

How God Prepares Us (Part 9)

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon explores how God prepares individuals for leadership through compassion, sacrifice, and submission to authority, exemplified by Barnabas in the early church.

Duration: 41:06

Scripture: Acts 4:32-37, Acts 9:26-27, Acts 11:23, Acts 11:29-30, Acts 14:22, Romans 12:15

Topics: "Preparation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of taking action and making sacrifices for others. He uses the example of Barnabas, who saw a need in the early church and sold his own property to help the poor. The preacher highlights the unity and selflessness of the early church, where believers shared everything they had and had one heart and mind. He encourages the listeners to believe in and support others, as they may encounter someone in need of someone to believe in them.

Transcript

Over the last couple hundred years, there's been two, not saying the only two, but two major interpretations of history. Karl Marx and others of his ilk saw history in terms of economic determinism, that the economics of a country and the world and all of that determine the history and move the levers of what goes on in nations and cities, countries, the world. That led to their manifesto and Lenin then put it into practice in a brutal way in Russia in 1917 during the Red Revolution and the rest is history.

Other people see history like this. History is biography. History is changed by characters, men and women, who arise.

Without a George Washington, you wouldn't know if the country would have been founded and endured. It was George Washington who not only got the power, but gave up the power. King George III after his second term was done, Washington here, King George III said, if he releases power and goes back to live in Virginia in Mount Vernon, he'll be the greatest human since Jesus Christ, because the whole world only understood one thing.

Once you're in power, you never give up power. You get all the money, you put it in Swiss banks. Am I right? The history of a lot of countries that are impoverished today are as they've never had one patriot who cared about the people.

They just care about themselves and the nation knows it. They know the minute you get in office, he's going to rob us blind, put all the money in a Swiss bank and thus the people have a moral deterioration go on because they know you just cheat like everyone else cheats. You get the opportunity, you steal because the president steals and the next president will steal.

I've been in South American countries where leaders there have told me spiritual leaders have been lived there all their life. They said, that's the story. It doesn't matter who gets in, they're going to rob the country like the last guy did during the civil war.

What if there would have been another kind of president, not Abraham Lincoln, not someone reading the Bible and pacing the white house at night, trying to make sense of all this bloodshed, emancipation proclamation and all the rest. And on the negative side, the slave drivers who kept buying slaves and the people who, the wicked people who abused other human beings or what would happen in Germany after world war one if Hitler hadn't, hadn't risen, did it have to happen that way? Did it have to be a world war two or did it take a Hitler to, to build those concentration camps? Now we're going to study as we read this portion of acts, we're going to read about, we're going to turn this into a biography because a man comes out of nowhere. He seemingly is a new convert.

He's Jewish. He comes from the tribe of Levi. He's a Levite priestly tribe.

And then the next thing you see is he's called a prophet and then with Paul and apostle. And what I would understand is how do you go from a new convert to a prophet and an apostle? Because you new members and all the rest of you, all the rest of us who have been saved by Jesus Christ, don't you understand there's a plan for our lives? There's a plan for our lives. There's a shaping process that God does when he takes a personality and elevates them to a position of leadership and blessing, whether it's small or large or notable in the public's eye or behind the scenes, God makes people into something they're not by his grace.

And I want to know how does God do that? How does a man just get converted and then years later, he's a prophet and an apostle linked together with the apostle Paul. So the Bible gives us a little story and I want you and I to ponder that, you and me to ponder that because what I want to do is I want you to strive and aim at God's best for your life. We don't want to settle into just sitting in church.

Don't you want to be what God wants you to be? Everybody who wants to be everything God planned for you to be. I mean, but there's a shaping process. There's a shape.

You don't become that overnight. It just doesn't happen. So let's read and we're going to pick up something interesting about how the early church lived together.

This is the end of chapter four. And all the believers were one in heart and mind and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had and with great power, the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and much grace was upon them all. You read that, that's heaven on earth.

Why is it heaven on earth? We'll read it. One heart and one mind, no fighting, no struggling, no backbiting, one heart, one mind. Not only that, total unselfishness.

