

## Applying All Diligence

Brother Stephen Kaung

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*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 ye 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 Jesus Christ; for he with whom these things are not present is blind, shortsighted, and has forgotten the purging of his former sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, use diligence to make your calling and election sure, for doing these things ye will never fall; for thus shall the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be richly furnished unto you. (II Peter 1:3-11)*

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a rushing noise, and the elements, burning with heat, shall be dissolved, and the earth and the works in it shall be burnt up. All these things then being to be dissolved, what ought ye to be in holy conversation and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements burning with heat, shall melt? But, according to his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, as ye wait for these things be diligent to be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless; and account the*

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*long-suffering of our Lord to be salvation. (II Peter 3:10-15)*

*Lord, when we sing that song, we say, 'We wait and wait.' But You have not come yet. Our Lord, is it because our heart waiting for You is not that fervent? Lord, is it that we are waiting for You, or is it that You are waiting for us? Lord, is it that, because of our condition, You have to endure? Lord, we believe Your heart waiting to return is more earnest than ours. Lord, forgive us. Forgive us that we did not wait earnestly enough. Lord, forgive us; it is our condition which delays you. Lord, this morning, we prostrate before You. We pray that You have mercy on us. Lord, Your long-suffering is our salvation. We pray that through Your spirit You work in us again, working to the extent that our waiting can hasten Your coming. Lord, it is for this purpose that we gather before You. May You prepare us. In the name of our Lord Jesus, Amen.*

This time when we gather together before the Lord, we learn to be a people that wait for and hasten the coming of the day of God. We remember that when our Lord was to depart from the world He told us Himself that He would come back. The saints of the first century waited for the return of the Lord. During the time when the Church was persecuted, whenever brothers and sisters met, they would greet each other by saying 'maranatha', meaning 'The Lord is coming'. Through the generations, brothers and sisters who have a heart for the Lord all waited for His coming. All through twenty centuries, the prayer of the Church has been for our Lord to return. But until today, the Lord has tarried. Is our Lord not willing to return? Is there any bridegroom who is not waiting for the coming of the bride? The reason that He has not returned is because His bride is not ready yet. It is because our hearts towards Him are not earnest.

Although we sing maranatha, but do we really want Him to return? Lately I received a poem written by a brother. In this poem he longed for the return of the Lord. But he said, 'When I was reminded of the return of the Lord, on one hand I hope that He will come back soon, but on the other I am afraid too, because I am afraid that when my Lord returns I am not ready.' Brothers and sisters, is this not the feeling in us? On one hand, we hope our Lord will return soon, but on

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the other hand there may be fear in our hearts. We may actually hope that He will be late in His return, because we have not made ourselves ready. Are we really ones who wait for and hasten His return? Probably people of this attitude are few on earth. May the Lord have mercy on us so that we can be the people to hasten His return. When the Lord meets us, when He sees us and hears our cry, He cannot help but return soon. This is our heart's desire when we gather before the Lord this time.

We thank and praise our God. According to His foreknowledge, He has chosen us. He has chosen us not because of our works. He has chosen us according to Himself. He has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world. He has called us by His own glory and virtue. He has given us His life. He has given us the greatest and precious promises, so that through these promises we can become worthy of His selection and His call.

We know that God does not regret about His gifts and selection, as recorded clearly in Romans 11:29: 'The gifts and the calling of God are not subject to repentance.' But II Peter 1:11 states: 'Wherefore the rather, brethren, use diligence to make your calling and election sure, for doing these things ye will never fall.' God's gifts and His calling are not subject to repentance. When God gives us His grace, He shall never take it back. When God selects us, He shall never let us go. From the standpoint of God, His gifts and selection shall never change. But from our standpoint, by His grace, we need to use diligence to make our calling and election sure. In other words, God has already selected us and called us to enter into His glory, to be conformed to the image of His Son so that the character of His Son can become ours and that His Son can be the first born among the brethren. This is the gracious gifts that God has given us. God will never regret about this.

