

GOD'S CALL

Major themes in the Scriptures

The Holy Spirit (15)

Freedom in the Spirit: nurturing it

Reference: GDC-S18-015-Mw-R00-P2

(Originally spoken on 6 April 2014, edited on 8 April 2014)

Web site: <http://www.ajourneyinlife.org> and <http://www.ajourneyinlife.com>

This message is protected by copyright © 2014 Lim Liong. Permission is given to reproduce part (where the meaning is retained and the part is not quoted out of context) or all, of it, for personal use or for distribution, on condition that **no changes are made** and the message is **distributed free** of charge. Please do so prayerfully and discreetly.

Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

The paragraphs above as well as this paragraph must be included when the message is reproduced so that others who reproduce it will be conscious of the conditions stated above.

The Lord willing, today we will consider the subject, “The Holy Spirit”, the fifteenth message, in seeking to appreciate major themes in the Scriptures. A short summary of today’s message:

True freedom is the power to be what I ought to be and to do what I ought to do. What has God done to help us find this freedom? How can we find and nurture freedom in the Spirit in all its glory and meaningfulness?

We will seek the Lord to appreciate more of what this means.

When we want true freedom, we need power – we need power to be what we ought to be and we need power to do what we ought to do.

So in order to appreciate how we can find and nurture such freedom, I see it would be helpful for us to consider the aspect of helplessness and power.

We often think of God as the almighty God: all powerful – He can do all things. That is true. But sometimes we may forget that God is also powerless, helpless.

We think of ourselves as being totally helpless, but there is a sense in which we are very powerful.

So it is good for us ponder over this.

We are totally helpless because we are created beings. We do not have an existence of our own accord; we do not have life of our own. We are created by God – He decided what we should be, and if He wants to remove us, destroy us, He can do so at any time. So in that sense, we can see we are totally helpless. And our total helplessness is in the context of God's almighty power: because God is almighty, He is the Creator of all things, we depend on Him in every aspect; we need Him. Without Him, we will be totally useless.

On the other hand, we may not sufficiently recognize that although God is almighty, He has chosen a path that rendered Him helpless when it comes to our moral choice.

God created us as moral beings and in order to create us as moral beings, He must give us an independent moral choice: We can choose contrary to His will; we can decide how we want to live our lives in terms of the direction, the values that we want to hold, what we want to commit ourselves to.

In this area, God is helpless. He cannot make our moral choice for us. If He does that, we are no longer moral beings.

God has created non-moral beings: animals, the beasts of the field; the birds of the air. For these non-moral beings, God can make decisions. He can decide for them how they should live, how they should move. He can determine their choices, but they are non-moral.

But when it comes to moral choices, God cannot do that. We have to exercise that and if we do not sufficiently appreciate that, we will not be able to develop the kind of quality that God wants to give to us.

So we need to see the proper aspect of helplessness on our part and the great power that God has given to us in our moral choice.

When we can see the two together in a wholesome way, it is possible for us then to experience the richness of what God intends for us – what He created us for, what He wants to give to us of the very, very best.

If not for this, God would never have chosen to go through the path of the cross.

The path of the cross is unimaginably terrible in its suffering and pain and anguish for God. Why would He choose such a path? It is because there is no other way to help us. God cannot just make us choose right and all go to heaven.

He knows we have the power to choose wrong, to rebel against Him and yet in the midst of that, He loves us. He must find a way in which He can still forgive us and give us another opportunity to choose His way. And that is why He chose the cross: a very, very difficult and painful path. But God chose it so that we can develop our potential to the highest level; we can become like Him; we can have the true freedom of the highest order.

Let us look at some of these passages in the Scriptures to appreciate what this means.

Acts 17: 24-28

- 24 "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;
25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things;
26 and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,
27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;
28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'

Here the apostle Paul tells us God made the world and all things in it... He is Lord of heaven and earth. He does not need anything from us. He gives to all *people* life and breath and all things. He is the One who has created all things. He has given us all things and He has determined our appointed times and the boundaries of our habitation. God is the One who is the almighty God; He has decided all this: We have no power against that; we are totally powerless against God's decision. Whatever He wants to do, He can do. This is the Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth.

Then he says: "...for in Him we live and move and exist". Not only did God create all things but also it is in Him we live and move and exist. That means our very existence depends on God all the time. At any point of time, God can destroy us and we no longer exist. So we need to be very careful not to be self-confident, arrogant, as if we can determine our own lives, how we want to live, where we want to go, how long we will live. God is sovereign. When it comes to the situations of our lives, circumstances and things that happen, God is sovereign.

