

The Testimony of Jesus

by Stephen Kaung

The sermon emphasizes the Church's role in bearing the testimony of Jesus and the significance of Christ's authority and ministry in the lives of believers.

Duration: 57:29

Scripture: Revelation 1:1

Topics: "Faithfulness To Christ", "Persecution And Martyrdom"

Description

This sermon delves into the book of Revelation, focusing on the visions experienced by John on the island of Patmos. It emphasizes the importance of the testimony of Jesus that the Church is entrusted with, highlighting the persecution faced by believers throughout history for their faithfulness. The sermon challenges listeners to consider their own faithfulness to the testimony of Jesus and the need for Christ to be at the center of the Church.

Transcript

Will you please turn to the book of Revelation, Revelation chapter 1, the first two verses. Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him to show to his boardmen what must shortly take place. And he signified it, sending by his angel to his boardman John, who testified the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, all things that he saw.

And then verse 9, I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Jesus, was in the island called Patmos, for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus. And finally, same chapter, verses 17 and 18, and when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, fear not.

I'm the first and the last and the living one. And I became dead. And behold, I'm living to the ages of ages and have the keys of death and of Hades.

May we have a word of prayer. Dear Lord, we want to thank thee again for inviting us to thy table. We have tasted thy love.

And we have received thy life. Lord, may we all live henceforth for thyself. We thank thee for gathering us together here this morning.

Prepare our hearts. Remove any hindrance that may be in us, any resistance. Lord, pray that thou will, by thy spirit, speak to each and every one of us here.

Do not let us go our way, but pray that we may go thy way and allow thee to work out thy full salvation. To the praise of thy glory, we ask thee to pray. In thy name, amen.

Last, last day, we share on the vision. We remember the word of God, which says, where there is no vision, the people disintegrate. The people scattered.

The people take off restraint, and the people perish. There is the vision that God has given to his people. In the Old Testament time, the vision is the law.

And it is the law that joins God's people together and allows them to be a testimony to the world. But in the New Testament time, the vision is Christ. And it is that vision of Christ that really unites God's people together.

Not only unites, but take off all restraints. Now, I mean, he gave us restraint. Otherwise, we will all each go our own way.

That is the result of sin, because we know at the very beginning, after Adam and Eve's sin, what happened. When God inquired of Adam, Adam put the blame on Eve. And when God inquired of Eve, she put the blame on the serpent.

In other words, you find that without the vision, people disintegrate. Everyone is thinking of himself or herself. And it is the vision that unites us into one and enables us to press on together.

So it is the vision of Christ that really unites us together. Now, we do know that in the Bible, there is vision and visions in the plural number. You remember Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 12? He said, now I'm going to talk about visions and revelations.

Yet whatever visions may be, it all centered upon Christ. So Christ Jesus is the vision. We must be occupied with Christ instead of being occupied with other things.

And that will really join us together and enable us to press on towards the goal. Now, this morning, we would like to share on the testimony of Jesus. I think that you must have heard about that term, the testimony of Jesus, because the testimony of Jesus is entrusted to the Church.

The Church is the vessel of that testimony. That is to say, the Church is to contain Christ. Everything about the Church is Christ himself.

Christ is so incorporated into the life of God's people that everything speaks of Christ. You remember in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 12, the body is one, but has many members. Though the members are many, yet one body.

So also is the Christ. Now, of course, to our understanding, when we think of the body as one, we know it refers to the Church, and yet have many members, because in the Church there are many members. But even though there are many members, it is one body.

From the beginning to the very end, from the first Christian to the last Christian, there is only one body. But it contains many members. We cannot count the number, because from the first century until today, we do

not know really how many are Christians that form that body.

It is an immense body, but however, there is only one body. So we all know it speaks of the Church, but strangely, the Holy Spirit ends up by saying, so also is the Christ. In other words, you do not find in the body anything, anybody, other than Christ himself.

So I remember at one conference in the early 60s, when Brother Sparks, Brother Franke, and myself were the speakers. We were together. And at one time, I'm going to use a formula, but I know Brother Sparks was deadly against formula, because he felt anything that becomes a formula is dead.

So I asked his permission for me to use an illustration of a formula. I say, what is the Church? Is the Church you, he or she, and I? For instance, there are only three Christians in the world, and you pick the best Christians. Now, I will pick James, and John, and Paul.

And what is the Church? I say the Church is John, and James, and Peter, equal the Church. Now, everybody shook their head. Then I say, what is the Church? The Church is Christ in James, plus Christ in John, plus Christ in Paul, equal to the Church.

Many nodded their heads and said, that's it? That's it? That's what the Church is. Now, if that is the case, no wonder the Church is in such trouble. Why? Because John, and James, not Paul, but Peter, John, and James, and Peter, they all want to be the leader.