Everyone's sharing. It was kind of divine communism. No one ordered it.

It just happened like you do for your kids. There was so much love that if anybody was in trouble, someone just pitched in and said, no, we got to help them. They shared everything they had.

And then the ministers, the apostles who were doing the teaching and preaching, God's anointing was resting on them and much grace, God's favor and blessing was upon everybody in the whole church. Oh my goodness. I'd like to live back there, wouldn't you? And there were no needy persons among them for from time to time.

Those who own lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales, put it at the apostles feet. In other words, you to handle it. And it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, that's an island in the Mediterranean whom the apostle called Barnabas, which means son of encouragement. They gave him a different name than his birth name. His birth name was Joseph.

That's a good name. They called him Barnabas. And Barnabas, by the way, is the Greek equivalent or the Aramaic equivalent of the Hebrew name, which means son of exhortation or son of prophetic exhortation.

It's translated here, son of encouragement. He sold a field that he owned and he brought the money and put it at the apostles feet. Just said, here, I sell my property.

You got anybody in need? Hey, do what you have to do. It's yours. Now, later on in the book, just to the 13th chapter, look in the church at Antioch, that's up in Syria.

There were prophets and teachers. Barnabas, same guy, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Mannion, who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul, that's Saul of Tarsus. And while they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, set apart from me.

The Holy Spirit said in a meeting, somehow through the gifts of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Whose name comes first, Saul or Barnabas? Barnabas. He's named first by the Holy Spirit.

Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. All right. So I want to know how we get there.

So how does this begin? How do you go from a new convert to later on in the 14th chapter of the book of Acts, he's called an apostle. An apostle. New convert from Cyprus, from the tribe of Levi, a new believer, and now as we follow his course, he ends up being a prophet.

Oh, I want to know that. I want to know how does God make you and shape you into someone that he can trust to be a prophet and an apostle. But for all of us, it doesn't matter.

That might not be the calling that specifically in our lives, but it's how do you get to where God wants you to be? Not everybody's going to be Barnabas. That's not what's being taught here. What the Bible is teaching us is how do you maximize the gift of Christ that's in you through salvation? How do you, how do you get where God wants you to go? Because a lot of people never get there.

They're stuck in some kind of ditch. I know people personally, uh, growing up. I saw them.

I see them all the time. Now they're exactly where they were 30 years ago. No, no more, no less.

Some have actually gone backwards. Other people, they take off zoom. They're going, you don't even recognize them the way they're being used by God.

I want to know that secret. How many are with me? Say amen. Okay.

So it starts out this way. The first thing we learned about the man, people had need in the early church and folks were caring for the folks who had need. So the first thing we learned about Barnabas is he saw some need.

He saw people hurting in the church and with nobody giving him an order, he went and sold a field that he had. He owned some real estate. He sold it, cashed it in, got the money, dropped it at the feet of Peter, James and John and the other apostles and said, it's yours.

Take care of the poor as the needy people as you see fit. That must've been a significant moment in his life in the eyes of God. He saw a need and he reacted with compassion and he made a sacrifice.

He had the land. Nobody ordered him to sell the land, but he sold the land out of compassion and then trusted the leadership that was over him in the Lord to take care of the distribution of the money. I would like to suggest to you that those kind of situations will happen to you this week.

In some way, shape or form, you're going to meet someone this week who's in need. Maybe they're in need of a cup of coffee. Maybe they're in need of somebody to put their arm around them.

Maybe they're in need of being invited to your house. Maybe they're invited in need of somebody sitting down and hearing them out. But you and I are going to be confronted.

We are all the time and we have a chance to open our heart and minister and even make a sacrifice. Sacrifice our time, sacrifice our money, sacrifice our home, sacrifice our car and God is watching. For how in the world would I be able to or you be able to graduate into being used by God in a greater way when we close our hearts to people in need? The very first thing about God that we know is that he so loved the world that he that he gave.

He had compassion. He could have said, then die in your sins. You don't want to know me.

