

The Will of God - Part 2

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the concept of renunciation as a key aspect of understanding and fulfilling the will of God in the Christian life.

Duration: 48:57

Scripture: Exodus 3:8, Matthew 6:33, Mark 8:36, Luke 9:23, John 13:6-8, Hebrews 12:24

Topics: "Will Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of renunciation in the Christian life. He highlights how God often puts us in situations where we must choose to let go or hold on to something. The speaker explains that God's will for us is to be enriched with His fullness, not for selfish purposes, but for His glory. He emphasizes that renunciation is a discipline that allows us to be rewarded by God and experience His peace and rest. The speaker also references biblical examples of renunciation and how God promises to give His people abundance while also requiring them to let go.

Transcript

In the letter to the Philippians, chapter 2, verse 5, have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, counted it not a pride to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross, wherefore also God highly exalted him, gave unto him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, for things in heaven, things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every knee, every tongue, should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Chapter 3, verse 8, Yea, verily, and I count all things to be lost for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I suffered the loss of all things, to count them but refuse that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, even that which is of the Lord, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God. The letter to the Hebrews, Hebrews chapter 12, verse 24, Thy faith, Moses, when he was grown up, or refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be evil and treated with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.

The Lord has directed that today we shall be occupied with the realization of his full will unto which he has called us. And this morning, you know, we were considering that great law of realization and fulfillment.

The law of the government of the word of God.

We were only able just to touch the very fringe of that matter. And I can only trust that it at least introduced you to a new consideration. And that because of that emphasis, you will have much closer, more devoted regard for the word of God in every matter of life.

All those who have been of service to the Lord, to others, have been people of the word. Not just of the letter of the word, but of heart relationship with the word of God. Men of the word.

All who have in any way fulfilled the function of spiritual leadership. Like Joshua, have, as we saw, been based so strongly and utterly upon the word. He liked that all the way through.

But the greatest of all, the Lord Jesus was meticulously careful that in everything he moved according to the word. Scriptures had such a place in his whole life. Conduct, teaching and work.

So that he became known as the word he was. The word is not something only written in a book. It has become personal.

Personified in life, character, every way. We're going to be used to others. We're going to be able to fulfill any responsibility at all.

Like those men at the beginning in the church. In Jerusalem and in Antioch, they were men who waited on God for his word. Didn't organize the church.

Didn't decide upon programs, plans and schemes for the church. They never introduced anything until they had waited on the Lord for his word about it. Is this according to what is revealed? It's the only way of the growth of the church, this building up.

Well, as you see, that opens a very large door. We're not going to pass in further on that matter. I just re-emphasize that a law, a binding law of spiritual progress in the individual life, in the church life, local and universal, is the absolute government of the word of God to the law and to the testimony.

If it is not according there to, then there will be a hidden peril in it. Well, we go on this afternoon to another law of this progress in the will of God unto its ultimate realization, remembering that we are called unto this. It's inherent in our calling.

It's not something extra to the Christian life. It is not something optional. You can have a Christian life and, well, you can have this or not have it.

It is fundamental, intrinsic in the Christian life. And so is what we are going to say now about another law of the will and purpose of God in our calling. And it is what is suggested, more than suggested, presented to us in the scriptures which we selected for this purpose out of many others.

It's what I'm going to call the law of renunciation. Renunciation. In Philippians 2, the Lord Jesus is presented to us in terms of the great renunciation, being equal with God.

St. Martin said he regarded it not as something to be grasped, held on to, tenaciously, but he emptied himself. He made the great renunciation in heaven. The Apostle Paul has caught that mind, which he exhorts Christians to have.

He has seen the point. It came to him, the great encounter with the Lord at the beginning of his Christian life. He saw, and then, all other things, however great they were, and they were many, and they were great as he tells us in that letter to the Philippians.

They lost their grip on him because something else got the grip on him. And he said, he made the great renunciation. Perhaps not in the same dimension as the Lord, but for him.

It was everything as it was for the Lord. Our everything may not be as great as the Lord's everything, but it's everything. If it's everything, well, that's it.

It's full, it's final. He said that he counted all these things, this catalogue of advantages, which were his by hereditary, by birth, by upbringing, by training, by acquirement and so on, all these things, he renounced. He renounced.

And in the great renunciation of his Master and of himself, the Church has benefited through all these generations. And that's the point. That's the point we have to come to before long.

Then we read of Moses. As we could have mentioned the many others in that same chapter, Hebrews 11. Picking up Moses.

