

Loose Him and Let Him Go - Part 4

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the significance of being spiritually loosed from limitations to fully experience the abundant life offered by Christ.

Duration: 49:30

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 10:10, John 11:44

Topics: "Deliverance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the story of Lazarus being raised from the dead by Jesus. He emphasizes that Jesus' words and actions reveal God's mind for humanity. The speaker highlights the limitations that many Christians face in fully experiencing the abundant life that Jesus offers. These limitations include being bound in ministry, progress, and understanding. The speaker encourages believers to seek freedom from these limitations and to fully embrace the abundant life that Jesus came to give.

Transcript

We do pray again, our Father, that we may be able to get our priority established. My goal is God Himself, not this or that, or even blessing for ourselves, but Himself. We ask thee that tonight we may really have a touch of God upon our life.

We pray that this hour may see, in the case of many here, a very definite impact of God upon the life. Take the word. It is written that thy word is as a hammer that breaketh rocks in pieces, as a fire that burneth sharper than any two-edged sword piercing to dividing asunder.

Thy word is a lamp unto our feet, a light unto our path, and many other things do say to it that it is the word of the Lord in all these meanings and values that is spoken here tonight for thy name's sake. I wonder if you know anything about the eleventh chapter of the Gospel by John. Well, we had a whole day in it yesterday, and we have not exhausted it by a long way.

We take another dip into it tonight, and we just read a short section. John chapter 11, from verse 38, Jesus therefore again, groaning in himself, cometh to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone lay against it.

Jesus saith, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he is stinking, for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that if thou

believest, thou shouldest see the glory of God? So they took away the stone.

Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hadest me, and I knew that thou hearest me always. But because of the multitude which standeth around, I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me. And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with great clothes. And his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

That last clause that we want for this evening, that last verse, he that was dead came forth bound hand and foot with great clothes. His face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

Just like to place alongside of that, a fragment from the tenth chapter, chapter ten and verse ten, I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. We have said more than once that here we are in the presence of God manifested in the flesh, the person of Jesus Christ, his Son. And being in the presence of God, we are being made aware of God's mind concerning man.

What Jesus says is the expression of the mind of God for man. I think you have learned that what is written in this whole gospel by John is more than an earthly story, a collection of sayings and doings on the part of Jesus Christ. It is in every one of those, in every part, a setting forth in one way or another of some eternal and unfathomable truth, because it comes from God.

God is unfathomable, unsearchable, incomprehensible, profound beyond our understanding. He is a depth and a fullness, never, never to be exhausted, either in time or in eternity. And anything that emanates from God, in word or in deed, carries all that significance of God with it.

It is not just human language. These are not just the words and works of a man. Every fragment contains the profound depth of God.

And this chapter, which is marked out now in the organization of the letter for our convenience as chapter 11, is a wonderful example of what we have just said. Every bit of it goes far beyond the thing itself that is said or done. It is so comprehensive, so far-reaching, so full of depth of meaning.

I have been reading Gospel by John, and of course in it, this chapter, for over 60 years. And I've spoken on it many times in many parts of the world. But we are still in the presence of that which is beyond us.

I'm not just giving you something that has been said before. It's always divulging something that we've not seen, known before. Now, that doesn't mean that what I say tonight, you have never seen.

But what I am saying, there's a full list here, that whatever and however much you have seen, there's more yet that God means by the fragments of this chapter. We're always wrestling with our limitations to both understand and grasp, and certainly to utter what is herein contained. Some of us are very poor at this business, and we know it.

A little grandson of mine heard I was coming to America, and he is in this country, and he said to his mother, what is Grandpa coming to America for? And she said, well, to preach. And he said, to preach? He's not very good at that, is he? Grandpa fully agrees. Now, you know what you have to put up with.

My grandson says so, and he's about that size. Well, it's just like that, you know. That's just how we feel when we come into the presence of the divine statue of God's words.

And I think those of you who have been here, especially yesterday afternoon, will realize something of the vastness of this chapter. And I trust that we shall see a little more, by no means, the fullness of what is in the fragment which we have just read, especially in the one verse, verse 44. Now, before we come to that immediately, let me just say this word that is necessary, I think, and leads up to it.

