

WCCC 2019

Brother Ted Peng

Until Christ is Formed in You (1)

II Timothy 1: 6 – 10 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel.

In verse 6, another translation for 'stir up' is 'rekindle the spirit of God'. That is, something was gone and now has to be rekindled, or put on fire again.

I would underline 'called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace'. That purpose and grace were given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.

Verse 10 is loaded with meaning. It said that God's purpose and God's grace were given to us before time began and now it is revealed to us by the appearing of our Lord Jesus to us. This Christ Jesus has come and has abolished death. He has brought life and He has brought incorruptibility. This incorruptibility is sometimes translated as immortality. Immortality emphasizes the future. Incorruptibility emphasizes now. The end of verse 10 said this is brought to us so it can be seen by the gospel.

II Timothy 4: 6 – 8 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Here the apostle Paul said I am about to die. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. From now on there is a crown of righteousness reserved for me. That crown is not only reserved for me. But also reserved for all who has loved His appearing.

Galatians 4:19 My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you.

Paul had an end in all those whom he called little children – Christ is formed in you.

Prayer

Lord, we really thank You and praise You. Lord, You are so gracious and so merciful. We look up to You for this coming hour that You will be with us. Show Your face to us and show Your glory. Lord, we want to see Your heart and mind. Lord, we love You but we know You love us a lot more. Lord, speak to us this morning. In the name of our Lord Jesus we pray. Amen.

Last night I was thinking we already heard three messages yesterday. I really thank the Lord because for the last 4 years, Brother Kaung has continuously asked us a question. The Lord is coming, are we ready? This is a very piercing question. And I thank the Lord for that question because we are brought face to face with our God. Yes, the Lord is coming for sure. Are we ready? When I think about the past couple of years, I have to admit I do not dare to say yes or no. I thank the Lord that this time all the brothers are addressing this question. If we love His appearing, we will be willing to be a vessel to honor. Today, when we look at the condition of the church, the obstacles ahead of us, the enemy, the world, our flesh and where we are, everything seems to be so difficult. But yesterday afternoon our brother encouraged us to be an overcomer. Thank the Lord our brother last night encouraged us to be a seeker of that crown of righteousness. Brothers and sisters, the Lord looks at our heart. Our Lord knows if we heed His words. We tell Him that we want to be a vessel to honor, we want to be an overcomer, and we want to be a seeker of that crown of righteousness. We may feel that we are so far away. But the Lord has never asked us to be a perfect man. The Lord wants us to have a perfect heart. Brothers and sisters, if we heed the word of our brothers yesterday, I think the Lord will consider us being ready. Thank the Lord for that. Our God and our Lord Jesus are most gracious and most merciful. Our heart counts. Our sincerity counts. Our simplicity before the Lord counts. May the Lord encourage us.

The brothers assigned me to share on the topic of 'Until Christ Formed in Us'. Brothers and sisters, this is a very personal question. We have this heart for the Lord. And it is not just a thought, it is reality. We asked God to form Christ in us. If we are going in that direction and we ask the Lord to help us really go that way, Christ will finally be formed in us. That is our testimony before our Lord and before the world. Brothers and sisters, our God the Father and our Lord

Jesus are most gracious and most merciful. If we really are willing, He for sure will make that happen. We thank the Lord for that.

This time the Lord burdened me to share from two books. One is II Timothy. I would like to share with brothers and sisters that when Paul wrote to Timothy, he actually had two audiences in mind. One for sure was Timothy. And the other he did not mention until the very end. And that is all who love His appearing. But he mentioned it in the very end in a very strong way. He said all those who love His appearing will receive this crown of righteousness. When I was young and I was reading this part, I thought apostle Paul will have this big crown because he had done so much for the Lord and for the church. And those who love His appearing, brothers and sisters, that is you and me, will have a small crown because we are not like him yet. But that is not what Paul thought. Paul saw only one crown of righteousness. And that crown of righteousness will be given to me. And that same crown will be given to you. Dear brothers and sisters, this is incredible. That crown of righteousness will be given to Paul, and also to you and me. The only qualification is that we love His appearing. So we see that the book of II Timothy has two audiences – Timothy and all those who love His appearing. In II Timothy, it is Paul speaking to Timothy and also to those who love His appearing. And the promise at the very end is that the crown will be given to all those who love His appearing. And of course, also given to Timothy. II Timothy is really encouraging. I wish to share with brothers and sisters on Timothy and those all who love His appearing. I would share also on what apostle Paul asked them to do and his encouragement and his demand on them.

