

2018 WCCC
Brother Stephen Kaung
To the Praise of His Glory (2)

The Glorious Gospel

John 3:3—Jesus answered and said to him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except any one be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God.

May we pray:

Dear Lord, our hearts are full of thanks that Thou should gather us together this morning. We know that Thy presence is here, and we are standing on holy ground. Teach us how to remove our shoes that we may have a heart full of gratitude. May Thy Spirit move in our midst, and may Thy Word come into our midst. Open our understanding, and bring us into Thy truth that Thy glory may be manifested. We commit this time into Thy hand and trust Thy Holy Spirit. In Thy precious name we pray. Amen.

The Lord's Glorious Return

Thank God for bringing us together again. I do feel that every day is the day of opportunity. The Lord is coming soon; He may come at any moment. Who is He waiting for? We remember that before our Lord left this world, He told His disciples that He would come back and receive them to Himself. It has been over two thousand years, but He is still waiting; He is waiting for you and me. He wants every one of us to be ready for Him. He does not want to see anyone left behind.

Do you expect the Lord to return any moment? Or are you like the servant who said, "The Lord delays His return"? And he began to beat his fellow servants and eat and drink with the drunken, enjoying his life; but unexpectedly the Lord suddenly returned. And what will be the end result for that evil servant? The Bible says, "He will be cut into two and cast into outer darkness. And there he will be weeping and repenting" (see Matthew 24:51).

It is my sincere desire that this will not be our result, but rather by the grace of God, if the Lord should return this morning, this auditorium would be empty.

He will have taken every one of us to Himself, and none would be left behind. Do you expect that? Or do you think this will not happen? I most sincerely believe that this could happen now. The Lord has been waiting long enough for us. We cannot imagine how anxious the Lord must be to come back for His own. Who delays His return? It is we who delay Him. He loves us so much that He does not want to see any of us left behind. He wants to take every one of us to Himself. Are we the people who delay His return?

So this is something uppermost in my heart. My prayer is that when the Lord shall return, He will take every one of us to Himself, and that is the most blessed thing we could ever think of. So I hope that in every heart we are expecting the Lord to come now. How long He has been waiting for you! It is you that He is waiting for. Are you willing to be made ready to usher in His glorious return? I do hope this is the desire of every one of us.

Nicodemus Seeks the Lord Jesus

We would like to speak on the very simple gospel. When our Lord was on earth, one night a man by the name of Nicodemus came to Jesus. He was a Pharisee, and at that time the Pharisees were very special. They were a people who devoted themselves to the study of the law of God, so they were considered to have knowledge of the Word and had become the teachers of the people.

But there was a Pharisee by the name of Nicodemus, and he was very special. Even though he was himself a great teacher, when he heard the Lord Jesus, he realized that what the Lord was teaching was more than any human being could ever teach. However, being a Pharisee, who was considered as a great man among the people, it would not be convenient to see Jesus in the daytime. But there was such an urgent desire in his heart to talk to the Lord Jesus, so he waited until it was night and secretly went to see Him. He told the Lord that he realized the Lord came from heaven because what He taught was nothing that any man could ever teach, and he was humble enough to go to the Lord to ask for help.

Nicodemus Wanted to be Perfected

Nicodemus wanted to be perfect. In other words, he had tried very hard to become a Pharisee, a teacher of men. Yet he felt that he was not perfect, that he lacked something. And he wanted to be perfected. Such a person was very rare. We who have accomplished nothing, yet we think so highly of ourselves. But here was a man who had accomplished much, and he was so humble. He came to the

Lord in the night and said, "I know that You are different. How can I be perfected? I have accomplished much, but that does not satisfy me. I discern that you have something more. Will You please teach me?" What a humble spirit that is!

The Lord was very honest with him. Immediately He said, "Except anyone be born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God." In other words, Nicodemus thought that he was pretty close to heaven, but the Lord was telling him that this was far from the fact. One thing is necessary; unless you are born from above you cannot see the kingdom of God. It is not only that you are not near the kingdom of God, you do not even see what the kingdom of God is. I believe that must have been such a shock to Nicodemus. Just imagine yourself as Nicodemus. Supposing that you have tried your very best, and you have accomplished much. You have even become a teacher of men, yet you were humble enough to think that there is something more. What a rare person that is!

If you have accomplished much, what will be your feeling? Will you feel good about it? Will you feel that you are better than other people? You may not be satisfied, but you are quite happy with yourself. But this Nicodemus was different. At that time the Pharisees who were among the Jews were a special people. At one time there were a few thousand Pharisees. They devoted themselves to the law of God, and they were honored by the people. They thought well of themselves, but this Nicodemus was different. He was a humble person. What a rare combination! He came to the Lord at night, for it was not convenient for him to come in the daytime because of what the people would say. Here is a great Pharisee coming to see a Nobody. The Pharisees looked down upon other people. They looked down upon the Lord Jesus because He was an unlearned person, and they were the learned ones. But Nicodemus was different; he was a true Pharisee. He was really seeking the Lord earnestly because he was not satisfied with himself.