You take my name in vain. You reject the prophets. Then Israel then just die.

No, he sends his son and he sends his son to die on a cross. How in the world am I going to be used by Jesus if I'm not willing to have compassion for people, for poor people, for people who are other than me, not my race, not my color, not raised the way I was raised, don't have what they need. Now, what am I going to do? Because God is watching.

He wants me to open my heart so he can give me the grace to care about them and share something with them. He sold property and he left the money at the apostles feet. This is not a cup of coffee.

He sold acreage and laid it at the apostles feet. What must have God been thinking in heaven when he saw that? Well done, good and faithful servant. Angels, put a marker on that boy.

And this week you don't need to be an apostle or prophet. You're going to have a chance. You and I will have a chance this week to help somebody.

And if we don't have that compassion and sacrificial giving in us, how in the world will we ever graduate to what God wants to do with us? Because without that we're not good representatives of Jesus Christ. How many understand what I'm saying? Lift your hand if you understand what I'm saying. How in the world is God going to entrust me with anything when I don't care about the people he loves and I'm not willing to sacrifice anything? No, I just want to go home and be with my family.

I went to church this Sunday. Do you think that's what it's about? You've bought into this American kind of Christianity that is going to be revealed as bankrupt on the day of Christ. It's bankrupt.

Go to church Sunday for an hour and 15 minutes and that's your religious experience? Just give me, give me, bless me, help me. And never having compassion on people are hurting. So we learned something about this new convert.

This boy's got the grace of God on him because he feels, he cares, he takes action. He just doesn't talk and say, that's hard what you're going through, but you just, you know, you keep on trusting. No, he takes action and he gives up something.

I've noticed that the spirit of this world, you know why this world is going down the tubes financially? The whole world, Europe, here, everywhere. We don't know where it will end. It's nobody wants to sacrifice anything.

Nobody's given up nothing. Let the other guy give something up. I'm going to melt the system and that's happening everywhere.

Let somebody else make the sacrifice, but we have the spirit of Christ in us. How many want to represent Jesus Christ to a world and care about them and be willing to make a sacrifice? Notice also this, because he's going to be a leader. You never can be a leader unless you submit to the authority that's over you.

God never lets anyone use spiritual authority unless you submit to the spiritual authority over you. Now, what am I talking about? Not dictatorial authority. That's horrific.

I'm talking about where the Bible says, obey them that are over you in the Lord. Of course, if someone who's your pastor or a leader tells you to do something that's not in the Bible, you go adios muchacho. I'm out of here.

I'm gone. I'm not doing that stuff. You just told me to do something opposite of the Bible.

I serve Christ. I don't serve you. But yet the Bible says the sheep know the voice of the shepherd.

And there were leaders in the church. Submit to them that are over you in the Lord, in the Lord. We all need to be connected to someone who we listen to.

Otherwise you just run around and make all your own decisions, bouncing them off of no one. He laid the money at the apostle. He could have said, no, look, I cash the money.

I'll hand it out. It was my lot. I'll do it.

No. He said, you're over me in the Lord. Go ahead, Peter, James, John, whoever.

You take care of it. I do this unto the Lord. That's the way to see spiritual authority in your own life.

You have to learn how to take orders before you can give orders. When I was in the Naval Academy, I went through plebe summer. I was recruited there to play basketball.

But basketball or not, I had to go through plebe summer. And that was horrific. And then I had to go through plebe year where every upperclassman has the right to make you do anything they want.

They can stop you in a hallway. They can burst in your room at any time. Take the white glove that you had to keep on your desk.

Start looking for dust anywhere in your room. Tell you to do 65 pushups. Tell you to do sit ups, put shaving cream all over your face and make you look in the mirror and say, I am ugly 20 times in a row.

I had all those things happen to me. And they try to break you because the rule is this. You have to learn ours is not to reason why ours is but to do or die because they're, which is a different code than a Christian.