We must recognize the aspect of this gospel. First of all, it is a backward aspect. That is, John wrote this gospel long years after all that is in it was completed.

The whole thing was finished as to the actuality of the content of this record. Finished, and the Lord Jesus left this out. All that is here lay in the past, when John wrote it.

It was something completed as to history. John is writing, from that standpoint, with the backward aspect. But then you will notice that the gospel itself is written on the forward aspect.

That is, it was all written in the light of a day that was to come. Jesus is heard here saying, repeatedly, in that day. In that day.

In that day. When? When? When? In that day. And that's related to the day of the advent of the Holy Spirit.

When He is come. In that day. Written for a coming day.

And we are living in that day. The day for which this gospel was written. The day, the dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

And Jesus was making it perfectly clear that what He was saying, and what He was doing, in the flesh, related to that day which was yet to be. The day when the Holy Spirit inaugurated the present dispensation. This gospel, therefore, is written for us, precisely.

Because we live in that day. And you, perhaps, are asking, why this? Why is He saying this? It's simple, it's obvious, we know it. Well, do we? I have said that in order that we might recognize that this verse 44 belongs to us.

Written for us. In the day in which we live. This very day.

Dispensation day. It belongs to us. One other word about that.

The backward aspect of this gospel, written after it was all actually accomplished in history, was the objective side. When everything was outward. It was all outward.

All that Jesus was doing was outward. His meanings were put into outward things, and ways, and means. The objective.

The day for which all that objective was done and said is the day of the subjective. When it is taken from history without and made history within. When it is no longer something just outside of us.

It is now something to be planted inside of us. That is the real meaning, as you understand, of the coming of the Holy Spirit to lay hold of everything in the scripture which is their objective and place it right within

the center of the life of the believer. So that it becomes a part of the very inwardness of the believer's life.

We don't recognize these things. We may miss our way in reading the stories and just think of them as wonderful stories of what Jesus did. And this one in particular, a wonderful story, this of the raising from the dead of this man Lazarus.

Wonderful story. But it was done. And it was recorded in order that it might become our inward experience.

A very part of our own being. Now that is the foundation on which we build what we have to say as to this whole gospel. May I add another word? Which I hope will also have some value to you.

It is always necessary, in the light of what we have said, necessary and important to take account of the correspondence between the epistles in the New Testament and the gospels. Because the epistles are, after all, only the subjective expression of the objective gospel. How can I put that to help you more simply? Well, you read your gospels.

If you like, read this chapter as we shall see as we go on. And you see, well, there's the story. The account of what happened.

All the parts of it. The phases of it. The stages of it.

All that. Very wonderful. But when I turn to the epistles, I am told what that means.

It's there that I get the explanation for my own life of this. This will remain but history 2,000 years ago until I come over to see what God meant. That to be in my own life.

And I find that out in the epistles. Always read it in this twofold way as you read the gospels. This in the gospels somewhere is explained in the epistles.

Read the epistles and you will say this is explaining what is in the gospels. So read it, your New Testament, in that way. We have to look at the book of the Acts and the epistles for the real meaning of the gospels.

Before we shall get the real inward value of the gospels. Now having said all that, we come to this verse in the eleventh chapter. John, what he called he that was dead, came forth bound hand and foot with grave clothes.

As the margin says, grave bands. And his face was bound about with a knack. Jesus said unto them, loose him and let him go.

Do you know you have a vast amount in the remainder of your New Testament after John that is exactly in keeping with that? It tells you what that means for us. Here is what it meant for Lazarus and his sisters. Now what did that mean in God's mind for us? First of all, it is possible for us to have life by the word of Jesus Christ.

Resurrection life, divine life, that which is called eternal life. It is possible for us to have that life by which we have been brought from the death of our natural state into this newness of life by the fear of the Son of God and yet to be limited in every way while we have it. Limited in ministry, his hands bound.

Limited in progress, his feet bound. Limited in understanding and acting around his head and over his eyes. Those three things are three of the major things in the teaching of the apostles.

Let me repeat it for it is so true and it is true of multitudes today and it is one of the problems in Christianity. That while through simple response to the word of the Lord Jesus they have been born again, they are his people, they are children of God, they have divine life, it is so possible and it is actual in numerous cases of Christians who have the beginning of the Christian life, quite true, quite real, yet who are limited in almost every way as to that life. And that life is limited in them.

