may affect your mind, but it does not affect your whole being.

It is temporary, not eternal. But spiritual exercise is eternal. It will help you now and forever.

So brothers and sisters, today we who are the Lord, we need spiritual exercise every day. The Holy Spirit who dwells in our spirit is leading us. Every day, he never gives us his responsibility.

So far as the Holy Spirit in you is concerned, he is always faithful. Every moment, he is trying to lead you to God's way. But I believe you all experience when within your spirit, you sense the leading of the Holy Spirit.

But in your soul, you still feel the desire of your old man. For instance, before you believe in the Lord Jesus, you like to be boastful. Because to be boastful seems to oblige yourself and make you great.

But after you have believed in the Lord Jesus, you continue to boast of yourself. To tell things beyond what you really have experienced. Now, what happens? You begin to feel when you are boasting that there will be someone within your spirit telling you this is not true.

You shouldn't say that. Now formerly when you boast, you feel happy about it. The more you boast, the more you are elated.

But now when you begin to boast, saying something beyond what you really are, you will be delayed. You feel bad about it. I believe we all have that experience.

When you try to pray before bed, you cannot pray. Until you confess your sin and ask the precious blood to cleanse you from your boasting, you will not have peace in your heart. So dear brothers and sisters, thank God.

He has provided a means for each and every one of us to be sanctified. He wants every one of us to be sanctified because He is sanctified. It is very important, brothers and sisters, that we do not neglect that in

you still small words.

If you neglect that still small words, your Christian life will be a defeat. But if you pay attention to the still small words and are willing to pay the cost for listening to it, your spiritual life will grow. So how can we grow in our spiritual life? How can we be like Christ? The process is, in our daily life, we must learn to listen to the still small words.

For instance, before you believe in the Lord Jesus, you went to a certain place quite often to enjoy yourself. But after you believe in the Lord Jesus, something happens. When you begin to go to the place that you usually frequented, somehow there is a still small voice within your spirit saying, You are now a Christian.

Do you think it is right for you to go there? I know a brother. He loved the Lord, but he was a mechanic. And when he was in Shanghai, he was frequently sent by his company to the theater to look at their problem.

And this becomes his problem because he was afraid that people would see him going to the theater. They thought that he was going to see the movie or something else, but actually he was just a mechanic doing his work. And we all feel the same thing.

Don't think because I'm a pastor's son. If it's not because of the grace of God, I will be a movie star. Because the first page when a newspaper comes is the page on these theaters.

But it is the mercy of God that has saved me. I remember the Holy Spirit began to work in my life. Even though I was a pastor's son, I usually spent my Saturday in movie theaters.

I had a friend who owned a movie star, his family. So we usually can go to see the best movie without paying anything. But then the Holy Spirit began to work in my life.

He began to tell me, is it a place that you should go? Well, I said, if I go to see good movie, what's wrong with that? But I dare not say I will not go to the theater. So I tried to keep myself trying not to go to the theater. And it's a great success to me.

For several months, I was successful. But sadly, although everybody knew what he was doing, a so-called Christian movie came to Shanghai. It is called Noah's Ark.

And people sent tickets to my family. Now, I argued with myself. What's wrong seeing a Christian movie? I have not been seeing a movie for several months already.

But the temptation was too great. I finally went. But I told you my experience.

I sat there in the movie theater, looking at the movie, hoping that the movie will quickly get over so I can get out. But strangely, I did not get out. I stayed there and looking at it.

It was called Noah's Ark. It was the dirtiest movie I have ever seen. For two hours, I sat there debating whether I should leave.

But I did not. I remained to the end of it. But thank God, when I went out, no longer to a movie theater to see a movie.

The Lord delivered. So, brothers and sisters, this is the way that the Spirit of God is leading us to a sanctified life. We have a conflict within ourselves.

The Spirit is willing, but the soul is not willing. And the conflict between the Spirit and the soul is a constant daily experience. It is either the growth of your spiritual life or the failure of your spiritual life.

