

# (Deeper 2003 - 'Let It Go') Letting Go of Control - Sep 28, 2003 Pm

by Stephen Fenton

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of letting go of control, our hearts, security, and self in order to trust God and experience His power in our lives.*

**Duration:** 32:12

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Matthew 14:22-33, Mark 10:17-22, Luke 5:1-2, John 21:1-6, Acts 2:38

**Topics:** "Surrendering Control", "Faith And Trust"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the theme of 'letting go' and challenges young people to let go of control in their lives. He uses the story of the rich young ruler to illustrate the point that we need to give up the things that put us in control. The speaker then moves on to discuss the story of Jesus calling Peter to follow him and how Peter had to let go of his fear and doubts. The sermon concludes with the message that when we let go of our limitations and trust in God, we will experience His presence and receive His promises.

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## Transcript

Many of you will not have had an opportunity to hear the other four. We just encourage you to talk to our sound people afterwards and they can provide you very quickly, in a few days, with all five messages in this series. Part of a weekend that we just had with a college and career group, some 65 or so young people who were with us, and we had an awesome time.

The theme of the weekend was Letting It Go. And on Friday night we challenged the young people that they needed to let go of control of their lives as we spoke about the rich young ruler. And how the Lord Jesus cut through all of his confusion and cut to the quick of the issues of his life and said, oh, it's all very well, basically, that you do the law or you think you do the law, but here's what I want you to do.

Sell your possessions. And it's not that Jesus comes to all of us and says, sell everything you have and live on the streets. That was not the point.

The point was give up the things that put you in control. Give up your control, in fact, and put yourself into my hands. What a challenge.

The greatest challenge we have as Christians, perhaps, is the challenge to let go of control. And, of course, control that we have is simply an illusion, but it's one we like to live with. We love to have that illusion of control, and it's just an illusion.

It's not real. Far better that our lives be in the hands of the one who has real control. In the second session we talked about Zacchaeus, a beautiful little story about a rather not-so-beautiful little man whom Jesus coaxed out of a tree into his heart.

And we encourage the young people to let go of their hearts so that Christ could sell them. For Zacchaeus was a man who was only seeing Jesus at a distance, and it's amazing even how many Christians are looking at Jesus from a distance. But he wants to own our lives.

He wants to fill our hearts. He wants to thrill us with his mercy. And then on Saturday evening we challenged the young people to get out of the boat.

We looked at Matthew 14, Jesus walking on the water, and to let go of their security. To let go of their security. To get into a place in their lives, to make the choices that are necessary, to find ourselves in a place where only God can be our strength.

Life can be so, so comfortable for us, mostly because we want it that way. We make easy choices that bring us into comfortable places, and we don't need God because we can do it without him. And Jesus called Peter and all the others out onto the water, and the only one who went first was Peter.

Now, to give the others a break, they went later, because they went out into lives in which they give away their security every day, and most of those disciples give their lives completely for the Lord Jesus. Stepping again and again into places where they were not secure, where God was the one who protected them. Where God held them up, doing things that were impossible.

And that's what God calls us to. He doesn't call us to an easy life. He calls us to do impossible things.

And resting in him does not mean inactivity. It means we rest in his ability to lead us out onto the waves, and to hold us up when we get there. What an exciting prospect.

Life is not supposed to be boring. It's not supposed to be easy. But it's not supposed to be lived in our own strength.

That's just crippling. We must walk on water with Jesus. That's what he calls us to.

It's the call of the church. Then this morning we challenged all who were here to let go of self. Jesus showed his disciples that walking with him in the kingdom meant that they had to deny themselves.

That self had to take much further back than the back seat. That self had to go. And that Jesus had to have absolute priority.

That God does not want us to think worse about ourselves, nor better about ourselves. That God's desire is that we not think about ourselves at all. And that Jesus set the agendas.

That we take up our cross, which is his instrument, his gift to us every day, that will keep us weak so that he can be strong, and that we follow him. What a challenge. God touched hearts today.

And it was such an awesome thing to watch him do it. Give people hope today. That at the end of all of their strength, they could find that Jesus was sufficient for them.

And tonight I want to take you to one more thing that we need to let go of. And it's really the culmination of all the things that we have mentioned so far. And it's so thrilling because the implications of it are powerful.

