

You Have the Authority for the Job

by Theodore Epp

The sermon calls for a deeper understanding of God's world mission and the role of the Holy Spirit in empowering believers for evangelism.

Duration: 38:07

Scripture: Joshua 1:8, Psalm 37:5, Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 1 Corinthians 12:27, Ephesians 4:11-12

Topics: "Spiritual Gifts", "Faithfulness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of following the course that God has laid out for each individual. He mentions that when asked about future plans, he simply wants to finish the course that God has set for him. The speaker refers to the concept of the body of Christ, explaining that just as the human body has many parts but functions as one, so too should the church. He highlights the idea that God has distributed gifts among believers in harmony with this principle. The speaker concludes by expressing his desire to be able to say, like Paul, that he has fought the good fight, kept the faith, and finished the course that God has ordained for him.

Transcript

I'd like to say something this morning that's been burning my heart for quite some time. I've been speaking along this line, thinking along this line for quite some time. This is Missionary Day, and there are many negative approaches to this whole program of missions, and rightly so.

When you really realize how little of the world we're really touching by means of missions, it's an appalling thing. Although I'm not so sure that I feel that this division that we make between home and foreign missions is just altogether biblical. Now, I hope you don't misunderstand me.

I heard Dr. R. Brown make a statement one time, and I said a loud amen. He said this matter of home missions and foreign missions, and by the way, Dr. Brown was one of the great advocates of missions, and traveled much and oversees missions. He says this matter of talking about home missions and foreign missions, he says those are good bookkeeping terms, but God's program is world missions.

And I really said amen to that. I appreciate that. That's God's program.

God's program is world missions. And when we heard what we heard this morning, I didn't get to hear all of it. It was tied up a little bit with radio, but heard hearing Dr. Anderson on some of those statistics, and

really how little we have accomplished, how little we've done.

We have to ask ourselves the question, really, what's the reason? What's really back of it? And is there any possible solution? But I do want to discuss with you something that is very imperative for us to see in this matter of world evangelism, world missions. The question was asked by Brother Anderson, has God given us a task that he did not expect us to fulfill? Let me show you what I believe is God's answer to that question. And may I just say at the outset, I believe with all my heart that God had planned that in every generation, every person should be reached some way or another with the gospel.

I believe that with all my heart. And I'll give you my reasons in just a moment. The thing I want to talk to you about, I think, can be cataloged under three topics.

The three absolutes to succeed, to have success. We talk a lot about success in our day. Do you know that that word happens to be used exactly one time in the Bible? Let me read it to you.

It's not my text, but I'll read it to you. From Joshua, the first chapter, verse 8. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein. For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

But I do want to talk a little bit about the idea of success in this world missionary evangelism program. God has one world program with a variety of ways of doing it in order that we might be successful. Now then, I'm sure that if we were to ask just really what is success, I doubt that we could classify as being authorities on this subject.

Let me tell you what I mean. Would you reckon if you had been living during the time of Elijah, and when he sat down there by the brook, poor fellow, the ravens had to bring him food to eat, and he was drinking out of the brook. Or when later on he was living in an attic, in the widow's home, hiding away.

Would you call that success? Oh of course when he was before Ahab, that was success. What about this other? That was very very important to God's plan and program. Or take for instance Abraham.

Abraham a man of God, a friend of God. But he was living up there in the hill country of Palestine. He was living in tents.

Abraham possibly was one of the richest men of his day. Yet when the four kings and the five kings had their war, and they no doubt sent their spies out all over the country to see whether there was anything worth taking, they bypassed Abraham. Just living up there in tents.

He's possibly not a very successful man. Of course Lot down here, he's in the government you know. He's down here sitting in the courts.

He's a successful man. Poor Lot died as a pauper later on. But you see what I mean? How do we gauge success? What about Noah preaching 120 years? I do not know how many people were saved during his ministry.

There were none left at the time he went into the ark except his own family and Paul of all men. I think if Paul were living today, I think there would be a lot of us curl up our lips and say, I wonder if that man's really called of God. I wonder if he's really doing God.

You know that man couldn't keep himself out of jail. He was always in jail. He was always in trouble.

They were either stoning him or flogging him or chasing him out or doing something with that man. But you know there is something about that man that's tremendous. And now as we look back, of course, we can say, oh yes, he was a very successful man.

But if he were living today, I just wonder whether we would really say so. But here's what you find about that man. And this is a verse that intrigues me through and through.

I don't know how many hundreds of times I've gone back to it. When he was warned not to go to Jerusalem, that he would be, it would be bad for him. He'd be imprisoned or they would find him and all of these type of things.