And the second session I would like to go into the matter of 'Christ is formed in us'. It is very concrete. If we love His appearing, we will live a different life and will actually become a different person. Something is worked in us. Christ is formed in us. And that was Paul's burden in Galatians. It is very specific. That is what we will share next time. That Galatians picture is telling us what a man is like if Christ is formed in him. Basically, it is like the man that God intended for man when He first created man. When God created man, He created man according to His own image. We are able to have the nature and character of God. That is what is fully expressed in our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is a very good example of such a man. Paul gave a very specific picture in the Galatians. It is the picture of the characteristics of such a man. And the Paul called it the fruits of the Holy Spirit. That is what we are going to share next time.

At the beginning of II Timothy, Paul talked to Timothy. When I was younger and when I first read Timothy, I felt that Timothy must be a timid and immature person because Paul mentioned his tears. And Paul also mentioned his mother and grandmother. But when I read 'I remember your tears'; I do not detect any hint of despise. Paul was in Ephesus for three years. He encouraged, exhorted and warned brothers and sisters from house to house. Brothers and sisters, do not despise tears. It depends on why you are crying. If one cries just for oneself,

it is pitiful. But one of these days, the Lord will open our eyes to shed tears for Him, for the condition of His church, and for the trouble that one made for Him. Paul said there was a genuine, unfeigned faith in Timothy's grandmother, mother and in him too. The grandmother was the first-generation Christian. The mother was also the first-generation Christian because of the genuine faith in her. And Timothy was also the first-generation Christian because he had the genuine faith in him. He had a real relationship with the Lord. We thank the Lord for that.

And then Paul told Timothy to rekindle the gift of God. Rekindle means something was burning but then died down. He needed to get it burning again. Brothers and sisters, Timothy at that time was not a kid anymore. And Timothy was not an inexperienced servant of the Lord. The first time the book of Acts mentioned Timothy was in Acts 16. It was about 49 A.D. II Timothy was written about 67 A.D. when Paul was about to be martyred. By this time Timothy had been working with Paul for about 17 – 18 years. In a sense, Timothy although young, about forty or less yet he was an experienced servant of the Lord. Timothy was with Paul when Paul wrote all thirteen letters. And Paul sent him to resolve problems at various church. Then why did the fire go down? That time was a very perilous time. Rome was persecuting the Christians. Worse yet, many in Asia had deserted Paul. It was the church and the servants who had left Paul. And thirdly Paul was soon to be martyred. Timothy knew that. When Paul was imprisoned again, Timothy went to see him many times. So Timothy knew that Paul would soon be gone. And other close coworkers of Paul knew that too. What that meant was that going forward after that would be very difficult. How would Timothy, a young servant of the Lord and Silas carry on the task that God had given them? The obstacles to God's work looked so severe to Timothy. So Paul told Timothy to rekindle the fire.

Here the words were to rekindle the gift of God. What was that gift of God? I used to think the gift of God was the speaking of tongue and the ability to serve and to preach. But that gift is singular. Not many gifts but one single gift. What was that gift? Remember in the Gospel of John chapter 4 when the Lord Jesus came to Samaria, the Samaritan woman said that the Jews and Samaritans did not talk to each other. Our Lord Jesus said, 'if you know the gift of God and if you know who it is that speaks to you, then you will ask Him and He will give you living water'. What Jesus was saying was that the gift of God is the Son of God Himself. Thank the Lord that at the end of the chapter the Samaritan woman fully understood that. What is the gift of God here? The gift of God is the Lord Jesus Himself; the Son of God, Christ. And then Paul continued to say what you have received is the spirit of power, the spirit of love, and the spirit of a sound mind. If we see the gift of God is Christ Jesus Himself, then the power, love and sound mind come with it. This is what apostle Paul trying to remind Timothy.

