

Submit Yourselves

by Mark Greening

Mark Greening's sermon emphasizes the critical importance of submitting to God to resist the devil and live a victorious Christian life.

Duration: 54:29

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 16:9, Matthew 11:28, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Colossians 2:15, 1 John 2:1, 1 John 4:4, Revelation 12:11

Topics: "Submission"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the importance of humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God in order to receive His grace. He highlights the sins mentioned in the book of James, such as anger, selfish ambition, and bitter envy, which stem from an arrogant and controlling attitude. The preacher emphasizes the need for surrendering to God and fully submitting to Him, as the eyes of the Lord search for those whose hearts are fully committed to Him. He also discusses the power dynamics between God and Satan, stating that people are either submitted to God or under the power of Satan until they surrender to God. The sermon concludes with a call to surrender to God and trust Him to run our lives better than we can.

Transcript

We've been studying through the book of James in recent weeks, and Jim Rennie's last message that he preached before I started this series last week focused on James 4-6, on the importance of humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God that we might receive his grace to help us all the sins listed in this book, namely in the past few messages that he preached dealing with anger and selfish ambition and bitter envy, that arrogant it's my way or the highway kind of attitude that really is manipulative and controlling and that is earthly, unspiritual and of the devil. And his last message focused quite a bit on what causes quarrels and fights among you. And we saw that again selfishness and the sin nature and all of these things really work to cause us to be angry and thwart the purposes of God and ultimately cause us to be called an enemy of God as he described through James chapter 4. And we learned that God's solution is to always humble ourselves under his mighty hand.

Now that ends verse 6 and then we come to verse 7 which says submit yourselves to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you. And so last week we started with part 2 of the verse. I skipped submitting which is what we'll deal with today.

But we looked at resisting the devil, what it means, especially what it does not mean to many people today and much of the unbalance that has been taught with respect to spiritual warfare over the years. And we learned that resisting the devil has to do with resisting his lies by standing firm on the word of God, by believing what God says and not believing the deception of the evil one. And we covered many of the enemy's lies versus God's truth.

And so for example, if we are tempted to become angry as we've been looking at in the book of James in the last few weeks, if someone is tempted to be angry, you can resist the devil and have him simply flee from you by saying no over and over and over again to those sins. For example, in James 1 20 we read, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. And believing that and understanding that we can stand against the enemy.

Proverbs 15 1 says, a gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. We can remember that and choose I am going to believe this and stand on this and say no to the enemy. I will say yes to God.

I will say no to the devil. Genesis 4 7, God is warning Cain and listen to what he says to Cain. He says, if you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door.

It desires to have you, but you must master it. And I want to put the emphasis here on we have a choice, folks. Once we know the Lord Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, we do not have to say yes to sin.

We can say no. And by saying no repeatedly, we resist the devil. He will flee from you.

Now, having said this, there are times when temptation just won't go away. We've all had those experiences and we resist and we resist. And yet the enemy is there in our face.

And in those times, and I touched on this just briefly last week, but I want to reemphasize and clarify that there are times where we have to employ what Jesus did in the wilderness. We're taking the sword of the Spirit. He said, away from me, Satan, for it is written.

And he quoted Scripture. And so if you struggle with anger, you can say, away from me, Satan. It is written.

Man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. And you can quote any verses that pertain to your specific weakness and the enemy will flee. But having said all of this, as important as it is to resist the devil and wield the sword of the Spirit, all of this is meaningless.

Meaningless if we do not follow step number one in verse seven, which is submit yourselves to God. Now, this morning we want to talk about what it means to submit to God. The definition of submission is this.

It's to yield oneself to the authority or will of another. Another way of describing submission is to refer to submission as a surrendering of everything in our lives that we are and have and hope to be. That's submission.

And if we haven't surrendered everything in our lives to God this morning, then we cannot resist the devil properly, if at all. And just as you cannot receive money out of an automated banking machine without first surrendering your cash card to that machine, so we cannot receive victory from God without first

surrendering our lives to Him. I want you to notice something about submission.

You remember when Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus and He saved Paul and He gave him this charge in preaching to the Jews and Gentiles. He said this in Acts 26 18 and this is Paul saying, he's recounting the story and he says, God told me this, I am sending you to them Paul to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God so that they may receive forgiveness of sins in a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me. Now, did you get what Jesus is saying here? He's saying to Paul, until people are under my power, they are actually under the power of Satan.