But brothers and sisters, on our side, although He has given His gifts and called us according to His own glory, it is possible that we might consider ourselves too lightly and take His gifts very lightly. We might think that His selection of us has nothing to do with us. It then becomes possible for us to slip. It seems that God's calling and selection are on a shaking ground. Is this not happening to many

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children of God? Indeed God has chosen us. But is our living today suitable for His selection? Indeed God has given us His gifts. But, are we falling in His grace? Are we slipping? We are not pursuing and pressing on and walking in the will of God's choosing. It is not to say that this way we shall lose God's salvation. But this clearly tells us that it is possible for us to lose sight of that purpose by which God calls us. Because of our carelessness, we may lose the very will and heart by which God calls us.

Last night, our brother mentioned especially about the inheritance. God called and selected us so that we can inherit this inheritance. But our brother also said that, while the inheritance is a gift, a free gift from God, we have to take it by possessing and obtaining it. God promised Abraham and his descendants the land of Canaan. He is faithful. He had already given this land to His chosen people. According to God, He had already given it. But the Bible tells us that the Israelites had to use the soles of their feet to possess the land step by step until they took possession of the whole land that God had promised them.

So, dear brothers and sisters, the Lord tells us in the Gospels that many are called, but few are chosen. We are all called, but have we been chosen? It is the Lord who calls, but whether we will be chosen or not has a lot to do with ourselves. If we can receive His great and precious promises based on the great faith He has given us, then we can see that His grace is sufficient for us to be chosen. But if today we take His gifts lightly, or if we have no desire for His election, then we shall be set aside. It is not to say that because of this we will perish or fall. But it means that we shall have no part in His kingdom.

The Book of Colossians tells us that God has transferred us from the power of darkness to the kingdom of His beloved Son. According to the work of God, we who have been saved by grace have been delivered from the power of darkness. We have been put by God into the kingdom of His beloved Son. But, dear brothers and sisters, are we, in our daily living, living in His kingdom? Are we willingly submitting ourselves to the authority of His Son? Have we let His purpose and will prevail in us? Have we let Him conform us into the image of His Son? Or, are we actually opposing Him? If that is the

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case, even from the standpoint of God's work, He has already put us in the kingdom of His beloved Son. But according to our living, we are not like ones living in the kingdom.

So Peter has a great burden before the Lord. He is willing to remind brothers and sisters before leaving the world. He knows that it is very easy for brothers and sisters to forget these things. Although we know these things, it is easy for us to forget. So he said he would use all diligence to remind them. The will of God is for us to enter His kingdom with abundance. God does not want us to wander around outside the kingdom. So Peter says that we have to use all diligence.

We know Peter himself is a very diligent man regardless of his many weaknesses. On the way of his following the Lord, once he almost decided to run away. The Lord called him when he was casting the net on the Sea of Galilee. When the Lord passed by, He called Him. So Peter abandoned his boat and followed the Lord. But after a while, in Luke Chapter 5 when our Lord went to the village where Peter lived, he went out fishing. Why? He had a feeling that the way to follow the Lord was just too hard. He may have said to himself, 'The Lord is too holy, and I am too filthy; I cannot possibly follow Him.' So there was a temptation for him to run away. The next morning, the Lord borrowed Peter's boat to preach. Our Lord has a big heart. He did not blame Peter, for He knew his heart. Not only did He not blame him but He also borrowed his boat and intended to pay him for it. So He told Peter to bring his boat out to the sea and cast his net in the deep. Peter cast his net and brought in a whole boatful of big fish, so much so that he had to ask his other companions to help bring in the fish. When our Lord asks for some things, He always repays thousand fold. He will never shortchange anybody. He is very magnanimous. But, just because of that move, Peter's heart was touched. He knelt down before the Lord, saying, 'Lord, I am a sinner. Away from me.'

Try to share Peter's feeling at that time: he saw the glory of the Lord and was drawn to Him, but he felt his own corruption. So he said, 'I am a sinner. Away from me.' Yet, deep down in his heart, he was saying, 'Lord, do not leave me.' The Lord said, 'I will make you a fisher of man.' Peter rose up and followed the Lord.