Paul urged Timothy and the brothers and sisters to remember two most important things. The first thing is God's purpose. God has called us not

according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace, which He gave us in Christ Jesus before time began. And then Paul went on to say Timothy, you and I are called not according to our work, not because of so many things we have done, not because we have brought the gospel from Jerusalem to all these other places, not because of our past work or present work or even our future work, not according to our plan, not according to our track record; it is according to His purpose. His purpose is more important than any of our track record. It is more important than what we can or cannot do. This purpose and grace were given to us before time began. It is manifested by the appearing of Jesus Christ. This is manifested through His appearing.

We have a sister in our midst who went to the Lord earlier this year. She left at 102 years old. You look at her and you wonder how could this sister serve the Lord. Last year we would already say this sister was useless. But every bible study she came and sat through an hour and a half and did not fall asleep. And Sunday was like that too. And when we see our sister showing up like this, week after week, our hearts were so encouraged. And even after she went to the Lord, when we think about her, we are encouraged. Brothers and sisters, it is not according to our works, it is according to His purpose.

The second thing is what this wonderful gospel has brought us. The gospel God entrusted to Paul is wonderful and comprehensive. It declares that Christ has appeared. And for thirty-three and a half years He walked on this earth. What did he do? He has abolished death. He has brought to light life. He has brought incorruptibility. These three words are very heavy words. II Timothy 1 :10 tells us that Christ has abolished death. And this whole thing is in the context of the gospel because this particular verse said His gospel has shown us that Christ has appeared and He has abolished death. He has come to abolish death. Dear brothers and sisters, I know that in another ten or twenty years, I will be gone. Everyone has to die. What does it mean by abolishing death? Remember in Genesis, the Lord Jehovah said, the day you eat of the fruit of this tree, you will die. Adam and Eve ate the fruit. They went on to live nine hundred years. So what does it mean? It means the day they ate of this fruit, their relationship and communication with God would be completely separated. They never could come into the presence of the Lord again. They never could understand God again. They could not hear His voice again. He would never talk to them again. This was what God meant. Brothers and sisters, that is death. There are no more communications. I used to work in a place where we send spacecraft into deep space. When the spacecraft leaves the earth, what does it mean when they say it is dead? It does not mean it blows up. The only definition of 'it is dead' is that it does not talk to you anymore. You cannot talk to him. You cannot receive anything from it. And that is the definition of death. It is exactly the same thing that God was talking about when He told Adam and Eve that the day they ate of the fruit, they would die. But now Christ has come. He has abolished death. What does that mean? It means He makes it possible for man to talk to God again. He allows man to be able to come to the presence

of God again. And that is what God created man for. Now man can come back to God. He can hear God's voice. He can pray. He can be a man according to what God has created for. Thank God when Christ came, He abolished death.

Then it said that He has come and brought to light life. What does it mean? You can say my mom already gave me my life. But this is different. This is the life that God originally intended for you and me. This is what God created according to His own image. And this is the life that has the nature and character of the Son of God. Now Christ has come. He has brought that to you and to me.

This is the apostle Paul's gospel. It is about the incorruptibility. Corruptible means someone can make you do bad things. Someone says to you: let us go and have a drink of liquor or go smoke opium or do some funny thing. You cannot resist it and you are corrupted. But now the Lord Jesus had come and He has brought incorruptibility. That means you have the ability to resist corruption. You have a wonderful, holy, clean life. And all things from outside cannot affect you. So when you think about the gospel Paul was bringing, it is weighty and powerful. It not only affects the first day we are saved. It brings us all the way through our life. And the life that God has intended for you and me is now formed in you and me. All the bad things cannot affect you anymore. In Galatians, you will find that to Paul the gospel is Christ Himself. He has come. He has abolished death. He has brought life. He has brought incorruptibility. Dear brothers and sisters, in the last two days our brothers have talked about being a vessel to honor, being an overcomer and being a seeker of the crown. Our Lord Jesus has come to abolish death. He has brought incorruptibility. All the things our brothers have been talking about these past few days are now possible. This life and this incorruptibility allow us to be overcomers, to be vessels to honor and also allow us to have a heart to seek the crown of righteousness. Thank the Lord for that. This is basically what Paul was telling Timothy to remember: first, the purpose of God and second, the all-powerful, wonderful gospel.