Here the apostle Paul talks about the God who made the world and all things in it. Then he also tells us that this God, who is the Creator and the Sustainer of all things, is also expressed through the Lord Jesus Christ.

God created all things through Christ, who is the Creator and Sustainer of all things.

Colossians 1: 13-17

- 13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,
- 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
- 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
- 16 For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him.
- 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

So what we saw in **Acts 17** is what is described here in **Colossians 1**. The apostle Paul tells us that God rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. This is the Lord Jesus Christ. And then he tells us that He, the Lord Jesus, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation... For by Him all things were created... So He is the One who created all things; God created all things through Him.

All things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. This is similar to the phrase, "in Him we live and move and exist". All things hold together. So the Lord Jesus sustains the universe by His life and His power. He has the power to create; He has the power to destroy and to sustain according to His will.

So here we see the almighty great power of God. He can do all things. But then, we need to appreciate the other aspect of it: that God in His almighty greatness chose a path that limited Himself that rendered Him powerless in the area of our moral choice.

Luke 13: 34-35

- 34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *the city* that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen *gathers* her brood under her wings, and you would not *have it!*
- 35 "Behold, your house is left to you *desolate*; and I say to you, you will not see Me until *the time* comes when you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

Here the Lord Jesus, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, He says, "How often I wanted to gather your children together..." "I wanted" – that was His desire, that was His will, He wanted to bring this about. But what was the outcome?

He said: "...and you would not *have it!*" "...you would not" overrides His "How often I wanted..." .

This is something that we need to see deeply; it is very, very important for us. The almighty God can be contradicted by mortal men, finite men, and that is because God chose this path. He gave us this power of moral choice.

We can disobey Him; we can go our own way. And in fact, all have gone their own way; like sheep we have all gone astray, we have chosen our own path. God did not stop us. He could not stop us. He can persuade us, He can speak to us, He can arrange circumstances to help us, but He cannot make that moral choice for us. We must understand this. This is the power of your choice.

What you choose is going to determine the outcome of your life for eternity. We can choose to reject help from God. God wants to help us; He wants to give us the very best. He has gone to great lengths in order to do that. He has gone through pain and suffering to a very great extent in order to seek to help us. He went to the extent of the cross and yet in spite of all this, we can still reject His grace, we can reject His love, we can reject His will.

So the Lord Jesus said: "...you would not *have it!*" "Behold, your house is left to you *desolate...*" There is a consequence of our choice.

It does not mean that we can choose whatever we want both in terms of what we want to choose and also its outcome.

We cannot choose the outcome to be good if our choice is bad. Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. So if we choose to disobey God and go our own way, there will be consequences; the judgment of God will fall upon us. He is still sovereign.

So while God is powerless in the area of our moral choice, He is not powerless to deal with us when we go astray. He will judge; He will deal with us; He will sentence us accordingly.

So then, I want to concentrate now on what can help us to find that kind of freedom that God wants to give to us: the power to be and the power to do according to what is the very best according to God's will.

There is a very beautiful passage in the Scriptures, which I have appreciated for many years, and I wish to consider this passage with you. It helps us to appreciate who God is and who we are and how we can work together in such a way that His will can be so wonderfully fulfilled.

Isaiah 40: 28-31

- 28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.
- 29 He gives strength to the weary, And to *him who* lacks might He increases power.
- 30 Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly,
- 31 Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up *with* wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.

These are the words declared by God Himself. In **Isaiah 40**, He mentions again and again who He is: the almighty God of all creation; how people have disregarded Him and misrepresented Him and worshiped false gods. And God says, "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired."

This passage brings across again and again the issue of power and weakness: Power and weakness.

God does not become weary or tired. He has all the power, infinite power. He never gets tired. He has all the energy, all the strength to do whatever He wants to. He is the almighty God. Not only is He powerful but also He is infinitely wise. His understanding is inscrutable or unfathomable. There are many things in the heart of God we may not understand unless He reveals to us and He teaches us. We need to come before Him in humility to seek to understand.

Then He tells us: “He gives strength to the weary, And to *him who* lacks might He increases power”: the contrast between weary and strength, lacking in might and increasing power. God gives strength to the weary, And to *him who* lacks might He increases power. Isn't this something very wonderful to us? All of us can experience this. We may be weary and tired; we may lack might to go through various situations. But God says: “He gives strength to the weary... to *him who* lacks might He increases power”.