People are either submitted to me, Paul, or they're submitted to the devil. Notice what Romans 8 7 says. It says the sinful mind is hostile to God.

It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. In Colossians 2 20 we read, since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why as though you still belong to it do you submit to its rules? And in Scripture, folks, there is no gray area. We are either this morning submitted to God or we're submitted to the world and sin and the devil.

There is no gray area. We are either under the influence and control of God or we are under the influence and control of the enemy. There are only two categories of Christians in our churches today.

Those who are submitted to God and those who are not. As a matter of fact, in the book of Acts we find a very strong distinction between those who were submitted to the Holy Spirit and those who were submitted to the devil and sin. In Acts chapter 5 verse 3 we read, then Peter said, Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit? In Acts 8 13 we read about Simon the sorcerer.

He went around doing all of these amazing false miracles and people considered him really something in that area. But notice with the power of the preaching of the Word of God, guess what happens? Simon himself believed and was baptized. Praise God.

And he followed Philip everywhere astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. But there was a problem as we read in the text with Simon. He had never surrendered his reputation and what people thought about him to God.

He had never surrendered that area of his life. He wanted to be recognized by the church and those around him, other Christians, as someone spiritual, as a powerful man. And so he sought to take with money by the power of the Holy Spirit so that he could have that power that was going on around him.

And Philip said this, you have no part or share in this ministry because your heart is not right before God even as a Christian, Simon. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps He will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.

For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin. And a captive to sin, folks, is someone who's submitted to sin. Paul says in Romans 6, if I continue to sin it is no longer I who do it, it's sin living in me.

You see, Simon was a captive to sin even as a believer. He was submitted to sin and the devil was going to use him to limit the power of the Holy Spirit to move and to save and to work powerfully to sanctify in the lives of believers in that city. Just as Achan's one sin brought defeat on the whole Israelite nation, so believers today submitted to sin and not to God can bring unexplainable defeat, powerlessness, and

ineffectiveness to the gospel even in a Bible-believing, Bible-preaching church like ours today.

I remember years ago when God was moving in a church where I was speaking. For 14 weeks God saved one, two, three, or four people a week. Every week we used to come into the church and not ask, did anyone get saved this week? We used to say, who got saved this week? You know, we go out to try to find people to bring them to the Lord.

I'd never seen this before. People would come to me and say, how do I get saved? And so this one week, all of a sudden, there was no more salvations. We went two weeks without any salvations, and we were under deep conviction.

Some churches go years with no salvations and never think anything of it. You see in the book of Acts, when they lived a pure holy life, and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. And when you look at the context of that statement, do you know what was happening? God had just killed Ananias and Sapphira right there in front of the church, and the fear of the Lord spread so that no one dared join them.

But even though everyone was afraid of this non-user-friendly, non-seeker-sensitive church, you know what God did? He saved daily those who were being saved. He added to their number, because it's not about us. Salvation is of God, not from you and me.

I looked, and there was no one to help, so my own arm works salvation for me, says God. He doesn't need you, and He doesn't need me. He doesn't need this church.

He can save without us this morning, folks. There's no telling what God can do with holy people submitted to Him. I remember when I was 20, Ralph and Lou Sotero from the 1972 revival, Saskatoon revival, who preached there, whom God used as tools and His servants to spawn a revival in that city.

I'll never forget what Lou used to say to me. He used to say, Mark, God can do more with one ounce of holiness than He can with a thousand pounds of our fundamental theologizing and theorizing. So here we are in our church, and we went two weeks without salvation, and we were conscious stricken as elders.

We said, Lord, our hands are unclean before You. What did we do wrong? And the Lord showed us what had happened, and the young people had an event, and the youth leaders, I warned them, because they're always on the edge, these youth leaders. If it was black and white, they'd want to go into a gray area.

They're always hanging right over the edge of the cliff to see how far they could go, and I warned this guy. I said, this time, don't you do anything that grieves the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's moving, and I don't want you to do anything to mess this up.

I warned him. He messed it up, and he grieved the Holy Spirit through an event that took place right on the platform, right at the front of the church, and the Holy Spirit was grieved, and he stopped working. So as elders, we repented, and I preached a sermon on grieving the Holy Spirit, and I asked all the church to stand at the end, and we repented as a church, and immediately God saved 20 more people.

You see, God is calling us to be a surrendered Christian. There's no option. Today, we make it an option.

You pray a prayer, you get into heaven. That's fire insurance. There was never that option, brothers and sisters.

Never that option ever in the preaching of the gospel. Never. Never.