I want to go back to this purpose a little bit. If we read the previous verse, it said this purpose has been given to us in Christ before time began. What does this mean? That means God's purpose is eternal. From the time that time began there is God's purpose. So this purpose is God's eternal purpose. Brothers and sisters, we cannot despise God's eternal purpose because we are called according to that. Thank the Lord that the eternal purpose of God concerning Christ and the church is the front and center focus of our conference for so many years. So Paul reminded Timothy that you and I were called according to this. You and I were called to serve Christ. And you and I were called to serve the church. Brothers and sisters, you and I are not called just to do small things. You and I are called to do this wonderful thing: to serve Christ and serve His purpose, the church. This was what Paul told Timothy.

Let me say just one more thing. Remember Paul said I have fought the fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. And in chapter 2, Paul told Timothy he needed to do the same thing. You have to suffer with me for the gospel. You have to fight like a soldier. You have to run like an athlete. And you have to work hard like a farmer. So essentially Paul was telling Timothy that he had to serve like him.

We are both bond servants of Christ. The Lord has said, if you deny Him, He is going to deny you. We have talked about being a believer; sometimes we messed up and we denied the Lord. But the Lord will never deny or give up on you. Peter denied the Lord three times. And the Lord looked back at him with grace. So what does it mean when it said, if you deny Him, He will deny you. Here he is talking about serving His purpose; about being a servant and serving His purpose. If you deny His purpose, He will deny you as a servant. Then he went on to say if we are faithless, He remains faithful because He cannot deny Himself. Brothers and sisters, you also have to understand this from the point of view of serving God's purpose. If we are not faithful to God's purpose, our Lord Jesus remains faithful. And He will not deny Himself. The Father's purpose is His purpose to the very end. This is how serious the purpose of God is.

Paul also told Timothy that he had to serve the Lord as Paul served. In addition to this, Paul told Timothy he had to live a life like he lived. Timothy had to live a life of a bond servant like Paul. II Timothy 3:10 said 'But you have been thoroughly acquainted with my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, endurance.' Here Paul said, Timothy you actually have followed these things. I thank the Lord that you have been walking with me the longest time. You have thoroughly followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, long suffering and love. Paul told Timothy he had to live like him. Timothy also needed to serve like him. They both were bond servants of the Lord. Is this not wonderful? This old brother was about to leave. He was telling young Timothy to remember these two most important things – God's purpose and His gospel. It is a wonderful and comprehensive gospel. And then Timothy had to live a holy life like Paul. Timothy had to work like Paul. Brothers and sisters, if Timothy followed these, Timothy would be like a man with Christ formed in him. Timothy saw Paul and Paul was such a good example of a man with Christ formed in him.

Look at the end where Paul mentioned those who love His appearing. There are two words in the bible related to the Lord's coming. One is Parousia – His coming, His return. Our brother mentioned that last night. And another word is His appearing. In Greek it is apophenia – he shows forth to me. Our brother mentioned last night that Christ's coming is very heavy in Paul's heart from the first day the Lord met him. Paul wrote about the Lord's coming from his first letter, I Thessalonians to his last letter, II Timothy. He was certain that Lord Jesus would return. Of course, the Lord said when He will come back depends on the Father and not on Him. No matter what Paul thought, he felt that Christ was coming. From I Thessalonians to II Timothy, this is a big part of his sharing.

I was thinking that this matter was so heavy in Paul's heart, yet he waited till the last days of his life and the Lord had not come back. Even after Paul died, the Lord Jesus had not come back. It was the same with Peter. To Peter when he wrote I Peter chapter 1, it was a fact that the Lord is returning. And it was the same with James. When we read James 5, he talked about the Lord's coming. Brothers and sisters, these brothers had been waiting for the Lord to return in their lifetime. This was their life and this was the meaning of their life. But to the last days of all the apostles, the Lord still has not come back. Have you heard anything from them that showed they regretted? Have you heard anything showing they were unhappy? Not a bit. They had absolutely no regrets. And we can see that they lived a different life because they felt that the Lord would soon return. Paul is Paul as we know him because in his heart, he was very sure that the Lord would be coming back soon. And because of that when he was living on this earth, he always had the light of Christ right in front of him. Although most of the coworkers left him, yet in II Timothy chapter 4, he said Christ was by his side; right by his side and gave him strength. In II Corinthians 4: 6, he talked about 'the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'. How did he know? He saw it – the glory of God showing on the face of the Lord Jesus. When Paul encouraged Timothy to live like him and to serve like him, he was saying that to us today too. If we do that, then Christ's face is constantly before us and His presence is constantly by our side. Brothers and sisters, His coming is real. His coming is powerful and it changes our life. Over the generations, we see those Christians who love His appearing, those who wait for His coming back, never lost sight of the Lord. They broke bread to remember Him. They obeyed Him as their only master. They pursued Him as their only goal. And they exalted Him as their chief joy. They praised the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus. Whatever they did in their life, the Lord Jesus was always by their side. We thank the Lord for that. They are those people whom Christ is formed in them. This was Paul himself.