Peter wanted to be the first one. And of course, the two brothers were not far away from him, because you remember how at the last possible time, when Christ was going to Jerusalem for the last time, to the disciples, they thought Christ was going to be crowned. So this was the last chance.

And James and John, they got their mother out. Now, their mother was an aunt to our Lord Jesus, humanly speaking. So they get their mother out and ask the Lord for something.

And you know, she knew what she was asking was not something that you can talk publicly. So she just told the Lord, I want to ask you to give me something. She did not mention what that something was.

In other words, here is a blank check. Sign it. And I will put what it's for in.

But our Lord Jesus never signed a blank check. So she asked, now, what do you really want? And she had to say. She said, let my two sons, one sits on your right, and one sits on your left.

Now, when the other 10 disciples heard about it, the Bible said they were ignorant. They were so angry because they thought these two brothers got the upper hand. Everybody wanted to be the head, the chief.

So if it's Christ in John, plus Christ in James, and plus Christ in Peter, it doesn't equal to the church. Because as long as there is Peter in the human nature, and there is John and James in their natural man, there's trouble. So finally, I said, well, what is the church? It is Christ in James minus James, plus Christ in John minus John, plus Christ in Peter minus Peter equal to the church.

Then everybody said, that's right. So brothers and sisters, even in the church outwardly, you may see all these people. But before God, he doesn't see every one of us.

He only sees Christ in each and every one of us. The church is the Christ. The church is to contain nothing but Christ.

The church is not supposed to be represented by anyone or any more people. No, the church is to be represented by Christ himself. It is the Christ.

And not only the church is the vessel of Christ, it is also the testimony, the paired testimony of Christ. So from the early days until now, until the coming of the Lord, what is the mission of the church? What is the nature of the church? The nature of the church is Christ, and the mission of the church is to bear the testimony of Jesus. So that is what the church is.

Now we find in the word of God that John, he was in Patmos. Of the 12 apostles, John was the last one who was still living at that time. He was towards the end of the first century.

And in his old days, he ministered to the churches in Asia Minor. But while he was ministering there, he was exiled by the Roman emperor, Demetrius, to the island of Patmos. Patmos was a small island in the Aegean Sea.

And John, he was exiled for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus. And on the Lord's Day, evidently he had some leisure. So probably he was sitting on a rock facing the Aegean Sea because in a clear day he could see the coastline of Asia Minor.

That is where the churches that he ministered to before he was exiled were located. So he must be sitting there looking across the sea, thinking of the churches that he ministered before he was exiled. His heart was thinking about them because he really had a pastor's heart.

And as he was doing that, he saw a vision. And it is the vision of the risen Lord. Now, John was most familiar with the Lord Jesus while he was on earth.

We can put it this way. He was the closest to the Lord among the disciples. He lay upon the bosom of our Lord and asked him questions.

Very close to the Lord. He knew the Lord more than anybody else probably. But here you find he saw a vision of the Lord in heaven.

That was something new to him. He heard a voice. And when he turned, he saw a vision.

He saw seven golden lampstands. And the lampstands are being interpreted to us as the churches. Every church is a golden lampstand.

It is golden with nothing else. You know, of all the furnitures in the temple, all in the tabernacle, the lampstand is one that is purely gold. No wood, nothing else but gold.

And gold speaks of the nature of God. In other words, the church is made up of what is of God and nothing else, nothing of man. And every church before God is a golden lampstand.

Now a lampstand is not something for itself. A lampstand is for a purpose. And that is to uplift light.

And the light is Christ. So this vessel that uplifts Christ is all golden. That is all of God and none of itself.

And it lifts up Christ as the light. It has the testimony of Jesus. So what is the church? The church is the vessel for the testimony of Jesus.

The church is not to speak of any person. The church is only to speak of Christ. And he saw Christ as the great high priest walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.

In other words, what is the ministry of Christ in heaven? We know what is his ministry while he was on earth. He was the apostle of God. He was sent of God with a mission.

And the mission was to provide redemption for the world and how he accomplished it. On the cross he said before he died, it is finished, it is accomplished. But what was Christ doing in heaven? I remember the story.

Once an old lady, she was asking to be baptized. And during that time it was the custom for the elders to question her about faith. And one of the questions she was asked was, what is Christ doing in heaven? And this elderly lady thought for a while and said, Christ in heaven is looking downward towards me, trying to find fault in me.

And of course she didn't pass. Now what is Christ doing in heaven? We know what he did on earth. He was our savior.

He provided redemption for us. But what is he doing in heaven? He's not dozing there. He is as diligent as he was on earth.

In heaven he is our heavenly high priest. He is ministering to his church. He is ministering to every one of us.

