

Spiritual Insights 06 Acts 10:38

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God's will and living a life of faith, trust, and obedience to Him.

Duration: 41:10

Scripture: 2 Kings 4:3, Acts 10:36, Ephesians 6:7

Topics: "Spiritual Insights"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of allowing God to run our lives. He highlights that God is all-knowing and loving, making Him the best person to guide us. The preacher also emphasizes the need for action and not just listening to sermons. He mentions that a good sermon should not only engage the mind and heart but also provoke the will to take action. The sermon concludes with a call for individuals to have a crisis experience of surrendering their lives to God and then allowing Him to lead them day by day.

Transcript

I'd just like to have a little change of pace this afternoon. During the last few months, I've been trying to put together a little booklet called Spiritual Insights, in which I just take some individual verses of Scripture and draw from them spiritual insights that have been a help to me and that I would like to feel will be a help to others. So, this is kind of a buckshot meeting.

Instead of just being on one subject, we'll be hitting a lot of different subjects. And if you're weary and take a five-minute nap, well, you can come in on the next subject. It's perfectly all right with me.

Just to show you what I mean now, we could turn to Acts chapter 10, please, and I'd just like to read with you verse 36. Acts chapter 10, and verse 36. Sometimes I don't even take a verse, just the words from a verse.

Acts 10, 36. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, he is Lord of all. Let me just take out of that verse these words, Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

One of the great themes of the New Testament is the lordship of Jesus Christ. Over and over again we are reminded that he is Lord, and that we should give him that sight in our lives. To crown Jesus Lord means to surrender our lives to him.

It means to have no will of our own. That is the perfection of manhood, to have no will of one's own and seek only the will of God. When the Lord Jesus came into the world, it was written of him in the volume of the book.

He delighted to do the will of God. Remember, he said in John's gospel, I can of my own self do nothing. That means that he was so morally perfect that he couldn't do anything in self-will.

You and I can't say that. We can do plenty of things of our own self that he couldn't. Instead of proving his utter humanity, that verse proved his perfect humanity, unlike ours.

To crown Jesus Lord means that I must be willing to go anywhere, do anything he says, say anything he wants me to say. I've always been intrigued in the story of Joshua. The angel of the Lord comes to him, and of course, the angel of the Lord, we believe, was the Lord Jesus in a pre-incarnate appearance.

And Joshua said to him, friend or foe, he said, are you for us or are you against us? And the angel of the Lord said, look, you're missing the whole point. I didn't come to be for you or against you. I came to take over.

And I think there's a sense in which the Lord Jesus comes to our lives, and he says to us, look, dear friend, I don't come to you as kind of a glorified assistant. I come to take over. Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

Is the Lordship of our Savior a prominent theme in the New Testament? I'll say it is. The word Savior occurs 24 times in the entire New Testament. Just think of that.

The word Savior occurs 24 times in the New Testament. The word Lord occurs 522 times. There must be a significance to that, don't you think? It's interesting.

We always say in conversation, we always say our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. The Bible never says that. It always says our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We certainly do get things fixed up, don't we? When we speak of man and his trite heart-type being, we say body, soul, and spirit. The Bible never says that. It says spirit, soul, and body.

See, we betray ourselves. We think the body is most important part, and God says, that isn't the way I created you. I created you with the spirit on top.

Spirit, soul, and body. And so here we have it. Men say Savior and Lord.

The New Testament says Lord and Savior. To crown the Lord Jesus, Lord, is the most reasonable thing that any man can do. He died for us.

The least we can do is turn our lives over to him. That's why T.T. Studd said that. He said, if Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him.

On the cross of Calvary, the Lord Jesus bought us. He redeemed us. He purchased us back to himself.

If he bought us, we don't belong to ourselves. We belong to him, and if we take our lives and use them the way we want to use them, then we're thieves. We're taking something that doesn't really belong to us.

No wonder the hymn writer says, Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. O Christ, thy bleeding hands and feet, thy sacrifice for me. Each wound, each tear demands my life, a sacrifice for

thee.

If we can trust the Lord Jesus for our eternal salvation, can we not trust him for the management of our lives? And we do trust him for our eternal salvation. We come and we bow at the foot of the cross, and we believe on him and claim eternal life through faith by grace, but then we hug our own little lives and we live them the way we want. Robert Laidlaw wrote this.

I think it's very good. He said, There is a lack of sincerity about committing the eternal soul to God and holding back the mortal life, professing to give him the greater and withholding the lesser. I think I should read that again.

