

The Secret of a Christian Life

by Stephen Kaung

The secret of a Christian life is not our environment or our own efforts, but Christ living in us.

Duration: 59:11

Scripture: Romans 12:1-2, Philippians 1:21, Philippians 2:5, Philippians 3:13-14, Philippians 4:13

Topics: "Christian Living", "Mind Renewal"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the book of Romans, specifically chapters 1 to 11, which highlight what God has done for us in Christ. The key to living out what God has worked in us is found in Romans 12:1-2. The preacher emphasizes the importance of renewing our minds in order to prove the perfect and acceptable will of God. He uses the analogy of a faucet to illustrate that although we have Christ in us, we need to open the faucet of our lives to allow His abundant life to flow through us. The preacher also emphasizes the need for a genuine transformation of our minds, not just a superficial change, in order to fully experience the life of Christ.

Transcript

The letter to the Philippians, chapter 1. The first part of verse 21. For for me to live is Christ. For me to live is Christ.

Chapter 2, verse 5. For let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. This mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Chapter 3, verse 13.

Brethren, I do not count to have God-possession myself, but one thing, for getting the things behind and stretching out to the things before I pursue, looking towards the goal for the prize of the calling on heart of God in Christ Jesus. Chapter 4, verse 13. I have strength for all things in him that gives me power.

That's all we'll read. Of all Paul's letters, the letter to the Philippians is the most intimate one. There he is not dealing with, primarily, with theological problems.

Nor is he treating, dealing with practical matters. We may say that the letter to the Philippines is a love letter. There Paul is pouring out his heart to a church that he loves very much, and he is very much loved.

In this letter to the Philippines, he is able to reveal himself in such a way that he has never been able to do that before. You know, in Paul's letters, there are two letters of Paul that reveal him most. One is the second Corinthians.

The second letter to the Corinthians. And the other is the letter to the Philippians. Now, in the second letter to the Corinthians, he is forced to expose himself, to tell about himself.

He is most unwilling to do that, but he has to do it. And there you will find he reveals in a very special way the ministry that God has given to him. We may say that the second letter to the Corinthians reveals to us Paul, the apostle, the servant of God, his ministry that God has given him.

But in the letter to the Philippians, he is not forced to do anything. He just loves to open his heart to that church that he loves so much. And there in this letter, Paul, the man, the man of God, is revealed to us.

In other words, in second Corinthians, it is his ministry that is revealed. But in Philippians, it is his life. We know that you cannot separate life from ministry, or ministry from life.

The reason why Paul has such a ministry is because there is such a life. In this letter to the Philippians, I believe Paul is revealing the secret of his life to the church in Philippians. By the way, you know, there is nothing more comforting than you are able to pour out your heart to someone without restraint and without any fear.

You know that you will not be misunderstood. You will be understood. And here you'll find exactly what is happening.

Paul is just pouring out his heart to the saints in Philippians with no reservation, with no fear, because he knows how much they love him. And he loves them. So I hope that tonight we may fellowship together something on the secret of a Christian life.

You know, very often people hope that they may live a Christian life like Paul's. I do not know how many of you here are dissatisfied with your own Christian life. How many of you are expecting to live a better, Thank God, by his grace, we are saved.

Thank God, we have received eternal life. Thank God, we do love him and we do have a desire. We want to be a good Christian.

We want to glorify his name. All these are true. And yet we do find that much as we desire to live a life that will be pleasing to God, oftentimes we are dissatisfied with ourselves.

We want to be better Christians. But what is the secret of a Christian life? I think we may consider Paul as a typical Christian. The way he lives attracts us.

Especially when you think of the time when he wrote this letter to the Philippians. He was writing this letter in prison in Rome. So far as his environment was concerned, he was in a very poor environment.

You know, very often we blame our environment. We say, now if God will give us a better environment, if there is a better atmosphere, if we meet better people, if we are in a better position, we will be a better Christian. As if our Christian life is dependent upon our environment.

But when you read the letter to the Philippians, you notice that Paul was at that time in a very difficult situation. He was a prisoner in Rome. Because of his countryman's desire to murder him, he had to appeal to Caesar against his will.

He had nothing against his brother in the flesh. And yet he was forced to appeal to Caesar as if he was against his own brother in the flesh. Even though he was given certain liberty in Rome, he was able to live in his own rent house, and he was able to receive visitors.

And yet we know, 24 hours a day, he was chained to a Roman guard. There was absolutely no privacy. A Roman guard was with him day and night.

