

(Secret of Paul's Authority) 7. Paul Depended Entirely on God

by Zac Poonen

The secret of Paul's authority was his dependence on God, which was demonstrated through his prayer life and his willingness to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 43:00

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:24-27, Matthew 13:3-9, Mark 1:4-8, Luke 10:2, 1 Corinthians 2:4-5, 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Topics: "Authority"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the different types of hearts when it comes to receiving the word of God. Some hearts are shallow and easily swayed by the cares of the world, riches, and lust, causing the word to be choked out. The preacher emphasizes the importance of holding fast and running the race, relying on God rather than qualifications or experience. He warns against depending on gadgets, techniques, and money to serve the Lord, citing the example of Jesus feeding the multitude with just a little boy's offering of five loaves and two fishes. The sermon emphasizes that it is not money or material resources that serve the Lord, but rather God's blessing.

Transcript

Well, I do want to share the views expressed by our brother Spar, how much of a blessing it has been to me as well to fellowship with you these days, to share together in God's Word. It's been a real blessing to my own heart to see the love and fellowship that I've experienced from the different ones I've met. And for you who have come so faithfully and encouraged us, upholding us in prayer and encouraging us by coming, I trust that what we have heard in these days will produce lasting fruit in our lives.

I think of the words of Jesus when he said that he was like a sower who sowed the seed. And the seed was the same seed, the sower was the same sower, and yet different results were produced and different harvests, because the ground into which the word fell was different in different cases. So you see, to me that's a warning, that I can sit in a meeting along with others and hear the same messages from the same speaker evening after evening, and at the end of it all someone else may have got a tremendous blessing out of it, and I may just go home with something superficial, because it depends on the type of heart that receives the word.

Some hearts are like ground without much depth of earth, it falls in, they're so excited, and they really feel they have dedicated themselves now, but it only lasts a few days, or a few weeks. And then by the time next year's convention comes along, we are back where we started. The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, the lusts of other things come in and choke the word.

You know, the devil is not going to sit quiet, he is here, and he's going to be working hard. I remember hearing the story of a lady, a good Christian lady who would never speak evil of anyone, anyone in the world. She always had something good to say about, she felt there was something good to be seen in everyone, and she decided she'd look only at that, and someone decided to test her on this, and said, well, what do you think about the devil? She said, well, there's one good thing about him, he works so hard.

And that's true, he's a full-time worker. Oh yes, he doesn't let up, and you're going to see that in the next week. That word which has been sown, you will see how the devil comes to choke it, to prevent it from coming out into fruitfulness, by drawing you away into some love for the world somewhere, into a neglect of the word of God, into some unholy marriage alliance, into some love for money, something like this.

You see, he's on the alert to see where he can trip us up. So we need to pray that God will help the words that we have received to sink deep down and take root in us. You know, you can't take root in one day.

We have to think and meditate on what we have heard, and let it sink in, and maintain our dedication to God. We've been thinking of the secret of Paul's authority in these days. We have seen how it is God's will that all of us should have spiritual authority in our lives.

And you know, brothers and sisters, when we have spiritual authority, when we have the authority of God, when we have the Holy Spirit backing us up in our life and our ministry, you'll find it makes up for many of our other limitations, makes up for all the other limitations that we have in our life. We may not have gifts and abilities, we may not have much to offer to the Lord, but if we have followed in the footsteps of Christ and Paul, and if we have that divine authority in our lives, it will make up for all our limitations. This is the one thing we need in our life.

This is the one thing we should covet. We should be willing to pay any price for it. We must be willing to fulfill the conditions that we have seen in Paul's life.

And I believe that we shall know that authority in our life and ministry as well if we follow in his steps. This is why you know Paul could look at others and say, Be ye followers of me, that I am of Christ. He was an earthen vessel as we have seen, but an earthen vessel which contained a treasure.