And in doing so, take you to Luke chapter 5, where there the Lord Jesus, it says, was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, which of course is the Sea of Galilee. And in verse 1 it says, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word that was from God, the word of God. And it says that he saw, this is Luke chapter 5 and verse 2, at the water's edge two boats left there by the fishermen who were washing their nets.

Now that means it was the morning. Because these fishermen traditionally fished at night, fished all night. They would come in, unload their catch, send it off to market to prepare it for sale.

And then they would fix any tear in their nets and then wash them and prepare them for the next night fishing. Then they'd go home and sleep. So this was the morning.

The teaching took place in the morning. And Jesus was standing by the lake. The sun would have been beating down.

It would have been a beautiful sight, much like the Straits were today with the sun shining down in the evening time as the sun came down and the sparklings on the water. Just a beautiful thing, but no good to fish. And as the Lord Jesus taught, and as he finished teaching, and he was by this time in a boat a little further out from the shore because the people were pressing.

And so he got into the boat and pushed it out a little. And when he'd finished speaking, it says in verse 4 that he said to Simon, of course we know who Simon was. Who is it? It's Simon Peter, yes.

Put out into the deep water and let down the nets for a catch. Now think about for a moment about Simon Peter's reaction. The one that any, any expert fisherman would have.

I've been driving every day past the fishermen who are fishing. What are they fishing? Oysters, is it? Phillip, you're one of those guys. Fishing oysters on the river.

Now it would be a strange thing if I called up Phillip tonight after church and said, I Phil, I've got a fresh new idea about fishing oysters. And I'd like you to take me in your boat tomorrow and just leave it to me. I know exactly the spot, and I know exactly what to do, and we'll fill your boat.

Now I Phil is a gracious, gracious young man. And I'm sure with a twinkle in his eye he'd take me out tomorrow and just let me dip down once with them huge scissor things, and then he'd pat me on the back and say, Steve, just sit down and enjoy the rest of the day, I'll do this. Because by then I'd be exhausted.

With three oysters lying in the bottom of the boat. If we were lucky. I mean, I don't know anything about fishing.

I'm not even sure what an oyster looks like. I know I don't like the taste of them. But the only time I've really seen one is in a can.

And I'm sure they don't come in cans in the bottom of the river. It would be so foolish for me to say to these experts, I don't know what I'm doing. And that reaction from the experts would have been, you know, normal.

Just typical. And I'm sure that Simon shook his head, and I mean he was now acquainted with the Lord Jesus somewhat, and he was already growing in his friendship with him. But he knew Jesus was a carpenter.

And he said to the Lord Jesus, Master, and this is a greeting, and it's a word that was used as a compliment. And you can just read Peter's thoughts. I'd better compliment him here, because I'm basically going to tell him he doesn't know what he's talking about.

It's always good to coat your truth with a little bit of sugar. So he said, Master, you basically don't know what you're talking about. However, Lord, we've worked hard all night.

The hint is there, isn't it? Do we think we know what we're doing? And we caught nothing. But, because you say so, and here's Jesus in front of hundreds and hundreds of people who have just finished listening to his great wisdom. They're sitting there starry-eyed, and Peter's thinking, I'd better not embarrass them.

We'll get them out of the water, and we'll have a good time, and we'll come in a little later when the crowd has dispersed, and he'll get over it. So, okay, let's do it. So out they go.

And he says, so I'll let down your nets. So they went out into the deep water, because that's where Jesus is asked to go, and they let down their nets. Completely wrong time of the day.

These fishermen would fish at night, and when they would, they'd carry torches. And they would, in the night, they would reach out their torches over the water to attract the fish, who would then come up from the deep, and then they'd throw these nets, which were only really useful at a certain depth, not very deep at all, and they would catch the fish, as they came up fascinated by the light. That's how they fished.

And that meant that they had to keep the torches there, and they had to watch for the fish coming. You had to be able to see it. Now, when the sun is sparkling in the water, you can't see anything.

Fish may well be attracted to the light, but you can't see them. Throw your net out over nothing. But they did it, but yes, well, they didn't want to embarrass them.

They didn't know what he was talking about, but they loved him. They humored him, just as poor Phil would have to humor me. But listen to what happened next.

When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. Somewhere out of the deep blue, hundreds of fish came to make their sacrifice to the Lord Jesus. Like the deep into which Jonah fell, and out of which came a great fish to swallow him, came part of his creation to commit suicide in the nets for the sake of the Savior.