There are many sins that people can be captive to in churches, and in increasing numbers as I counsel, and as I talk to other pastors and other counselors, men and even women are being bound by lust and pornography. Others are bound by homosexuality. Others by premarital sex in one very large church here in the Toronto area.

They even put on their website that the preference is that people be married, but we're not going to judge you if you're not. That's an abomination to God. Fornication and adultery, anger and rage and fear and worry and false teaching and doctrines and occult and horoscopes and Ouija boards.

So much false teaching, I can't even keep track of it today. I used to have a handle on this. Some people, people are always telling me things I said I didn't even know.

What is that? I just know it's bad. You know, you don't have to step into a manure pile to know that it stinks. You just know it's bad.

And by the week this stuff is being devised. Doctrine taught by demons. False religion, gossip and slander.

Manipulative and controlling spirits. People that want to control everybody and everything. That's from the pit, folks.

If you're a controller this morning, the Holy Spirit wants to control you. You don't control others. You're sitting in the seat of Christ if you're a controller.

Perfectionistic spirits, obsessive-compulsive behavior, theft. Some people, even if it's a small thing in a store, they want to steal it. Or even if it's a small thing on an income tax return, we want to steal it.

Lying, greed, which is called idolatry in Scripture. And I could go on and on. And if you've been dodging those bullets, you know the Holy Spirit's reminding you of at least one thing.

Now before I explain what it means to be submitted to God, I want to warn you that it's possible for a person to believe that he or she is a Christian. Even to be a member of this church or other churches. To be involved in ministry Sunday by Sunday or week by week and never know the saving and freeing grace of God in their lives.

Here is an example of what a person looks like. Even if they call themselves a Christian who is submitted to the devil. Now let me read to you from 1st John 3. This is very important.

No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen Him or known Him. Now the sin here is not talking about the sins that we normally commit.

I mean, we have the sin nature. And we're not going to be sinless this side of glory. Even in 1st John chapter 1 verse 8, John says, if we claim to be without sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

So if we're sinners, and then John says here, if we continue in sin we've never seen God or known Him, what's he saying? What he's talking about here is not the sin, the kind of sin that we do when we slip on a

man appeal and make a mistake. He's talking about perpetual, ongoing, determined, enjoyable bondage that we live in day in day out, week in week out, month in month out, year in year out, and we do not change. Because there's pleasure in that sin for a season.

And we are habitually sinning in an area. And here's what John continues to say. He says, dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray by telling you it's okay to live like this.

He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

That's why we don't have to keep sinning in these areas. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him. He cannot go on sinning because he has been born of God.

Verse 10, this is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are. Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God, nor is anyone who does not love his brother. Now Paul understood this, and in talking in the context of submission to Christ in 2nd Corinthians 13, 5 and verse 4, immediately after talking about Christ being crucified and Paul living in light of that crucified, surrendered life, he says this, examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith.

Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you, unless of course you fail the test. What's the test? Submission to God.

Now we can be Christians and still not be submitted to God. That's called a backslidden, disobedient Christian. I've been there and I will be there, but hopefully it's just for minutes, maybe an hour, maybe a day.

I don't want to stay there. I've been there before. I want to quickly come back and repent to the Lord.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and justifies to give us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Would to God we live in light of that every day. I'm just going to throw this out and we can think about this, but you know, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

I'll never forget when God started moving at Park Royal. You know, the first people who got saved were the Christians. Oh, after they got saved, they said, Mark, we prayed a prayer, but there was never, this never happened back then.

We love the Lord. We've been freed from our sin. We tell others about him.

We're not ashamed anymore. If the Son sets you free, you'll be free indeed. I remember someone telling me, Mark, you know, in the 1939 takeover of the Communists in China, he said there were so many millions of Christians in churches.

He says, you know, when the Communists came in and outlawed Christianity and started killing Christians by the thousands, he says, you know that the churches paired off? Eighty percent of the Christians left and never darkened the door of a church again. Eighty percent. He said to me, Mark, the twenty percent of Christians left, they themselves considered, they considered themselves the only ones who had truly received God's saving grace in their lives.

Eighty percent. Oh, well, that's over there. Do you remember A.W. Tozer? Many of us have read his books.

A.W. Tozer. I had the opportunity of being disciplined by one of his deacons. When A.W. Tozer came up from the U.S., he preached at Avenue Road Tabernacle here in Toronto and just thundered.

