

When God Breaks You for Ministry

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer emphasizes the necessity of trusting God and seeking His glory through weakness and desperation in ministry.

Duration: 28:05

Scripture: Genesis 32:24, John 1:29

Topics: "Ministry"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of having a strong faith in God. He references theologian John Calvin, who describes faith as a fervent and passionate response to God's grace. The preacher encourages believers to trust in God completely and not rely on human support or validation. He also discusses the significance of Matthew 7:7, urging listeners to persistently seek God's guidance and promises through prayer. The sermon emphasizes the need for believers to have a desperate and bold approach to their relationship with God, wrestling with Him in prayer and pursuing a deep love for Christ.

Transcript

You can trust God. You can trust God. Don't you hear me? You can trust God.

If God has called you to do something, why run to men? Why tell them? Why raise support from them? Why speak great things about yourself so that they might give? If God has called you, He will provide every one of your needs according to His riches in glory. And if, as we hear these evangelists on television, if you don't support our ministry, we're going down, then go down. If God's in it, He will hold you up.

I want to speak for a moment about Matthew chapter 7. It says, Ask, verse 7, ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened to you.

For everyone who asks, receives. And he who seeks, finds. And to him who knocks, it will be opened.

So many young people and so many older people come to me discouraged about this verse. It just doesn't work. I pray and I ask and God doesn't answer.

Surely this can't mean what it says. And then all the theologians come and say, Well, of course, it means exactly what it says, but only in regard to God's will. And of course, we know God doesn't will anything for anybody nowadays.

This is a promise and it is true. You must understand the context, but it is true. This promise is not for those who seek to promote, advance or preserve self.

This promise is not for those who seek to promote or advance or even preserve. You understand what I mean by that? God, if you can get glory for yourself, that I be destroyed. It is not about self preservation.

It is not about the promotion of self. This promise is for those who seek God's glory and God's will above all other things. This promise is for those who recognize their utter weakness to attain such a heavenly ambition.

And this promise is those who by faith lay hold of the promises of God and persevere until God comes down. The promises belong to those with a right passion. Let me give you a few verses.

Matthew 6, 9. Pray then in this way. Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Your kingdom come, your will be done.

You see all these silly little things being said about prosperity today. God wants to prosper you and he wants to give you a Mercedes and a nice home. God wants you to go out there and name it and claim it and blab it and grab it and get it all for yourself.

Let me tell you how it really works. Everything in our life as a Christian is within the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of God's dear son.

The mentality of those who pray correctly is this. God, if you can get glory for yourself and you can advance your kingdom through prospering me in any measure, in any way, then so be it. But dear God, if your kingdom will advance and your name will be glorified through me being ground to powder, then so be it.

This is not a prayer for you. It is a prayer for him. It's asking about him and asking about the advancement of his kingdom.

It's another passage and it says, Matthew 6, 21 through 24. For where your treasure is, there is your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body.

So then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness.

No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. You cannot serve God and anything else.

The problem is with the eye. Because the eye reveals the passion of the heart, the treasure of the heart. I don't need to read your heart.

I only need to look at your eye. To what is your eye gazing? What is the goal of your life? And I want you to know something that even the greatest goals of life can be nothing more than idolatry. Nothing more than idolatry.

Ministry is one of the greatest idols in Christianity. Christianity becoming a success in ministry is a putrid, horrid, abominable idol. To become a big person, an important person, one who speaks at a conference.

The charismatics, they have their heroes. They're guys who can shake out their coat and make people fall down. Southern Baptists, they have their heroes.

You're a success in the ministry. How? Because you've got the biggest number of people and the biggest budget and the most baptisms. And then the reformed guys, they have their heroes.

They all have really big heads with really big brains that know a lot of things. Everyone seems to be trying to be a hero or to get into the inner circle. The eye is focused on one thing.

I loved Whitefield. No movement began with Whitefield because when he was dying, he said, Let me die and let my name die with me. Just Christ.