Here the symbolism is bound hand, bound foot, bound head. The hands are the symbols of ministry or fruitfulness of life, fruitfulness of life. And will you tell me that there are not many Christians, Christians who believe in the Lord Jesus and have that saving faith in the Lord Jesus whose ministration of life, whose fruitfulness of life is exceedingly limited, bound, tied up.

Oh, how many Christians are just tied up in this matter of real fruitfulness, real ministry. And when I use that word ministry I am not talking about platforms and Bible preaching. That ministration of the Lord Jesus, ministration of the Lord Jesus.

In this next chapter, and there ought to be no chapter divisions, it is only a convenience. Jesus came back to Bethany and there it says they made him a priest. And Martha said, and Lazarus was one of those that sat at meat, been a poor lookout for that whole thing if Lazarus had still been tied up in his grave clothes.

But no, he is able to share with the others in his experience. And if you think I am trying to make something of nothing, look again. Because it was at that point that the Jewish rulers took counsel to put Lazarus to death also.

Because by reason of him many believed. By reason of him many believed. That is what I mean by loose hands, ministry, fruitfulness.

Many believed because of him. And is it not true? A multitude of Christians are not in that release of life where many believed because of them. They remain as isolated, tied up, bound Christians.

But in the meaning of hands of fruitfulness, hands of service, hands of the ministration of Christ, hands of the testimony still in the grave clothes. That is why Jesus said, I claim that they might have life, but more than that have it abundantly. And Lazarus had it, the life, but not abundantly until he was loosed.

Now you get into your epistles. And with that fragment only, see how much there is about the life of the believer being an effective life, a fruitful life, a responsible life, a life that is really producing something. Indeed we could say this, that amongst the other things, this is one of the major purposes of all the letters that the apostles wrote.

To get these Christians. Indeed I remind you again that more than 90% of the New Testament was written to Christians. That's impressive and that is challenging.

And they wrote their letters to Christians in order to get these Christians who had life to have it more abundantly. That is to be loosed in this matter of their newness of life. Well perhaps that's enough for the moment on that.

We'll be coming back in a minute to that. And what is true of the meaning of the hands is true of the feet. Bound hand and foot.

Again is it not true that many, many Christians, yes Christians, all again believers, are making no progress in the spiritual life, are not going on. You meet them once and three, six, ten years afterward you meet them again. They are just where they were before.

They are not gone. Just there. Their feet are bound.

They are not going on. They are not making spiritual progress. They are not gaining ground.

They are not overtaking the cross. They are not, to use Paul's phrase, attaining. Attaining.

They are in a state of spiritual stagnation. Spiritual arrest. Their feet are bound.

That is not God's idea. Jesus, Jesus, God incarnate said, let him go. Loose him.

Let him go. Release those feet. He may walk.

He may run in the way of my commandment. It's God's idea for us. It's not only a statement of truth.

It's a challenge as to where we are. Well, you can say, on that we'll come back again in a minute. What about this head? Wrapped in a napkin.

About the eyes. About the mouth. The eyes in particular for our purpose at the moment.

Jane, is it not true that there are many who are the Lord's, who are really not seeing more and more and ever more of what he has for them? Many Christians see no further than their hand before their eyes. It's a little world in which they live. A very short horizon of spiritual perception and understanding.

Apprehension. Knowledge. Spiritual knowledge.

Small world. Their heads are wrapped around. Their eyes are covered over.

They have life, but that's all. Now, having said these things, in order to indicate what we mean by the great fullness that there is here, even in a verse, let us look at this again, you see. Lazarus came forth.

He had life, but at that moment when he came forth, he was still in contact with the grave. Still in contact with death, in a way. There was still that about him, about him, which spoke of that sepulchre.

And the limitations of the sepulchre. Again, what are these limitations? Well, we turn over to our epistles. And don't be afraid, I'm not going to go right through all the epistles.

But I'll give you just enough to indicate what is meant. If you turn to the first letter to the Corinthians, and have any knowledge of what is in that letter, you will know what we mean by the grave touch. The grave touch, till upon born again Christ.