I had some of his tapes. If you think my preaching is harsh, you've got to listen to his. That guy, there was fire coming out of his mouth.

I can't believe. I won't even say what he said to his people. I used to listen to him and burst out laughing.

Just almost, I think that's nothing. I've never said anything like what he said. You can't believe it.

You want to know, you ask me after, I'll tell you what he said. It's almost embarrassing to say. And he used to say this.

He says fifty percent, he'd say to his elders, fifty percent of my people in this church do not know the Lord. Fifty percent. They're not surrendered to Jesus Christ.

Now I'm trusting for better things at Oak Ridge Bible Chapel, but you know what? The law of averages, folks, says even if we say ten percent, thirty of you don't know the Lord and are going into a Christless eternity today if you die. Thirty of you. Examine yourself.

Test yourself to see if you be in the faith unless, of course, you fail the test. Now all that we've read from Scripture this morning teaches us that we're either submitted to God or we're not. But what does it mean to be submitted to God? Well, there's nothing complicated about this.

Submission to God means to yield oneself to the authority or the will of another. It's to surrender everything we are and have to the control of God. Do you remember the story of the rich young ruler? He came to Jesus asking how to get eternal life? Let me pick up the story for you in Mark 10 19.

You know the commandments. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery.

Do not steal. Do not give false testimony. Do not defraud.

Honor your father and mother. And then the rich young ruler says, Teacher, all of these things I've kept since a boy. And Jesus said, Jesus looked at him and said and loved him.

Jesus looked at him and loved him. Jesus didn't say, hey, you're a hypocrite. Hey, I know you didn't do those things.

I see everything. I know everything. Jesus did not say, no, you haven't been a good person.

Jesus basically acknowledged, yeah, you've kept all of those things. He was a good man and he was rich. And Jesus had his opportunity.

The offerings could have gone up. He could have increased the membership. What does Jesus say to him? One thing you lack, go sell everything you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven.

Then come, follow me. At this the man's face fell. He went away sad because he had great wealth.

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. Folks, this isn't a story about how to get saved. If that's a story about how to get saved, then unless all of us this morning have given away everything to follow Jesus, we're not saved.

That's not what the story's about. It's not a story about how to get saved. It's a story about submission to God.

Jesus could not save him or use him until he was surrendered to God in everything. What is sad about church life is that we can come Sunday by Sunday and from all outward appearances we look surrendered to God. But the truth is we can be holding on to things and areas in our lives and the Holy Spirit can't use us in a fruitful way.

Someone says, you know, we can be productive in the flesh but we can only be fruitful in the Spirit. Yesterday I was talking to a dear sister who attends another church in Mississauga. We were talking about surrender.

And this lovely woman has surrendered herself to the Lord and she knows what it means to walk in surrender. She said something and I just laughed. I had to write it down.

I had my laptop open as I was finishing this sermon. I said, I'm going to quote you. And she said this, some people you think are surrendered aren't.

They're just better at being good. Some people you think are surrendered aren't. They're just better at being good.

Just like that rich young ruler. And in his heart there was one area he wasn't given to the Lord. And the Lord says, I can't use you.

You go think about this. Can you see why so many people don't have victory over sin in their lives and why they can resist the devil till they're blue in the face quoting scriptures and they're still bound? They've never surrendered everything in their lives to God and when they try to resist the devil or temptation, he won't flee from them. Because he says to them, you know what, you're submitted to me.

You're not submitted to God so I'm not listening. You ever wondered why young people are leaving organized churches by the droves? It's because they don't know surrender in their own lives, often because they've not seen it in the lives of the adults around them. I remember years ago at a church I attended, two missionaries from OM came and these guys were on fire for God.

And they began preaching to the young people, to guys your age. They began preaching what it was like to be surrendered and sold out for Jesus. It wasn't long before the elders in that church started to get upset because all of a sudden these two missionaries turned the youth group upside down.

You know what, they didn't turn the youth group upside down, they turned it right side up. Because those young people were more on fire than the leaders of that church. Those young people had a more of a burden and desire to witness and to pray and get right with God than the leaders of that church and that made them very uncomfortable.

And after they left, after three months, the youth leader at that time started leading them and teaching them how to pray. One of the first thing he said to those young people, he says, young people I want to tell

you something, prayer is not saying the right things, it's saying the real things to God. So those young people just started saying the real things, not the flowery things, not all along theological things, they said the real things to God.