You've got to judge your motives. You've got to look at those motives and ask yourself, Why are you doing this? Most men study the Bible to get a good sermon. And get a good sermon so that they can get an open door.

Study the Bible to know God. You pray that God's kingdom might be advanced. Some of you young men, you've been praying, Oh God, use me.

God, use me. What you ought to be praying is, Oh God, use my roommate. Let me carry his bags all the days of my life.

God will give anything to those who ask Him. If their heart is set on this view. Matthew 6, 33.

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you. Go on to 1 Corinthians. Whatever you do, whether the most menial task of eating and drinking, do it all for the glory of God.

And the whole idea is this. The full thrust of your life is to be only one thing. That God be glorified.

That the kingdom of Christ advance once you step into that realm. If your heart is truly there to seek first only the kingdom, then anything you ask with that passion and that direction, He will give it to you. Anything that is necessary for the name of God to be glorified.

Anything that is necessary for the kingdom of God to advance is yours. Absolutely everything and anything. The promise belongs to those with the right passion.

And the promise belongs to the weak. The promise belongs to the weak. Young men, you will heartily agree that you can do nothing of yourself.

You don't know at all what that means. It's going to take so many decades of all your strength being destroyed. You have no idea what it means.

Even those of us who are older, and even those who have been in the ministry longer than I've been alive. It's a process of learning. What does God do? God does such a work of destruction in our lives.

He says, I will cleanse you in Ezekiel in the new covenant. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and all your idols. He will break apart all those cisterns that you make that can't hold water.

He will smash them and smash them and smash them until you're left utterly destitute of everything. Nothing but God. That is, of course, if you're God's man.

If you're not God's man, He'll give you the desires of your heart. And that's the most terrifying thing you could ever imagine. The Pharisees, they wanted to receive glory from men.

Jesus said that God gave them their reward in full. And then they went to hell. The most terrifying thing, young man, is that God will give you the desires of your heart.

The desire of big ministry, popularity among people, all men speak well of you, God will give it to you. But it won't be blessing, it'll be judgment, ending, and condemnation. You must be weak.

You must be weak. The life of Peter is such an example of this. Lord, though all men betray you, though all men betray you, that all men turn their back on you, I will die with you.

It was so necessary for that cock to crow. It was so necessary for Peter to fail. If that had not occurred, I don't believe he could have ever been filled with the Holy Spirit.

He had to realize, I am a betrayer, I am nothing. Some men will say, yes, but they'll still hold on to this. They'll say, yes, I am weak and I can do nothing without Him.

But they still hold on to this idea, I have enough piety to be used of God. You do not. It is even forsaking whatever known piety you think you have, and realize that God works because God has ordained to work.

And to take the weakest of men to do the greatest of things. Your problem is not that you don't know enough. Your problem is not that you're not gifted enough.

Your problem is you're too strong. You're just too strong. Also, the promise belongs to those who lay hold of the promises of God.

Lay hold of the promises of God. Grab a hold of them and do not let them go until God does exactly what He's promised. Matthew 11, 12.

From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and violent men take it by force. Listen to this. The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and violent men take it by force.

Now, in light of Luke 16, 16, it seems best to interpret this passage to mean this. The kingdom presses ahead relentlessly and only the relentless press their way into it. The men that are used of God, if I could only have two words to describe them, the women that are used of God, if I could only have two words to describe them, they are the passionate weak.

They are the violently desperate. They're not the type of men who say, yes, with this John Wayne, I'll do it mentality, I'll press in there until I get in there. No, they are men that come to reality of such weakness and such desperation, like a starving man without food.

They know they must do everything within their means to press into that because there's no other place for salvation. There's no other place of hope. There's no other deliverance just there.

And they're desperate because of their weakness. They're violent because of their need. They have no other place to go.