He renounced all that he had in Egypt. The learning of the Egyptians, the court of Pharaoh, all the advantages. He made the great renunciation.

Why? Again, because of the people of God. Now, that's the point. Before we come to its application, let me remind you that one of the clear marks and traces of the devil and his handy work is the distortion of good into evil.

Good things made into bad things. Satan creates nothing. He is not a creator.

He creates nothing. But he encamps upon what has been made. And what has been made for good to turn it into bad.

Hence you have a whole list of paradoxes in the Bible, fascinating to follow them, which I'm not going to do. Give you the hint. A whole list of paradoxes or seeming contradictions.

And they lie in this realm of good things in divine intention turned into bad things. Take the matter of ambition. Ambition indeed is the parent of many evils.

Ambition in the world, what it leads to. Ambitious men, women. Who to realize their ambition, who tread upon all principles, will ride roughshod over all sensibilities.

The ambition, a driving force to get, to be, to master, to dominate, to rule. And haven't we in our lifetime seen something of that? My, these ambitious people, whose names we could mention, who have thrown the world into the most distressing and awful state. Literally multitudes being murdered for an ambition.

Man's ambition. Ambition. It need not dwell upon it.

It can come and has come into the church of God. Men, as Peter calls it, lording it over God's heritage. Wanting to be something.

Just fulfilling some secret ambition. They don't mean it, perhaps, and they don't realize it, but others do. That is.

Well, here's something that is evil. But, but, God created ambition. That's a divine thing.

Our translations don't help us too much in this, but Paul said, we make it our ambition to be well-pleasing unto Him. We make it our ambition. Paul, you've redeemed a bad world.

You have salvaged something that has gone astray. That the devil has captured. Turned to his own use.

For it was ambition in Satan before his fall that led to his fall. And he, like the serpent, has injected that poison of the serpent into human nature. Ambition.

We make it our ambition. Oh, surely keep that word out of the sacred language. We could go on with a whole lot of paradoxes like that.

Contradictions. Paul gave us a list in one place. Sorrowing, yet always rejoicing.

It's a paradox, isn't it? Poor, yet making many rich. So on. Now here, we are in the presence of one of these, in this very chapter, Philippians 2, and in this very consideration of the great renunciation.

Satan has taken hold of something that God created and put into man and into his universe. What is it? To acquire, to possess. It's not wrong in itself to have it.

It is not wrong in itself to acquire, to possess. Haven't you had many battles over that, whether you ought to have this? Whether it's right to possess that? In your very nature there are the traces of this divine thing. To be enriched, there are words you like to use about it, is acquisition.

Yes, God put that in. The Bible is full of it. We were looking at Israel this morning.

And what a lot the Lord said to them about having it. I bring you into a land flowing with milk and honey and so on and so on, and this is for you to have. I mean you to have it.

To be a wealthy people. It's all for you. Every place in the soul of God.

Put your trust on it. I've given it to you. Over against that.

Great renunciation. Is that a contradiction? Renunciation now as a law of having. He let go and he was given.

He renounced and was endowed with all the fullness of heaven. Satan then uses this divine thing and twists something which is divine, which is of God, which is quite right in its own nature, quite right, and gives it this distortion to make it an evil thing so that we have now in this world this terrible assertiveness to get control, to possess, to have. Well, where does the solution lie? Where does it lie? What's it for? The answer to that question is the answer to the paradox.

What is it for? What do you want it for? And you see it just is there where the enemy has done his work. Introducing the selfhood. Self.

Drawing, having the self. Holding for self. Pricing it for self.

When it says he emptied himself there's all the story of redemption in the emptying of self. And all the wonderful issue in this whole universe along the line of redemption. But what man is going to have by God's gift, and what we may have now by God's gift are the spirits in heaven and the heavenlies in Christ.

All that fullness unto which we are called in the will of God comes along the line of the conversion of self. Turning around. Not now this way.

Now don't please let that very principle work wrongly on what I'm saying. You see, Peter slipped up there because he wasn't converted really at that time. And I know I'm going to be challenged on that.

But I have been. There was a real sense in which Peter was not converted until the day of Pentecost. Now we won't argue that out.

And the Lord came with the basin of water and power for Peter to wash his feet. Peter said, you, you shall have it. Then the Lord said, if I wash thee not thou hast no part with me.

Oh well, I won't be disappointed. It proved in a few hours after that, very few hours after that, that really it was Peter who was in view to have all he could get, even the divine things. And when I say you'll get a great, a great fullness if only you will learn the lesson of renunciation, be careful, as to your ambition for fullness.