They started confessing their sin and they started praying for the lost and God started to move in that group. As a matter of fact, I had an option to go to the adult prayer meeting or the youth prayer meeting, where do you think I used to go? I used to go and pray with the 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 year olds. I'd pray with them.

Because the adult prayer meeting used to start at 7.30 sharp and end at 8.30 dull. And I want to tell you something, young people, let no man despise your youth. Honor your Creator in the days of your youth before the days come when you find no pleasure in them.

You get so bound up and unsundered in other areas, you've got nothing to really bind you. Now a few things, I'll get to those, don't worry. But you have less to deal with than the rest of us over here.

Honor the Lord in the days of your youth. It's not surprising that the young people in that group, the last I heard, almost all of the young men in that group, almost all of them to a man are Christian leaders today and involved in full-time Christian work. One of them is with New Tribes Missions as a missionary.

That's not surprising, is it? They were surrendered at a young age. Now we don't talk about surrender or submission in our churches much anymore. Actually, those terms were replaced with the term dedication.

Oh yes, there's a spiritual word, dedication to the Lord. A few years ago when I grew up, dedicate yourself to the Lord. You know, traveling evangelists and youth evangelists would come in and we don't do that here, but maybe you've done that at youth events and they ask you to come forward.

Whoever wants to dedicate themselves to the Lord, you come forward and really I've got to make it look good on my report to the denomination so I can boast in your flesh at the frontier. You come forward and you dedicate yourself to the Lord. And so here's the way it used to go.

They preach at you and you feel guilty and you kind of look around and you say, okay, I'm going to go forward, I'm going to dedicate myself to the Lord. And so you know what I used to do? I can't speak for the others. You know what I used to do? I used to go forward.

You know what I dedicated to the Lord? My flesh. I said, Lord, I'm going to dedicate a little bit of my time and a little bit of my talents to you. That's what I'm going to dedicate to you today.

And Lord, but please, Lord, please, I'd modify the Isaiah prayer. You know Isaiah's prayer, Lord, here am I, remember that? And I'd say, Lord, here am I, send George. You know, Lord, I'm going to dedicate myself to you, but oh, please don't ask me to go into full-time Christian work or be a missionary or God forbid, a preacher.

Oh, Lord, here am I, you send Sally, you send George. And all over this nation, God has got fleshly Christians who've dedicated something to the Lord, but not everything. God isn't looking for lukewarm Christians.

He spewed those out of His mouth He wanted to in Revelation. He's looking for people who are on fire for Him. The fire of a pure and a surrendered life.

There's an expression that goes, get on fire and people will come and watch you burn. Just as God in the burning bush got Moses' attention, so the Holy Spirit filling you and overflowing you will cause others to question what it is you have. Now if ever there was a time in the church's history that she needs to be surrendered to God, it's today.

You say, why is that? Notice 2 Timothy 3 verse 1, but mark this, there will be terrible times in the last days. Are we in the last days? We are most certainly in the last days. And what is it going to look like in these last days? People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive.

I hear so much abusive talk, you know much of my counseling, you know what it deals with? Abusive talk. God commands you men, do not be harsh with your wives. He commands you that.

Fathers, do not exasperate your children under all. Don't get them so ticked off, they hate you. Don't be abusive.

There's lots of abusive talk. And the other, coming from the other direction too I might add. You know Proverbs does talk about nagging.

Abusive speech. Disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not forgiving, not forgiving, not forgiving, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. Oh my word.

Who in the world is Paul talking to? Anyone know? He's talking to the cultists. He's talking to those who propound false religion. He's talking to the Satanists around the corner.

Right? Wrong. He goes on and he talks about who he's talking to. Listen to verse 5. These people having a form of godliness but denying its power.

He's talking to the church. All of these other people, they don't have a form of godliness. Having a form of godliness but denying its power have nothing to do with them.

Now if we're to be surrendered as young people, let me start with the young people. What does that look like? It means that every part of your lives are surrendered to the Lord. You're listening to what the Holy Spirit says to you about the kind of music you like.

You say, well, how do I know what's right? We want to know what the elder approved music list is at Oak Ridge. We don't have one. And guess what? We're not giving you one.

Because those who are led by the Spirit are children of God. If you're a child of God, you know what the Holy Spirit will speak to you like He used to do to me when I was your age. I go to put on that record and the Lord says, Mark, that's dishonoring to me.

We had records back then. If you want to know what that is, you ask me after. But we had what we call records.

And even if the music was good, it still sounded rotten because it was scratchy and hissy. But we'd listen to that stuff. And God would say to me, Mark, see all those up there? That's not honoring to me.