There is a lack of sincerity about committing the eternal soul to God and holding back the mortal life, professing to give him the greater and withholding the lesser. You know, one of the great things that could come out of this conference would be for somebody here, or some persons here, to have a really Christ-like experience of the Holy Spirit, whether for the first time in their lives they get down and they say, Lord Jesus, I turn over the reins of my life to you. I want you to come in and be Lord of my life, a Christ-like experience, and then day by day after that, to begin the day and say, Lord Jesus, live your life through me during this next 24-hour period.

First you begin with a crisis, then it becomes a process, and it makes such good sense. It makes such good sense. If we believe that the Lord is wisdom incarnate, that he is omniscient, that he knows all things, and that he's a God of love, what good sense it makes to let him run our lives.

He can run them better than we can, I'll tell you that, in his wisdom, love, and power. Preaching peace by Jesus Christ, he is Lord of all. Spiritual insight, number one.

For number two, let's turn back to the book of Jonah. The book of Jonah, and the third chapter and the first verse. The book of Jonah, chapter three and verse one.

Very short. Now it says there, and the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time. Let's just stop there.

The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time. Spiritual insight, and I praise God for this today, and I hope it will rejoice your heart the way it rejoices mine. Spiritual insight.

Just because a man has failed doesn't mean that God is through with him. The word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time. Isn't he a God of grace? Our first hymn was, Crown him Lord of all.

Okay, we've had that spiritual insight. We've said amazing grace. Well, it really is amazing grace.

It really is. This is a verse that's filled with hope and promise for me. Just because a man has failed doesn't mean that God is through with him.

Jonah really blew it, didn't he? God called him to go and preach repentance to Nineveh. He takes the ship to Spain, yeah, and you know the rest. Pretty soon he has an experience with God in the belly of a great fish, and he cries out, salvation is of the Lord, and the fish spews him out in dry land.

Ah, the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time. He went to Nineveh and he preached that short message. Yet forty days and Nineveh will be destroyed, and the whole city was plunged into the deepest repentance, including the cattle, and God spared that city.

I think of David, and I think of the failures in David's life, and yet how God used that man. I think of John Mark, and John Mark really, in a sense, was the failing servant, wasn't he? He went off with Paul and Barnabas, but then he kind of petered out, and you say, well, that was it. But it wasn't it.

God used him later to write the second gospel, the story of the unfailing servant, written by the failing servant. But the word of the Lord came to John Mark the second time, too, didn't it? And then I think of Peter himself, and all of us feel a kinship with Peter, I know. And you think of his failure with his hoof-in-mouth disease and all the rest, and how he denied the Lord three times with oaths and curses.

Ah, but the word of the Lord came to Peter the second time, and he stood up on the day of Pentecost and opened the doors of the kingdom to three thousand souls. Really wonderful. Wrote two of the epistles that we have in the New Testament, and he died a martyr's death.

The word of the Lord came to Peter a second time, too. So, I get this spiritual insight, and it encourages me. When it comes to service, God is the God of the second chance.

When it comes to salvation, that isn't true. If a person rejects the message and dies in unbelief, that's it. The spiritual principle that applies there is, as the tree falls, so shall it lie.

But when it comes to Christian service, here is a lovely principle for all of us to keep in mind. Just because a man has failed doesn't mean that God is through with him. Now, would you turn over to John's Gospel for number three, spiritual insight number three, John's Gospel, chapter 11 and verse 9. You know, we all have these spiritual insights, we all have these guideposts that illuminate the way through life, and sometimes I think it's helpful to share them with others.

John, chapter 11. I have to go back to verse 7, although the words I want are in verse 9. Verse 7, Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late thought to stone me, and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of the world.

The words I want here especially are the words of the Lord Jesus. I ponder them many, many times. Are there not twelve hours in the day? Just tuck those words away in your heart and meditate upon them.

At first blush, the Lord's answer doesn't seem to have anything to do with what the disciples have said. I mean, Judea was the vortex of opposition against the Lord. It wasn't helpful to be down in Judea.

Incidentally, it's still the same. The opposition to the Christian gospel in Israel centers around Jerusalem and Judea. The further you get away, the less opposition there is.

It's just the same today. This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled. And the Lord said, Let us go down to Judea again.

And the disciples, they panicked. They said, Judea, they'll kill you if you go down there. Jesus said, Kill me? Aren't there twelve hours in the day? Spiritual insight.

