

# God's Purpose

by Alan Redpath

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of submission to God's authority in order to experience power and fulfill God's purpose.*

**Duration:** 42:20

**Scripture:** Matthew 8:10, Mark 8:35, Mark 8:38, Luke 7:6-8, Luke 9:23, John 3:16

**Topics:** "God's Purpose"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of submitting to the Lordship and sovereignty of Jesus. He highlights that while humans have achieved great advancements in various fields, they still struggle to conquer themselves. The speaker uses the analogy of three men passing by a house to illustrate the difference between claiming ownership, building, and actually living in a house. He then discusses the centurion in Luke chapter seven as an example of someone who understood the principle of submission and authority. The sermon concludes with a reference to Watchman Ni, a Chinese Christian who has written about the importance of surrendering to God's power and purpose.

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## Transcript

I feel almost like Elijah who said, I, even I only am left, because you've all deserted me. I have at least Mrs Mitchell behind me to look after me. Shall we read together from Luke chapter 7, the seventh chapter of Luke's gospel.

Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum, and a certain centurion servant who was dear unto him was sick and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying that he was worthy for whom he should do this, for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.

Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof. Wherefore, neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee, but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.

For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh, and to my servant, do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard

these things, he marveled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole, that had been sick.

Let us just bow for a moment before the Lord of the Word. Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, in full and glad surrender, I give myself to thee, O Master. Let this evening be an evening of encounter with the living Lord Jesus, our triumphant Master, the Head of the Church.

And may there be a submission to his authority that will bring glory to thy name, and blessing to this city, far beyond the bounds of this fellowship. We thank thee for the possibilities that exist in this congregation tonight, and every life where Jesus Christ is enthroned. Lord, have thine own way with every one of us, we pray thee.

And if we're not willing, make us willing to be made willing. We ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

The eighth chapter of the seventh, the eighth verse of the seventh chapter of Luke's Gospel, the words of the centurion, for I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, go, and he goeth, and to another, come, and he cometh, and to my servant, do this, and he doeth it. It's always a concern of those of us who share the responsibility of the ministry at a convention of this kind, that as we do so, the Lord may really make an impact upon our lives and upon the congregation. And as we share together in all the ministries of song and of word that have come to us through many channels and instruments in his service, I feel tonight somehow that there's a great hunger in our heart for reality.

The prayer that has been echoing in my mind through this day is that word of a hymn which says, oh, to be saved from myself, dear Lord, oh, to be lost in thee, oh, that it may be no more I, but Christ who lives in me. I believe that to be the desire of certainties of my heart, and I'm sure that it is shared by many of you, if you would express it in one word, our concern would be that as the outcome of what we've heard and had spoken to us, we're so conscious of our lack of power, not just power to serve or power to preach or power to do something, but power to be someone, power to fulfill God's purpose that we should be like him. One of the great questions of this generation, the Chinese Christian, is Watchman Nee, a man who has suffered greatly for his faith.

He has written many books, and some excerpts from his writings appear in a wonderful devotional book called A Table in the Wilderness. It has a portion for every day. I read it every day and find tremendous help in it.

From that book this morning, he was speaking of the incident in the home in Bethany where Mary came and broke a box of ointment and the fragrance filled the house. The thought that came through Watchman Nee's book was that often, if not always, something or someone is broken. There's a result of it, perhaps it through suffering, perhaps through trouble, maybe through facing this great issue which we're confronting tonight, the brokenness of a life.

Out from that life, the fragrance of Jesus begins to shine, what Paul calls the sweet savor of Christ. That's what we need power to be, power to shed forth the fragrance and loveliness of the Lord Jesus. We're not unorthodox, that's not our trouble, but we are unattractive.

I don't mean necessarily physically, but I just mean that somehow the fragrance doesn't get through. There are still so many hard corners and when people touch us, they're very much more conscious of

ourselves than they are of Jesus. Now, how can that power be mine and yours? Because I don't think the convention will accomplish a great deal unless out from it go people who bear the fragrance of Christ upon them.

To answer that question, I want you to look with me just at this remarkable incident in the life of our Lord, and in particular, at the statement made to him by this Roman centurion. Incidentally, it's very interesting to me to notice that there are no less than seven of these men in the New Testament, seven of these centurions. A centurion, of course, I hardly need to say, is not a man who's a hundred years old, but who's a man in charge of a company of soldiers, and he's a representative of the Roman Empire.

But each one in the New Testament, as you come across their path, you find there's so much of good about them. You remember Cornelius, a devout man, and one who feared God and prayed to God always. You find him in the tenth chapter of Acts.