And it didn't matter how weak the earthen vessel was, didn't matter how ugly the earthen vessel was, didn't matter how unqualified the earthen vessel was, didn't matter what limitations the earthen vessel had, if only that earthen vessel would allow the treasure within to shine out, if only that earthen vessel would be willing to be broken. Like we heard earlier this evening, when the alabaster box was broken, the odor of the ointment filled the house. The same truth throughout Scripture.

We've got within us the treasure. But if we are not willing to let this alabaster box of ourself be broken, the odor of Christ, the sweet flavor of Christ, is not going to fill this city. What a tremendous thing it will mean for Singapore if every one of us here are determined to be men and women who are going to have at any cost spiritual authority in our lives.

I tell you, it'll turn the city upside down. May the Lord help us to be so. I'd like to speak this evening on another reason why Paul had authority in his life.

If you turn to Philippians 3, verse 3, we read, Paul says, We are the circumcision who worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and we have no confidence in the flesh. Paul was one who depended for his life and his ministry entirely upon God. He depended entirely upon God and nothing else.

The secret of his success was God. No other reason. This is another secret of why Paul had authority in his life.

He depended entirely upon God. As he says in this verse, I have no confidence in myself. The world looks for self-confident people.

The business world looks for people who have an air of self-confidence about them. But Christ is looking for the opposite. He is looking for people who have no confidence in themselves, but whose entire confidence is in Christ and God, who can say, The Lord God will help me, therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I'm not going to turn back.

I know I will not be ashamed. Who is there who can contend with me? Like it's said in Isaiah chapter 50. That's how Paul was.

He knew that God was behind him. He knew that God would help him, and therefore he did not have a fear. Therefore his ministry was a success.

First of all, we see this in the fact that Paul was a man of prayer. You remember when God told Ananias in Damascus to go and meet Saul of Tarsus. And you remember what the Lord told Ananias would be the identifying mark of this man.

He said, When you go down to the street called Straits, Acts chapter 9, and you go to the house of Judas, you'll find there a man. And behold, he is praying. That's how he started his life.

That's how it was all through his life. He was a man of prayer. 1 Thessalonians 5, 17.

He told others, Pray without ceasing. Now, why did he have to pray? It was not just a question of fulfilling a routine. You know, we hear somebody say, We must pray every day, and so we make it a part of our routine and pray.

Well, that's a good thing. But it was not just that with Paul. To Paul, prayer meant something more than that.

It was an expression of his utter dependence upon God for his life and his ministry. And you know, prayer is something that comes out of one's life. It's not just the words that we utter that mean so much to God.

It's not the length of our prayer, but the life that backs up. The Bible says, The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Not just any ordinary believer.

One who is a righteous man, his prayer has great effect in heaven. And it says there about Elijah. He just prayed a prayer which was just less than one minute in length.

And the fire came from heaven. You read in 1 Kings 18. But the priests of Baal, they prayed for so long, no fire came from heaven.

See, it's not the length of our prayer, but it's the life that backs up that prayer. And to Paul, prayer was an expression of his dependence upon God for his ministry. He did not depend on money.

He did not feel that money was the most important thing. He did not depend on his Bible knowledge. He knew the scriptures thoroughly.

From Genesis to Malachi, he knew the whole thing. But he didn't depend on that. He didn't depend on his qualifications or his experience or any such thing.

He depended on God. You know, brothers and sisters, this is the danger in our day. People, we have so many means available to us to serve the Lord.

We have gadgets and electronic equipment to serve the Lord. And we have audio-visual aids and we have intensive training. And so many techniques to serve the Lord.

And all unconsciously we depend on them. But I tell you this. And sometimes we feel that what we need is money.

And if we have money, we feel we can serve the Lord. You remember when Jesus wanted to feed the 5,000. In John chapter 6 we read, he asked Philip first of all, just to test him.

How are we going to feed this multitude? Just look out at Singapore and say, how are we going to feed this multitude? But something like that. And Philip made a quick calculation in his mind. He was just like us.