If you and I are walking in the will of God, we are immortal till our work is done. That's what the Lord was saying. He's saying the average day consists of twelve hours of daylight, and so the man who's living in touch with God each day has its appointed service, its appointed task, and nothing can interfere with that schedule apart from the permissive will of God.

My, that's wonderful, really wonderful when a person is yielded to the Lord, everything goes according to schedule. So, even if the Lord Jesus went back to Judea and the Jews sought to kill him, they wouldn't have been able to do it, would they? That's what he's saying. Are there not twelve hours in the day? What peace and poise this would give to my life if I would just believe it and appropriate it by faith? Mine's safe from an awful lot of worry, wouldn't it? It really would.

If I'm living in the will of God and following reasonable rules of safety and health, I'll never die a moment before my time. Never, and neither will you. It's absolutely true.

Nothing can come to us apart from his will as a hedge around us as the children of God. I find many Christians worrying over the food they eat, the water they drink, the air they breathe. Death is always knocking at the door.

This verse of Scripture tells me that anxiety is absolutely unnecessary, and incidentally, this verse would save us from a lot of second-guessing if we just believe it. If we really believe this verse, we'll never say, if the ambulance had just arrived sooner, if the doctor had only detected that growth two months before, if a cure had only been discovered for that disease earlier, if he had only taken a different airline. Our lives are planned by infinite love, and infinite wisdom, and infinite power, and there's a perfect timetable for every child of God.

I think the Lord was saying that here. Are there not 12 hours in a day? There's a perfect timetable for every child of God, and his train and his plane always run on perfect schedules. And didn't the Lord teach us that, you know? Didn't he teach us that with regard to the sparrows and the lilies of the field, and how he cares for them, and how much more valuable we are to him than many sparrows? I sometimes, when I think of these tremendous truths, I realize that we're just living out in the suburbs rather than in the sanctuary, aren't we? And sometimes we know these things intellectually, and yet it's so easy for us to panic.

Now, maybe there's some troubled heart here this afternoon. Maybe your heart is filled with those if-only second-guessings and all the rest. You don't have to do that.

If you know the Lord, you're walking in fellowship with him. There are still 12 hours in the day, and God is on the throne. He plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take. The clouds you so much dread are big with mercy, and shall break in blessings on your head. Ephesians, chapter 6, verse 7, for the next one.

Ephesians, chapter 6, and verse 7. You see, we're making quick transitions today. It's not just one subject, but a series of spiritual insights. And I love this portion of the word of God.

Do you know, it's interesting that there are more instructions in the New Testament to slaves than there are to almost any class of people. Did you ever think of that? More instructions in the New Testament to slaves than to almost any other class of people. And here's a section that has to do with slaves, but I'm particularly thinking of verse 7, with goodwill doing service as to the Lord and not to men.

This was written to slaves. With goodwill doing service to the Lord and not to men. Now, the spiritual insight I get out of this, and actually out of the whole section, although I've just chosen that verse, the spiritual insight is this.

Any honorable work, no matter how menial, can be done to the glory of God. Any honorable work, no matter how menial, can be done to the glory of God. I don't know what these slaves were doing.

I don't suppose they were picking cotton, but probably something similar to that over in that culture. And notice these expressions. Verse 5, it says, As unto Christ.

I would be surprised that a lot of people here that get very restive in your occupation, you get very restive and you're looking for the perfect job. You're looking for the job that has no disagreeable factors to it. I don't think such a job exists, frankly, so I wouldn't look any further if I were you.

But these were disagreeable jobs these people were doing, and Paul says, verse 5, As unto Christ. Verse 6, the servants of Christ doing the will of God. These people weren't up in a pulpit.

They were doing household chores and farm chores and all the rest. And he says, the servants of Christ doing the will of God. It says, verse 7, Doing service as to the Lord.

And it says in verse 8 that they would be rewarded for doing a good job. Isn't that wonderful? That's the context. Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

Well, that's beautiful. That's why Mrs. Billy Graham has that little plaque over her kitchen sink. It says, Divine service is conducted here three times daily.

That's right. You mean you can wash dishes to the glory of God? Yes, of course you can. Can you mop a floor to the glory of God? Yes, of course you can.

There are some things that aren't honorable for the child of God. You can't do those to the glory of God. But any honorable work, no matter how menial it might be, can be done to the glory of God.

There's another precious lesson in this section, too, and that is this. No matter how low a person may be on the social ladder, no matter how low, how far down he may be on the social totem pole, he is not excluded from the best blessings of Christianity. Now, I think that's lovely, don't you? He is not excluded from the best blessings of the Christian faith, knowing that whatsoever thing any man doeth, whether he be bond or free, slave or free, the same shall he receive of the Lord.