And this continued for quite some time. Aside from this, when he was in Rome, certain so-called Jewish believers, they believed in the Lord Jesus, and yet they still held on to Judaism. And out of jealousy, they began to preach the gospel.

But it was a gospel of grace mixed. And to Paul, it was a burden. Their preaching actually increased his bonds, made him suffer even more.

And not only that, but he heard something. In the church in Philippi, the church that he loved, there were two sisters that helped Paul in the past in the gospel. Two leading sisters.

And they were in a rivalry. Not because of any doctrinal problems, it was just a clash of personalities. And because of such clash of personalities, a dark shadow seemed to spread over the whole church.

And Paul was not able to go there and help them than himself. So, brothers and sisters, when you consider the environment, the situation that Paul was in at the time he wrote this letter, you cannot imagine any worse circumstance or situation than a person could be. When you read the letter to the Philippians, you find there is such a note of joy.

Such a note of victory. Such a note of thankfulness. In other words, Paul lived above his circumstances.

He was not like us, often lived under our environment. Now, what is the secret of this Christian? God has not promised us that we shall always have a smooth, easy life. As one sister wrote, God has not promised sky always blue.

But God does promise something. And this is something that we desire to know. And this is something which Paul tries to.

He tries to tell the saints in Philippi his secret. How they will not be under the circumstances. How they could live above everything.

And I believe today this is what Paul is trying to share with us in this letter. But what is the secret of Paul's life? In chapter 1, verse 21, he says, For me to live is. Now, this is.

For Paul to live is Christ. In other words, it is not Paul who is living. It is Christ who lives in him.

As if Paul is trying to tell us, Now do not think that I am super. I am a person just like you are. Nothing more.

But I know a secret. It is not because of me, Paul. It is because of Christ who lives in me.

Do you think that Paul knew this from the very beginning? I doubt it. Even though he was given such a great revelation on the road to Damascus. And yet if you read Romans chapter 7, you will find that he actually is not different from us.

Now, whether Romans 7 refers to Paul's life before he met the Lord, or after he met the Lord, this is a theological problem. But for us, when we come into spiritual experience, I think it is clear. Here was a man who had a mind to serve God.

Or to put it in another way, he is a Christian. After he has known the Lord, naturally, he has a desire to please God. Before we know the Lord Jesus, we do not care what is God's will, so long as it pleases us.

Before we knew the Lord, we lived for ourselves. That is the way we live. But after we are saved, I believe that in the heart of every believer there is a desire.

We know that we should not live for ourselves anymore. We know that we should live for Him. We know that we should not just do our will.

We know we should do the will of God. We know this. And it is honest and sincere.

We want to please Him. We know we cannot live as we lived before. We are Christians.

We must live as Christians. And I believe somehow everyone in his mind sets up a standard. Now, this is the way that I ought to live.

And this is the way that I must live. If I live up to that standard, then I am a good Christian. If I cannot live up to that standard, then something is missing.

Now, sometimes your standard is another person. You admire a certain Christian. And you say, now, if I can live like that Christian, then I am a real Christian.

Or sometimes your standard is something that people have told you. They told you that as a Christian you should do this, you shouldn't do that. And they gave you a certain number of rules and regulations.

And you think that if you keep all these things, then you are a good Christian. If not, then you have failed. As a matter of fact, there is only one standard for us Christians.

It is neither your brother nor what you are told. The standard of a Christian is Christ. As long as you do not live like Christ, you will never be satisfied.

The Spirit of God in you will never be satisfied. And that is a real problem. We Christians are supposed to live like Christ.

But who is able to live like Christ? And if we don't, we are not satisfied. We know it. In Romans chapter 7 you'll find Paul says, I want to do the will of God.

I want to please God. Now I am His. This is my duty.

What is the will of God? The clearest is the Ten Commandments. Because to Paul, he was trained in Judaism. And there you'll find he mentions the Ten Commandments.

Thou shalt not commit. Of the Ten Commandments, this is the only one that governs our inner being. All the other Nine Commandments seem to be, seem to govern our outward action.

For instance, thou shalt not kill. Now if I don't kill anybody with a knife or with a pistol, I'm all right. I have kept that commandment.

So far as the letter is concerned, I am righteous. Now the spirit is another thing. But the Ten Commandments is a commandment that governs our inward feeling.