I want to read to you for some theologians in the past, some beautiful things that I researched. First of all, John Calvin writes, the meaning, therefore, is a vast assembly of men is now collected as if men were

rushing violently forward to seize the kingdom of God. For aroused by the voice of one man, John the Baptist, they come together in crowds and receive not only with eagerness, but with fervent impulsiveness, the grace which is offered to them.

Let us also learn from these words, what is the true nature in operation of faith? It leads men not only to give cold and indifferent assent when God speaks, but to cherish warm affection toward Him and to rush forward as if it were with a violent struggle. How many of you believe God? How many of you are desperate enough and believe God enough and want enough to enter in with a desperate struggle to grab a hold and wrestle with God? As Jacob wrestled with God and came out limping and broken. The problem in the church today is not too much passion.

Problem is we don't have any, at least about the right things. John Gill writes that this text refers, first of all, to publicans and harlots and Gentile sinners who might be thought to be a sort of intruders into the kingdom. I love that.

Here you have this circle of people. They're total outcasts and they ought to be. They're total outcasts.

For them to even come close to anything that mentioned God, people would look at them and say, you don't have part with this. You don't belong here. Look at who you are.

But in their desperation and their need, when one door of grace flies open, they run at it like wild men. And they don't care if everyone else says, you don't belong here. Their desperate need of salvation causes them to run to God and hope and to grab a hold of Him.

And he goes on and he says, secondly, to persons powerfully wrought upon under the ministry of the gospel who were under violent apprehensions of wrath and vengeance for their lost and undone state and condition by nature. People who had been awakened to what they were before a holy God, who were in fear of the wrath of God, full of apprehension and dread. And see again, one window of grace thrown open.

And they fight with all their might to make it through there. He goes on and he says in three, to those who were violently in love with Christ, and eagerly desirous of salvation by Him and communion with Him, and had their affections set upon the things of another world, these having the gospel preached to them, greedily caught at it and embraced it. They were maddened.

People emboldened and maddened with love, who realized that absolutely everything in this world is a sickening, stupid vanity. And the only thing that matters is the kingdom of Christ and doing the will of God and entering in. Matthew Henry writes, they who will have an interest in the great salvation are carried out toward it with strong desires, will have it upon any terms and not think them hard, nor quit their hold without a blessing.

What an amazing statement. They won't complain. They won't think it hard.

They won't be murmuring about the time. They'll lay hold of a promise of God, and they will not let go of it until it's fulfilled. The kingdom of heaven was never intended to indulge the ease of triflers, but to be the rest of them that labor.

It is a blessed sight, oh, that we could see a greater number, not with angry contention thrusting others out of the kingdom of heaven, but with a holy contention thrusting themselves into it. Finally, John Trapp says,

men are resolved to have it, whatever pains or perils they pass through. As God's Israel violently invaded and overran the promised land, so do His elect lay hold on the promised inheritance.

This true treasure, hitherto hidden, is now discovered and exposed to all that have a mind to it. Though God would have His servants content with the least of His mercies, yet not satisfied with the greatest things in the world for their portion since they are born to better. What does he mean? If you are a child of God, you have been given a new nature.

You have been recreated in the image of God in true righteousness and holiness. Nothing that this world could ever throw at you ought to be able to take away your joy. And nothing this world could ever promise you ought to be able to give you joy.

Why? You are of a higher nature. You were created for the heavenlies, for the things of God. Nothing on this earth will ever please you.

And what should that cause you to do? It should cause you to rush forward like a madman. Young men, listen to me. I have seen so many young men and they are so pretty and so proper.

They dot every I and cross every T and they speak well and they are never a bull in a china shop. They never make a mistake. They are quaint and clean and pretty and easy and not dangerous at all.

And then I see a young man come along. He is like a bull in a china shop. He is a raving madman, a lunatic.

Someone ought to lock him in jail for three years so he doesn't hurt anybody. But there is a passion there. There is a fire there.

Not content. I don't want morality. I don't want to just look nice.

I don't want to be churchy. I don't want to be religious. And most of all, I never want to be civilized.