But then we may think: does it mean that God gives strength to anyone who is weary and He increases power to anyone who lacks might?

It may seem to be like that when we read **verse 29** but when we look at **verse 30**, we know that that is not so. He says, “Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly...” So in the midst of life, people who may be very strong, they will grow weary and tired. Vigorous young men, they will stumble. How can they then carry on when they are weary and tired, when they stumble? How can they carry on?

There is only one way basically, that is of significance and importance to us: “Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength...”

It is those who wait for the LORD who will be strengthened by Him. The power and strength of God is for those who wait for Him. It is not just for anyone who may want to have more power, more strength.

“They will mount up *with* wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not faint.” The picture is a very beautiful picture.

A number of years ago, when I was trying to take photographs of eagles flying, I saw a sight that I will always remember.

It was a time when the current of the wind was strong. I was at the viewing tower looking for the eagle to come. I saw some small birds flying about. Some tried to fly against the current but within a short while, they turned around and followed the direction of the current. They did not have the strength to fly against that current.

And then I saw a majestic sight: Here came an eagle, flapping its wings slowly with regulated strokes, and it just flew wherever it wanted to go. It could fly against the current without difficulty. It just flew where it decided to go.

And I pondered: How often our life is like the small birds! We live our lives, we want to do the things that we think we should, but we are so affected by the currents of this world: the opinions of men, the way that people do things. We dare not take our stand against the current of this world because of the opposition, the difficulties that may come. And so we try for a while; we turn around; we follow the current.

If we want to follow God, if we want to live according to the will of God, we must be able to move in the direction that God wants us to move. Like the eagle, whatever the current of the world, we move as we should move according to the power of God.

On another occasion, I was again in the viewing tower. It was raining very heavily and the wind was strong; there were no birds around – they had all taken refuge in the trees.

And then suddenly, I saw a sight that I will never forget. It was so memorable: until today, I can still recall it. The eagle flew so close, we can say a few feet or few metres away, flapping its wings so majestically; flying just above the water of the reservoir.

It was such a beautiful sight! I could not take a photograph because it was raining. And that was the time I could really enjoy the sight – a very beautiful sight – the eagle flapping its wings, gently moving slowly across the water and then suddenly, it swooped down, stretched out its legs and with its powerful talons, it caught a big fish. It flew up again, went into the trees to enjoy its meal.

So again, I was thinking about this – how God has created the eagle: so beautiful, so powerful; and it was able to achieve its objective in the midst of wind and rain. It was raining heavily. It could fly in the midst of the rain, in the midst of the wind. And because of the rain, the fish could not see the shadow of the eagle. Normally, the eagle would fly very high up so that the fish would not be able to see its shadow. And that is why the eagle has to drop very fast from a height like a bullet down into the water and then catch its fish. But because it was raining, the fish would not be able to see clearly the image, the shadow, of the eagle and the eagle was able to catch the fish very quickly.

So in life are we living like the eagle: We fly wherever God wants us to go in wind and rain? In times of pleasantness and unpleasantness, in times of peace and difficulty, we move as God wants us to go and we achieve the objective that God wants of us. We can then receive what God wants to give to us.

It is those who wait for the LORD who will gain new strength. This phrase “wait for the LORD” can also be translated as “hope in the LORD” or “expect the LORD to work”. It is a phrase that helps us to appreciate the importance of our looking to God, recognizing our helplessness, trusting Him both in terms of His promises as well as in His power to accomplish what He wants to do. If we wait for the LORD, we hope in Him, we expect Him to work because we are moving according to His will then we will gain new strength.

“...gain new strength” can also be translated as “renew their strength”. Those who wait for the LORD will renew their strength and when God renews our strength, when God enables us, we will move beyond the youths and the young men who may be strong in the eyes of the world. No man can mount up *with* wings like eagles but we can, in terms of the meaning of it – the power and the freedom that we will have to do the things that God wants us to do. And we can run and not get tired... we can walk and not become weary. Whatever it is that God wants us to do, we will have the power and the strength to do it.

So this reality has wonderful application in the spiritual realm as well as in the physical realm. God grants us strength and power in the realm of the spirit as well as in the realm of the physical, in order that His will may be accomplished.

Many years ago, I heard someone say: “All the power of God is available to us, if we make ourselves totally available to God.” I interpret it in this way that I find meaningful, and that is: that God is almighty, He can do all things; and all the power of God will be available to us if we make ourselves totally available to Him in the sense that we are totally committed to do His will; that is all that we want, we want nothing else. If that is the case then God’s power can be channelled to us to do whatever He wants to accomplish.