And so we might well pray, teach me, my God and King, in all things Thee to see, and what I do in anything to do it as for Thee. No honorable work, no matter how menial, but what can be done to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ with goodwill, doing service as to the Lord and not to men? And he's watching it all, and he knows what's done for him, and he's going to reward it all. Deeds of merit, as we thought them, he will show us, were but sin.

Little things we had forgotten, he will show us, were for him. Okay, the next one is found back in 2 Kings chapter 4 and verse 13. 2 Kings chapter 4 and verse 13.

I suppose you could do this with any verse in the Bible, could you? I suppose that's what the Bible's all about. We believe that. We believe that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable.

And I think it's a great joy to just do this, to go to a verse and extract the honey from it, something that will help me in my practical life. 2 Kings chapter 4 and verse 13. Well, this is the story about Elisha, and he was an itinerant prophet, of course, and there was this believing lady and her husband, and they had a

home, and Elisha used to drop in from time to time for hospitality.

And one day this woman said to her husband, you know, why don't we build a room especially for this man of God? Why don't we have a room there and just furnish it so that any time he comes along, it's there for him? Really a wonderful thing, wasn't it? Humbly fitted out. And of course, Elisha was very much impressed, and in verse 12 he said to Gehazi, his servant, call this Shunammite and ask her, what can we do? Would she like to be invited to a tea at the royal palace, or how would she like an introduction to the headmen down at the Pentagon? And the spiritual insight I would like to share with you at this time, she answered at the end of verse 13, I dwell among mine own people. It's really beautiful to me, although I have to confess once again when I read that, well, they say, what connection did her answer have with the question that was asked of her? They said, do you want an introduction to the king, or do you want an introduction to the captain of the army, the commander-in-chief of the army? And she said, I dwell among mine own people.

What did she ever mean by that? I dwell among my own people. It means I'm happy to be among the people where God has put me. I don't really aspire to mingle with the upper crust.

I have no desire to hobnob with famous people. That's what she's saying. She's saying, I love the people of God, and my greatest joy is to be with them.

They're to me the excellence of the earth. You know, she was a wise woman. Some people are never satisfied with their lot in life, and it takes people a long time to learn that many of the choicest people on the earth, they never make the front page of the paper.

They never even make the society page of the paper, about the only page they ever make is the obituary page, but the excellence of the earth. I feel that I know a little bit about the evangelical world in general. I've met some of the big names in the evangelical world.

I hope I don't disappoint you when I, I hope I don't shock you when I say this. Largely, the experience has been disappointing. I guess I know too much about what goes on behind the scenes.

Largely, the experience has been disappointing. I read the ballyhoo in the Christian press, and then I get to know what's really going on behind the scenes, and really it's a tremendous letdown. Give me the humble, godly, solid citizens, unknown as far as this world is concerned, but well known in heaven.

I think Tozer said it well. She said, the woman said, I dwell among mine own people. Tozer said it in other words.

He said, I believe in saints. I've met the comics. I've met the promoters.

I've met the founder who puts his name on the front of the building so people will know he founded it. I've met converted cowboys, not too well converted. I've met all kinds of weird Christians throughout the United States and Canada, but my heart is looking for saints.

I want to meet the people who are like the Lord Jesus. Actually, what we want and ought to have is the beauty of the Lord our God in human breasts. A winsome, magnetic saint is worth 500 promoters and gadgeteers and religious engineers.

Don't you think that's what he was saying? He was saying, I dwell among my own people. I like that. A winsome, magnetic saint is worth 500 promoters and gadgeteers and religious engineers.

And then, if I could read that statement from Charles Simeon once again, he said, From the first day I set off to the present hour, my intercourse has been with the excellence of the earth, and every one of them striving to the utmost of his power to show me kindness for the Lord's sake. So, when I read that, this woman, this Shunite woman, I think that's beautiful. I like that.

I want to be like that. I dwell among my own people. I'm happy with the Christian people among whom God has placed me.

I thank God on my knees for them. Okay, now if we just could go on. Acts chapter 4 and verse 29.

Acts 4 and 29. And here's the early Christians, and at the time of persecution, and things are really going rough. Their friends are in and out of jail, and the jails are the best evangelized places in that day.

If there's ever going to be a revival, it's going to break out in the jails there. And in verse 29, it says, And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word. Now, I have to read this spiritual insight in it, but I see something here, and that is this.

