

Available to God

by Major Ian Thomas

Major Ian Thomas emphasizes the importance of being available to God and obedient to the Holy Spirit for spiritual effectiveness and personal evangelism.

Duration: 36:26

Scripture: Isaiah 53:5, Acts 2:37, Acts 8:30, Acts 8:32-35, Acts 10:36, Acts 16:6-10, Acts 16:25-26

Topics: "Bearing Fruit"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a story about a boy named Abraham who had no home, friends, family, money, or food. The preacher gave Abraham a German Testament and explained to him that if he received Jesus as his redeemer, he would be accepted back into the family of God. The preacher emphasizes that when we yield ourselves to Christ, His life overflows through us, impacting our church, community, family, and fellow students. The preacher also shares a personal experience of driving along the Rhine and encountering a weary boy, highlighting the adventure of life when we trust in God.

Transcript

That's the privilege that He's given to you and to me. Completely available for the flow of His life like a river of living water. This peki of the Holy Spirit, whom they that believe on Him should receive, for the Lord Jesus at that time, the Holy Spirit at that time was not yet given, because the Lord Jesus had at that time not yet been glorified.

But now He has. He descended to be with the Father and has implemented the promise that when He was restored to the Father's right hand, He would come. Not leaving us orphans, but in the person of the Holy Spirit, flooding our whole humanity with the fullness of the triune God.

So we've become individual members of the corporate body of the living Christ, who is not only the head of that body, but its life content. Well, that's a very important principle. And remember, the concern of His heart is to seek and to save that which is lost.

Therefore, if you place your humanity at His disposal, you can already thank Him in advance for the blessing that He is going to be through you to others. Did you ever thank the Lord Jesus for the souls that He is going to save through you? If not, why not? Aren't you available to Him? And if you are available to Him, don't you anticipate that this is what He will do? Then thank Him. Don't wait till it's happened.

Anybody can thank Him for what's happened. Faith thanks Him for what's going to happen. That's what makes life so exciting.

That's what makes life such an adventure. I love to live six months from now, because I know what happened six months ago. And because of all that happened six months ago, I have strong confidence in what He's going to do six months from now.

Well, why should I wait till it happens, till I enjoy it? I might just as well enjoy it now. So I say, Lord, thank You for the boys and girls, the men and women, into whose faces I've never looked and whose names I've never heard, but to whom You're going to speak and to whose lives You're going to add Your life, who are going to be redeemed from darkness, taken out of death and raised into newness of life in the power of Your resurrection. I thank You for defeated, frustrated, exhausted Christians whom You're going to emancipate and lead into the glorious secret of living life as God intended life to be.

Lord, it's wonderful. I don't know who they are, don't know where they live, I don't know on what corner I'm going to meet them, but it's just as sure as the door. Because it's just like You to do things like that.

And I'm available. Now, that's the Christian life. Members of the body.

What do you expect of the members of your body? What do you expect of your hands when you get up in the morning? Do you expect them to have a committee meeting? To present to you their plans for the day? Is that what you expect? And they tell you what they consider would be a very good idea for the occupation of the 24 hours that are to ensue. I don't expect that of my hands. I expect of my hands that they will be restfully available but instantly obedient.

I don't expect them to demonstrate their enthusiasm or show me that they're busy the whole time. Life would be an unbearable burden if my hands behaved like that. You see, all the time that I'm speaking, my fingers want to impress me and they want to impress you that they're really on the job.

You see? Haven't you met exhausting Christians like that? Whose activity is totally unrelated to the purpose of the head. They think the whole criterion in spirituality is activity. Busyness.

On the job. Living on their nerves. And everybody else.

I'm sure you've met them. Now God says, I don't want you like that. I just want you to be a healthy member of my body.

Just restfully available. And if I don't happen to have anything for you to do at this particular moment, then get where you belong. Into my pocket.

And just rest. But when I need you, when I want you, instant obedience. Now that's the Christian life.

Restfully available. Instantly obedient. To every prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Now if you will act on this basis, you will discover that all the stress and all the strain has gone out of your Christian life. It doesn't mean that you will be inactive, but you will be Christ active. And all the superfluous, all the extraneous matter of your Christian activity will be extracted.

And you'll be a much nicer person to live with. And you will be infinitely more effective in your service for Jesus Christ. He directs you by His Holy Spirit, for that is His office in you, to exercise the headship of

Christ as the head of the body.