Here's his answer. I want you to get it. None of these things moved me.

Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Here was a man who was a free man in this respect, though we're often in jail, who had this one life goal. And that one life goal was to finish the course that God had laid out for him.

He didn't know what it was all the time. Very often we get interviewed, I'm interviewed, and one of the questions that I'm sure that they're going to ask towards the end of the interview is, well now what are your outlooks? What are your prospects? What are you planning to do? You're planning to continue to enlarge the broadcast? You're going to take on some more radio stations and so on, so on, so on, so on. And when I give them this answer they sit there so dumbfounded they don't know what in the world have they been talking to this fellow for.

He doesn't seem to know much. All he says he wants to finish the course that God's laid out for him. But what is it? Well I'll find out tomorrow's course tomorrow, and the next course the next day.

Because I want to be able to say what Paul was able to say when he came to the close of his life. There he was in jail again, in a dungeon, joyous, happy, victorious. He writes to young Timothy and says, tell me, the day has come.

I am now ready to be offered. The time of my departure is hand. I've fought a good fight.

I've kept the faith. I have finished my course. By the grace of God that's all I aspire to is to finish the course that God has laid out for me.

I want to talk to you about that course for just a moment. That course that God has laid out for us. I'm not going to stay here, stand here and say, now this is what God wants you to do, and this is what God wants you to do.

But I want you to see how God planned. How God purposed. Under three headings.

The three absolutes for spiritual success. When I say absolute, I mean something that is irrevocable. Something that is fixed.

The principles of God, of which the Holy Spirit is the very center itself. Like we call the law of gravity. That's a principle that is fixed.

I pick up something and drop it and it'll not go up, it'll go down. That's simply a fixed principle. Well there are fixed principles with reference to spiritual success.

And they're clearly laid out in the word of God. And we've got to fit into this plan, program, whatever we want to call it, this program that God has laid out for us. Let me name them first.

Number one. The Holy Spirit has absolute sovereignty in the planning, the directing, and the executing of the work of the church. It was Jesus Christ who said, I will build my church.

I wonder how many of us recognize that Jesus Christ said, I will build my church. That was Moses' promise. Moses was earnest, sincere.

He made one of the greatest decisions. To join up, instead of being king, to join up with his people. But he still made the basic mistake at the beginning of his life.

Thinking that it was partly his work and partly God's work. It wasn't until God was through training him those forty years out in the desert that Moses finally came to the realization, this is God's undertaking. We have to recognize that the ministry of the word, world evangelism, is God's undertaking.

I will build my church. The same Jesus that said, I will build my church, also said, I will send the Holy Spirit. So while he, in person, is sitting at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for us, taking care of our affairs up there, the Holy Spirit is designated to take care of the affairs of the building of the church down here.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit is absolute sovereign in his choice of men, in his distribution of spiritual gifts to these men, and thirdly, in his choice of placing these spiritual gifts of men in God's church. And then thirdly, and this is very personal, this sovereignty of God, the Holy Spirit, calls for another absolute, and when I use the word absolute, it takes irrevocable, positive, committal of ourselves unto him, for his plan, his power, his results, his purpose in his church, a committal unto him. Young people, you're often confronted with questions as to what you're going to do, and finally you may come to the perlocutionary position you say, I have surrendered myself to go to Africa.

Don't surrender yourself to go to Africa. Surrender yourself to him, wherever he wants to lead you, and if he wants to lead you to Africa, that's his business. But surrender yourself to him.

That's the important thing. People are always seeking for better methods to do God's work, while God is seeking for better men. You say, but don't we need methods? Yes, but remember always God uses men.

Methods are necessary, but they're incidental. God uses men to build his church. Let's look at these three absolutes in more detail.

The first one again, the absolute sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in the planning, in the directing, and in the executing of the work of the church. Let's think for a moment of the work of the church. What church? Some people, the church is confined to four walls.

Some people have a broader view to a denomination. Others have a view that will actually take them to the so-called worldwide church, that is those who are truly born of God, regardless what their affiliation may be here, or whatever denomination it may be. They have a larger vision of the church.

But I want to say to this morning here that the church even includes more than that. We have to recognize that the church began at Pentecost. That's nearly 2,000 years ago, and the church that he's been building has been building for nearly 2,000 years.

There have to be plans for this total 2,000 years, and there is no human being that can possibly lay out plans for a 2,000 year period for a worldwide church. This, of course, leads it only to the Holy Spirit. It is impossible for any man to direct, regardless of how wonderful an organization he may have and how much he knows about administration, to direct such a work, even if he were only to do it today with the existing church today.