And we who come by him, he can save us to the uttermost. That's Christ doing in heaven. So you'll find he is ministering to the churches on earth.

He not only ministered to each one of us individually, but corporately he is ministering to the churches. Therefore you'll find to every church, he wrote seven letters to the seven churches. And to every church he begins with a revelation of himself.

In chapter one you'll find the full revelation of Christ. But to every letter he begins with a partial revelation of himself. In other words, our Christ is so immense.

Not only no one person can contain him, but even no one church can contain him. He takes all the Christians, he takes all the churches to contain Christ. And you'll find each has his special commitment or revelation.

So to every church there is a special revelation of Christ. That is to say, this is the testimony of Jesus committed to this church. And he is ministering to the church to see if this testimony is being maintained.

Or to put it another way, can he find himself in that church? Or will he find many things in that church, but he couldn't find himself? That is what chapter one, that vision is for. And you see when John saw that vision, what happened to him? What was his reaction? He fell as one dead. He who knew Christ so well, and he who served Christ so well, and yet when he saw that vision of Christ in heaven, as a minister ministering to his church, he fell dead.

In other words, he realized what a poor ministry he had done to the church. Brothers and sisters, what is the testimony? You know when Christ was on earth, the heavens opened and a voice came from God. This is my beloved son, in whom I have found my delight.

It happened three times. Once at his baptism, once on the Mount of Transfiguration, and they hear him. And another time is found in John chapter 12, when our Lord Jesus said, glorify yourself.

And the father answered, I have glorified myself and will continue to. The father testified for his son. This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.

Hear him. That's the testimony of the father. And you find the whole Bible testifying of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In John chapter 5, the Lord Jesus said, you search the scriptures. That is the Old Testament. And you think there is no life in it.

But this is that testifies of me. In other words, the whole Old Testament bears the testimony of Jesus. And you also remember after he was resurrected, in Luke chapter 24, how he met the two disciples, leaving Jerusalem for Emmaus.

They were so disappointed because Christ was crucified. And they heard the woman said, Christ has risen. They couldn't believe it.

And they were so disappointed, so they left Jerusalem and went to Emmaus. And our Lord Jesus walked with them and explained to them. And the Lord showed them how the Old Testament bore him witness.

When our Lord was doing that, the Bible says their hearts were so warmed by the word. So touched. And again you find he came to the disciples, shut within a house because of fear.

And the Lord appeared to them and explained to them from Moses' five books, through the prophets and the Psalms, how they spoke of him. So the Bible, what is the Bible? The Bible is the testimony of Jesus. As we read the Bible, we see Jesus.

And our Lord Jesus himself testified of himself. So here you'll find in Revelation chapter 1, verses 17 and 18. He told John, fear not.

I'm the first and the last and the living one. This refers to his divinity. He was God.

I'm the first and I'm the last and the living one. Brothers and sisters, when he say I'm the first, what does he mean to us? Is he the first to our life? I'm the last. What does it mean? Is he the last to us? He is the goal that we run after.

And he's the living one. Is he our life? This is all to us. And he said, and I became dead.

That speaks of his humanity. When he came to this world and died, he now is dead. And behold, I'm living to the ages of ages.

That is his resurrection. And he lives forever. And not only that, he said, and have the keys of death and of Hades.

He has overcome. He has the keys now. So brothers and sisters, this is what Christ is to us.

This is the testimony of Jesus to us. What do we testify? We testify that he is the first and he is the last. And he is the living one.

That he has died, but behold, he is living forever and has the keys of death and of Hades. Now that is our testimony. So put it very briefly.

What is the testimony of Jesus? It testifies to us that he is God. And he is man. He is our God.

He is our savior. And he is our life. And he is our victory.

So in other words, that is what the church is to bear testimony of. This is the testimony of Jesus. And because this is the testimony of Jesus, therefore you find it is severely contested by God's enemy.

So you find that there is a context, as it were, between God and Satan. And the church is the target of it. In the middle.

But the church, of course, stands for Christ. And that is the reason why the church is persecuted. And John, for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus, he was exiled to that island.

And throughout the centuries, brothers and sisters, as you read the history of the church, you find how the church has been persecuted, contested by the enemy of God. We find that during the second and the third centuries, the Roman Empire persecuted the church ten times. But thank God, it is because of the persecution, the church was revived.

And I believe, brothers and sisters, you must have heard of the testimonies during the second and third centuries. The book of Fox, he wrote about a martyr's story. And notably, you find during the second century, how Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, he was an old man, faithful to the Lord.

And through the advice of some brothers and sisters, they asked him to go to the village to avoid the attack of the Roman Empire. He went there, but then he was discovered by the Roman soldiers. So they came to take him.