But Lord, so and so, remember what Peter says, Lord, what about him looking at John and God says, what is that to the follow thou me? What's it to you, Peter? What's it to you what that guy does? You follow

me. So God will, the Holy Spirit is going to talk to you young peoples after this sermon. He's talking to you now and he's going to tell you what he wants you to get rid of in your life.

He's going to tell you because he's told me and he still tells me as an old guy. What about the music you listen to? What about what you watch on TV? What about the books and the magazines you read? What about the friends that you hang out with? What about your boyfriend and girlfriend? Do they know the Lord? You should not be dating anyone who does not know the Lord. If you call yourself a Christian, you are sinning against God because Satan has a plan for you and he's going to use that person to pull you away from God.

What about your sports? Do they come before God? What about the priorities, your career goals, your schooling, what you plan on doing? Is that surrender to God? Are you saying God, whatever it is, even if you send me to the mission field, I'm willing to go. If you can't say that, you're not surrendered. Adults, now it's our turn.

Are we surrendered to God this morning? Have you ever said, God, I give you my home. I give you my job. I give you my wife and my children.

I give you my husband. I give you my health and their health. Lord, I allow you to treat me, if you will, just like Job and take everything, even if you want to go further and take my life.

The Lord gives. The Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

If we haven't done that, folks, we're not surrendered. Don't fool yourself and leave thinking you're surrendered if you're not willing for God to have his way with everything and anyone, anytime, anyplace, anyhow, at any cost in your life. Don't think you're surrendered.

And here's a hard one. How about church leaders? Surrendering our reputation to the Lord. Are you willing to say, Lord, it doesn't matter what people say about me, think about me, do to me, doesn't matter.

Lord, if it means you destroy my reputation, I'll let you destroy my reputation. A good definition of surrender is that we daily die to ourselves and we live for Christ. Listen to how Jesus put this in Luke 14, 25, large crowds were traveling with Jesus, large crowds, another opportunity to increase the membership and to get lots of money in so they could buy a nice sign or do whatever, patch the roof or whatever, build an annex to the sports center.

Right? This is the opportunity. Large crowds are following him. Jesus hadn't read the church growth manuals.

So he said this, he blew it, he turning to them, he said, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Now people read that and they say, Lord, what do you mean? I thought you told us we're to love people, love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and our neighbor and ourself.

And now you're telling us not to love our wives and children. You know, this is called an expression of appearance. What Jesus is saying, if you don't love me so much that people don't one day say, you know what? He doesn't care about his family because he's out there serving the Lord.

She's out there serving the Lord. She's doing this. He's doing that.

It almost looks to others that we love God more than our own family because we love others. And Jesus says, unless you have that kind of priority where I am everything in your life, even sometimes the exclusion of time with your family. Virginia can attest to the fact that there have been times, you know, God only ever saves and moves and delivers.

It seems when it's most inconvenient for me in Virginia, do you know that there have been times I had a date set for Virginia. I had her hopes were all set up. We're going out on a date and God had another date set for me.

And I had to spend time counseling someone to see them freed. I didn't plan it. I didn't want to be there.

And God says, no, no, no, no. Wait a second, Mark. Remember you told me you love me more.

I'll take care of your wife. I'll make it up to her. You'll make it up to her another time.

But tonight, this is my calling on your life tonight. You canceled that date. You know what? Some people would say, Mark, you don't love Virginia.

I do love her, but I love the Lord more and you must, too. Jesus said. Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

Other places, he said. Take up your cross daily. The cross is an instrument of death.

It means that I'm willing to die. It says, Lord, today I've died with Christ. Live through me in the power of your Holy Spirit.

George Mueller, a great man of prayer, a great man of faith who died in the early 1900s. When he died, there were over 50,000 prayer requests that he listed in his diaries. And all of them except for four or five were answered.

And those four or five were answered within 10 years of his death. 50,000 prayer requests answered. He had orphanages.

He used to sit down and see all of those little children and they'd be sitting in front of empty plates and empty glasses. And he used to say, now, children, we have a wonderful, loving heavenly father. Let's pray and give thanks for the food we're about to eat.

And there was nothing in the kitchen and there was nothing on the plates, folks. And he used to say, heavenly father, we thank thee that thou art the provider. And you said, give us this day our daily bread.

We pray this day for our daily bread and we thank you for it. And when he finished praying, there'd be a knock at the door. And it was the milk wagon that had broken an axle.