Paul used the term 'His appearing' three times in this letter. The first mention is in II Timothy 1: 10, when Christ 'appears' the last time, He came to abolish death, to bring light life and incorruptibility. In chapter 4:1, he was telling Timothy, in light of His kingdom and His appearing, you have to preach the word in season or out of season. Paul used this word 'appearing' to refer to our Lord's coming both in the past and in the future. And in this chapter 4 when Paul talked about His appearing, he was referring to the future and the present. You do not want to wait two years before you love His appearing. You love His appearing now. So for Paul, his loving the Lord's appearing was from the beginning he knew the Lord and unto the future. I think His emphasis is really 'now'. Dear brothers and sisters, we love His appearing now. Do we have His presence with us? Do we see His face? Brothers and sisters, all these are real and it makes a difference as to whether Christ is formed in us or not. Today, if we love His appearing, we are willing to be a vessel to honor. If we love His appearing today, we are willing to be an overcomer. If we love His appearing

today, our heart will seek that wonderful crown. This is what Paul was telling us.

And then Paul mentioned the crown of righteousness. The people who love His appearing will for sure get this crown of righteousness. How does the righteousness judge decide whether you or I can have the crown? Remember He is the righteous judge. This word righteousness in Paul's head means a specific thing. In the Book of Romans, he mentioned this word righteousness a lot. That righteousness is not your righteousness or my righteousness. It is God's righteousness. God's righteousness is found only in the Lord Jesus. And in Romans 3: 10 Paul said there is not a righteous man, not even one. Our righteousness is just like a filthy rag. God's righteousness however is different. God's righteousness is found only in Christ Jesus. In I Corinthians, Paul said Christ is our righteousness. And because we believe in Christ, righteousness is given to us as a gift. The point is that this righteousness is only in Christ. So are you and I like Christ? If you and I are like Christ Jesus, then the righteous judge will consider us as righteous. And then He will give you and me the crown of righteousness. Brothers and sisters, the whole thing hinges on Christ Jesus. When we try to be righteous before God, do not go to the bookstore and buy books teaching people how to be righteous or good. We are righteous if we are like Christ. Righteousness is given to us by faith. God considers us righteous if we believe in Christ Jesus. To this righteous judge the criteria is simple. For you and me, what we have to remember is also simple. May the Lord's character and nature become ours. I really thank the Lord that Paul in his last letter told Timothy and actually told those who love His appearing these things. He told us three most important things. First, the purpose of God. That is how we serve. Second thing, Christ has come. He has abolished death. He has restored our relationship with God. He has brought life. This life is the original life that God wants out of you and me. And He has brought incorruptibility. If we really believe in Christ, He makes sure that you and I are good. Be righteous. Be holy. Be sincere. Always come back to Him. Third thing, Timothy got to live like Paul and serve like Paul. That is not only to Timothy but to you and me. Why? Because you and I love His appearing. If we do so, we will fight the fight, will finish the course, and will keep the faith. Thank the Lord.

Let us pray.

Dear heavenly Father, we really thank You for giving us Your dear Son, our Lord Jesus. He has done so much for us, much more than we can think of. And even today, our Lord Jesus is fully responsible for us. Lord, we really thank and praise You. And we also thank You for giving us honest brothers like Timothy. And we thank You for giving us faithful brothers like Paul. We thank You Lord for considering us worthy to love You and Your appearing. Lord, we thank You. In the name of the Lord Jesus we pray. Amen.