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We see Peter was a great follower of the Lord. When our Lord fed five thousand people with two loaves and five fish, many wanted to follow the Lord. The Lord started telling them He was the bread from heaven. Then even His disciples found these words too hard to understand and many of them left Him. But the Lord asked these twelve whom He had chosen, 'Are you leaving me too?' Peter said, 'Lord, You have the word of life. Who else can we follow? We have already believed in You, knowing that You are the Son of the living God.' Thus, Peter followed the Lord throughout his life diligently. When he was about to leave the world, he still said, 'Be diligent. Be diligent. This way is not easy.'

We remember that on the Mount of Transfiguration, when the glory of the Lord was emitted and when Moses and Elijah also appeared, the glory was so great that His disciples fell asleep. When they woke up, the conversation of these three was about to be over. Peter was so anxious. He bluntly cried out, 'It is so good for us to be here. Let us build three tents, one for You Lord, one for Moses and the other for Elijah. As for the three of us, we shall just sleep in the open. The scene is so glorious and this is the kingdom. The kingdom is so glorious.' After Peter said so, the glorious clouds of God covered them. God interrupted Peter and took away Moses and Elijah, saying, 'This is My beloved Son. Hear Him and be quiet.'

Brothers and sisters, what does this mean? You know, Peter stealthily had this thought in his heart: he wished that he could get to glory without going through suffering; that is, to obtain the crown without the cross. When the Lord said, 'Who do you say I am?' Peter, obtaining the revelation from God, answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Our Lord said, 'Simon Bar-jona, you are blessed.' Then our Lord told His disciples how He would go to Jerusalem to be rejected and crucified. Peter then took hold of the Lord and said, 'Lord, that cannot be so. You have to love Yourself. You can get Your kingdom and You can be the king without going through the cross.' But the Lord told him, 'This is the thought of Satan. Satan, get away behind me.' Although Peter received this lesson from the Lord, that thought was still in him. So, on the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter thought: 'Now that kingdom has arrived, I can enter the kingdom without going through suffering and the cross.'

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This is so good.' So the Lord instructed him again: 'If we want to enter into the kingdom of God, we have to go through much difficulty. We have to seek the kingdom of heaven by violence. Those who are violent can get it.' This 'by force' is violence directed to oneself. It is not violence towards others. In other words, we have to deny ourselves, pick up the cross and follow the Lord, for the way of the Lamb is the way of the cross. The cross leads us to the throne.

The story of Peter shows us that, if we want to enter into the kingdom richly, we have to use all diligence. Now that God has called us and He has given us so much promise, essentially everything is ready. We have to rise up and walk forward diligently. What does 'diligence' mean? According to the natural man, some are a little lazy, and some are a little more diligent. But interestingly, no matter how diligent a person is by nature, he has no portion in the kingdom, because the 'diligence' here is the Lord's character. When our Lord was on earth, He was a diligent man. In the Gospel of Mark, we often see these words: 'straight-away', 'straight-away', 'straight-away'. When our Lord was following the will of His Father, He would never wait for the next day. This is the character of our Lord. Today, in the life that we believers have received, there is this attribute. If we can follow this character of the new life in us, then we can become diligent. The question is: By what kind of life we live today? If we try to be diligent by our own efforts, it is not possible for us to succeed. For in spiritual matters, man's diligence is totally useless. But if we can confess before God that we are lazy and look to Him to be our diligence, then we can become diligent before God by following the diligence in this new life. Proverbs 10:4 says: 'He cometh to want that dealeth with a slack hand; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.' Then again, 'The hand of the diligent shall bear rule.' (Proverbs 12:24) So we must have an attitude of diligence before God.