Who is it for? What is it for? Is it... Now the principle then lying behind Philippians 2 is just this. That the Lord Jesus let go all that he had, heavenly glory and equality with God, not for himself, it was his already. Nothing, nothing whatever that he need do or could do to enhance his own, but God had got to be vindicated in the creation of man.

God created man. Took that tremendous responsibility. Have you often felt bad about this? Oh, some of your natures are better than mine.

I have sometimes. Man, collectively, as he is today, the history of man, hardly bears thinking about. God did it.

Took the risk, the responsibility, making the whole race, making you, making me, me. I have to turn that back on the Lord sometimes and say, Lord, you made me. You made me.

You gave me a being. It was by your law that I came into being. Your responsibility.

Well, that's helpful sometimes, you know. But leave that. God had got to be vindicated in his creating responsibility and therefore he had got to save this man that he had made.

And he had got to be glorified in this man. And there is no salvation and there is no glorification while man is a selfish creature. Selfishness spoils everything, doesn't it? And rots of old glory everywhere.

Therefore, therefore, that deep thing had got to be touched and dealt with not theoretically, not doctrinally, not theologically, but actually, actually. Definitely. And there is no way of dealing with anything actually and do underline that word, really, truly, actually, but by taking that thing, destroying it in your own person and work and being the opposite yourself.

A mighty deep work of God. It's the vindication of God, the justification of the Father, the justification of creation, the making possible man coming to that glory in fellowship with the Father in heaven forever.

That was the motive that led him to the great renunciation, of letting go.

It was outward first for his Father's vindication, outward secondly for man's redemption from that twist that the devil had brought in and by which so much mischief had been done. It was your salvation and mine from something that the devil had planted in the race, which was a contradiction. That was outward, not for himself, not for himself.

Now I'll read again his life. All that is included in this description. He emptied, he humbled, he took the form of a bond slave, he was found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death and the most shameful and ignominious form of death that this world has known.

There has always been known the crucifixion of the worst form of death. That's letting go self, isn't it? Or self-interest, that's renunciation. All that was involved for God first, the Father first.

That's why he's always speaking here of the vindication of the Father. The redemption of man unto glory, transformation and transfiguration of humanity, motive, ambition, purpose, the will of God. Now, dear friends, you and I are in the way of this, aren't we? Have you not noticed that the Lord's dealings with us when he gets us in hand, when he really does get a purchase upon us, are along this line, again and again, because of Christian experience, we come up against the situation.

Or let go. Are we going to let go? Can we let go? Can we really renounce? We are stuck until death. We are.

We can't get past that. Maybe an incident in life, maybe what we might call a small thing in comparison with other things. But there it is, there it is.

Must I? Shall I do? Shall I? Get this bone between my teeth and worry that it could end. Not let go. All right, I'll just repeat this.

No way on. Nobody said it. And have you not on the other side experienced that when at last, having sought the grace of God, by the grace, I'm not just resigning.

Resign to your faith is not the will of God. I'm not just, well, no longer interested. No negative attitudes and no passive attitudes, but positive.

Lord, if this is what you want, you have it. And you have a purpose in bringing me to this position when we get there. Something great.

All that we had wanted, we get. It's strange, isn't it? It works like that. What about Abraham and Isaac? Couldn't he have not? Couldn't he have argued with God? Couldn't he have supported his tenacity over Isaac by what the Lord had said? Oh yes, he could have built up a tremendous argument against offering Isaac.

But he came to the point of the great renunciation. To God, let go to God. Go to God.

What did he get? He not only got Isaac back, but he got a nation. And in thy seed shall all nations from inward to outward. You see the range of a renunciation.

The tremendous potential of a renunciation. Moses, we have picked him out. Moses could have argued on the ground of sovereignty.

Well, Lord, your sovereignty so ordered that when all the babes were being slaughtered, I was spared. And that girl of Pharaoh's came along that day, his daughter. In your sovereignty, I was rescued and taken right into the palace and brought up in Pharaoh's house.

Educated according to all the wisdom of the Egyptians. He left it all. A big old.

Renounced it all. Why? Because he had become converted. Not in the New Testament sense perhaps, but converted.

Turned around with reversion. Or withversion. Turned from inward, the people.

His race, as we know, were on his heart. People for God. He chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God.

What I may lose doesn't matter so long as the people. You see the point? Christ repeating himself in these men's lives on this one principle. Renunciation.

And because he, the Lord, the Son of God did this, wherefore? What of wherefore? Take him the name which is above every name. In the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. Things in heaven, things in earth.