It sounds silly, but I believe that's what happened. He called the fish and the Kim. Creation is far more willing to obey him than we are.

And the nets began to break, and the fishermen were overwhelmed. And so they signaled their partners, and it was probably James and John, and they were all stunned as they worked to get the catch aboard. And as they began to fill the boats with the fish that were in the nets, the boats began to sink.

Imagine this picture. The embarrassment, the sheer shock of it all, as they kept pulling these overloaded nets into the boat, and as they did, filling both boats, and the boats began to feel the weight so much, they began to sink. These guys were thigh-deep in fish.

When Simon Peter saw this, it says in verse 8, he fell at Jesus' knees. Now he was chest-deep in fish. And he said, Go away from me.

I'm a sinful man. Suddenly, what happened? Suddenly, what happened? Humility for sure. You're right.

His evaluation rapidly changed. I mean, whether he fully understood at this point that Jesus was the Son of God and could call all creation to his attention, who knows. I doubt if that was where he was at.

But suddenly, his evaluation changed. You see, the problem with Peter, and the problem also with us, is that we limit God. Now you say, No, I don't limit God.

I believe God can do anything. Yes, we can all say that, and we all do our religious duty, and we sing that, and we pray that. But we really don't believe that God will do.

That God is doing. And there are circumstances, and situations, and problems, and issues, and sometimes it's just life itself, and we look at it, and we think, Well, yes, God could do this. But it doesn't seem that today He wants to do this.

We take the religious cop out and say, Well, I suppose it's not God's will today to do this. It amazes me how unwilling God seems to be in so many of our lives. The problem really is not God's willingness.

Certainly, the problem is not His ability. The problem is, we limit Him. So here's what we need to let go of.

We need to let go of our attitudes that limit God, and what He can do. If we let go of the control of our lives, He's going to step in, and meet us there, and control our lives, and be there for us. If we let go of our hearts, He's going to fill our hearts with His love.

Day after day after day after day, total acceptance. If we step out of the boat, and let go of our security, He's going to hold us up. If we let go of self, He's going to shine like the morning sun out of our lives.

And if we let go of our attitudes that limit Him, anything. Anything. Now this is not as easy as you might think.

You can't just decide, okay, today I'm going to stop limiting God. Right? Got that? Now we can leave. Because the first thing tomorrow morning, something will be in your face that traditionally has left you limiting God.

Some circumstance, some personal issue, some problem, some situation, that again and again has left you impotent, spiritually speaking, and absolutely despairing that it seems that God cannot deal with us. And of course, all around us, our enemy would like to lie to us about our whole culture and about the call that the Lord Jesus has given us to walk on water and to reach the world with Him there. Oh, that doesn't happen anymore.

Great numbers of people don't get saved any longer in this country. Don't you know that? Don't you think we tried? I mean, we fished all night. We didn't catch anything.

We limit Him. We limit Him in so many ways in our thinking, so many of our attitudes express the truth that we just don't think God can do it. He can't turn our culture around.

He can't turn our governments around. He can't turn our world around. So He'll come along to us and He'll say, we've been trying this for 30 years.

You know, we can't go on the streets anymore because the government won't let us. Last time we did an open air, the police came along and chased us. We can't give out tracts.

It's illegal. We can't pray in the schools. They won't let us any longer.

It's just not possible. We just need to come so we can all get home. Because it just can't be done.

It can't be done. How many times has that been our attitude? How many times have we said it? How often have we believed our own words? And how often, consequently, have we limited God in the process? How many times has God told you to say something or to do something or to go in a certain direction? Putting your trust in Him and your whole attitude has been, that's weird. That couldn't be from you, Lord, because it just couldn't happen.

It just couldn't be possible. She would not listen to me if I said something right now. No, no, that couldn't be you.

He would... There's no way He's interested. Do that? Go to that place? Try to get involved with this group of people? Oh, that couldn't be you, Lord. That must be my own imagination.

Thank God. He doesn't permit that for long. But as He draws us to let go of so much that we've talked about this weekend, He'll also draw us to deeper and deeper trust in God.

Remember what He said to His disciples as a young ruler walked away? With this man, and truly with any man, salvation is impossible, but nothing is impossible. Remember what the angel said to Mary? Nothing is impossible with God. Remember what Jesus said to the man whose son was so, so distraught and so abused by a demon? Nothing.