But to again take the church worldwide from Pentecost until now, and then to totally coordinate that, plus to execute what the plans are, that's another thing. Lots of times we have committees that never commit. God calls men individuals.

So here what you have is a worldwide church from Pentecost until the day that he shall take her to his side. That has to be planned, that has to be directed, that work has to be executed, and it's progressive all the way through. There's only one answer, and that is God the Holy Spirit.

He's the only one that has absolute authority, sovereignty, in this planning, directing, and executing. Let's look at it in a little bit more detail. Jesus Christ said, I will build my church.

And before he left, he spoke to his disciples, as you heard so well the other night, from in Matthew 28, all power, all authority is given to me in heaven and on earth. And now I want you to go. And he gives a commission.

Then he says, Lo, I'll be with you always. Jesus Christ says, I'm going to build my church. All the authority has been given unto me.

I like another verse that sets this forth more beautiful even than this one does. I mean more clearly, a little more detail. In the second chapter of the book of Philippians, beginning with verse 6, 6, 7, and 8, we have the humiliation of Jesus Christ.

He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. But I want you to note, as the ninth verse begins, it begins with the word, therefore. Very important word.

That little word, therefore, connects what we have just read in the previous verses with that which will just follow afterwards. Therefore, he says, God has highly exalted him and given him a name that is above everything. Then he tells what he's going to do as a result of having that name.

Now what does he mean by that name? That beautiful name we like to sing about, but that's not what he's talking about. It is a beautiful name, and I like to sing about it, but that's not what he's talking about. He's talking about a name and authority.

Moody Bible Institute has a man whom they have designated as president. That is a name, but not just a name. That name designates authority and responsibility.

We in our country have a man by the name of Ford, who's president. The highest name in the country, as far as worldly government is concerned. The highest authority.

The greatest responsibility. Jesus has a name that is above all names. Whether it be political, he will rule all the nations of the world.

Daniel speaks of that. That's not the aspect that we're interested in here now. But his name is above all names with reference to the church that he's going to build.

And he is going to direct this work. Of course, he delegates it. He says, I am going to send you the Holy Spirit, and he is going to be in charge of this work.

And so it's made available to us. This person, this authority, yes. This power, yes.

Together with Jesus Christ, yes. Made available to us by the Holy Spirit. Jesus said to his disciples, just before he went to glory, recorded in Acts 1.8, you all know it, after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, ye shall receive power, authority, and ye shall be witnesses unto me to the ends of the earth.

There's your commission. With the commission, however, before we can go, there comes that authority. In Ephesians, the second chapter, and in verses five and six, we have been raised together to sit together with him in heavenly places.

I heard a missionary say one time, rather amusingly to me, he said, you know, so many folks are sitting in the heavenly places, they're no earthly good. There's a little truth in that too. But the thing I want you to see is this.

Unto him were given those names, the final authority. The Holy Spirit is exercising that authority here in building the church. He has committed to us this power.

Not that he's given us his power, he is that power. Oh, that we might recognize this fact. It'll change our whole life.

So many times we want to do something and we say, no, Lord, I need power for this. I need help for this. Don't pray that way.

Recognize that he is the authority, he is the power, that he is indwelling us. And commit yourself to him and say, Lord, I commit myself to you, here are my lips, here are my everything that you have chosen to use, and you just use them now in your power, in your grace. Be strong in the Lord and in the might of his power.

Not ours, not something given to us. I'm just a mighty small vessel. I cannot hold very much power.

But when he comes and indwells me in his power, that's all the difference in the world. There's therefore no reason whatsoever that there has to be any failure in this ministry of ministering the gospel to the ends of the earth, simply because the Holy Spirit is in charge of the whole program, the whole plan of executing it of everything. He even worketh in you, the will.

He even works with our will. And then he worketh in you to do our part, of course, is to receive. But let's go on.

Number two. The Holy Spirit has absolute sovereignty in his choice of men, and this is very personal and yet very important. He chooses the men.

And then in his distribution of gifts to these men, and when I say men, I do not mean masculine gender, talking about people. Thirdly, and it is his to choose where he's going to put these gifted men in the ministry of building the church of Jesus Christ. First, he chooses the men.

Jesus said to his disciples, John 15, 16, you have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. I've chosen you, and I have ordained you that you should go, that you should bear fruit, that your fruit should remain, recognizing that all you need to do is ask the Father in my name, and anything that there is needed for what you're going to do, what I'm calling upon you to do, he'll supply it for you. He is the great I am, what your need is.