He's the Lord of the harvest, and He puts you where He wants you, to meet the need that He recognizes to be priority number one for you. Some folks say, well how does He direct? Well the answer is, that's His business and not yours. He simply says, if you will acknowledge my headship in all your ways, I will direct your path.

I credit my head with the intelligence of mobilizing my body into coordinated action. So that if I want to write a letter, I expect my head to mobilize all the necessary members of the body for that operation. And if my hand doesn't happen to be near enough to the pencil, I credit my head with sufficient intelligence to mobilize my arm to move my hand near enough to the pencil.

Now we need to credit the Lord Jesus with exactly the same intelligence as the head of the body of which He is the life contact. And in any one particular operation designed by Him, it's almost inevitable that many members of the body will be needed, all of whom by His Spirit will be prompted into action into a perfect harmony of cooperative effort. Now that is real spiritual fellowship.

And that is how the Church of Jesus Christ as a living organism should function. And it's the most natural function in the world. So acknowledging Him in all your ways lives in the supreme confidence that by His indwelling Holy Spirit in the normal processes, keeping yourself mentally alert and aware and acquainted with the facts, believe that He is directing your path.

I've explained to some of you that if I happen to be traveling, say, on a train, then I'll say in my heart, Lord Jesus, if there's anybody to whom you want to speak through me on this train, I'm available. I don't know whether there is or whether there isn't. One thing I know is this, if there isn't anybody that you want to talk to, there's no point in my talking to them.

If I do, I shall just be a public nuisance. So I simply place myself at your disposal. Now if there happens to be somebody to whom you want to speak, I don't know who it is.

I don't even know whether they're on the train yet or whether they're going to get on two stations from here. And I don't know any human means of discovering who they are. I could peer in all their faces and see if I could discover who looked the most likely.

But I'm sure I'd be wrong. So all I can do is place myself restfully at your disposal. Well, where do we go from there? Well, I know where I go from there.

I look for the most comfortable seat. Because that's the most obvious thing to do. But in the supreme confidence, in the process of doing the most obvious, he is doing precisely what he said he'd do, direct my path.

Now he never repeats the pattern. He may do it one way this time and do it another way another time. He may sit me next to the person or he may put me next to a person who's going to get out whose seat somebody's going to take, who's going to get in.

In a thousand and one different ways he does it. But the whole process is wonderfully thrilling. I demonstrated this to some of you in the pictures that I showed you.

It makes life a wonderful adventure. I remember, eleven years ago, on the first journey that I made in Germany as a civilian after the war, to visit some of the young folk who had visited us in England from Germany, I was traveling along the Rhine from Cologne to Bad Godesberg. And as I was driving along the Rhine, I overtook a very weary, scruffy-looking boy.

He was about fifteen or sixteen years of age. He was somewhat bedraggled. His clothes were obviously well worn.

He had a haversack on his back. He looked very tired and very lonely and very discouraged. He didn't even look up.

He didn't even hum a list. His eyes were glued to the ground as he trudged slowly forward. And I couldn't help but be impressed.

So I stopped and I waited for him. And when he came along, at that time I could speak, I'm afraid, very, very little German. I said, would you like a lift? He said, yes.

Well, I said, where did you come from? He said, I don't know. I said, where are you going? He said, I don't know. Well, I thought that was a bit strange, not to know where you've come from or where you're going when you're on a journey.

You're not likely to get places. So, he got in. He was very hungry.

He ate all there was in the car. He very nearly ate the car. And I said, well, where's your family? Well, he said, I don't really have a family now.

They're in the Russian zone. Well, I said, have you friends? He said, I don't have friends. Well, I said, where do you live? He said, I don't live anywhere.

He had no home. He had no friends. He had no family.

He had no money. He had no food. Of course, the one thing that boy needed supremely, one would imagine, was a family, a home, friends, clothes, food, money, prospects, security.

Well, we chatted together and I happened to have a German testament, which I gave to him, and I asked him to read one or two verses. John 1, 12. To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

And I was able somehow to make him understand that if he would receive the Lord Jesus as his Redeemer who died for him, God would accept him back into the family. His name was Eberhardt Pomeritz. So I said, Eberhardt, if you do that, you'll have a family again.

You'll have a father again. You'll have a home again. Now, wouldn't that be a wonderful thing? He said, yes, that would be very wonderful.

Well, I said, that can happen right now, if you'd like to ask him. So, very simply, I led him in prayer as we were driving along. I kept my eyes open.