And he said, we need at least 200 pennies to evangelize these people. It's cash we need. If we have that, we can feed the multitude.

But Jesus taught him and all the other disciples that day, he did not need 200 pennies. One little boy with five loaves and two fishes was enough. If he gave his all to the Lord.

When the Lord took that all from that little boy, he fed the whole multitude. And there were 12 baskets left over. Teaching the disciples.

He gave them each one basket to carry home. So that they would meditate on the way as they carried this basket home. It's not money.

That's not how we serve the Lord. But it's God's blessing. Five loaves with the anointing of God upon it.

It's more than enough for the multitude. One little life. You may be young.

Unqualified. You may not have the opportunity to go for theological training. Makes no difference to God.

You may not have money. You may not have the ability. But if you can cast yourself upon God.

Say, Lord, I want the power of your Holy Spirit. I tell you, that will make up. It will do much more than all these other things.

God's work is not done by economic power. By electronic power. By any human mind.

But by the power of the Holy Spirit. And we, in the 20th century, are in grave danger of forgetting that fact. God's work does not depend, my friend, on money, or theological training, or qualifications, or anything.

It depends on this. Whether you have no confidence in yourself. That's what Paul says in this verse.

We are the circumcision. What was it that marked out the people of God in the Old Testament? The one thing that marked out the people of God in the Old Testament, the Jews, was circumcision. They were the only people in the whole world who were circumcised.

That identified them as the people with whom God had made a covenant. And you know, Philippians 3.3 is the New Testament interpretation of the meaning of circumcision. Philippians 3.3, Paul says, we are the circumcision now.

The spiritual, who have been spiritually circumcised, meaning we have no confidence in ourselves. That's the meaning of circumcision. We have no confidence in ourselves.

We lean upon God. We don't lean upon anything human. And this was what prayer meant to Paul.

It's not a matter of routine. It's not a matter of filling a certain number of minutes every day. Oh no! He didn't descend to such carnal levels.

He leaned upon God. When he said pray without ceasing, he meant lean upon God perpetually, without ceasing, all the time. And I believe this is the way it should be with us in this day.

There should be no human explanation for our life or our ministry. If your ministry can be explained by anything human, by the fact that you've got plenty of money to keep carrying on serving the Lord, that's the explanation for our service. Or because we have got enough theological training to serve the Lord.

If that's the explanation for our service, we are building on sand. There should be no human explanation for the ministry of a true servant of God. Was there any explanation for the ministry of John the Baptist? Which college did he go to? Which rich businessman was backing him financially? Did he get a man to do an advertising campaign for him in Jerusalem? Oh no! All these modern-day methods where some Christian workers have boosted up the greatest so-and-so and the greatest so-and-so and the greatest this, that and the other.

John the Baptist had nothing like that. He didn't do a single miracle. But Jesus said there was no greater prophet born of women than that man.

Because, you know, he spent years alone with God. And God laid his hand on him, anointed him with the Holy Spirit, filled him and sent him out as a servant. That's what we need.

We need young people like that in Singapore, who know what it is to wait on God, to know his anointing, to know what it is to be filled with the Holy Spirit and go out to serve God. It's so important. Paul's ministry, he tells us also that it was through prayer that he completed his ministry, you know.

Preaching alone does not do the job. Paul prayed for everyone to whom he preached. To every church that he writes, he says, I'm praying for you.

He preached to them and he knew that that didn't complete the job. He prayed for them. Because he knew that God had appointed him to deliver souls from the clutches of the devil.

And he knew that this was no easy job. And so he gave himself to prayer that God would set them free. You know what he says in 2 Corinthians 10, verse 4? He says, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds.

Paul fought the devil who was holding these men in his grip in prayer. That's why his preaching was effective. His preaching would not have been effective if he had not prayed that God would set those people free from the clutches of the devil.

And this is where many a modern day preacher fails. Because he feels that when he has preached and his sermon has gone very well, that he's done the job well. But Paul knew that that was not enough.