And you'll never be a leader unless you can first take orders. You're not going to be an ensign or a commander or a captain or an admiral. You can't distribute orders until you learn to first take orders because then you sympathize for people hopefully.

You're more well balanced. You're not some dictator. Scripturally we obey the Bible.

But notice what he did. He submitted to the authority in the church and said, I'm coming to you. Here's the money.

So we see a man, new convert, seeing need, feeling compassion, taking action, making a sacrifice, all under the radar. He still only has his name Joseph. His name Barnabas is going to come later on.

But Luke looking back on it says his name was Joseph, but the church gave him another name because of the way he lived. Where's the next place we spot him? The apostle Saul of Tarsus is persecuting the church. He's a Jewish zealot trained under the Pharisees and he's making havoc in the church, putting people in prison, possibly having people executed.

And he is just the number one terror to the Christian church. And then on the way to Damascus in Syria, he's on the road and the Lord appears to him. And you know the story.

He becomes converted. And he says to this voice and this bright light, who are you? I am Jesus whom you're persecuting. It's hard to fight against the pricks and the goads that I've been bothering you with.

So he gets converted and he goes to a house. He's blinded. Someone comes and ministers to him.

And then as he gains some strength, he starts to witness for Christ in Damascus. He starts sharing the fact that Jesus appeared to him and he starts to prove to people that he is, that he's risen from the dead. Well, you know, this, this is like a miracle conversion.

Later on, after some time, he comes to Jerusalem to where all the apostles are, where the mother church is and nobody will receive him. Nobody will trust this guy. He's like, he's like an untouchable.

They won't get near him. They're saying, no, he's not converted. It's, it's look how little faith we can have.

Even the apostles. No, it's, it's, it's, you know, it's a hoax. He's trying to get in among us so he can do even more damage.

And now the guy is caught between two worlds. He's no longer a Jew. He's repudiated his whole background.

He's witnessing for Jesus. But when he gets to the home where the big guys are in Jerusalem, they won't touch him with a 10 foot pole. Ah, but guess who comes to the rescue.

Look, when he came to Jerusalem, Paul, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple, but Barnabas took him and brought them to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. So now as I watched God shaping this man, I find something else.

It's not only a man of compassion, not only a man who's ready to make sacrifices, but he's a guy that believes in people that sticks up for people that has compassion for people who are caught in no man's land. And you and I this very week, we'll have a chance in the office in our neighborhood. You're going to meet someone who needs someone to believe in them.

You know, one of the reasons I'm in the ministry today when I was an off the wall college student, and I mean literally off the wall playing basketball, trying to be a big man on campus and all of that. And yet God started deal with my heart. And I didn't, I didn't understand everything that was happening.

And I ended up going to a church in Brooklyn here in Bay Ridge when I was home for the summer or for the holidays in between basketball season and studying in school. And there was a minister there and associate pastor, and you'll never believe this. He believed in me.

I didn't believe in myself. He believed in me. He took time with me.

He would talk to me about the things of God. He would tell me stories about the moving of the Holy Spirit. He would explain Bible verses to me.

He wanted to be with me. I didn't want to be with myself. I was so obnoxious at times then.

And you and I are going to have a chance to be like Barnabas. You'll meet somebody this week that needs somebody to put their arm around and say, don't you worry. Don't be down on yourself.

You're going to make it. God is going to help you. Come on.

Can we put our hands together and say amen to that? God is going to help you. The Lord is with you. I know it.

Barnabas discern something that the apostles don't discern. They're afraid of Saul. He embraces Saul.

What an amazing lesson. You can have a high position and lack discernment. They're afraid of them.

And Barnabas has to bring them like a little puppy. And he has to come and say, guys, don't be afraid of him. This is my man, Saul of Tarsus.

He saw the Lord. It's real. So I believe in you.

You know, that changes some people's lives. Did you know some of the young people in our church that we're working with right now, teenagers who are working here this summer, or I took some out to lunch the other day, and I'm learning about their lives. We have a lot.