You shall not be greedy. Now even if you don't do anything outwardly, Now greedy is a desire. Greediness is a lust.

So of the Ten Commandments, this is the only one that governs our inward feeling. Paul knew that it was not enough just to keep up an outward front. Something of our inward feeling must also be dealt with.

So here you'll find he says the Word of God says thou shall not commit. You shall not be greedy. And Paul probably said, well, I have never been greedy before.

So that should be easy. But very strange. Before he thought about this problem, he was all right.

But when this matter was brought to his attention, and he began to remind himself, now Paul, don't be greedy. Don't be greedy. The more he tells himself not to be greedy, the greedier he becomes.

You know, very often you'll find when there is a sign, do not come, that's where people come, you know. It seems as if you're attracted to it. Paul says, what I do not want to do, I do not do.

What I want to do, I do not do it. It is not me. It is sin that dwells in my flesh.

Oh, wretched man that I am. Who can deliver me from this body? May we say after Paul was saved, he was just like one of us. He felt now he was a Christian, and he should live like a Christian, and he started out to live it, and then he discovered that he couldn't.

He said, to will is with me, but to do is not with me. He was willing, but he couldn't. If any person could live a Christian life, if any person could live like Christ by himself, that person must be Paul.

Why? Because he was a genius. In a sense he was different. He was a most talented person.

He was a born leader. He was a man not only of great learning, but he was a man of iron will. Now if such person could not live a Christian life as he should, that does not give us too much comfort.

If we try to live a Christian life, if we try to live like Christ, sooner or later, we will come to the same. Oh, wretched man. On the one hand, believing in the Lord Jesus, knowing his grace, seeing his mercy, there is nothing more pleasant than to be a Christian.

Yet on the other hand, at the same time, the more you try to be a good Christian, the more miserable it's a paradox. On the one hand the Lord does give you joy. The Lord does prove to you in many ways how faithful he is, how good he is.

And yet on the other hand, you do discover, do you, that it is very miserable because you cannot live as you should. Oh, wretched man that I am. Who can deliver me from this body? We are told that the Romans had a very cruel punishment for murderers.

If anybody should murder a person, the punishment that the Romans will use was most cruel. They did not heal the murderer right away. They tied the murderer to the murderer, face to face, hands to hands, body to body, feet to feet.

They just tied the murderer to the murderer until the corpse decayed. And the murderer was poisoned. And he went into a slow death.

And we are told that probably Paul, in saying, Oh, wretched man that I am. Who can deliver me from this body of death? Probably he was using that as a background. He felt as if he was tied to a corpse.

And the corruption was gradually eating him up. Now, brothers and sisters, do you sometimes feel the same way? Do you sometimes feel that you are tied to something? It's not somebody else. It's yourself.

You just cannot get rid of it. It's yourself. It's your flesh.

What is the secret of victory? Paul said, For me to live. Yes. You know, sooner or later you will come to the same conclusion.

You will agree with Paul. In other words, after you have failed repeatedly, after you have come to be despair of yourself, in you that is in your flesh there is no good. That's very difficult to swallow.

After we are saved, we try to do good. We try to live like Christ because we feel that there is some good in us. But one day you come to see there is no good.

No good. There is only one person in this whole world who can live like Christ. Not even Paul could live.

There is only one person who can live exactly like Christ. And that person is Christ himself. So one day you have to come to a place to see that.

If ever I am to live a Christian life like Christ, it must be Christ who lives and not me. If it is me, it is hopeless. Now if only it be Christ, then the whole problem is solved.

Therefore we begin to hope. Oh Lord, if only you can live and not me, how good it would be. In other words, it becomes our hope, our wish.

But that's not what Paul says. Paul said for me to live, it is. It is more than just hoping.

It is a fact. It is a reality. For me to live is Christ.

Now how can it be? How does it come about? One day. When Paul was down to his... He received a revelation. And that revelation is recorded in Galatians chapter 2, verse 20.

One day when he was very, very low at his end, he cried out, Oh wretched man, who can deliver me? And at that point, the Lord gave him a revelation. And the revelation was, I am crucified. No longer live I, but Christ who lives in me.

And I now live in the flesh. I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself. That's a revelation.

You know, God's revelation does not come until you are reduced to desperation. Very often we are not desperate yet. We still have some hope yet.

We are still trying. And as long as we are still trying and we are still hoping, and we still have some confidence in our flesh, you can hardly receive a revelation from God. But when we are really reduced to desperation, then God's revelation is given.