This is similar to what the apostle Paul said: "...I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." The "all things" is a reference to all things in accordance with the will of God, all things that are glorifying to God. So whatever it is that God wants us to accomplish, we can fulfil it if our hearts are truly His.

Ephesians 6: 10

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

Here the apostle Paul is writing in the context of spiritual warfare. He tells us that we are fighting a spiritual battle against the powers of darkness in the heavenly realm. It is not just flesh and blood, it is not just in the physical realm; it is in the spiritual realm.

And what we must make sure is: be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. So when he says, "be strong in the Lord", it must mean that it is possible. To know the strength of His might, it must be possible.

So this passage will correspond in application to **Isaiah 40**. God will strengthen us. He will give us power from His very life and being. He will enable us to do whatever He wants us to accomplish.

The problem is that most of the time, we think at the natural plane. We think in terms of our natural resources, the abilities that we have, the support that we may get from this world and we calculate: Can I or can I not do it?

But being strong in the Lord is not based on such calculations. Being strong in the Lord means that there is no limit. God is almighty. Whatever it is that He wants us to accomplish, He will enable us if we fulfil the conditions.

So in the spiritual realm, we need to make sure that we wait for the LORD.

Many people are impatient. In times of difficulty, they may pray to God and expect God to answer immediately; and if God does not do so, they will seek other means very quickly.

When we wait for the LORD, it means that we listen to Him, we seek to understand what He is seeking to do, we trust Him to enable us; we appreciate His wisdom – His understanding is inscrutable. We must learn to listen to Him: What is He seeking to do?

If we do not do that then we will not be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might because this is for those who wait for the LORD. We may become like the youths and the vigorous young men. Yes, we may think we are strong enough to do the various things that we want to do, but we will grow tired, we will stumble badly. We cannot carry on if we want to fulfil what is truly meaningful and worthwhile.

There is only one way: we have to wait for the LORD.

In the physical realm, this principle also applies, but the application in the physical realm must first come from the spiritual. If our hearts are not properly identified with God then in the physical realm, whatever God may undertake for us and work in will not mean very much ultimately. But it is true that God will also enable in the realm of the physical. He will undertake and enable according to what is good in the situation.

2 Chronicles 16: 7-10

- 7 At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, "Because you have relied on the king of Aram and have not relied on the LORD your God, therefore the army of the king of Aram has escaped out of your hand.
- 8 "Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubim an immense army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the LORD, He delivered them into your hand.
- 9 "For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars."
- 10 Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him for this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time.

The life of Asa is a very serious warning to us. For those who really want to be faithful to God, who are serious in their faith, who want to pursue the right path, the life of King Asa is a warning that though we may start off quite well, we may end up quite badly.

Though we may at times trust God sincerely, we may at other times move far away from that.

The Scriptures tell us that King Asa was initially quite a good king. He sought the Lord; He sought to do the right things. And when Azariah the prophet of God taught him how to seek God, cautioned him to seek God, he responded positively. He sought to do what was right.

So in the earlier years, King Asa trusted God. So when the Ethiopians and the Lubim, they came to attack Israel with an immense army with very many chariots and horsemen, they were totally outnumbered. But King Asa called upon God to deliver and God did. God worked powerfully in that situation and the Ethiopians were defeated.

But now, in this situation, in a lesser situation of difficulty, Asa was no longer trusting in God, but he sought the help of man. He relied on the King of Aram to solve his problem. He was not dependent on the Lord. So Hanani told him: "Because you have relied on the king of Aram and have not relied on the LORD your God, therefore the army of the king of Aram has escaped out of your hand." And also, he told him, "...from now on you will surely have wars."

This passage also tells us that King Asa had a choice: he decided to trust God earlier on; he decided not to trust God later on. That was his choice.

God could not ensure that King Asa would always trust Him.

That choice was his.

But God spoke to Him; God warned him; God encouraged him but he did not choose well and we are told: Asa was angry with the seer [or the prophet] and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him for this.

What was the basis for Asa being angry?

He knew that what the prophet said was true; he knew it. He did not imprison him because he thought that the prophet was a false prophet. He recognized it: what the prophet said was true. King Asa knew it in experience – he trusted God and God delivered him.

He was angry because he was the king and: “You are my subject. How can you talk to me in this way? How can you say that I am wrong?” He refused to acknowledge that he was wrong. He was angry. He put him in prison because he was the king – he had the power to do that. And he also oppressed some of the people at the same time.