The grace of God is uniform for us. But why do some seem to have more grace while some seem to receive less? It is not that God is partial, giving some a little more grace and some a little less. The reason is: some are more diligent and some are lazy. What does 'diligence' refer to here? Is it to say that we have to rise up to be diligent and that we would strive by ourselves to improve ourselves so that we can walk forward? Not so! The 'diligence' here means that

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we are diligent in believing the promises of God, in being obedient to the work of the Holy Spirit. It refers particularly to the maturity of one's spiritual character. Peter says, 'For doing these things ye will never fall.' These all refer to the growth and maturity of the character of a Christian. This does not mean that we have to be diligent in doing our work, although diligence in serving the Lord has its position. This 'diligence' here particularly refers being diligent in being conformed into the image of the Son of God.

We, by ourselves, cannot conform ourselves into the image of the Son of God. Only the Holy Spirit can conform us into the image of the Son of God. You shall not try by your will and by your efforts to conform yourself into the image of the Son of God. Outwardly, you may achieve some thing. But inside, it is not so. You then become a hypocrite: You have a godly outlook without godliness inside. This has to be the work of the Holy Spirit. But, in what way should we be diligent? We have to be diligent in cooperating with the Holy Spirit. We should be diligent in putting ourselves in the hands of the Lord. If we can be diligent in such a way, then the Holy Spirit will minister Christ into us.

So Peter here says in II Peter 1:5, 'But for this very reason also, using therewith all diligence, in your faith have also virtue.' Faith is a foundation. Faith is a gift of God. Oftentimes we try to create faith. We hypnotize ourselves by repeatedly saying, 'I believe. I believe. I believe.' But the more you say 'I believe', inside of you there is more likely an unbelief. Ephesians 2:8 says, 'Ye are saved by grace, through faith; and this not be yourselves; it is God's gift: not on the principle of works.' Faith is according to Christ. Hebrews 12:2 states that Jesus is the author and the finisher of our faith. God has given us this precious faith. Everyone of us has believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Then we must exercise this faith. We believe that God is and that He will reward all those who seek Him.

Faith is the foundation. But after you have faith, you have to add virtue. In the original text, to 'add' means to 'supply'. So, on top of faith, you have to furnish virtue. 'Faith' in the original text means 'energy' and 'courage'. This is what it is said in James 2:26: 'As a



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body without a spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.' If you truly have faith, there must be the works of faith. There is an energy and power in faith. There is courage in faith, so that you can do what man cannot do. Chapter 11 of the Book of Hebrews lists all the heroes of faith. By faith, they have courage and strength. By faith, Abraham forsook all and followed the Lord. By faith, he offered up Isaac to God, believing God can bring life out of death. By faith, Rahab received the spies from the Israelites. So we see if there is faith, there will be the evidence. This is virtue.

Then Peter goes on to say that, with virtue, you have to supply knowledge. This knowledge refers to our knowledge about the will of God. This is true knowledge. Paul said in the Book of Romans that the Israelites had fervency towards God but they did not base on true knowledge. They wanted to establish their own righteousness and rejected the righteousness of God. Brothers and sisters, many people today are very fervent toward the Lord. But is that fervency based on true knowledge? In Matthews Chapter 7, the Lord says, 'Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied through thy name, and through thy name cast out demons?' But the Lord says to them, 'I never knew you.' It actually means, 'I do not appraise you.' Because not all of them who say, 'Lord, Lord,' can enter into the kingdom. Only those who do the will of the Father can enter. Brothers and sisters, if by faith we can be obedient, this obedience can bring us into more abundant knowledge of the will of God. If we already know the will of God but do not obey, God will not give us more knowledge. The more we are obedient to Him, the more we understand His will.

'In knowledge, temperance.' Temperance, according to Galatians Chapter 5, is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. 'Self-control' is actually control by the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit in us restraining us. Why does this control by the Holy Spirit have to be added to knowledge? I Corinthians 8:1 says, 'Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.' When we have a little knowledge, even so-called spiritual knowledge, unwittingly we become proud. When we see other people, we would say, 'They don't understand. Only we understand.' Brothers and sisters, we are really weak. It is so easy for us to lose control when we have a little knowledge. So, after we have knowledge, we have to add the control and discipline of the Holy Spirit. Paul says, 'If

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I eat meat and cause a brother to stumble, then I shall not eat meat.' It is not that eating meat is wrong. In fact, to forbid eating meat is the teaching of Satan. But some are weak. At that time, the meat had been offered (to the idols). Paul says, 'If I make my brother stumble because I eat that meat, then I sin against the Lord.' If you have knowledge, you keep it to yourself before the Lord. Do not make your brother stumble because of your knowledge.