We have some right here in this building. Did you know what they've grown up in their lives with nobody believing in them? No one. We once had a keyboard player in this church some years ago, and the only thing his father ever told him growing up was, you're stupid and you'll never amount to anything.

That's the only thing he ever heard from his dad through his teenage years. You're stupid and you'll never amount to anything. Now, what do you think that man needs? He needs somebody to believe in him.

But wait a minute, as I get ready to close this, hasn't Jesus believed in us? Why are we all here today? How many have been like me? You get so down on yourself, you're almost ashamed to come into God's presence, and instead of yelling at you, he has his arms open wide. How many have ever had? Come on, lift up your hand if you've ever experienced that. I'd just like to suggest to you, those are the opportunities that God gives us to shape us into being someone that he can use to the max.

I don't know what your calling is, but to be used by God to the max, it is a very helpful thing to be able to react to need and make sacrifices. A lot of people are not willing to make a sacrifice for Christ. They don't mind worshiping and waving their hands and going through gyrations, but if it touches anything then they have to give up.

And you say, how can I represent Christ with that? How can I represent Christ if I don't believe in people and put my arm around them and say, come on, you're going to make it. You're going to make it. If it wasn't for that guy believing in me, I don't know where I'd be.

And one day, I remember being so full of myself. You know, being full of yourself is almost worse than being full of the devil, because you can cast the devil out, but it's very hard to get rid of yourself. How many say amen? That's what the Bible says.

When a person is full, I remember being full of myself and being so obnoxious and talking to this guy and his wife. I look back now, I cringe. I don't even want to remember that night.

And you know what he did? When I think back, he should have stopped me and said, shut up. You don't even know what you're talking about. You're talking like a fool.

You know what he did? Nothing. When I got all done with my babble, he said, see you in church on Sunday. And we're going to have a chance this week.

How many want to be ready to believe in someone? Help someone. Wave your hand at me. Just believe in someone, especially if they're young people in and around the church or out in the street, because young people are growing up now.

Nobody believes in them. They have absentee parents or negative parents. It's so great to have somebody who believes in you, sticks up for you.

You know what they say about friends? It's like good health. You don't realize how much it means to you until you lose it. You just assume good health every day.

But when you get sick, you know, I hyperextended my knee playing paddle ball the other day. I never knew how much I should have loved my healthy knee, because now it's bothering me. I'm wearing a little brace on it until it heals up.

It's like that with friends and people that stick up for you. You don't miss them until they're gone. You know, if someone's been good to you in your life, tell them today, call them, walk up to them today and tell them, I love you.

You believed in me. You encouraged me. Because once they're gone, you can't tell them.

You can't tell anybody. One other little picture. So Barnabas ends up back in Jerusalem, and then a revival breaks out in a city in Syria called Antioch.

But something is happening in this church that had never happened before. Jews are worshiping together with Greeks. See, when Christianity first began, the Roman Empire thought it was a Jewish cult, because everybody was Jewish.

Jesus was Jewish. The apostles were Jewish. All the converts were Jewish.

But now the gospel has started to spread, and God's plan is finally being revealed that it's not just for Jews. It's for Gentiles. Who's a Gentile? Anyone who's not a Jew.

We're mostly all Gentiles here. So they hear about what's happening up north in Antioch, and they, could this be so? Could they be worshiping together? And the Greeks are not circumcised, and what's going on here? So they want to find out what's going on, so they want to send someone to check it out. Who do you think they pick? My man Barnabas.

They know this guy has discernment. They know this guy can be trusted, and he's not too big to be a messenger. He's just willing to do.

That's another lesson you learn from Barnabas's life. If you and I are just willing to do what lays before us, God, promotion comes not from the north or south or east or west. Promotion comes from the Lord.

If you want to get to where God wants you to get, just do what's in front of you. So they send him, and again, he submits to the authority. He doesn't say, I have my own ministry.

Don't tell me where to go. God hasn't led me. No, he goes, you guys feel I should do that? I'll do it.

So he goes up to Antioch, and here's where the story ends, at least for us today. The news of this church reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch, and when he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he saw that, man, God is blessing. It's nothing like I've ever seen, but God is in this.