And the revelation is, I am crucified. Paul was trying, was trying and trying. He was doing everything he could.

He made up his mind and he put his will upon it and said, Now I must not be greedy. And all the time he was doing it, as suddenly he was told, he was already dead. I am crucified with Christ.

Now what am I doing here? If I am crucified with Christ, then no longer I. I am out of the way. Why should I be trying? Why should I not just look up and say, Lord, you led me. But it's a revelation.

You know, we often make things very complicated. When we are involved, it's always complicated. But when you come to the Lord, when the Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross, you were in Him.

Therefore, you were crucified. It is something you don't need to do. It is something that was done by Christ and in Christ.

It was something that God has done. You do not need to crucify yourself. You are crucified.

You don't need to look within yourself and see how dead you are. You are dead. In other words, God has done something two thousand years ago in Christ for you.

He has put you in Christ. And when Christ was crucified, you were crucified. So far as God is concerned, you are out.

You are finished. But because we do not give up, therefore, we seem to. But one day, when you look up and see what God has done for you in Christ, you can say, Thank God, I am crucified.

No longer alive. So that day, Paul learned a secret. Paul said, For me to live is Christ.

Why? Because I am crucified. I am out of the way. And if I am not out of the way, who is there? Christ.

He is living. And living is Christ in you. The Bible says, Christ in you, the whole.

Everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus has Christ in him. But oftentimes, we do not know why Christ is in me. Sometimes we think that Christ is in me as a guarantee for heaven.

One day when I die and I go to heaven, now this is my guarantee. Christ in me. But that's not good enough.

Why is Christ in you today? Christ is in you as your life. And what is life for? Life is to live. What's the use of having life if it does not live? Life is for the purpose of living.

Christ is our life. In Colossians, Paul said, Christ is our life. Christ in us is our life.

And this life is to live. But he cannot live because you want to live. Now, if you say, I don't want to live anymore, then Christ will begin to live.

You know, when we preach the gospel to unbelievers, we often say, now, you do not need to die because Christ has died for you. Now, that is a glad tiding. People who do not believe in the Lord Jesus, they live in constant fear of death.

They know that they have sinned. They know that one day, after death, there will be judgment. They live in constant fear of death.

But one day you hear the gospel, and the gospel says, you will not die because Christ has already died for you. If you believe that he has died for you, you will never die. A Christian never dies.

A Christian may go to sleep, but never die. Well, what a relief. One day when you believe in the Lord Jesus, and the fear of death is taken away, you are free men.

Thank God for his salvation. But, there is a gospel for believers. And the gospel for believers is, you do not need to live because Christ has lived.

Ah, if you want to live very much, that is not a gospel to you. But if you are tired of living, then this is real gospel. Brothers and sisters, I have met many Christians who are tired.

Good Christians. You know, if you are a careless person, you don't care. You will not be tired.

But if you really want to do God's will, you really want to live a Christian life, you really want to please God, I have met so many believers, so many Christians that are so tired, tired of living. Dear brothers and sisters, if you are tired of living, here is the gospel for you. You don't need to live.

Oh, thank God I don't need to live because Christ lives in me. He lives for me. I am crucified with him.

No other I but Christ who lives in me. Every morning you get up and say, Lord, I thank you. I don't need to live all the day.

You live for me. Every time something happens, every temptation that comes to your way, you say, Lord, it is your problem. I look to you to solve it.

Oh, if only you can see that for you to live is Christ. Literally is Christ. Not you.

Is Christ. Paul said, don't look at me as if I'm super. I'm not.

It is Christ. And you have Christ. You can live in the same way that I live because it is the same Christ who lives in you and lives in me.

Brothers and sisters, that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not some teaching or some doctrine. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a living Christ.

Christ who lives in you. He lives. He is my life.

And he lives. That's thrilling. That is really exciting.

It is Christ who lives. That is possible. But some people probably raise a question.

I know Christ is in me. I know that. I know he is my life.

Yes. I want him to live because somehow I still live. Now, what? What is the problem? Well, you come to the second chapter and you find Paul continues to say, Let the mind of Christ be your mind.

In other words, here you come to this matter of the mind. Of the mind. You know, our mind, or our mind being, that is what we set our mind upon, is very important.

As a matter of fact, you know, what is mentioned here is actually, shall we say, your mental attitude. Your mental attitude. We have Christ in us.

A new life in us. And we should be able to live in newness of life. But, unfortunately, we still have an old mind.