And so the Lord has chosen. When Ananias was being sent to Paul, or Saul, in Damascus after he'd had that experience out there on his way to Damascus, and he was talking to the Lord about it, God made one statement to Ananias that I want you to get. God says to him concerning Saul, he is a chosen vessel unto me.

And then he outlined what he was going to do, where he was going to use it. This is God's prerogative, if you please, the place to choose a man that he would like to choose, and he can choose him as he wants to choose. In my early ministry I was, became quite discouraged at times why God may have chosen me for what he chose me for.

But then one day that thing began, that that thing was settled, as little by little other things were settled. But especially from 1st Corinthians, the first chapter, and I'm reading this from Philip's paraphrase, he says, verse 26, For look at your calling, your own calling as Christians, my brothers. You don't see among you many of the wise, that is according to the world's judgment, nor many of the ruling class, nor many of the noblest family.

He didn't say not any, he said not many. But God has chosen what the world calls foolish, to shame the wise. He has chosen what the world calls weak, to shame the strong.

He has chosen what the things of little strength and of small repute, yet even things which have no real existence, that's where I belong, to explode the pretensions of the things that are, that no man may boast in the presence of God. He does the choosing, that's it. There's no, nothing left there to chance.

There's nothing left there to election even, while God can look after the election too. God chose Abraham, why? I do not know. God chose Isaac over Ishmael, we possibly know a little bit more why.

God chose Jacob, the schemer, over Esau, the big-hearted man, why? God knew. Nothing left to chance, popular vote, not even self-choice in this thing. Secondly, the Holy Spirit has absolute sovereignty in distributing spiritual gifts unto men.

Oh that men might learn that today, in this confused Christian world. Listen to just a few verses. Again from 1 Corinthians, this time the twelfth chapter, beginning with verse four.

I'm going to read from Philips just a few statements. I'll just read some statements. Men have different gifts, different ways of serving God.

God works through different men in different ways. Each man is given his gift by the Spirit, that he may use it for the common good. Behind all these gifts is the operation of that one same Spirit, who distributes to each individual as he wishes.

He chooses a man. He has a task for him. He has a course outlined for him.

He gives that man the gift for that particular course. No one else can fit that place. Keep that in mind.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit has absolute sovereignty in delegating these gifted men to the various positions in the ministry to be performed. He uses a picture of the body in this twelfth chapter, and it's a very interesting picture. Let me read just a few statements again.

I'll pass over. You won't follow me, because I'm just going to read statements. It's very interesting.

All have been baptized by one Spirit into one body. All have had the experience of the same Spirit. We've been made to drink of the same life, says King James.

Now the body is not one member, but many. But God has so arranged all the parts of one body according to his design. For if everything were concentrated in one part, how could there be a body at all? The fact is, there are many parts, but one body.

Then he goes on describing this and the purpose for which all of this has been ordained. Just a couple of more verses. Now ye are together the body of Christ, and individually you are the members of him.

And in his church God has appointed, and then he mentions the messengers and the preachers and so on. No, we are God's, we are, we find God's distribution of gifts is on the same principle of harmony that he has shown in the human body. I have a healthy body, thank God.

And the basic reason would be that the various members of my body are functioning properly. And so it is, should be in the body of Jesus Christ. I'm building my church.

It is his responsibility to delegate these individual gifts of men that he has chosen and to whom he has given the gift that they are to be delegated to their particular responsibility. Absolute his is complete, and yea, it is complex, sure. Man has been given no choice in this matter.

He is absolute in his sovereignty in administrating all of it. This brings me now to my third point, which is very, very personal. If then, and it is no if really in the sense of a question mark, since then the Holy Spirit is absolute sovereign in every detail of the ministry of the church of Jesus Christ.

And the commission is a worldwide commission, not to this generation, to every generation, including this generation. And since he is in charge, he has a perfect plan for total world evangelism. So that as we heard a while ago, not 90% of all of the efforts are being spent on 11% of the people, or 10% of the efforts of evangelism are spent on 89% of the people.

That's very unbalanced, and the Holy Spirit is not responsible for that. We are responsible for that because we do not fit into the plan that God has called for us. Very important to find that.

So the Holy Spirit is sovereign, and this sovereignty calls for an absolute committal unto the Holy Spirit. Not a committal to a job. That was Moses' problem.

Moses had surrendered himself, first of all, to a task. To perform the task of emancipating the people, believing that his people, his own people, would believe that God would use him to emancipate them. He had surrendered himself to that task.

That was good as far as it went. Forty years later, at his graduation exercises at the burning bush, he began to realize that his surrender had to be made to God, and God only, for whatever, wherever, whatever it was. That's why God allowed him to be turned down by Pharaoh, to be turned down by his own people, so that he had no one else to look to but just God.