Sometimes when we have a little heart for the Lord and a desire to see Him, and by the grace of God maybe we have accomplished something, what will be our attitude? We will look down upon other people, thinking they are common people who know nothing about the Lord. But I am one who is really seeking God, and I have accomplished something. Now that would probably be our attitude. But not Nicodemus. It was not convenient for him to go to see Jesus. For a Pharisee to go to see a common person would be a disgrace in the eyes of the people. It would not be a necessity, so that is the reason Nicodemus went to the Lord at night. His desire for perfection was so high that he was willing to ask for help. What a humble spirit Nicodemus must have had!

Nicodemus Realized the Lord's Teachings were Different

In view of that let us examine ourselves. What have we accomplished? Is there in your heart the feeling that you are better than other people? You may be humble enough to say you are not perfect, but at least you are better than the one next door. Why is it that you are thinking in such a way? I am afraid that most of us think that way, and that is the reason why we are far from the kingdom of God. Unless we have a humble spirit like Nicodemus, there is no opportunity for us to be saved. Thank God for Nicodemus! Even though he came to the Lord at night in order not to be seen by the people, yet he was commendable. He said, "Lord, You are from heaven because what You teach is far more than anyone else can teach." He himself was a teacher so he realized what the Lord was teaching was different; it was not earthly but heavenly. He was humble enough to ask for help from the Lord; he really had a heart to be perfect.

Now I want to ask us this question: What do you think of yourself? If it is permitted for you to say what you think about yourself, what will you say? Do you expect ones to say, "I am just a humble sinner"? Or will they say, "I am not perfect but I am better than anybody else"? Is there a Nicodemus spirit in each and every one of us? Are we willing to come this morning to the Lord Jesus with a spirit like Nicodemus? If so, we will be blessed.

Our Lord Jesus was very honest with Nicodemus, and it might seem as if He was almost impolite. Suppose you meet a person like Nicodemus, and he asks help from you. How do you help? You will feel so honored, but you will have to say a few polite words: "Oh, I am not worthy." But probably you will feel that you are somewhat worthy, and that is human nature. But not Nicodemus; he was a true seeker. He was seeking after perfection, and our Lord Jesus was very open with him. The Lord immediately said to Nicodemus, "Unless a man is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Not only can you not enter into the kingdom of God, but you cannot even see the kingdom of God. You cannot know what the kingdom of God is; it is all human imagination. To enter into the spiritual realm, you need first of all to see the kingdom of God. Unless you are born from above you cannot see the kingdom of God.

Are you one who is seeking the kingdom of God? Or are you one who is seeking the kingdom of this world? If you are seeking the kingdom of this world, are you accomplishing something? Are you just satisfying yourself? If so, I am afraid there is very little hope for you. In order to really enter into the kingdom of God there is a humility that we must have. We must come to God with a humble heart. But if we have a proud heart there is no hope.

Personal Testimony

I remember when I was young, I always thought I was very good. I was a good student and I had a good relationship with everybody, even with the servants. My father was a pastor and he really loved the Lord, so I was brought up in a Christian family. Therefore, I always considered myself as almost perfect. I knew the gospel from my childhood, but my thought was since Jesus is the Savior of the world, let Him save them. However, I did not need saving because I thought I was good enough. That was real to me when I was a high school student. Thank God, for changing my thinking.

He brought me almost to death. I was so sick I was almost dying. I was fourteen at that time, and I did not want to die; so I prayed. I asked God to touch me, and by the grace of God I gradually recovered after several months. At that time there was no medicine for my sickness, so I was just left to see whether I could pull through. After a few months I recovered, and I believed God had healed me because I was not dead. So this natural thought came to me: I wanted to do something to repay His goodness. Now this is a natural thought, but it is a good thought.

Sure enough a fellow student came to me and asked if we could have some Christian meetings in the school. Ah, that was my opportunity, and I thought I could do something to repay God's goodness. So we began to organize meetings in the school. We had a prayer meeting before the evening study. We gathered fellow students together and even teachers attended, and I was the one who was to lead. Do you think that is difficult? That is easy because my father had a large library. So I just went to his library and got a book on prayer. I still remember the name of the person who was a famous preacher in America, and I translated a chapter from English into Chinese. Then I memorized it, and on that night, I led the meeting. I gave the message, and I felt good about it, and my only regret was that nobody praised me. When I told everybody to kneel down and pray, you know what happened? Nobody prayed, and some even began to laugh. Now as the chairman I scolded them and said, "We are before God and we cannot do such a thing." So I led a prayer meeting before I was saved.

I also preached before I was saved, and that was easy. I went to my father's library, got a book, translated it into Chinese, memorized it, and then gave the message. I still remember that it was Noah's ark. I felt really great in preaching Noah's ark, but the only regret I had was that nobody praised me.