It's safer when you're driving. But he prayed simply, sentence by sentence. And then we got to Bad Godesberg, where I was going to spend the night with the family of one of the students, now a medical

doctor in Germany, who had been with us the previous summer.

I knew that his parents and the family were Christians, so I risked taking my newfound friend to them. And when I arrived, I just introduced him as my friend. They were a little bit surprised at the kind of friends I had.

But they didn't say a word. They very graciously received him into the home, and he got new clothes, and they treated him just like a member of the family. He was there for a number of weeks.

He found friends and food and many of the other necessities of life. I only saw him about twice in two years, and then I didn't see him for many years. But I did get a letter, eventually, that he was back in the Russian zone where he had made contact with some of his family and was living in a little village near Dresden that he had married, and in this letter he said, you'll be glad to know that my wife, too, has her trust in Jesus Christ as her Saviour, and we have a little child.

And then I heard no more until about nine months or a year ago when I got a letter from the British Broadcasting Corporation, which was forwarded to me. And they said in this letter that a certain Eberhardt had written to them and asked them if they could, somewhere in the British Isles, to find a Major Thomas who had picked him up on the Rhine between Cologne and Bad Goldesberg, and he couldn't remember the address. So the British Broadcasting Corporation very kindly and very cleverly discovered who I was and where I was.

And I got another letter through the BBC in Berlin a few months later. So when I was in Berlin in the Western sector in May this year, just at the time when Khrushchev arrived from the summit that had exploded, I thought it would be rather fun to meet Eberhardt Pomerich again. I hadn't seen him but once or twice since a little ragged boy was trudging his way down the Rhine.

So we sent a messenger to the Russian sector and from an East sector post office sent a telegram to his East address with an East sector accommodation address where he should call and find the West Berlin address for the sake of security and safety and for his sake. Well, I waited until about 11 o'clock on my last day, the Sunday of the closing meetings of that particular evangelistic campaign in Berlin. And I thought, well, now he's not coming.

Maybe the message hasn't reached him. And I had to be at a lunch appointment and then to meet some of our torchbearers that afternoon and so I left the building where I was and as I stepped out of the front door he was standing on the pavement. And it was a great reunion.

He flung his arms around my neck and we went off together and I discovered that he's got five children now. The last were twins. But, you know, as he sat around the table with us that afternoon, I shall never forget the absolute hush as he told us the story of the little church to which he belonged.

Soon, he thinks, to be closed and he thinks probably they will only be able to meet in twos and threes and fours, maybe, on some excuse, like a birthday. But he said there is only one thing to live for and that is that Jesus Christ, through us, may seek and save men and women and boys and girls. Now when I met him on the road eleven years ago he seemed to need food and money and friends and a home and we gave him all that.

How long would the food have lasted him? Until the next day. The clothes, until they were worn out. But what a wonderful thing it is when one can plant a seed, the word of life, by which a man can be

regenerated.

So that I know today, somewhere in a little village near the city of Dresden, there's a member of the body corporate, a fellow member of mine, of that body which it was my privilege to join when as a boy of twelve I put my trust in Christ and the Lord Jesus imparted his divine life to me. We're members of the same body. I don't know whether I shall ever see him again until I see him in the presence of the head himself.

All I know is this, that long ever before I knew him, Lord Jesus, the head of the body, looking down from heaven, saw a lonely boy on the side of the road trudging along the Rhine and loved him and sought him and wanted to find him. It happened to be my privilege then to be that bit of humanity that he occupied, that he could direct to cross the path of that particular boy. But this is the principle.

It's the principle that you see underlined again and again throughout the Acts of the Apostles. The secret of fruitfulness is not your cleverness. It's no technique.

You could learn all the techniques in the world on personal evangelism or homiletics or a hundred and one other things, but it wouldn't accomplish that miracle of spiritual regeneration that only God himself can accomplish. The secret of spiritual effectiveness is availability so that under the direction of the Holy Spirit day or night, for he has no office hours, you are the right man in the right place at the right time saying the right thing to the right person. That's all that matters.

God had used Philip wonderfully in the city of Samaria which all the whole city rejoiced. And he was having subsidiary campaigns in the adjacent villages. His name made news.

Everybody came out to listen to Philip, the great preacher. And then the Spirit of God, we're told, in the Acts of the Apostles, told Philip to leave all that and go into the desert. For no intelligent reason, it would appear.