All this tells us that once our heart moves away from a true devotion to God, various other negative traits would emerge in our hearts.

It is very important that we ensure that our devotion to God is pure, that we constantly live for Him according to His ways and we maintain a humble and contrite spirit.

When God shows to us that we are wrong from anyone that He may choose to point out to us, we must be careful to humbly learn and respond well. Otherwise we will degenerate in our hearts and we will not be able to develop quality and true freedom.

Verse 9 tells us: "For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars."

So Asa acted foolishly because his heart was not completely given to God. The real issue here is: God wants to strongly support those whose heart is completely His.

It may seem very strange that it was put in this way: that God would strongly support mortal men. We are the ones who are supposed to support Him in what He wants to do. We are His subordinate co-workers. Whatever God wants to accomplish, all of us should come and support Him in what He wants to do. That is one way of using the word "support".

But here the meaning is different. The meaning is that "God may strongly support those whose heart is completely His" tells us that in reality, we are helpless in ourselves, we need the power from God: He is the One who will supply all that is necessary for us to do what we need to do if our heart is completely His.

Again it tells us that all the power of God is available to us when we truly love Him and want to do His will. So our heart being completely His is so critical. We cannot take this lightly.

We may say we love God... so too, there are many people who love God, and yet it is so easy to go astray. Solomon loved God but subsequently he became very disobedient to God.

This is something that we need to be very careful about: that we need to ensure that our heart completely belongs to God, we hold nothing back; and not just for a moment of time, it has to be maintained, sustained, developed, deepened throughout our lives.

This can only happen if we truly value what is good; we truly value God and His purposes; we truly worship Him.

If we do not, then we can profess faith, we can say we love Him but our hearts are not with Him. We will still do many things according to our own desire; according to our own will, according to our own ways.

So in the physical realm, God will provide for us whatever is suitable for us in our situation.

Now then we may think therefore it means everything in the physical realm will turn out very well because God is almighty.

But that is not the meaning. God will bring us through situations that will be the most meaningful. But meaningful situations can involve shipwreck, can involve pain and suffering, can involve illnesses and various other situations of life that are very difficult.

It can involve all this but God will strongly support us, that is to say it includes physical situations where if He sees fit to heal us, to strengthen us, to remove obstacles, He will do so.

We can see this in **Hebrews 11** where God worked miraculously to deliver people who trusted Him because they had faith but He also allowed various ones to go through great difficulties and suffering. God was pleased with those who truly trusted Him.

Our heart being completely His cannot be conditional, that is to say we tell God, "If You do this for me, I will love You with all my heart" ... unless the "if" concentrates on only one thing, and that is if God will help us to be faithful to Him, we will give everything. If that is all that you want - to be faithful to God - you can tell Him that, yes: "If You will help me to be faithful to You, I will love You with all my heart." But then it is not necessary because certainly, God will help you to be faithful to Him. He wants to help you to be faithful to Him.

So our response to God basically should be unconditional.

God is good; God is perfect. He is perfectly good. Are we prepared to just give ourselves fully to Him, for Him to work out in whatever way He sees fit? His understanding is inscrutable. We trust Him. He is perfectly good and perfectly wise so we can walk with Him, we can go where He wants us to go and we can live as He desires us to live.

But there is one very important aspect that we need to bear in mind carefully. For those who really want to live for God, there is a serious danger that we must guard against.

Sometimes we grow weary in seeking to live out the will of God: It is so tiresome, it is so difficult, to find out the will of God. I must pray and consider and ponder. I must think of so many things. It is so difficult.

And then we may come to a state where we say, "God, please take over. You think for me, You do for me. I just give myself to You." We become passive; we do not want to do anything. We just say, "God, You do everything." It sounds very good: "I have given my life to God. I have given my brain to God. I have given everything to Him. He can do whatever He wants."

Does God want us to respond like that?

Obviously not! God does not want us to respond like that because God wants us to be true moral beings of quality. Moral beings of quality must know what they are doing, must understand the direction of their lives, must be committed to what is truly valuable. And to do that, we must spend time to think about life, what is valuable, what do we want to give ourselves for; why is it God's ways are so good. We must understand these things. We must find out; we must ponder; we must work at it.

People are prepared to spend hours, months, years, studying for exams in the university or postgraduate degrees and they do not complain. But when we say, "Spend time to search the Scriptures, to think about eternal things, to consider", it is very tiresome, it is very tiring, it takes up a lot of time. Our values are distorted.