And God may have to bring us, and many times he brings us to that place where we are left absolutely alone. We say, now all I can do is depend on God. We should have started there, but sometimes that's the only way he can get us to that place.

Absolute committal unto him, for his gifts, for his choice, for his plan, for his power, for his results. In this generation in which we're living, we have possibly one of the finest illustrations from the scientific world of what we're talking about here. The scientists have been able to perform tremendous feats.

They orbit the world, never forget when they first orbited the moon, and finally landed on the moon, and so on and so on. But one day I read a statement somewhere that the Russians, also orbiting the earth, and they said when they came down, they said, well, we looked for God up there, but we didn't find him. No, they didn't find him, because they weren't looking for him, but the thing I want you to get, and this is the point I want you to get.

They never would have orbited the earth had they not obeyed to the minutest detail every law and principle that God had set down in nature. They would recognize him no more than a pharaoh would recognize God. But nevertheless, God has set out what people nowadays call the laws of nature, the principles of God, gravity and all the rest of it.

God has ordained all of it, and man has learned to harness these laws of nature and the laws of God, and to obey them to the minutest detail. And in doing so, I cease not to marvel when they say at such and such an hour, minute, second, at such and such a space in this particular place in the Pacific Ocean, they're going to land. How do they know all that? I tell you, it's tremendous, friends, and that's the way it is, unless we obey to the minutest detail.

God's plan, God's program will never evangelize the world. Jesus Christ said in John 15, and you heard that great song a while ago, I am the vine, you're the branch. Abide in me, and I in you.

There you have it. Actually, the translation is, if you abide in me, I will abide in you. You'll bear much fruit, and so on.

But the verse that the Lord gave us back in about 38, 39, 35 years ago now, 36 years ago, was Psalm 37, 5. I've lived on that, we've lived on that over and over again. Commit thy way to the Lord, trust also in him, he shall bring it to pass. When he gave that verse to us, it was moving a young family from Oklahoma to Nebraska with \$65 in my pocket, and the contract to start broadcasting.

Just commit that way unto the Lord, just trust in him, he shall bring it to pass. I remember two months went by, it was the fifth day of July. I was down about as far down as I could get because there hadn't been a letter all week, and the verse that the Lord gave my wife that day is a verse that you might smile at, but the verse he gave her that day wasn't, though he slay me, yet will I trust him.

I pouted and I did everything this way and that way, and the only verse the Lord gave me was, yet thou wilt yet praise me for this day, mark it July 5th. I remember going to the post office about a month later picking up a letter and it came from Africa, from a young missionary that we knew. As I tore the letter open there

was a \$5 bill, American \$5 bill, and the letter simply said, God told me to send you this for your radio work.

I stood there and I all at once I looked at the letter and it was July, mailed on July the 5th, right there in the post office I broke before God. When God made it known to me, you don't worry about the finances, I'll take care of that, this is my work, not yours. That \$5 that day paid for one day's broadcast.

God's doing a little better in it today, I mean a little larger, I shouldn't say better. Today the budget today is \$8 million a year, he's still looking after it. He says, don't you sometimes worry, why should I worry when he's got the worries? And he doesn't worry.

Commit thy way unto the Lord. That's only one aspect, that's just one aspect. The ways of the broadcast, all of the other details, the ways of the life that God has set before you.

Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. That's why Romans 12, 1 and 2, present your bodies unto God a living sacrifice. That's a paradox.

A living sacrifice, death, living is the opposite. How are you going to do that? If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, his place of having died to self, put yourself at his disposal. Some general was supposed to have gone to some great president, I think it was Abraham Lincoln, during the heart of that war, and said to him, some thing like this, we'd better pray that God get on our side.

And the president is supposed to have said, it's not a matter of God getting on our side, it's a matter of our getting on God's side. Quite a difference, quite a difference. He shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, and ye shall be witnessed unto me, unto the ends of the earth.

This is God's plan of worldwide evangelism. But you say, oh, we're just so few. I know we're just so few.

I'm just one, you're just one. But if you're just one, and I'm just one, and the other fellow's just one, and the other fellow's just one, and we put ourselves totally at God's disposal, absolutely at God's disposal, and allow Him to take over, the world evangelism will be taken care of. That's God's answer to it.

And God hasn't failed. If there's been any failure, it's been ours. I trust God has spoken to our hearts.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/13/SID13361.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/theodore-epp/you-have-the-authority-for-the-job/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

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

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

www.sermonindex.net