And the driver would say, we can't use this milk now. We can't get it to our destination. Can you use it in the orphanage? In would come all this milk.

A few minutes later, another knock at the door. Someone else carrying bread, fresh bread. Something happened to the horse.

The angel of the Lord was in work that day. And all of the children were fed. This happened over and over and over again, folks.

It was miraculous. And one day, he sailed across the Atlantic and he went to Quebec City. And when he was in Quebec City preaching, he had just come through a great fog storm.

And they couldn't get to the destination in time. They were stuck in the St. Lawrence and it was, it was so foggy, you could not see your hand in front of your face. And so the captain says, Mr. Mueller, I can't get you to your preaching destination tonight.

I'm sorry. And Brother Mueller said, oh, yes, you will. Because my God is great.

Let's go down into the hold and pray. So they went down into the hold. George Mueller was on his knees and he began to pray.

And then he began to praise God. And he thanked God for the clear weather. And then after he said amen, the captain, who was a Christian, was going to start to pray.

And George said, stop, brother, you don't need to pray. Because you don't believe God can do it. I believe God can do it.

And he's already done it. Opened the door. He opened the door and it was sunny and clear.

He got to his meeting in Quebec City. And one of the people who was there in the congregation, at the end, they had a question and answer period. They said, Mr. Mueller, we want to know how is it that God's power rests so greatly on your life? And how is it that all of these answers to prayers take place every time you pray? How is that? And he said this.

He said, and he stood at the top, he was quite a tall man. And he stood there and he says, there was a day when George Mueller died. And he went lower and lower and lower.

He says, I died. I died. Have you died today? Have you died to the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you lost your life that you might gain eternal life in the power of God and his honor in your life? You can do that today.

How do we die? John 12, 24, Jesus said, I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, he remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it.

Well, the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me. And where I am, my servant also will be my father will honor the one who serves me.

One of the most touching prayers I think I've ever heard in my life came from the lips of a dear sister in the Lord as I was counseling her. And I was sharing these truths of surrendering. And she looked at me in shock.

And she says, how is it that I've never been taught this before in the church? I said, I don't know, but Jesus taught it. She said, and as she she just sat there thinking about this, this need to surrender and die that day. And tears started streaming down her face.

And she said this, Jesus, she began to pray with tears streaming down her face. She said, Jesus, you love me so much that you died for me. But I've never died for you.

Jesus today, I want to die for you. I want to surrender my life to you take control, I give it up. I don't think I've heard a more touching prayer in years than that prayer folks that touched me I wept.

Are you willing to submit to God today? To die to your own desires and goals and pleasures? To lose your life that you might gain eternal life? If you do this, God, as he says, as Jesus said, will honor you. And Psalm 91 16 adds to that honor. And he says with long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation.

I'll never forget the day that God cornered me and says now you have to reach up to touch bottom mark. Now you got to surrender there's what else you're going to go What else are you going to do? You're going to run your life better than I can run this universe. You think folks this morning that you can run your finances and your future and your family and everything else that keeps you awake at night better than God of this universe? Can you? He says, Okay, Mark, you're going to surrender to me today or not? What is it? And I said, Lord, I just give up.

I give up today. That's it. I'm nothing.

I'm reaching up to touch bottom Lord, if you don't, you don't do something today. I'm dead in the water. And I surrendered.

And the Lord gave me a verse I hadn't thought of for a long time. He gave me that verse Second Chronicles 16.9. What a wonderful verse for the eyes of the Lord search to and fro over the face of the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed, fully surrendered, fully submitted to him. That's a promise.

The think of it, folks, the eyes of the Lord is searching to and fro over the face of the earth. And he's looking at churches, and he's looking at evangelical communities. And he's looking at all of this spiritual stuff that's going on all of this Christian busy work.

And he's looking at these people and his eyes don't stop over them. The eyes of the Lord search to and fro over the face of the earth to strengthen those he's looking for a man, a woman, a young person whose hearts fully committed to him. And he says, guess what I'm going to do now that I found that person now I'm going to strengthen them.

And I said, Lord, what are you going to strengthen me to do if I'm surrendered? He says, I'm going to strengthen you number one to not sin. Number one, these areas of bondage and struggle in your life, I'm going to strengthen you to not sin. That's the first thing I'm going to do.

And the second thing he does is he empowers us with the Holy Spirit to have victory over our sin. These things are written that you sin not, but if any man does sin, he is an advocate with the Father praise God. This morning as we go to communion, I'm going to read the same verse that we read last week because I only read half of it.