I want God. And I will have Him or I will die. Show me your glory.

Moses wasn't a dumb man. He knew what that meant. It is almost as though Moses was saying, I know it will kill me.

It is just give me one glimpse and let me die. We say, just give me one glimpse and let me alone. It is pressing in.

Now I want to finish by saying one other thing that is so extremely important. Do you have any idea how many promises are in the Bible for you? I would dare say, now you do understand, don't you? That if it is a promise in the Bible, it is the will of God. Hope you understand that.

Do you have any idea how many promises for godliness there are? Do you have any idea how many promises where God says, I will let you see me? I will let you know me if you seek me. I would, not a wagering man, but I'd bet everything I have that there are more promises. There are more promises in the Bible with regard to you growing in grace and overcoming sin and being used of God and trampling on serpents and every other sort of thing.

There are enough promises there that if a man were to pray only over those promises 24 hours a day, he would have to live 10,000 lifetimes to win them, to avail himself of them. Do you understand what I'm saying? Take all the promises of God, all of them that you find, Old Testament, New Testament, write them down. The ones that talk about godliness and God being with you and God helping you and God strengthening the weak and God showing himself to men and God doing mighty things.

And you get down and you wrestle with them all the days of your life. And if you ask about those promises, you will receive. If you seek those promises, you will find.

And if you knock on the door of those promises, it'll be open to you. But the problem is, we want other things than the promises. We want a comfortable life.

We want to be able to minister. We want all sorts of things. And God has other plans, higher plans, greater plans to make you conform to the image of his Son.

And then to use you as a treasure, as a focal point, as an illustration of just how good he is. To take you throughout all of eternity and lavish upon you greater and greater demonstrations of his goodness. He has such plans for you.

You have such meager, pitiful plans for yourself. Young men, find those promises. Get down on your knees until you've availed yourself of them.

Take them one at a time. Wrestle with them. Cry out to God.

God, you said if I seek you, I'll find you. You said that. I seek you.

I seek you. And persevere. Wrestle with a holy boldness.

Such timid men. Such timid men. And how easy we forget, those of us who know.

About three weeks ago, I'd been wrestling with something for many, many years. Just not seeming to make much progress in that area of my life. Then one night, about one in the morning, woke up.

And you know what? Older men, listen to me. You really don't need to learn anything else. What you need to do is remember what you've forgotten.

And it was like, get up and go out and struggle and scream and cry out to the Lord until he gives you victory over this thing. Next morning, a young man that I wanted to help, he said, Brother Paul, you're looking kind of bad this morning. You didn't get much sleep last night.

And I said, in the words of Keith Green, one sleepless night of anguished prayer, I triumphed over sin. One battle in God's holy war, he promised me to win. There's so many things that pick at you.

Like those Canaanites in the land. Drive them out. Take God's promises and drive them out.

Brother Paul, I have this one sin I can't overcome. Then fast and pray and drive it out. Grab a hold of grace.

Avail yourself of promises. Be sick of the thing. The problem is, at first, you're sick of the thing.

And then you begin to be able to live with the thing. And then the thing becomes a part of your life. Young men, warriors, and radical Christians aren't those who listen to contemporary music and wear t-shirts with verses on the back.

And it's not necessarily those who hit the streets going door to door. You give me one man who'll take the promises of God and fight through them on his knees in the darkness when no one else is around. Everything else will fall in place.

There is nothing, there is absolutely nothing in your life that cannot be overcome through wrestling in prayer and believing and availing yourself of the promises of God. Let's pray. Father, I come before you and ask you, Lord, you are a good God.

You are a very good God. And you have given us mighty promises. And you've given us your spirit.

Oh Lord, help us to take possession of the land, to drive out those Canaanite sins and idols. Take possession of the land. To fight the good fight of faith.

To lay hold of that for which we have been laid hold of. To be conformed to the image of Christ. To never be content, but with a holy ambition to pursue your glory.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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