I had been doing all these religious things, and my heart was to repay God for His goodness. But thank God, as I was doing these things the Spirit of God

began to work in me. Nobody talked to me. Everyone in the church thought I was a good number-one Christian. But the Spirit of God began to work in me. He began to show me that there was nothing good in me. From the top of my head to the bottom of my feet there was nothing good. Think of that! I was a fourteen-year-old person sitting there alone and weeping. I wept for my sins and cried out to God to save me.

In the summer I determined to go to a summer conference to get saved. That was Bethel Mission. Three men from Asbury College in America came to preach. I went there to get saved, but after a few days I still was not saved because what they preached, I already knew. So one morning as I was in my room, I do not know whether I was praying or just thinking to myself. I said, "Lord, why do other people get saved so easily, and it is so difficult for me. If You want to save me, save me now. If not, good-bye!"

I went to the meeting in the afternoon. I still remember Mr. Kilpatrick spoke on John 3:16, and I knew it so well. Nothing touched me. After he finished, he asked everybody to kneel down. So I knelt down and an Indian brother came and knelt by me. And you know what he did? He did nothing but encourage me to go to the altar. Now I had been there a number of times, but nothing happened. So I did not want to go, but out of courtesy I went forward. Again, I wept. I wept for my sins, and I cried out to God for forgiveness. Nothing happened, and the meeting was over.

Everybody was walking out, hundreds of people. A Chinese pastor, Andrew Zchi, who was a young preacher, must have been noticing me. So he stopped me and pointblank asked me a question: "Are you saved?" I had to be honest, and I said, "I want to be saved."

Everybody had left and there were just the two of us, and he asked me a question: "Do you believe the Bible is the Word of God?" I said, "I do, I have believed from my childhood." And he said, "Turn to I John 1:9; read it and put your name in it." "If Stephen Kaung confesses his sin, God is faithful and just to forgive his sin and all his unrighteousness." He asked me to read it twice with my name in it, and he said, "Let's pray." We knelt down. Now I knew how to pray, so I started to pray, but there was a difference. I said, "Lord, according to Your Word, I confess my sins. I have done my part, now it is Your part. Whether You will do it or not is up to You." Praise God, when I prayed in that manner, a great peace came into my heart. I stood up, and Andrew Zchi asked me: "Are you saved?" I said, "I am saved." He said, "How do you know?" I said, "I have such peace in my heart." He shook his head, and immediately the Lord said to me: "I know I am saved because God says so." He said, "That is right!" Your feeling may change, but God's Word never changes.

He was very wise in helping people. He said, "You go out and tell somebody what the Lord has done to you." I did, and then I went to my room, opened the Bible to I Peter chapter 1 and began to read. Every word spoke to my heart. From that day until now, over eighty-some years, God has kept me. His Word is forever true.

You must be sure of your salvation. If anybody should ask you, "Are you saved?" Do you have that assurance to say, "Thank God, I am saved"? That is initial salvation, and every brother and sister must have that assurance. If you have that kind of assurance then you will be able to grow in mercy and in grace. This will be your beginning; this will be your assurance. If the Lord should come today, you will be taken and not left behind. So it is the sincere desire of my heart that all who are here will at least have the assurance that you may say, "Thank God, I am saved."

Initial Salvation is Only the Beginning

But remember, this is just the beginning. Do not think this is the end. This is the beginning of your Christian life. Now give yourself to the Lord, allow Him to take charge of your life, and by His Spirit He will guide and lead you as you go on in life. It is not a matter of being saved again, but your salvation will be so strengthened that you will go on with the Lord. You will learn how to obey the inward, indwelling Holy Spirit. You will be led by God to follow Life, and your life will be acceptable to God. This is the simple gospel, and I hope that none of us will be an exception. May every one of us at least know our initial salvation. Do you have the assurance of salvation? If you do, remember this is the beginning, not the end.

Sometimes I ask God: "In the moment I was saved, if you had taken me then to Yourself like the thief on the cross, how good that will be. Then I would have been saved from all the temptations. But God knows better; He wants you to be saved and saved to the uttermost. He wants you to be in His kingdom to rule and reign with Christ for a thousand years. God has something so much better for you, so press on.

By the grace of God I have been pressing on for over eighty years. I am expecting the Lord to return in my lifetime, and if it pleases Him that I may be raptured to Him and reign with Christ for a thousand years. A few years on this wretched earth and then to rule with Christ for a thousand years, you know the choice. So may every one of us when the trumpet calls be there in His presence. This is the prayer of my heart.

Shall we pray:

Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee for the blessed gospel. We thank Thee for coming to this world to save sinners such as we are. We thank Thee for saving us and saving us to the uttermost. It is not our will that we be barely saved; it is Thy will that we be saved to the uttermost. It is Thy will that we be kings in the kingdom of God and even to eternity. Oh dear Lord, what a blessed gospel this is! May it be that each and every one of us share in it. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.