Paul opens that letter by addressing them as saints. That means those who are the Lord. But as he writes on and on, an awful situation is unfolded, isn't it? They have life.

Oh, but you cannot say they have it abundantly. The grave closure on them, that is, the grave touch is still there. And in the first letter to the Corinthians, it is the grave touch of the limitations of the natural life.

Christians are bound and limited by the ties of the natural life. That's the word the apostle uses specifically. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them.

That's limitation, isn't it? And you proceed into the letter and you find these people are just behaving as other worldly people behave. Their behavior, their conduct, their procedure is just exactly as worldly people go on. Someone has done a wrong to another believer, some one believer to another.

And apparently it was in more than one case at Corinth. And the result was that this believer against whom the wrong was done thought this was criminal. This was worthy of being set right in the court of law in the world.

So he hauled his fellow believer before the judge in the worldly court to get his rights. Exactly what the world does. Exactly what the world does.

That's an instance of a whole handful of things like that going on at Corinth. Some worse than that. Divisions.

There are divisions among you. And when there are divisions among you, are ye not carnal? Not spiritual, carnal? Well, gather up the whole of that letter. It's a terrible story of those who have life, who are the lords, just behaving as other people do, living in the way that the world lives.

And you'll find the women, just behaving as other people do, in the way, living in the way that the world lives. And you'll find the women behaving as the worldly women did in their dress, it's touchstone, in their demeanor, their behavior, even in the assembly. I don't pick out the women particularly, but I'm indicating that here's the spirit of the world amongst believers in Corinth.

And all that, you read it again, in the light of this, all that is keeping them still in this bondage, this limitation of their spiritual life, of the life that they have. It's grave clothes. And you're not surprised that at Corinth the world is not feeling the impact of their testimony, that the church in Corinth is not counting in the world because the world has got into the church and its members individually.

In this sense, the grave clothes are still on them by reason of the limitations which come upon the spiritual life when the natural world takes charge and governs, controls and directs a terrible limitation spiritually. Life, yes, but not life abundantly. See what I mean? So, their testimony is bound still with something of the grave.

And the letter, that letter to the Corinthians was written in the same spirit, with the same idea and intention and object as, loose them, let them go. Paul is striving to get these Corinthians loosed, as Christians loosed, liberated, set free into the fullness of the life which they have. We pass from Corinthians into Galatians and no one who knows that letter will dispute the statement that here you are in touch with the grave very truly.

You know all that the letter to the Galatians is about, don't you? And you know the two prominent words, don't you? Liberty! Liberty! Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Sonship! Not servanthood and slavery, but sonship, the liberty of sons. They are the two great words of this letter.

But what are the grave bands there in Galatia? They are the grave bands of tradition, of legalism, and all such things. You know, dear friends, it's very, very easy to get tied up with these grave clothes. The

persistent peril through the ages of Christianity is to crystallize itself into something set, something fixed.

You have some light, some revelation, something of the immensity of truth, a fragment of it, not long before you begin to form that into a set system and make it the limit and say, this is what you must believe. You must come within this horizon and you must behave like this. And it becomes again a system of you must and you must not and there's no difference between that and the Old Testament, thou shalt and thou shalt.

And Christianity has fallen into that peril and is continually doing it, circumscribing the great revelation, making Christ smaller than he is, crystallizing truth into something fixed and set. This is how. And the meaning is, this is the ultimate.

Now, you notice that when the Spirit did come, as we have the record in the Book of the Acts, the one thing that these old Jewish disciples experienced was a marvelous emancipation from that bondage of Judaism. And it's like how the Holy Spirit was working all along against any fixed barriers. Peter, Peter will argue that he's a Jew born, bred and died in the world and that never anything unclean entered his mouth according to Leviticus chapter 11.

All right, Peter? You are putting your interpretation upon the Scriptures and you are putting your limits upon what Christ has done by his cross, what God had cleansed called not thou unclean. The Holy Spirit reacted to Peter's traditionalism and legalism and limitation and bondage and made him go and do what he would never have done otherwise. How again and again right to his death the words of the Lord Jesus told him in the last chapter of this Gospel were made good.

When thou wast young thou girdest thyself and wentest whither thou wouldest when thou shalt become old another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. That principle was being applied over Cornelius and his house and Caesarea, the Gentiles. Made to go whither he would not.