The early Christians didn't wait for their circumstances to change. They glorified God in whatever circumstances existed. Now, this has been helpful to me, because I have a tendency to think, well, I'll wait till things get better, and then I'll do it for Jesus.

You know? The early Christians didn't wait for circumstances to change. They glorified God in the circumstances. Notice, And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and get us out of this fix.

Is that what it was? No. Get us out of this fix so we can serve you better. No.

Now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word. The Christian student remains uninvolved in active service. He waits till he gets through school.

Sounds reasonable, doesn't it? Then he becomes a graduate, and let's say romance comes upon the scene, and marriage, while you wait till you settle down in suburbia with hot and cold folding doors and all the rest. And then the matter of employment and family. Well, they keep them from serving the Lord, don't they? You wait while you wait.

Employment, I can't do it now. I'll put it off. I'll put it off to my retirement.

He waits for retirement and a life when he can serve the Lord, and his vision is gone, and his energy is gone, and he settles down to a life of leisure. Or perhaps we're in the assembly, and there's someone there in the assembly who just rubs us the wrong way, you know? And you say, well, I'll just wait. Maybe we don't ever say this, but I think we think of something.

I think we think what we really need is a first, a few first class funerals, you know, and after those, then I'll serve the Lord. Is that nervous laughter that I hear? People that rub you the wrong way have surprising longevity. Have you ever noticed that? Maybe some of our doctor friends could explain that nuance to us, but it's true.

It's true. Joseph didn't wait. He was taken down to Egypt, and he lived for God no matter what the circumstances were.

It's a good thing he didn't wait. It would have been too late. Daniel didn't wait.

He was God's man. I tell you, it's a thrill to read the book of Daniel. The only jittery people I find in the book of Daniel were men like Nebuchadnezzar.

The believers all had perfect peace and poise, and they were going on for God. Paul didn't wait. No, no.

He served God in the present circumstances. You see, circumstances are never ideal in life, are they? They're never ideal. Nothing's ever ideal in this life.

And he that observeth the wind will not sow, or the clouds. And incidentally, circumstances aren't going to improve either. They're going to get worse all the time.

And so, as in salvation, so in the matter of serving the Lord, now is the accepted time. I leave that spiritual insight with you. The early Christians didn't wait for circumstances to improve.

They glorified God in whatever the present circumstances were. Just one final one, and that's found in the book of James, chapter 1 and verse 22, and with this I close. James, chapter 1 and verse 22, and there you read these lovely words, and I think it's fitting for us to close this section anyway with this verse.

It says, "...be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own self." My, this speaks powerfully to me, because there is a subtle deception that comes into my mind that by attending conferences and meetings and conventions and seminars, I'm doing the work of God. There's a subtle delusion that comes into my mind that says that. That by sitting under the ministry of the word of God, I'm doing the work of God.

Actually, of course, it isn't so. Sitting under the ministry of the word of God increases my responsibility, and I'm not necessarily doing the work of God by it. I'm deceiving myself if I think that.

I'm deceiving myself into thinking that I'm spiritual when I might be carnal, that I'm growing when I might be stagnant, that I'm wise when I might be foolish. Jesus said that the wise man is the man who comes to him and hears his sayings and does them. That's it.

The man who comes to him and hears his sayings and does them. Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only. It's not enough to listen to a message and to say, what a marvelous message.

The test of a good sermon is not saying, that was a good sermon. The test is when people go out and say, I must do something about it. Someone has said that a good sermon not only stretches the mind and warms the heart and tans the hide, but provokes the will.

And I believe that's true. A good sermon stretches the mind, warms the heart, tans the hide, and provokes the will. A preacher was once in the middle of his message, and he said, oh by the way, what was the first hymn that we sang before the service, at the beginning of the service? Nobody in the audience knew.

He said, um, what was the scripture portion that was read? Nobody in the audience knew. He said, what were the announcements that were made? Nobody in the audience knew. We become sermon testers, don't we? But the word of God says, be doers of the word, and not just hearers only.

Before every meeting, I think it would be a good thing for us to ask ourselves, why did I come? Am I willing to have God speak to me personally? And will I do what he tells me to do? The Dead Sea, you know, has a lot of input, has no outflow, and that's why it's dead. And no wonder the Savior asked that piercing question, why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say? Spiritual insight, not just to hear, not just to listen. We want to translate it into action.

God's will for you and me is that the word might become flesh in our lives. May the Lord bless his word to our hearts.

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