He opened the door, he invited them in, he prepared a table for them to eat, and asked for permission for an hour that he may pray. So he went to his room and prayed. And he prayed two hours.

And after he finished praying, he allowed these people to take him. And when they brought him to the poor council, the poor council, in view of the fact that he was an old man, tried to persuade him. And said, just burn incense to Caesar, and you will be free.

And he said, I have served the Lord 86 years, and he has been good to me. How can I deny him? So he was to be burned. And when they put the fire, strangely the fire could not touch him.

So finally, a soldier thrust his spear to him, and he died. And I believe you have also heard in the third century, a sister, she had a baby. And actually, she wasn't baptized yet, but he trusted the Lord.

She was taken into prison, and she was baptized while she was in prison. And his elderly father begged him, begged her, to deny the Lord. And how she stood, and finally was killed by the animal, and the spear, and the sword of the gladiators.

We have heard these stories. And such things happen all over the world, throughout the centuries. And even in my time, it happened in China.

One day, over a thousand brothers and sisters, all over China, were taken into custody. And those in Shanghai, where I was before, my fellow workers and elders, they were taken and put in a meeting hall. And you see the subtlety of the enemy.

They told them, you will be released if you will say one thing, that Watchman Ni has fought. Now, who doesn't have fought? Of course, our brother has fought, just as we are. But they used this to divide God's people.

Because once you say, so and so has fought, in other words, your faith begins to waver. And one of my fellow workers, he's also an elder there, a medical doctor, he was physically weak. And his family came and backed him.

They said, Watchman Ni has fought. That's true, you are not lying. Why don't you say it, and then you can come home? You know what he said? He said, I know Watchman Ni has fought, but God has not asked me to say it.

So he refused. He was put in prison, and very soon. And our brother Watchman Ni was put in prison for 20 years.

He was sentenced to 15 years. But after 15 years, because he would not deny his faith, five more years were added. So he was in labor camp.

And for 20 years, he was supposed to be free. But he died. Brothers and sisters, there is a conflict going on in this world.

It is a conflict between God and Satan. And the church is the target. But thank God, oftentimes God used persecution to revive his church.

More and more, brothers and sisters, we in this country began to realize that if we want to be true to the Lord, it was difficult. We have to suffer for it. Oftentimes, it is through persecution that the church is revived.

Now, brothers and sisters, in the past, many have borne witness to the testimony of Jesus. And because of their faithfulness in witnessing, they suffer for their testimony. And now we are living towards the end of this age.

Brothers and sisters, it seems strange that a church needs persecution to be purified. Why cannot it be purified without persecution? So I want to ask myself and you brothers and sisters this question. Where are we with regard to the testimony of Jesus? If we are faithful, we will be persecuted.

But if we are not faithful, no wonder the world will welcome us. Finally, I would like to tell you a story. It is a dream of A.G. Gordon.

A.G. Gordon was a great servant of the Lord in the New England state. He was a little before my time. Actually, when Brother Sparks came to this country, that's where one of the places he was.

A.G. Gordon was a pastor of a big church in Boston. And one day he dreamed a dream. He saw the church was in session.

He was sitting on the platform waiting to preach. The place was almost filled. Then he saw the usher brought in a man and put him at the front.

Somehow his attention was attracted by that man. So while he was preaching, his eyes were upon that man. And he was wondering, who is that man? Will he approve of my preaching? How does he think of our pipe organ? How will he think about our choir? And before he finished his preaching, he decided, I have to see that man.

You know, it is the custom. The pastor, after he finished preaching, he would go to the door and greet people who were leaving. So after he finished preaching, he tried to get to the door as fast as he could.

But that man was already gone. So he asked the usher, who is that man? And the usher said, don't you know him? He is Jesus. And you know what happened? The pipe organ gone.

The choir gone. Everything began to change. Brothers and sisters, if Jesus should visit us, I shouldn't say visit.

He should be here. If he is not here, woe to us. If he is here this morning, what will happen? Can we continue in our way? Will there be great change in our lives? Brothers and sisters, it is not a supposition.

When we gather around the table to remember the Lord, do you think that the Lord is not here? If he is here, can we come to the Lord's table in the way we are doing today? What will he think of us? I believe that this is reality. This is spiritual reality. This is not a supposition.

The Lord is supposed to be here. If he is not here, why do we gather? We come here to express our appreciation to him. We come here to honor him.

We come here to exalt him. We do not gather together for our own sake. It is not a social gathering.

So, dear brothers and sisters, I believe there is much. The Lord is coming soon. We do not know how many times.

So, let us, dear Lord, we praise and thank thee because thou art real. Thy testimony is real. It is thy pleasure to be with us.

And it is thy pleasure to see. Oh, Lord, make it so we commit ourselves to thee and cry to thee, Lord. The testimony of the Lord.

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