And here's a peculiarity, and things under the earth. You notice often something like that is said, but the third dimension is left out. The under the earth is left out.

On other occasions, where in heaven and in earth. I'll leave that for you to think about. In this case, the underworld is also going to bow.

His renunciation means that the underworld, the full dimensions of it, the ability to let go. I think I hardly need say more than that. It's one of the most difficult things that you and I have to learn.

But he was meek and lowly in heart, and meekness is just that. Just that. The outward aspect of life.

That's meekness. Not for myself, but how much others can gain if by my, the Father, if by my loss the people he has created may be benefited. That's the law of enlargement.

Enlargement. I stopped short in the quotation about Moses. You noticed that of course, watching.

You noticed I stopped. Because I'm always afraid, you know, of this wretched, wretched self. It's always like Peter at that time, ready to pounce.

He had recompense unto thee rewards. But I stopped, I didn't say that. For he had recompense unto thee rewards.

Very well. Very well. If it's thy way, renunciation and loss, his promised enrichment along that line, we shouldn't be motivated by reward, should we? No servant of the Lord ought to be motivated by what he's going to get out of his service.

Not at all. When you've done all say we're unprofitable servants. Nevertheless, nevertheless, we can put right and proper emphasis upon it because of where we started.

You're following the train of thought? This is God's will for you, for me, for mankind. To be enriched with all his fullness. To have all that he can give, not for their own use, but for his glory, his vindication.

And if you and I, put it that way, if you and I get to glory, and he is able to give us, then, of his fullness, endow us with heavenly riches, I'm quite sure that we will have found in the discipline of renunciation the right ground. That is, you see, a person, anybody who's really been through this, been right in that deep and desperate reality of facing something, some possession, something that is very much to them, indeed might be everything to them, might make or mar their life, be faced with death. Go unto the Lord.

Most devastating. And that devastation has taken place when we come out on the other side. No better now than that.

It's safe, it's safe. I wonder how many of you, especially you servants of the Lord, whoever you are, I wonder how many of you, can you trust me with that? Can you really trust to do this for me? I know my own heart. I know its pride, I know its acquisitiveness, its love of place, position, influence and so on.

Oh, the place, dear friends, where he can trust us with eternal heavenly responsibility. That deep evil thing in our nature has been dealt with. It's very true, isn't it? There are so many tensions, aren't there? My word, aren't we suffering this life from nervous tensions, strains, many a nervous breakdown, a lot of this intensity, our own kind of intensity that does us harm nervously and physically.

What is it due to? We're not getting what we want. We're not having what we've set our heart upon. God is not giving it to us.

Doing it, and so we are in this state of tensions, strain in life. Here we meet, people everywhere, because I know and you know by experiences that you've had, that when you have come to do, let go to the Lord. I'm very particular about saying to the Lord, Mark you.

It may be to the Lord through other people or through... The battle's over. Strange God, this great renunciation. So he identified himself with man in the form of a man.

Temptation is not temptation, has no meaning. Resolve this problem if you can, but it has no meaning at all if there is not something to work. Not necessarily a sinful, evil, devilish nature, but just human nature as it is.

And so when the devil came to him in the wilderness and offered him the kingdoms of the world, it was no temptation. He had no heart for the kingdoms of the world. If he could say, you can have them, if he could say, it doesn't matter to me at all.

If the kingdoms of this world were the very object for which he had come, there's a temptation and a feeling to the soul life. He became identified with man, knowing quite well the temptations of man and knowing man's natural ambition, feeling tempted in all points, like as we are. But he conquered how? He conquered not by saying, I'm not a bit interested in that.

That's no temptation to me. I'm going to have, not by your gift, not along your line, I'm going to the cross and there I'll destroy you and get this on proper ground. And so he became knowing man without the sinful nature, nature nevertheless, nevertheless with a human soul which can have ambition for itself or for God.

And so in that temptation everyone, it's the father, the father, the word that the father has spoken. I wonder if you follow me. I think we're touching things that are very real to the spiritual life.

The whole matter of identification with us in order to save us, to save us from our selfhood, our self-towardness, to save us by conversion. The life of the Christian then simply is the life which is for God, isn't it? That's the way we grow. Next time we'll be more severe.

Sorry to say that. But you've learned something. You don't come into the more severe without the knowledge of what it means and the way through.

Right, this is a bit more difficult but same principle. I'm not going to fight this bulldog disposition of mine to get hold of this and not with it. The solution comes that way.

The law of renunciation, progress toward divine fullness. I'm sure we want to be quiet for a moment, clearly, deeply, or expect some response.

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