'In temperance, endurance.' Endurance means: in all temptations and trials, you do not lose courage. One who knows truly the will of God and one who follows the Lord faithfully will encounter much trial and much suffering. In all these trials and difficulties, can one endure to the end? The Lord says, 'One who endures to the end shall be saved.' 'If we endure with Christ, we shall reign with Him.' So, we have to add endurance.

'In endurance, godliness.' If we can be like this, then in our bodies we can show forth the image of the Son of God. Paul said to Timothy: 'Bodily exercise is profitable for a little.' (But of course, bodily exercise is still beneficial. So we hope we still have to exercise our bodies. In our youth, we thought we were fervent. We exercised only godliness but not bodies. But without bodies, we cannot possibly exercise godliness. However, do not only exercise your body; you should also exercise godliness.) This word 'exercise' in the original meaning is like entering into a gymnasium. You go into the gymnasium to exercise; but who is the coach? You are not to exercise at your own wish; otherwise you will hurt yourself. Some want to exercise like Madame Guyon. But the result is: outwardly, you may look like Madame Guyon, but inwardly you are not like her. God may not mean for you to be like Madame Guyon. God just wants you to be like the Lord. Is this not better than Madame Guyon? Brothers and sisters, this kind of exercise should be under the control of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will exercise your godliness by using all the things and people in your life like the equipment you use in the gymnasium. The Holy Spirit knows what you lack. He will arrange the surroundings for you to exercise your godliness. In the beginning, it is painful. But through this pain, godliness emerges. It is the Lord, no longer you.

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'In godliness, brotherly love.' You are now like God, and God is love. So, love your brothers. We all remember John 3:16, but we often forget I John 3:16 -- We should love our brothers and lay down our lives for them. Today, regrettably, we want our brothers to lay down their lives for us, but we are not willing to lay down our lives for them.

To this brotherly love, we should also furnish love. The original text just says 'love'. It means by this way we are conformed into the image of the Son of God. When we are in love, we are in God. The love of God will fill us.

If these things exist and abound in you, then you will neither be idle nor unfruitful as regards the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To have the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus is to have His character manifested in us. It does not depend on how much you know in your brain. The Corinthian Church is fully equipped with eloquence and knowledge. But they have expressed only their ugliness, not the glory of Christ. Truly knowing the Lord is to let the Lord expressed in you. Then you can enter into the kingdom of God richly.

Dear brothers and sisters, the day of our Lord's coming is at hand. When He comes, we shall all gather together before Him. We shall also stand before the seat of Christ to be judged. We thank God that the judgment of the great white throne of life and death has already passed. For our Lord Jesus has substituted for us to die on the cross. So we shall not be subject to that judgment. But we in the House of God shall be judged before the throne of Christ. This will be the time for our rewards. But brothers and sisters, this may also be the time for us to be reprov'd. Judgement starts in the house of God. If we long for His coming, we should be diligent, keeping ourselves spotless and blameless so that we can meet Him in peace. How we hope that we, the people who wait for and hasten the coming of our Lord, shall hear our Lord say when He returns, 'Good! You are the good and faithful servants.' Only when we in our daily lives let the Holy Spirit conform us into the image of the Son of God do we truly wait for the Lord to come. Only in this condition will the Lord be made to hasten. The Holy Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come, Lord.'

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Let us bow down and pray:

*Lord, help us so that we will not be those who only say that we wish for You to come back soon. Let us be a people who in our daily lives wait for and hasten Your coming. We wish that You can see on the earth these people who can join You in Your heart's desire to come back quickly. In the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.*