And with that old mind, this new life is being... Let me use an illustration. It's just like in the water company, in the reservoir. There is plenty of water there.

Now, how are you going to get water in your home? Of course, you have the pipe connected and everything. But there is one thing. Whenever you need water, you have to turn the faucet.

If the faucet is shut, no matter how much water in the reservoir, you have not a problem. But if you open the faucet, then the water begins. We have Christ in us.

Christ is our life. All the riches of the life of Christ in us. Inexhaustible supply.

Abundant supply within us. But for us to really enjoy Him as our life, we need to open the faucet. And the faucet is our life.

Let me prove it. You read Romans. The book of Romans.

You know, Romans roughly is divided into two parts. From chapter 1 to chapter 11 of Romans tells us of what has God done for us in Christ. Everything.

The compassions of God. The mercies of God. When we were sinners, Christ died for us.

His blood cleanses us. His cross takes us away. He gave us the Holy Spirit that we may be led by the Holy Spirit.

The first part of Romans tells us of what God has done for us. And the second part, from chapter 12 to chapter 16, is now how should we lead. First, He has done something in us.

Then, we must let that which is deposited in us to be lived out. But you know, the key is in Romans 12 verses 1 and 2. How can you turn what God has worked in to be worked out? That faucet, that turning, the key is in Romans 12 verses 1 and 2. Therefore, brethren, I beseech you by the mercies of God, present your bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable to God. This is your intelligent service.

Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind to prove what is the perfect, good, acceptable will. Here you'll find, by the renewing of your mind. Do not be conformed to the world.

Prove the perfect will of God. How? By the renewing. In other words, if your mind is not renewed, you still look at everything with your own viewpoint.

If your outlook has not changed, if your mental attitude has not changed, if your evaluation of things has not changed, no matter how much life you have in you, that life is not able to live out. Your mind must be renewed. It is true.

When we are saved, our mind does change a little bit, but that's superficial. What? The word repentance means change of mind. But that's superficial.

Basically, your mind is still the old mind. In other words, you still look at things in the old way. What you treasure before, you still treasure now.

What you neglect before, you still neglect now. Now, if this is your mind, how can you expect the life of Christ to live out? It's what your mind has to do. You look at Paul.

In Philippians chapter 3, he tells us, he said once upon a time, he was proud of something. He treasured very highly something. He was a hero of heroes, of the tribe of vengeance, circumcised on the eighth day, a Pharisee, keeping the law.

He treasured these most highly. Now, when he treasured these things very highly, he looked down upon Jesus. He considered Jesus of Nazareth as an imposter.

And he persecuted. But here was a change, a renewing of the mind. He said, Those things that I once treasured, now I look at them for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

His outlook was changed. His mental attitude was different. Now he looked at things in a different way.

Suppose you want to give Paul back these records. Paul said, who wants records? And finally, Paul said, I can do all things through him. I can do nothing without him.

But I can do all things through him. Brothers and sisters, a Christian life is not negative. It is very positive.

But of course you cannot get to the positive until you learn the negative. That is true. You know, we all start out saying that I can do everything by myself.

Then you begin to realize that you cannot. So you say, well, I can do nothing. I can do nothing.

But then you become very negative. I can do nothing, so I do nothing. No! You can do nothing by yourself.

But you can do all things through him who empowers you. Oh, if we trust in the Lord, we can do all things. All things.

Whether it is prosperity, or whether it is adversity. Whether it is abundance, or whether it is want. Paul said, I have learned the secret.

And what is the secret? If we depend upon Christ and not depend upon ourselves, nothing is impossible. Nothing is impossible. All things can be done to the glory.

And this is the matter to the village. This is the secret of Christ. So dear brothers and sisters, actually it is an open secret.

Everybody knows. And the secret is Christ. He is the secret.

May the Lord teach us how to use that secret that we may live to the praise. Lord, we do thank Thee because through Thy Word we are told Thy heart. Oh Lord, do open our hearts, our understanding, that we may enter into this secret and be able to use it.

We pray that we truly may stay with Paul for me to live. We pray that we may be constrained by Thy love and present our body, that our minds may be transformed. We pray that as we pursue after Thee step by step from glory to glory we may be transformed to Thine own.

Do teach us how. Knowing that Thy power is limited. We ask Thee that these may not just be theories, thoughts.

We know that these are real. And we ask that Thou will make them real to us by Thy grace. We ask.

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