He was saying, No, Lord. Those who say, Yes, Peter whither thou wouldest not. Heaven's reaction to this legalistic limitation the grave closed on an apostle.

That was not the only battle that Peter had on that. But we'll not stay with it. You read again.

And then John says that when Peter said when the Lord Jesus said that to Peter he signified by what manner of death he would glorify, glorify God. We haven't got the manner of death but Peter long years afterward or years afterward wrote and said, I'm about to put off my body. Time of thy departure has come.

Even as the Lord Jesus showed me even as the Lord Jesus showed me another shall gird thee. Tradition says Peter was crucified, crucified. Only Jews could be crucified only Gentiles could be Jews could be crucified by the Gentiles.

Gentiles dare not crucify one of their own. Only Jews could be crucified by Gentiles. Peter went that way.

Went that way. Because Paul had Roman citizens they never crucified him. They executed him, beheaded him.

Peter was selected for this kind of death that his Lord died even as the Lord has shown me. He is girded by another and carried with her. He would not choose to go but the way, the way of the Spirit is the way that goes against our limitations.

Our death clothes takes us ways that we would never have thought of. Indeed, our theology wouldn't accept that way. Our doctrine perhaps might have been against that.

Our tradition would forbid it but the Holy Spirit says this is the way. Loose him, let him go. That's Galatians, isn't it? I said to you that you need the epistles to explain the gospel and one verse in the gospel contains all this.

I hasten to close with one other thing. You move into the letter to the Ephesians and you move, having come through the loosing of the hands in Corinth the loosing of the feet in Galatia to walk in liberty and stand fast in the liberty. Now you move to the head in Ephesians taking the napkin from the head in Ephesians and doing it thoroughly tremendously.

Ephesians has to do with the napkin around the head. What do we mean? Around the head. Paul hardly begins that letter before he says I bow my knees unto the Father of glory.

He would grant unto you Christians Ephesian Christians who have had the whole counsel of God given to you. He'd grant unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, Christ. The eyes of your heart being enlightened that you might know, that you may know what is the hope of his calling.

The riches of his inheritance in the saints the exceeding greatness of his power to us all who believe that you may know the eyes of your understanding enlightened the napkin off the head. It's a wonderful revelation this letter to the Ephesians. How great it is as to the eyes of the heart being unveiled unbound as to the greatness of God's people's calling and vocation the immensity of that for which they have been brought into union with his son.

How great it is how great it is beyond all our grasping, dear friends believe me, no exaggeration that you may know as one little prefix missing in our translation which is the key to the whole thing the apostle says that you may know you may know and in the New Testament we have that word given to us in part and in whole. It's not given to us in our translation but it's just this knowing in itself is applied to our beginning knowledge of the Lord. To use John again this is life eternal that they may know thee the only true God and him whom thou didst send even Jesus Christ I know thee this is life the entering into life the receiving of divine life but when Paul is speaking about knowing he's using a compound Greek word which we don't have in our translation and it is epignosis full knowledge.

You know these Ephesians you know by the space of two years he ceased not to preach unto them the whole counsel of God they knew and on the initial knowledge they had come to the Lord but now he is praying at the end of his life from his prison that you may come into full knowledge full knowledge it's more than life it's life abundantly it's more than seeing it's seeing with a great range of divine purpose and meaning for our calling and our having life. Will you tell me that all Christians are like that and that there are not many perhaps some in this very place around whose heads while having life being the Lord around whose heads there is no napkin obscuring their spiritual vision limiting their spiritual sight narrowing down the range of their comprehension of the great purpose of their calling? Real revelation dear friends is not as our brother put it in his prayer just information it's liberation it's liberation to see and to see fully or more fully is to be released you often said about this man Paul that there was nothing on earth or in hell or combination of birth that would have changed that rabid fanatical Pharisee into the greatest friend that ever Jesus Christ had but life from heaven nothing would have done it but it did it it did it life from heaven the napkin taken off the man set free to walk up and down in the greatness of Jesus Christ I think we may see that one verse in the whole of John's Gospel contains the Bible isn't it true?

God's mindful man God's full thought for his people loose him he's got life but loose him let him go I came that they might have life and have it abundantly

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