But you see, Philip had long learned the secret of spiritual effectiveness. It was to obey the promptings of the Spirit of God. Simply to be available and ask no questions.

Humanly speaking, it was ridiculous. For the place of opportunity and where the crowds were, were in Samaria and in the surrounding district where his name made news. But God said, desert.

And he arose and went, and behold, a man of Ethiopia and eunuch of great authority and the Candacy Queen of the Ethiopians who had the charge of all her treasure had come to Jerusalem with her worship and was returning and sitting in his chariot, read Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, join myself to this chariot. This time it was Philip who was doing the hitchhiking.

And he got a list. And he found that the man was reading the prophet Isaiah, the fifty-third chapter. And of all the verses that he should have been reading, he was reading about a lamb for the slaughter.

Of one who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. And the cost of our peace laid upon him. And by whose stripes we are healed.

What perfect timing. Indeed it says in verse thirty that Philip ran thither to him. Because he had to get there, you see, at the right verse.

God's timing. How perfect. The place of the scripture which he read was this.

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter like a lamb done before his shearers who opened him on his mouth. In his humiliation, his judgment was taken away. Who shall declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth.

The gospel according to Isaiah. And the eunuch answered Philip and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus. Notice he didn't discuss with the man the authorship of the book of Isaiah.

He took the same scripture and he preached Jesus. To Philip there was only one possible interpretation of what the prophet had to say by divine inspiration. In the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah.

Taking the same scripture, he preached Jesus. He said, if you don't know who it is of whom the prophet speaks, I'll tell you. It's Jesus.

How difficult was it for him to persuade the eunuch to receive the Lord Jesus as Savior? Did he spend a night in agonizing prayer? No. You see he happened to be the right man in the right place at the right time saying the right thing to the right person. And as they went on their way they came unto a certain water and the eunuch said, I see here is water.

What doth him to me to be baptized? Who made the appeal? Philip? No, the congregation. This is what happened all the way through the Acts of the Apostles. It wasn't the preacher that made the appeal.

It was the congregation. On the day of Pentecost when Peter stood up with the others, who made the appeal? The congregation. They said, Sirs! What shall we do? When Paul and Silas were spending the night in the local jail singing, rejoicing in the Lord.

Do you remember? Till all the other prisoners heard it. Knowing perfectly well that if they were spending the night in the jail it was because God had something rich in store. You can imagine Paul looking over to Silas and saying, what do you think God's got in mind? Why did he put us here tonight and not in the grand hotel? And Silas said, I don't know.

It's wonderful, isn't it? He'd never have put us here if he hadn't got something, something up his sleeve. It's tremendous. And Paul said, yes, let's have another song.

And while they were singing Silas suddenly said, look out, Paul! And they ducked. And there was an earthquake thrown in. And then they rubbed their eyes.

And when the dust had settled there was a man in the inquiry room. Sirs, what must we do to be saved? Who made the appeal? The congregation. You see, in those days the Holy Spirit was seeking and saving through them that which was lost.

The spirit of the risen Christ who now inhabited their humanity. The same Jesus Christ who stood beneath the tree where the little fat Zacchaeus was hiding. The same Lord Jesus who was at the well just at the precise moment that the woman came out from Samaria.

The Lord Jesus who was sitting up late at night to Nicodemus' surprise when he came because he was expecting him. The same Lord Jesus does his own work in his own way just the same way today. Peter, directed by the Spirit of God even though he was a Jew to the house of a Gentile dog.

For as God had revealed his purpose to Cornelius so at the same time God was revealing his purpose to Peter up on the roof having a snooze while the food was being prepared. And when he arrived he discovered that Cornelius had been round all the district gathered in all his friends and his relatives. No publicity except that which he himself had given it.

And when Peter came he was amazed. But Cornelius said we are here now gathered to hear all that God has to say through you to us. That's all we want to hear.

We don't want your opinion. We just want you to be the mouthpiece and the voice of God to our hearts. And Peter preached unto them Jesus the Redeemer and the risen Lord.

And while he was yet speaking it says while he was yet speaking didn't even come to the conclusion of his seven points didn't have time to recite the poem. While he was still preaching already Cornelius and those who were with him had mixed with faith the word for which they had been waiting. And God had already answered their faith with the gift of life by the Holy Spirit.

And there came a day when Paul the Apostle planning, planning a world missionary journey. We're told in the 16th chapter the Acts of the Apostles was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go into Bithynia. Forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go into Asia.