I only preached half a verse last week. So I only use half a verse in our communion last week. I'm going to read it, but the whole verse, remember we talked in Revelation 12, 11, how they overcame Satan.

We read, they overcame him by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony. But here's the verse I didn't, the rest of the verse I didn't quote. And they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

What a beautiful passage. We overcome Satan by the blood of the lamb. Christ died for us.

He disarmed the powers and authorities. He made a public spectacle of them. Satan can't touch us.

Greater is he that's in you than he that's in the world. We overcome Satan by the blood of the lamb. The word of our testimony, our testimony is based on the word of God, the truth of God's word.

And we do not love our lives so much as to shrink from death. That's called surrender, folks, submission to die. When we do not shrink from death this morning, if you will not shrink from death, if you will die to yourself and your desires this morning, if you will surrender everything that you are, everything that you have, everything you hope to be, you surrender your past and everything that's happened to you or against you, you surrender all of that to the Lord and you don't shrink from death.

Guess what? Now you have victory over the enemy for everything. And he will flee from you. It's amazing when I counsel children, I've counseled children before who've been under tremendous spiritual bondage.

And I love listening to little 11 and 12 year olds tell them how, tell me how after when they obey God's word and they've surrendered to the Lord that the devil flees from them. Isn't that amazing? Isn't that amazing? So this morning, if you want victory over the enemy, do not shrink from death. Don't love your life more than to shrink from death.

Die. God is saying, accept the grain of wheat, fall to the ground and die. And if you die, you'll be fruitful.

If you do not die, you'll be alone. And you may do your ministry here at Oak Ridge. You may do your church ministry wherever you are, but you will be alone.

But if you die, the Holy Spirit will fill you and empower you and use you and you will see fruit 30, 60, 100 times what is sown. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we come to you this morning.

Father, you tell us you were bought with a price, therefore honor God with your bodies. We were not bought with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Father, you sent Jesus to die for us.

He loves us enough, loved us enough to die for us. Lord Jesus, how can we keep living for ourself any longer? Lord, as that dear sister prayed, would you give us the grace this morning to pray, Lord Jesus, you died for me. I love you.

I want to die for you today. Could you give us that grace, Heavenly Father, today? We plead for it. Lord, we don't want to go to the cross.

We want to live a full life. You're calling us to die with Christ today that the power of the Holy Spirit might fill us and raise us up and use us powerfully for the honor and glory of your name. Father, we thank you for these elements that remind us of Christ's body and his blood.

Father, may we take it realizing that like him we must die even today. Lord, we come week by week to remember your death on the cross, but Lord, wouldn't it be great next week if we could come and

remember that we died today? What a glorious thought. Thank you, Heavenly Father, for what you will do.

It's in Jesus' precious name we pray this. Amen. Men, you may come forward to distribute the elements.

One of the privileges we have here at Oak Ridge is there's many opportunities for prayer, but on Wednesdays the most important meeting for any one of us as preachers is what takes place in the side room on Wednesdays. Nothing else is more powerful, nothing else is more important, nothing else has a greater priority. When the elders, the apostles got together, they said it would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word in prayer, but I want to tell you the power in the preaching of the word comes first through prayer.

And every Wednesday we pray there. If you're able to come, you come and see what it's like to pray. We start at 7 30 sharp and we end at nine o'clock excited.

And I have something to share that the Lord has laid on my heart for next Wednesday, so I'm preparing. You come. But if God's house is a house of prayer for all nations, I would like to see more and more prayer happening on Sunday mornings after the preaching of the word.

Jesus said in a familiar passage in Matthew 11, come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I'm gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is like, and the Lord may be calling you this morning.

You come. And what I'd like to do is if any of you want to pray, this is not an altar call folks. This is an opportunity to pray.

My house shall be called a house of prayer. We just don't want to pray in our groups. And just on Wednesday today, if God has called you to die and to surrender, you've never surrendered and you want to come forward after you sit down, you just come forward and in small groups, three, four, five, we'll pray.

We'll pray together and we'll pray and we'll make this day a day that we'll never forget that this was the day, Lord, today I died to you. So if the Holy Spirit is speaking to your heart this morning, do not harden your heart. If you hear his voice, do not harden your heart.

Come today. We'll pray with you at the front. We'll make sure that you know that God loves you.

If you don't know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we'll talk to you and show you how you can be saved and know it today. God bless you. You're dismissed.

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