Remember the other one who was in charge of affairs at the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus? Who cried when he heard the shout of victory from the lips of the Savior? Truly, this man was the Son of God. And there was something about each one of these centurions that had a savor of dignity, of courtesy, of integrity, of gentlemanliness. And this marks you from representatives of a pagan empire.

And I see in the life of this centurion here before us in chapter 7 a principle for life. Let me read this verse to you again, and will you follow me in it? I am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, go, and he goeth, and to another, come, and he cometh. Perhaps you noticed that I deliberately omitted one important word in the reading of that verse.

I will return to it in a minute. But first of all, I want you to see, I want us all to see this principle. A man under authority, that is, submission.

Having under me soldiers, that is, authority. The centurion would say, I am submitted to the authority of a throne. And because of that, I wield the power of that throne.

I am in authority because I am under authority. What did that submission mean to this centurion? Well, it meant first, in the first place, submission to a person. He was submitted to Caesar, and all the will of Caesar, and all the purposes of Caesar in the Roman Empire.

This centurion, one day, had a wonderful and never to be forgotten day in his life, when he had bent his knee before the throne of the emperor, and he had been commissioned and received authority to represent him in a particular area entrusted to him. That was an unforgettable moment. And from that moment, he belonged to Caesar without reserve.

He was under authority, and in being under authority, he was submitted to a person. It meant, too, the submission of a personality. For this centurion, from that moment when he submitted to Caesar, he had no will of his own, no rights of his own.

His property, his possessions, his relationships, all were surrendered. He gave up everything, his time, his habits of dress, his choice of food, his place of residence. Everything implied the surrender of his will and his personality to the authority of another.

Unless that was true in every respect, he would never be entrusted with the position which he occupied. It was submission of a personality. And again, it was submission in order that a purpose might be achieved.

What was that purpose? Well, it was a seeing to it that the will of Caesar was done in that particular part of the territory over which this centurion had control. He was absolutely obliged to insist on certain conditions there. The emperor looked to him and held him responsible for exercising his will and his sovereignty in that area.

I am a man under authority. That's an upward look to the throne before which he bowed. I am a man under the authority of Caesar.

I have under me soldiers. That's the downward look to the territory for which he's responsible. The upward look of submission was with a view to the downward look of power.

I am a man under authority, and my responsibility in life is to see to it that all the commands and all the will of Caesar are done in this area for which I'm responsible. He knew perfectly well that there could be no peaceful or happy government over the territory assigned to him unless he was in right relationship to the throne before which he bowed. There could only be peace and only happiness in that area for which he was responsible.

If, without question, he was under the authority of the throne he represented. Now, my dear friend, here is a principle for all life. Here, in fact, is man as God made him.

Genesis chapter 2 and verse 28 tell us that man was made to have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth, but only under submission to the God who created him. It was to be power, but only power to express through submission. And it wasn't long before he refused to submit, and he lost the power in a desperate effort to recover the situation.

He has made some quite remarkable strides. He's mastered the elements. He can sail across any ocean in any storm.

He can fly through the sky at breathtaking speed. He can tame every wild animal. He can split the atom.

He can shoot at the moon. He can put himself into space, but he cannot conquer himself. And in that area, he hasn't advanced an inch.

And man, as God made him to have dominion under his authority, has become man as sin made him, a clever, brilliant, sophisticated, educated slave. And that's precisely the condition of a Christian who knows forgiveness from sin, but has never sanctified Christ as Lord in his heart. My dear friend, let me just ask you a very simple, honest, earnest question.

Who is your Lord in the territory of your life for which God holds you responsible? What are the conditions in the circle of your home, your friendship, in the areas where your life, to which your life is related? Who's master? Is it God, or is it self? Who is on the throne tonight? You can't escape that principle. Romans 6.16 in Living Letters translation says this, don't you realize that you can choose your own master? You can choose sin with death, or else obedience with goodness. The one to whom you offer yourself, he will take you and be your master, and you will be his slave.

Oh yes, every one of us here in this congregation has a perfect right to choose our own master. But what we have no right to do is to wear the uniform of one master and do the bidding of another. The New Testament makes no allowance for that.

For if you choose Christ, you will be his slave. If you choose self, you will be a slave. To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God.

You shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me. I can do all things through Christ who, the word is, dynamites me, who strengthens me. Oh yes, but God's promise of power depends entirely upon my willingness to submit.

It is power through submission to the lordship of Jesus, and that is the principle of life. Now I ask you in the second place just to look here with me for a minute at the pattern of life. You notice that when I read that verse, I left out one word on purpose.

It was the word also. I also am a man under authority. It was as if that centurion had seen something in the life of Jesus, though perhaps he didn't quite understand it, and that's why he came to him in his time of need.