He knew that he had to pray and release them. I tell you, prayer like that is hard work. And the modern day Christian is lazy.

He prefers, like the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, to sleep rather than pray. People have many excuses as to why they sleep. But if only we would be gripped, as I said the other day, with the same compassion that Jesus had.

If only we would allow God to bring us into a fellowship with his own heart, so that we look at other people like he looked at them. And long for that deliverance, we would be willing to pay any price, even in prayer, that God would set them free. In the quiet place, when nobody's seeing us, in the secret place, we would get along with God and lay hold of him for others.

That's how Paul was. His whole ministry was dependent on God. He had no confidence in himself.

He had no confidence even in his preaching. He didn't believe that merely because he preached to wonderful servant people would be delivered. No.

He didn't lean upon himself or even his servants. He knew that only God could set them free. And so when he had finished preaching, he got along with God.

He said, Lord, set them free. Set them free. Don't let them just have knowledge, but deliver them.

Paul was not only a man of prayer, but as I've already referred to it, he was a man filled with the Holy Spirit. One of the things we see in Acts chapter 9, when Ananias came and laid his hands on him, was that he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Now, I believe it's impossible for a man to be filled with the Spirit, unless he's first of all emptied of his own self-sufficiency.

Just like a glass, if it's full of a whole lot of other muck, dirt and rubbish and stones, you can't fill it with any water. But it's got to be emptied first, then cleansed and filled. And so when we come to God to be filled with the Holy Spirit, we have to be emptied and cleansed before we can be filled.

And it's no use our asking God to fill us with the Holy Spirit if we are not willing to be emptied and cleansed first of all. There are things that God has spoken to some of you this week. Have you done anything about it? No.

You're still hanging on to that relationship with that boyfriend and girlfriend, even though God's spoken to you so clearly to break it up, because it's dishonoring to his name. Well, you can pray till all eternity for God to fill you with the Spirit. He'll never fill you, because your heart is full of something else.

You've got some ambition for the future, which you haven't yet yielded up to God. There's something in the glass, and God says, I won't fill it till it's empty. How many are there who are willing to say, Now, Lord, You take all my ambitions, shatter them.

I don't care if You will give me the power of Your Spirit to serve You. I believe there comes a choice like that in our lives. When I joined the Indian Navy, I was just 15 years old, and that was 17 years ago, and I said, Lord, I didn't say Lord, I mean, I wasn't born again, but my ambition was to be the Admiral of the Indian Navy.

Then, four and a half years later, when I was 19 and a half, Jesus Christ came into my life, and He gave me something new to live for. And immediately, there began a tussle. I knew I couldn't have this and the other, and I had to make a choice.

And I believe in the life of every young man, usually before he's 25, sometimes earlier, sometimes before he's 20. There comes a time when he's got to make a choice, and that choice which he makes then usually determines the course, the rest of his life. Perhaps that time has come in some of your lives now.

I know the time when it came in my life, and I had to make a clear-cut choice whether I was going to continue with my ambition or whether I was going to say, Lord, I don't want that, but you give me what you have. Some of you may have ambitions. Are you willing to give them up? I believe this is very, very practical.

When Paul came and gave himself to the Lord, he was filled with the Spirit because he emptied himself. He didn't want anything for himself. He was emptied of all self-sufficiency, any plans that he had for the future, he gave them all up.

And when the Holy Spirit filled him, the Holy Spirit did many things for Paul. I just want to mention a few of those. The Holy Spirit taught Paul God's Word.

He gave him revelation on the Scripture. In 1 Corinthians chapter 1, you know, Paul says about how the wise people couldn't understand God. The wise Jews and the wise Greeks, they couldn't understand Jesus Christ when he came, they crucified him.

But God chose the foolish and the despised, gave them spiritual revelation so that they could see who Christ was. This is a mistake that many Christians make in our day. They think they can understand the Bible with their human wisdom.

No. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit to understand the Bible properly. That's the most important requirement to understand the Bible.

He is the greatest professor of theology, the Holy Spirit of God. If he fills your life, he'll teach you things no man can ever teach you. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2, verses 9 and 10, I has not seen, neither has ye heard what God has revealed, what God has prepared for those who love him, but he has revealed them unto us by his Spirit.

He has revealed them. We cannot know the Scriptures apart from our really being under the control of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Otherwise, our knowledge of the Scriptures will be mere theological information in our minds, just like I studied geography or physics or mathematics.

It'll be just here. It won't be revelation to my soul. And there's a vast difference.

You can be evangelical, you can be fundamental, and yet not taught by the Holy Spirit. You know, the Pharisees in Jesus' day were thorough fundamentalists, but they crucified Jesus Christ. And the descendants of the Pharisees are in the midst of evangelical Christendom today, who know the Scriptures academically.

We all recognize that man's righteousness is of no avail when it comes to inheriting the kingdom of God. But we have not recognized that man's wisdom is also of no avail when it comes to understanding the things of God. This is a truth we need to learn.

Just like man's righteousness can never take you into the kingdom of God, you need to say, Lord, my righteousness is a rotten, filthy rag. Give me the righteousness of Christ. And then you have an entry into heaven.

Likewise, to understand the Scriptures, I have to say, Lord, my wisdom is no use. Give me the revelation of your Holy Spirit. That's what Paul got.

The Holy Spirit taught Paul, and he knew the Word as a living Word, not merely the academic theological information. That's not what he got from the Word. And when he preached, 1 Corinthians 2, he says, When I came to you, I determined that I was not going to speak with excellency of speech or wisdom.

He could have. He was a brilliant man. Paul's mind was perhaps one of the most brilliant minds this world has ever seen.

And he could have spoken with excellency of speech and wisdom, but he put it aside. And he says, My speech and my preaching was not with man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Holy Spirit and power. He knew that man's wisdom, which went from Paul's head, would only reach people's head.

And he was not just interested in reaching people's head. His ministry came from his heart, and it went to people's hearts. This is what God is looking for.

It comes through the fullness of the Holy Spirit. It comes to those who have cast away all confidence in themselves, who have thrown away all their ambitions for the future, emptied themselves completely, said, Lord, I have no will of my own. You can choose for me anything you like.

You can choose any job for me you like. You can choose any person you like for me to get married to. You can choose any place for me to go and work in.

I have no choice in matters big or small. I'm empty. Well, such people can be filled, and they'll have revelation on the Scripture.

And the Holy Spirit also helped Paul to obey God's word, to serve God, and to endure until the end. You know, we read in 2 Corinthians 12 how God gave Paul a thorn in the flesh to keep him weak. And he says these remarkable words, When I am weak, then I am strong.

Now, the natural mind cannot understand this. The ordinary human being cannot understand it. But this is a mystery that the wholehearted Christian understands.

It's only when he's weak in himself, with five loaves and two fishes, that he's strong to feed the five thousand, if it's given over to God completely. Think of that little boy who came with five loaves and two fishes. And when he gave it to Jesus, his hands were empty.

There was nothing left. And the Lord could use that to feed the five thousand. When I am weak, emptied completely, then God can fill me, and I will be strong.

That's the meaning of that verse, 2 Corinthians 12, 10. When I am weak, then am I strong. Like Abraham.

You know the story of Abraham? He was a man whom God said, I'm going to give you a son. And Abraham's wife was barren, could not produce a child. And so Abraham thought, well, God's made a promise to me, I must help God out of this tight spot.

He has made a promise, and now he's not able to fulfill it. So I must help God out. And so he got married to somebody else, and had a son, and said, Lord, here's Ishmael.

I'll just help you out to fulfill your promise, because it was impossible. You couldn't do it. You needed my help, so here it is.

Oh, that Ishmael might live before you. And God said, nothing done. I don't want him.