What is of true value? These are the things that are of true value: the things of eternity. All these other things that we learn, whether at work or in university, in school, they will all perish; it is just temporary. There is a place for us, yes, to study, to learn, to be responsible, to get a reasonable job, to fulfil our responsibilities on earth. There is a place for that. But where is our heart? What is our priority? What is really important to us?

I see that it is very important for us to consider very carefully day by day: What do you really want to give your life for?

And we must be very active in our giving ourselves to God. When we say our heart is completely His, it means we work our heart very hard to think about what is in God's heart; we want to understand Him, we want to know His ways. We work very hard to seek, to find, to know and then to obey, to do, to trust.

So unless we are prepared to do that, there are many things we will not understand. God wants to speak to us; we are not listening because our heart is not tuned to the heart of God. We are tuned to the wave notes from the world. It is a different world; it is a different realm.

So if we want to hear what God has to say, then our heart must be tuned to what is in His heart. We must appreciate, concentrate on the things of true and ultimate value. And this is a difficult thing.

But the Scriptures show to us that God appreciates this: when we are active in our submission to Him, in our giving of our lives to Him.

A very good example we can see in the life of Moses. When Moses argued with God, God was very pleased. It seemed as if Moses was contradicting God, choosing something that was not God's will. But in fact, that was God's will. It is just that that will may not be expressed if there was no one who could identify with Him. But Moses identified with God. Moses appreciated what God was seeking to do. So he called upon God not to destroy the people of Israel and not to make of Moses a great nation. He wanted God to preserve them, work through them that the world may see the glory of God. And God heard Moses' prayer and God appreciated his arguments.

So God wants us to take initiative but initiative of a healthy kind. God does not want us to simply submit without knowing what we are doing. He wants us to appreciate the things that we are doing and consider them properly and if we do not understand, to ask Him, to discuss, find out.

But ultimately there will still be many things we do not understand in spite of all the hard work we put in. There, we continue to trust God in areas that are beyond us at the moment, but we continue to pursue, to seek to find out, to understand, to work at it.

So what I see is very important for us if we want to attain to that kind of quality of freedom in the Spirit, to be what we ought to be and to do what we ought to do: We must appreciate how we can bring together these two very major primary issues - God's almighty greatness and the power of our moral choice. We must bring these two together in accordance with God's will and God's intention. God wants to work out His purposes but it requires our moral choice to be exercised in line with what is in His heart and we have the freedom not to exercise that choice in the direction of His will. God cannot compel us and He will not seek to compel us in that kind of sense.

On the other hand the evil one seeks to compel us to follow him, to do his will. He does not care about moral quality. He just wants power; he wants authority. He wants to control us. So he does not care whether you believe in it or not, whether you understand or not, whether you think it is good or bad. He just wants you to follow him, do his will.

But God is not like that. God only wants what is good, truly good. And truly good must have this element of your agreement, that you see and you want it, you choose it willingly and gladly.

So that is why we cannot compel people to become Christians; we cannot compel people to follow the Lord; we cannot draw them to follow the Lord by false means, by deception, by false persuasion.

We must help them to understand that this path of following the Lord is a very meaningful path but it is difficult and they must be prepared to give up what is wrong in order to pursue what is right. There has to be a sufficient recognition of the meaning of following the Lord and who the Lord is.

So God wants us to nurture this freedom in the Spirit and in order to nurture this, we need to ponder over what it means and do our part so that we can mount up with wings like eagles. We can go wherever God wants us to go. There will be freedom and life and power to do whatever He wants us to do.

So if we want to live our lives well and fulfil God's call in our lives, we must appreciate our total weakness and helplessness without God; and choose to depend on Him always; and experience His power and His strength to live for Him, seeking to walk in the Spirit, to fulfil the perfect will of God.

The more we appreciate our helplessness and our weakness and the more we recognize our need of God and His almighty greatness and His availability to us, the more we can experience that freedom to be and to do what we ought in accordance with the will of God.

So then let us as we come before the Lord, ask Him to help us to appreciate these issues more deeply, so that we may treasure God Himself and treasure our lives that God has given to us, how He has created us, so that we respond well, we do not waste away our lives but respond in a way that will help us to fulfil, to attain, to that potential that God wants for us.

And that is how we should prepare for eternity and that is how we should also help others to move in that direction because that is the only thing that is truly worthwhile.

All other things basically will pass away. All that is in the world – whatever the world can offer, the temporary enjoyment and excitement – they will all pass away. There will not be true value.

So let us come before the Lord and ask Him to speak to us and teach us His ways and to help us to know how to depend on Him.