Now, brothers and sisters, where are you today? Are you listening to the still, small voice in the Spirit? Or are you still following the loud cry of your soul life? How much failure have you experienced in your Christian life? Or how much success have you experienced by the Spirit overcoming the soul? So, the conflict between the Spirit and the soul is the secret of our Christian growth. If, when the still, small voice is speaking to you against the loud voice of your soul, and you're willing to lay down yourself, accept the dealing of the Holy Spirit, you will discover that your spiritual life begins to grow. But on the contrary, if you listen to the loud voice of your soul and reject the small, still voice of the Spirit, then you'll find your Christian life is going backward.

And this will be the criteria of your Christian life. So, brothers and sisters, do not expect great things. In Christian life, just in these small things, that will reveal to where you really are.

Where are you today? Are you listening to the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit in your spirit? Are you just following the loud voice of your soul? This marks our Christian life. So, in a sense, it is very simple, brothers and sisters. Before the coming of the Lord, and we believe the Lord is coming soon, those who are really ready for Him will be taken by Him and will be kings reigning during the millennium.

But those who listen to their spirit, soul's voice, and try to live what they call a better life on this earth, during the millennium time, the thousand years, they will be cast into the ark of death. And the Bible says there will be gnashing of teeth. In other words, they repented of what they've done.

So, dear brothers and sisters, thank God. The way of victory is shown us by the Bible, not in big things. Do not expect that only big things will affect your life.

No, it is your daily, small things that make up your life. If you are faithful to the Lord in small things, you may suffer a little bit today, but eventually you will reign with Christ for a thousand years. But on the contrary, if you cater to your soul's voice and try to please yourself today, sin, during the millennium, you will be cast into the ark of death and repented of what you have.

So it is, Christian life is really very simple. Brothers and sisters, do not expect great things. Christian life is made up of everyday life.

Faithful in small things means faithful in life. Unfaithful in small things means defeat in life. So our daily life is very important.

Brothers and sisters, again, I want to repeat. Life is not composed of big things. Life is composed of small things.

It is your daily, small things that make up the life that you shall live. If you neglect, may I warn you, that you will regret. During the millennium time, when other Christians will reign with Christ, then you will be cast into utter darkness with gnashing of teeth.

That is to say, repent for what you have done. It is worth it. So this morning, I want to put this thing before you, dear brothers and sisters.

You know, sometimes I thought, why is it that the Lord should leave me on earth, that law, without taking me to be with Him? How good it would be if immediately I was saved. He took me to Himself. That would save me a lot of problems.

But that's human thinking. Because God wants grown-up sons and daughters. He does not want little babies.

Little babies are good to look at, but they are not able to be depended. So the simple fact is here, brothers and sisters. Thank God He has not yet come.

If He should come already, and we were all here, we were all lost. But thank God He is coming. He does not tell us when.

He can come at any moment. Brothers and sisters, I do sense very strongly, we are living in the last days. Two thousand years have passed.

This is the last days. He may come at any moment. This is our opportunity.

So do not lose this opportunity. Let us all press on towards the goal. And when He shall return, at any moment, you will be raptured.

And reign with Him during the millennium time. But woe to the people who had to be cast out, in utter darkness, repenting, regretting. But dear brothers and sisters, God is merciful.

He will not leave anyone out forever. The Bible clearly tells us sooner or later, we shall all be gathered together with Him in eternity in the kingdom, ruling and reigning with Christ forever. But a thousand years in darkness is not something easy.

to go through. If you think it is hard to be faithful to the Lord in giving up what your soul likes. Think, during the millennium kingdom, it can be a thousand years in utter darkness with gnashing of teeth.

Which do you prefer? So I just want to put this thing before all you dear brothers and sisters. It is my urgent prayer that for the sake of eternity, we will be willing to lay down ourselves and let Him have His will in each and every one of us. That at His coming, we will all be gathered together with Him.

Hopefully, brothers and sisters, we will not meet again on earth. We will meet again. There in heaven.

May the Lord bless you. Dear Lord, how we praise and thank you because your heart is always perfect towards us. You do not want us to be barely saved.

You want to save us to the uttermost. Lord, Lord, even though in this world there will be some little problem, some little things that we have to give up, and yet, Lord, it is for our eternal good. So we just pray, Lord, after we have heard such message, Thou will enable every one of us to give ourselves totally over to you and say, Lord, have Thy way.

We want Thy best. We want to be what Thou want us to be. We do not want to be just babes in Christ.

We want to be grown-up sons and daughters of God. Have mercy upon each and every one of us. In your name we pray.

Amen.

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