He's produced in your strength. He may be a good, smart boy, nothing wrong with him. Physically alright, mentally alright, but I can't help it.

Produced in your strength. And God waited and waited till Abraham became impotent, he came to zero. Then even if he tried, he couldn't help God to get a son.

Then God said, alright, now I can give you a son. Because you've come to an end of yourself. Now you have become weak, till now you were too strong.

Till now you were too full of your own ability. Now you're weak. Now I can take you.

Now I'm going to give you and Sarah a son. And through that son, the whole world will be blessed. And that promise was fulfilled.

That's God's way. You know, he waits, till we come to an end of ourselves. All the time we are trying to help God to do this, that and the other, and he is waiting.

All the Ishmael's reproduced. God says, I can't accept that. All the multitudes of Ishmael's that there will be at the judgment seat of Christ, which God will reject.

They're all produced in your strength, in your own self-sufficiency. I don't want it. How few there are of Christian work, which can be called a work of faith.

Work in dependence upon God, which has no human explanation for it. How few of Christian ministry today is in the power of the almighty God, in the power and anointing of God's Holy Spirit. So much is dependent on human factors.

All Ishmael's. So impressive perhaps, before men, but unacceptable to God. You remember the story of Moses? God told Moses that he was going to be the leader of his people.

But when did he tell him that? After he had been broken. At the age of 40, Moses, who had been trained in the best academies of Egypt, a brilliant orator, and great leader, he thought, surely I'm able to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt. He thought he was well qualified, he had got all the degrees, and he got all the qualifications, all the knowledge, all the ability.

And he tried to deliver the people of Israel, and he failed. God took him out to his university, 40 years in the wilderness, feeding sheep, all by himself. And he broke him, emptied him, till Moses came to zero.

And at the age of 80, God comes to Moses and said, now I can use you. Moses said, Lord, I'm not able. I'm not able.

I can't speak. The same man who 40 years earlier thought he was so qualified, now he's broken. God said, now I can use you.

And at the age of 40, what did Moses do? He took one Egyptian and buried him under the sand. That's all. At the age of 80, in the strength of God, at the age of 80, in the strength of God, he buried the whole Egyptian army under the Red Sea.

Do you see the difference? What can be produced in human strength and in the power of God. It doesn't depend on your abilities or your qualifications. It does depend on how much you have emptied yourself of your self-confidence, self-sufficiency, how much you have given yourself over to God completely.

That was Paul. He kept himself weak. Lord, I'm nothing.

He leaned upon God perpetually, leaned upon Him in prayer, leaned upon Him to be perpetually filled with the Holy Spirit day by day for every ministry. And thus in the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul served God. God could accept his service.

And when Paul comes to the end of his life, you know what he says? 2 Timothy 4, verse 7. When he comes to the end of his life, he says, I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith.

Look what Paul says. He says, he doesn't say, I have traveled to so many countries. No.

And those were not the things he gloried in. I preached in so many places. No.

He says, I fought a good fight. I finished my course. I kept the faith.

Tremendous. Just think of it seriously. If you, when you come to the end of your life, can say that.

I fought a good fight. I finished my course. I kept the faith.

I believe there are very, very few Christians who would be able to say that. Paul could say that because he always lived in a state of perpetual self-emptiness and emptied of self-sufficiency in a state where he recognized his own weakness so that he leaned upon God. This is what the Lord is teaching us to do.

To lean upon Him day by day, moment by moment. Seek for the power of His Holy Spirit with all our hearts. Then we too shall be able to say that when we come to the end of our lives.

Of course, he had a lot of suffering to go through. But if you were to go up to heaven today and you were to ask Paul, well, Brother Paul, do you have any regrets? You know, you chose a hard path. You could have just taken an easy path.

You could have perhaps taken an easier ministry. Not such a hard ministry where you had to be beaten and persecuted and ridiculed and you didn't become famous and all this. And Paul would say no.