He saw that principle of life expressed in the life of Christ. I also, like you, am a man under authority. Jesus, a man under authority? Yes, indeed.

Submitted to a person. I do nothing of myself. I do always the things that are pleasing to him, said Christ.

Submission of his personality. We were thinking a little last night of those wonderful words to the church at Philippi. He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Submission of his personality. And submitted for a purpose. My need, he said, is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

A life of perfect submission, where everything in that life was at perfect rest. The peace that the Lord Jesus revealed was movement without friction. You see the Lord's life.

Constant activity, but never losing spiritual tone. You never find him worried. You never find him under pressure.

You never find him under strain. You never find him tense. Peace.

Drop thy still dues of quietness, till all our ordered lives confess the beauty of thy peace. And because of that, a life under authority, it was a life that was in absolute power, he could speak to a storm and say, peace, be still. And the waves obey his voice.

He had power over disease. He could go to a leper and say to him, I will, be thou clean. And he'd power over fever, and could touch a fevered body, and immediately the fever went.

He had power. Here is God's ideal man, fulfilling in himself God's purpose for every one of us. In authority, because under authority, and here in Christ, the self-light is laid low and conquered, and the will of God accomplished.

And therefore, God highly exalts him and gives him a name that is above every name. And once again, power is in the hands of flesh and blood, in the person of Jesus Christ, our Lord. A pattern for life, fulfilled for us in Jesus.

And therefore, I see in this story here, a power for my life and for yours. For the Lord Jesus is calling from every one of us for submission and authority. One day, you remember, in the upper room, he breathed upon a tiny group of his followers and said to them, receive ye the Holy Spirit.

As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you. As the Father hath sent me, and the word is, with authority. Even so send I you, and the word is, under authority.

As the Father hath sent me with all authority, even so send I you under authority. And that means submission to his person, to be his, completely, unreservedly, yielded to all his will. And that's how God recreates us in the Lord Jesus.

That's what we were intended to be from the very beginning. That's the life that we lost because we refused his authority. But now Jesus puts us back on center, and as we submit to his authority, we have power.

But that means the submission of my personality. It means that the citadel of myself is given over to him. Therefore my rights, my time, my talents, my friends, my money, my everything, come under his control.

Because, you see, we are saved by grace for submission to government. Do you challenge that statement? I trust you don't. Because it lies right at the heart of the New Testament.

Saved by the grace of God for submission to the government of God. And nobody can pray, Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, unless first of all he has really prayed, O Lord, my kingdom go. For his kingdom never comes in my life until I'm willing for mine to go.

In other words, the Christian life is the commencement of a new sovereignty in which he is Lord. We love John 3, 16. It's probably the favorite verse in the Gospels.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. That's a wonderful whosoever. But have you ever looked on to Mark chapter 8 and the closing verses of that chapter? Listen to it.

There's some tremendously shattering whosoever's in it. Here they are. Listen to them.

Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Whosoever will save his life shall lose it. But whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, and the Gospels the same, shall save it.

Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous generation, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with his holy angel. You can't claim the whosoever of John 3, 16 unless you're prepared for the whosoever's of Mark 8 submission of my personality to Christ. You see, if your money is your own, well, you can do what you like with it.

You have a perfect right to do what you want and spend it how you will, but if you are his steward and you hold it in stewardship for the Lord, then he has a right to it. If your body is your own, you can treat it how you like. You can go where you like and do what you like and behave as you like, but if your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and you are not your own but you're bought with a price, then you'll be very careful what you do with your body because it's not your property.

It's the submission of your personality to the Lordship of Christ. And my dear friend, there are thousands and thousands of people who masquerade under the name of Christian who are not within a million miles of that experience. My dear friend, you've perhaps played church for a long time, but you've never known anything about his Lordship and his sovereignty.

I wonder, can Jesus really look into your heart today and say, I say to him, come and he cometh, do this and he doeth it? Three men were walking down the road one day and they all passed exactly the same house. One man looked at the house and he said, that's my house, and he went by it. The second man came along and looked at the same house and he said, that's my house, and he went by it.

And the third man came along and he went into the garden path and he took the key out of his pocket, walked into the door and put his hat on the peg and sat down in a chair and said, this is my house. Well, two of those men are telling a lie, oh no they're not. Oh no.

One man bought the house, he owned it. The other man built the house, he was the builder. The third man lived in the house, he was the tenant.

God has made you, for without him nothing was made that is made. And he has bought us at the price of his precious blood. But may I ask you, who's in possession of the property? Is Jesus Christ Lord? And you see, it is submission, not only of my personality, but it is submission for a purpose.

He shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you. And what is the purpose? This, that the will of God may be done in your life and through your life to others. Oh, it's not what you say that matters, but it's the throne before which you bend in your heart.

So I ask you tonight, have you and I entered into this experience and discovered the secret of power through submission? I have sometimes used the illustration of a day when I was in London many years ago. And we have in London a street called Regent Street, some of you may know it. At the end of Regent Street there's a circle and it's called Piccadilly Circus.

Walking down Regent Street one day, a summer day in London, sizzlingly hot, about 65, I went down the road that day and arrived at Piccadilly Circus, but all down the road at Regent Street there were two buses lined one side by side, all stopped. Two by two of them, crowds of them. I wondered why those buses had stopped.

I began to count up the horsepower under the hood, being an accountant by nature. I soon ran out of tickets. Every bus had a driver and every bus was stationary, engine ticking over.

When I arrived at Piccadilly Circus I found the reason why. One fat little London policeman was on duty, the traffic lights had broken down, and he had one hand on his hip and the other hand up in the air, like that. That was all.

He wasn't even looking at the buses, they were all behind him, just standing like that. And I was fascinated by him. I stopped for a moment and looked at him, and I didn't say this to him, but I'd said it to myself about him.

I said, I suppose you think you're very important. Well, I should imagine that you have a wife and perhaps five kids at home somewhere, and you live in an ordinary little suburban house in London. I suggest that you go right home now and you take off your uniform and you put on a suit of clothes like I have, and you

come back into Piccadilly Circus and you try standing like this.

In one minute you'd be under a bus and in hospital. You see, none of those buses care to panic, for a little fat London policeman. But they did care and did respect the authority of the uniform he wore, the authority of the headquarters of London Police, Scotland Yard.

And because of that, and because that policeman was vested in authority, not one of those buses dare moving in, not one of those drivers dare put his foot on the accelerator. For a man who was under authority was in absolute power of the whole situation. Now that's what Jesus offers you and me.

And listen, it's when I get right there that the fragrance begins to break through, because when I get there, every idol has been torn from the throne of my heart, and Jesus is on the throne, and the fragrance and loveliness of Christ begins to get through my life in blessing to others. Have you sanctified Christ as Lord in your heart? Let us pray. God has been speaking to us through this service this evening.

We've seen the futility of seeking to live the Christian life by ourselves, and tonight in some of our lives we want Jesus Christ to be Lord for the first time. Perhaps over years of Christian living somehow we've resisted his sovereignty over this issue and over that. We've crowded him out, but it's he who says, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in.

Shall we just quietly in prayer review in our lives the area which he is claiming? Our time and our talent, our money, our will, our lives, our all. Power through submission, the fragrance of Jesus breaking through a life that has been broken from every idol. Is he your Lord? We'll just pause for a moment.

I would like to ask that those of you who desire this very night, this evening, to crown Jesus Lord of all that you have and all you are. I would like you quietly to stand to your feet, and then let me offer prayer, especially on behalf of those who respond, who today are making Christ Lord. Not everyone that saith to me, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom, but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven, submitted to the Lordship of Christ, in order that the will of God might be done in and through our lives.

If that is your desire, would you just quietly rise to your feet? Please remain standing. God bless you. Amen.

Oh, that it might be no more I, but Christ who lives in me. Are there any others before I lead the congregation in prayer? Oh, may this be an evening when it's just a question of signing off to Christ, giving him all, yielding all we have and all we are under his control. Submission to him is the key to power.

Now let's pray together. Dear Lord, our hearts are so thankful to thee for all who this night have taken this step, and who by faith are yielding themselves utterly to the claims of the Lordship of Jesus. We praise thee, we thank thee, thou art worthy to receive honour and riches and glory and power and blessing.

Thou King of Kings and Lord of Lords, we long that in all things thou shalt have the pre-eminence, that Lord from this moment on, every part of our lives may be underneath thy sovereign control, submitted to thy direction, in order that thy will may be done in us. Oh, may this be a day when we're saying to thee, my kingdom go, Lord thy kingdom come, have thine own way. Dear Lord, we thank thee we can put all the consequences of this transaction into thy hands, the government is upon thy shoulder.

We praise thee that thou art well able to handle every situation in our lives, for thou has control of all of us. Bless our homes, our children, our families, our relatives, our friends, our church. Oh, that this city may

feel the impact of a body of Christian people who are utterly surrendered to the claims of the Lord Jesus.

We ask it in his name. Amen. Will you sit down please.

I want you to sing just two verses of a closing hymn. You'll find it, it's the hymn, have thine own way Lord, have thine own way, thou art a parter. But he said the boss was ready for him, that is the commander.

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