He was glad, and he encouraged them. See, that's where he got his name. He encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.

He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord in Antioch. So from a new convert who has compassion and willing to make sacrifice to help, then he's the kind of guy that sticks up for people in no man's land who are being rejected by others. He doesn't care.

He'll even stand up to the apostles and say, no, don't do that. That's not right. This is the real deal, and he believes, and he encourages Saul of Tarsus, and now we find out he's sent to this church.

Now these little lessons, I hope you can catch their significance. The Bible says that when he got there and he saw how God was blessing, although he was from the mother church in Jerusalem, he didn't resent what God was doing there like some people do. You know, if it's not happening in their church, it's just not happening.

Have you ever met someone like that? The only thing God is doing is in their little peanut shell church or denomination or Brooklyn Tabernacle. You know, like the whole world revolves around a church. Oh my goodness.

No, he was glad for them. Did you know that God can't use you to the maximum if you're not glad for other people's blessings? Did you know that I meet people every day? I meet people every day. They can't rejoice in another person's blessing.

I meet pastors who tell me they struggle, that when someone else preaches and God uses them, they're just, they're suffering. They can't rejoice. But God is using them.

Who you're getting frustrated with is God. That's a losing battle. How many say, amen.

If God is going to use somebody, we shouldn't resent it. We should rejoice. Come on, everybody, put your hands together.

We rejoice. He was glad. You know how the body of Christ would change if we were all just glad for other people, not resentful.

You ever see sometimes a woman looks at another woman who has a new dress on? You ever see the look they sometimes give? Who does she think she is? Thank God she has a new dress. Do I get an amen? Thank God she has a new dress. Thank God that God blessed somebody with a job.

Yeah, but Pastor Cimbala, I got my needs. I got my problems. Don't you want to know the secret to get the blessing of God in your life? Rejoice for other people.

Come on, one more amen. Rejoice with other people. Don't be small.

Don't have a small soul. Have a big soul. Don't be small and tiny.

Be big. So they're not from your island. They're not Polish.

They're not from Brooklyn Tabernacle. So they're not your color. Can't you get over all of that and see things the way God sees it? And say thank God for his blessing on anybody and everybody.

Those wrong attitudes just hold back the body of Christ so much. You know what I'm talking about. How many know exactly what I'm talking about? Who said that a couple hundred years ago? They said the test of God's grace in your life is not how you react to poor people.

It's how you react to rich people. Oh, that didn't get so many amens. Oh, let me say that one again.

The test of God's grace in your life is not how you react to poor people. People in organized crime can feel compassion for a beggar on the streets. It's how you react to someone who God has blessed more than

you.

Who has more gifts than you. You sing, but someone's a better singer. You know the Bible, but somebody knows the Bible better.

You can play basketball and shake and bake somebody, but somebody you meet can shake and bake better than you. How do you react to that? And Barnabas didn't have that small little soul. He had a big soul.

That's why God could promote him and use him. He was like, this is a great guy. God is doing something awesome.

But it's not like it is in Jerusalem. Who cares? God's here. When I go to Korea and I see the blessing of God, it's not exactly like I see it in America, but praise God.

It's God blessing. When I met all those mainland China home house church leaders, half of whom had been in jail, they don't sing songs like we sing. Who cares? God is there.

People are getting converted. And they worship differently in South Africa when I was there. So who cares? What is it about the way I grew up? Is that what this whole thing is going to be about? Or is it going to be praise God? God is building his church.

Come on, let's all put our hands up in the air. Put your hands up in the air. Just thank God for he's building his church all over the world.

God, tell him, I thank you, God, for blessing other people, other churches, other ministers, other races, other countries. Lord, we thank you. And then the Bible says, this is where he got his name.

He encouraged them all to stay true to the Lord. You know how he got his name? He was an encourager. You ever meet someone like that? He wasn't an expositor.

He it seems like Barnabas was the guy who gave brief exhortations. He was the kind of guy that could walk up to someone and say, Carmen, you're going to make it. I'll tell you why.