Until a voice of one from Macedonia said come and help us. And so directed by the Spirit assuredly recognizing God's direction he landed there. And in Philippi that Sabbath afternoon he went down to the riverside and of all things Paul the Apostle joined a woman's prayer meeting.

Ironical for Paul maybe but there he was right dumped in the middle of a woman's prayer meeting. And there in the midst of that little gathering Lydia not even a native of that district some 430 miles away Tyre Tyre a stellar person whose heart the Lord opened. Right man right place right time saying the right thing to the right person.

This is the secret. There's nothing sensational about it and yet every step of the way is miraculous. In the perfect timing of a God who is gloriously competent to implement his evangelistic purpose through those healthy members of his body that are restfully available and instantly obedient.

I want you to notice that for Philippi to be the right man at the right place at the right time saying the right thing to the right person he had to die to his own preconceived notions of service. He had to die to his own success in some area. He had to die to the complex of crowds.

He had to be prepared to be in the desert by divine appointment. For Peter to be the right man in the right place at the right time saying the right thing to the right person he had to die to all his racial prejudice and his national pride as a Jew. And in spite of the disapproval of his own fellow Jews to go into the house of a dirty Gentile dog.

For Paul to be at the right place at the right time saying the right thing to the right person he had to die to all his sincerely conceived missionary progress. Because God is always supremely concerned not about our progress but about the individual sinner who is the immediate object of his questing race. All three could have been busy in the wrong place and have achieved precisely nothing in that which counts for time and for eternity.

So as you learn to apply the principles of the Christ who is in you remember that his quest is still the quest of a seeking savior. Anticipate that he will close this his quest with your humanity. Thank him.

In joyful anticipation for those whom it is to be your privilege to introduce to the Lord Jesus as he borrows your humanity to speak to them his word the truth that sets men free. And in the place of obedience blessing is inevitable. All he wants is your availability.

You don't have to be very clever. Just available. Day and night.

What an adventure a life like this. So I trust that these days may not only bring untold comfort to your own soul and in the person of the Lord Jesus the answer to all your personal problems but I'm anticipating that there will be the overflow of his life through you in your church your community your family and amongst your fellow students. And I'm going to thank God with you right now for those who this coming Sabbath this coming weekend are going to feel the impact of a Christ life released at last in terms of your humanity by virtue of your new yieldedness to what he is in terms of what you are.

Some of you may be have commitments this weekend. Will you for the first time get down in your knees and say Lord Jesus this is your commitment not mine. Thank you for what you're going to be through me to these to whom I speak.

Thank you for the boys and girls whom you're going to bless through my lips as your life flows through me to them this coming Sunday. Thank you Lord. It's the first time I have ever had an expectation which is now worthy of what you are in me instead of what I can do for you.

Paganini a great violinist was billed on one occasion to play in a large auditorium in a certain city. Big placards announced his coming. He was advertised as the master musician who with his priceless instrument could produce the whining of the wind in the trees and the cooing of the dove and the chattering of children in the streets and the music of water dripping down the mountain side.

Great crowds came to hear him. There was a buzz of excitement as they saw the door at the back of the stage begin to open and then there was a hush as the great musician walked to the footlights and then to everybody's startled amazement he took his priceless instrument and with his thumb he plucked out a string and then another and then a third until only one remained and then staring almost like a madman at the crowd in front of him then he said ladies and gentlemen one string and Paganini and stepping back he began to play on the one remaining string and they heard the whining of the wind of the dove and the chattering of children in the streets and the music of water dripping down the mountain side just one string and the master player your life filled with Jesus Christ is all God needs to fulfill his great commission to which he in Christ in you is committed now let's play bow heads and pray our God as we rejoice together in all the rich and wonderful discoveries that we have been making that have brought to us such comfort and joy and release our greater rejoicing tonight is in all that this is going to mean for our fellow men the overflow of thy life through us to them we unitedly join our hearts in prayer for boys and girls and men and women in this country and to the uttermost ends of the earth who in thy loving wisdom and matchless grace are going to feel the impact of these days as thy life day by day and week by week and month by month and year by year as thou dost tarry in an ever increasing measure flows out through us to them we don't deserve this privilege but our God thou hast given us the right to have it and we want to be as from now restfully available instantly obedient in the place of obedience which is the place of inevitable blessing and for thy name's sake Amen

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