I have no regret. I have no regret that I gave my all to the Lord the day I met Him on the Damascus Road and I never took back anything from the altar. He has no regret.

Those are the people in heaven who have no regret. The people who the day God spoke to them to surrender all, they placed all on the altar, never took anything back. Paul has no regret in heaven today.

Who are the people who are regretting? Go to Demas, whom you read of in verse 10 of the same chapter. Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world. He looked for a little comfort, a little money, something like that, I don't know, to get married to some unconverted girl perhaps and forsook Paul.

Go and ask Demas today whether he has any regrets. He has plenty of them. Oh, I wish I hadn't gone back to the world.

That's what he'd say today. There are many people like that. When we come to the end of our life, and we look back, there are many people who are going to say, I wish when God had spoken to me that week in the Keswick Convention, I wish I had stuck on to my dedication instead of going back to the world.

I remember hearing the story of people called the Moravian Brethren 200 years ago. One of the greatest missionary movements the world has seen from the heart of Europe. Dedicated men who waited on God and were filled with the Holy Spirit.

And two of their number, they heard that in the West Indies there was an island where there were only slaves. Nobody was allowed on that island except slaves. So these two people had a great burden to give those slaves the gospel.

How to reach them? The master of that island, he owned the whole island, he said, nobody can come here who is not a slave. You know what they did? They sold themselves as slaves for the rest of their lives to give the gospel to those slaves on that island. There were two other Moravians filled with the Holy Spirit who went to Africa.

In those days there was no cure for leprosy. And in the heart of Africa there was a leper colony. And nobody who went into that could come out for fear that the disease would spread.

And these two people had a great burden to give the gospel to these lepers. And they went in for the rest of their lives to go into that leper colony to give them the gospel. Oh yes, they suffered.

They didn't make money in this world. They didn't become famous. They didn't become big shots and VIPs.

They had a lot of suffering. But you go to them today in heaven. Go to those brethren today in heaven and ask them, do you feel sorry that you sold yourself as slaves and went into that leper colony? They'll say no.

We're so happy that we gave all to Jesus, the one life that he gave to us. We are so glad we didn't keep it for ourselves. You know, this is not fiction or fantasy.

This is true. The people who have no regret in eternity are the people who have said, Lord, I give my all to thee. And no matter what the cost, I'm not going back.

I put my hand to the plow and I'm not going to look back at any cost. It's not the one who starts the race well that wins, but the one who finishes. You go to the marathon race in the Olympics.

Anyone can take part. Even I can take part. I can go in stock and I can run pretty well for the first half a mile.

But it's after that that the test comes. Maybe the first hundred yards, I may be leading, but I don't get a prize for leading in the first hundred yards, the marathon race. And so many of you who have heard the word of God and God's spoken to you and you've got a zeal now, how long is it going to last? Just for a hundred yards? There's no prize for that.

The Bible says we have to hold fast, run. Are you going to finish? Is there going to be a prize waiting for you? I remember hearing of some Christians in Vietnam gone through tremendous suffering with all that war in that country for so many years. So much suffering.

And through it all, some of them just faithful to the Lord. And this is what they said. They said that there's still more suffering ahead of us, but we are going on because at the end of the road, Jesus is waiting for us.

You know, they've got a vision of the Lord Jesus at the end of the road waiting for them. And all the things of earth have become strangely dim because they have seen the glory of God. Now God's looking for such people, not merely hearers of the word, but people who will give their all to Him, who will say, I will not offer to God that which costs me nothing.

Let us pray. Has God spoken to your heart in these days? Maybe you don't have qualifications. Maybe you don't have abilities.

Maybe you don't have gifts. But if you're like that boy with five loaves and two fishes and say, how can I ever serve God? Remember, Jesus can do more through you than with all these other fellows who've got so many qualifications. If you will give your all to Him and seek Him with all your heart, that you might be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Will you give your all to Him?

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/26/SID26048.mp3>

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