So let go of the attitudes that limit God. How do you do that? You've got to let go of control. So when you're in control, your whole attitude will be one of limitation because your whole life will be about what you can do, not what He can.

You've got to let go of your heart so that He can sell it. You've got to let go of your security. Take some risks.

You've got to let go of yourself so that you're not even thinking about the ways in which you doubt Him. You've got to let go of the limits. Go through your nets.

Where He tells you to. When He tells you to. Trust Him, let the fish.

My friends, what a challenge this is. Yet, one of the sweetest things about this passage is that as He did this, two things happened. First, Peter got on his knees.

If you will let go of the attitudes that limit what you think God can do, you will understand. If He comes to you, and this is how it will happen, He'll tell you to do something that traditionally you've not been able to

do, not believed that He can do, not been able to take any action on, and as you have let go of these other things over the weekend and then step out to do that very impossible thing, you'll discover that God is with you. And the second neat thing that happened when Jesus did this was that He made His disciples have great problems.

He said, don't be afraid. This was a fearful thing. To see such a response because of obedience.

What a fearful thing. To see such a response because of obedience. That's scary.

That means if He tells you to do something, if He clearly impresses you, how do you know the voice of God? Do you know the voice of your own mother? Of course you do. You know the voice of God when He speaks to you. Make no mistake.

He can make you hear. And when you hear His voice, and when you obey, you'll be shocked to find that He is with you. You'll worship and discover the reality of His grace and His power in your life.

Incomparably great power for us who believe, but there's more. He'll make you a promise. So don't be afraid.

From now on, I'm sure Jesus did it with a grin all over His face. Peter, do you think this is good? Peter, do you think this is awesome? Do you see the load of fish that lie in the bottom of this boat? They represent what I'm going to do in the world. If Peter could only have seen ahead a few thousand years, if only we could, and we can, through the glimpse we get in the book of Revelation, and see around the throne of grace thousands upon thousands upon thousands upon thousands representatives from every tribe, the Bible says, every family, and every nation, we would know there is a great load of fish to catch.

God would have us let go of our understandings and our attitudes that limit Him. And even as we let go of all the things that we have spoken about, and step out in trust, and allow Him to teach us what it means to walk on the water with Him, carrying our nets with us, as it were, and as we obey His voice, which we hear so often, but simply don't respond to because we don't believe it can happen, but if we will, we'll first of all discover that God is with us. We'll start catching more men.

Two things always go together. Why are our churches emptying? And I don't just mean our Baptist churches, I mean churches in general. Because if people have reached a place where they are in control, where their hearts are closed and even cold, not knowing His love as they need to, where they're no longer willing to take risks and walk on the water with Him, where self is in domination and is destroying the church from within, and where hearts limit what Jesus Christ can do if we would just answer.

But I am so encouraged, encouraged by some of the young people I've met this weekend. Some fine leaders, some of them who realized and prayed and I listened to them pray and talked through the night about, yeah, it's so true, I need to let go of the control of my life. It's such a horrible thing.

I really need Jesus to love me because I've struggled to know that He loves me at all. And I will take risks and I will let go of self. And it's so neat to watch the Lord bring hope.

I sat with an individual who wasn't even part of our group tonight, a visitor. And as she poured out her brokenness, she came to the Lord. Five or six of us, we sat around her and prayed, watched hope dawn.

Hallelujah. And our circumstances haven't changed. She's let go of the attitude that limits what God can do.

On its own, it's got to be the hardest thing. But together with all the things that God has challenged us about this weekend, it begins to be an answer. Why are churches empty? Because we're not obeying His call to go into the deep, throw out our nets, because we just don't think.

So consequently, we're not sure if He's present. That needs to change. That must change.

And it will change one person at a time. The challenge is with God, we pray. As we consider all the things we've heard this weekend, to reach the place where we can listen to your voice, obey it, and discover that you're with us.

The ways we didn't expect, indeed, in ways that we didn't even believe. When we reach that place by your grace, it's only by your grace that we'll get there. We'll start to catch men.

Look forward to that. Look forward to that new confidence in the lives of some of these young leaders that we've had with us this weekend. Ask for a similar new confidence that we might worship.

We understand who you are. Step out. Grant that we pray in Jesus' name.

Thank you for loving me. Thank you for loving...

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