Lord gave me this verse this morning. Don't despise the day of small beginnings, because in the end, God's going to add his blessing. And something else I want to tell you, and then he was done.

But he did it so many places that they said, change his name. He's not Joseph anymore. He's Barnabas.

He's a son of encouragement. Everywhere he goes. I'm telling you, do we need that in the church today? Do we need that among our new members and among the congregation? There's so much discouragement in the world.

Do you ever meet some people that are so negative and discouraging that you just, you spend a half hour with them. You want to take your life. You want to commit Harry Carrey.

You don't even want to go on anymore. Come on. How many know what I'm talking about? Just negative, negative, negative.

It won't happen. And then you meet somebody. Praise God.

Jesus is on the throne. Pastor Cimbala, we're going to make it. Where do you see what God is going to do? And when you leave them, you're like, yeah, let's go.

Come on. Let's give God a hand. Make us sons of encouragement.

So I end with this sentence. Before he became a prophet and an apostle, he was a son of encouragement. Now you and I could do that this week, can't you? You want to get to your maximum in God? Start encouraging people.

Start believing in people. Start rejoicing with people. Let's start feeling what they're going through instead of judging them.

God's not looking for judges. He's looking for saviors. He has sent his son as the ultimate savior.

But you know what I mean, a savior with a small S. He's not looking for judges. Anyone can judge. Some of you are sitting here possibly, you're visiting, you're judging me while I'm speaking.

You're finding fault with that it doesn't, it's not happening here like it happens in your church. Who cares about your church or our church or any other church? Let Jesus be praised today. Come on.

Do we say yes to that? Let Jesus be praised. Let's close our eyes. Remember the lessons now.

This is like a bible study. Remember the lessons from a new convert to an apostle and a prophet. And what do we know? He reacted to need and he made sacrifices.

He stood up for people who had nobody else to vouch for them. He believed in someone. Ha! Ended up being the great apostle Paul.

Instead of throwing him under the bus, he believed in him. And finally, he rejoiced in the blessings other people had. Didn't judge him, didn't look down on him, didn't resent it.

He rejoiced. Oh God, help us. Help me.

Help us all, Lord. That we can rejoice with those who rejoice. It's easier to weep with those who weep.

We confess that. It's easier to weep with those who weep than it is to rejoice with those who rejoice. And he was an encourager.

And when God saw all that, he said, no, you're going to be more than you ever dreamed you'd be. I'm going to make you I'm going to name you with the apostles. I'm going to make you a prophet.

And this was the way God shaped him. What came first, the chicken or the egg? Was it the calling of God or the shaping of his life? I leave that with you. All I know is that nothing happens overnight.

And we can say yes to God in these areas this very week. Lord, would you help us this week as opportunities present themselves, that instead of being stuck in a ditch, we will get out of that ditch and we will have compassion that you give us. And we will even make sacrifices as you help us to bless somebody less fortunate.

God, that we will stand for somebody this week. Stick up for them. Believe in them.

Brace them up. Lift up their hands that might be a little weak and say, you're going to make it. You're not going under.

You're going over because Christ is going to help you. And finally, Lord, rejoice with others who rejoice and that we can encourage them. Give us words from the Holy Spirit to speak, to encourage children, young people.

Holy Spirit, I believe, just interrupted me. So we'll sing that song. But right now, if you're here today and you need encouragement, I will encourage you.

I got friends who will encourage you. We'll lay our hand on your shoulder and I will speak a word. It might just be a sentence, but I will encourage you.

Anyone battling with discouragement, the enemy has piled on, beat you down, relatives have beat you down, people you trusted beat you down, and you are just like struggling with, oh man, how am I going to make this? Come on, you come up here and stand right at this altar. I will give you a word of encouragement. I'm not good for that much, but I can be a son of encouragement.

Oh yes, I can. And I'll say yes. Let's sing it.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/24/SID24087.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jim-cymbala/how-god-prepares-us-part-9/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net