

GOD'S CALL

Major themes in the Scriptures

The Holy Spirit (18)

Freedom in the Spirit: presented to God

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

God wants us to know true freedom in all its fullness. However, this is developed progressively in different areas. There are greater depths and higher levels of freedom in the Spirit that we can enter into in our experience of having presented ourselves to God.

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

We have seen that true freedom is the power to be what we should be and to do what we should do.

In order to know that freedom, we need to develop our character to be like that of God, who has absolute freedom in the spiritual and moral realm as well as in the physical and material realm.

This freedom is developed progressively. God wants us to know the fullness of freedom but as we grow in life, we can experience different degrees, depths, of this freedom, and we should not be satisfied with low levels of freedom because that can very easily turn to bondage again.

So, we are considering the meaning of progressive development towards perfect freedom in the spiritual realm, in the context of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

We saw that we need freedom from bondage in condemnation for sin, so that we can come into the freedom in forgiveness for sins; and this aspect is necessary once sin has taken place, but that freedom may not last if we do not enter deeply into it. We need to know how to be justified by faith.

Then we can consider that there are two kinds of condemnation that we need to be free from. The first we have seen is the freedom from the condemnation because of sin that results from the judgment and punishment from God, which we considered in the last message.

The other aspect of condemnation is because we continue to fail to live a righteous life, resulting in condemnation within our own heart.

Having become forgiven, become a child of God, we continue to fail to be what we ought to be and then this leads to a sense of condemnation within our own heart: we know that we are not what we should be.

Let us look at **Romans 6: 5-7**.

Romans 6: 5-7

- 5 For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection,
- 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;
- 7 for he who has died is freed from sin.

So we know that in **Romans 5**, the apostle Paul tells us how we can be reconciled to God: We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ – we are justified by faith. But being justified by faith, having been forgiven our sins does not mean that we will not continue to fail and continue to sin. Forgiveness of sins means that God is prepared to free us from the condemnation of our sins, but it does not mean that we will not continue in sin.

So God's purpose in bringing about forgiveness for us is not to stop at forgiveness. It is to go on to deliverance from sin – the power of sin, a life of sin. He wants us to live a life that is free from sin: no longer slaves to sin.

It is very important for us to recognize this. Many people separate the Christian life into many different compartments and they may think that not all of them are necessary.

So, many people want forgiveness of sins. They concentrate on this area, whether in their own lives or in seeking to help other people. You need forgiveness of sins, you need to become a child of God then you can go to heaven.

Well, that is true but it must not stop there; it is not meant to stop there. When we have sinned, we need forgiveness. But if we do not go on from there to stop sinning and to be committed to the path of not sinning then we may find that that forgiveness that we thought we had may in reality not be true; or if it were true it may no longer be meaningful or valid.

So it is important for us to see that we need, in the context of forgiveness of sins, to learn to give ourselves to a life of righteousness. This is an aspect of repentance.

Many people may think that giving our lives to God is an option that we can consider after we have been forgiven. It is up to us whether we want to present ourselves to God or not, but we need forgiveness so we seek forgiveness; but giving ourselves to God – well, if we do that it is good, but if we do not, we are still forgiven. That is not true. It is important for us to recognize that.

What is repentance? What is sin?

At the heart of sin is man going his own way: All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.

So repentance has to mean that we turn from going our own way to going God's way. It has to mean that we discard the life of sin and rebellion and self-centeredness in order to live for God according to His ways, His instructions.

It therefore must mean we present ourselves to God to live according to His ways. That is to say, giving our lives to God, being consecrated to God is part of repentance. If we are truly repentant, we will love God, we will seek to live for Him in accordance with His will. It is not something that we can say, "If I would like to, I will but if not, I won't."

Romans 6 tells us that our old self (or our old man) was crucified with the Lord Jesus, so that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin. Then he says, "...for he who has died is freed from sin".

Here "freed from sin" refers to being freed from continuing in sin.

Reading this passage just as it is may give us the impression that it is all done for us already: The Lord Jesus died on the cross; we died with Him, so we are freed from sin – there is nothing more that we need to do. We just trust Him that He has done it all for us; we just receive it as a gift, so we are free. Is that so?

No, it is not so. There is a very, very important aspect for us to fulfil. The Lord Jesus has done His part completely, totally, but we have a very, very important part to fulfil.

Romans 6: 11-13

- 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.
- 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,
- 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.

This passage tells us very clearly that the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross does not by itself free us from the life of sin, even if we have come to Him to acknowledge Him as our Saviour and we come to Him for forgiveness of sins.

Though our old man was crucified with Him, though we died with Him in the event of the cross and we are supposed to be freed from sin, the reality is that this does not materialize in life unless we do our part.

And this is the part that we must do: consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. First, we need to consider or to reckon that the Lord Jesus died on the cross, we died with Him and it is our choice to be identified with Him in that death and that resurrection. We are alive to God in Jesus Christ: this is our choice, our commitment. This is the life that we want to live.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts...

If we appreciate what the Lord Jesus has done for us then we need to choose this path not to let sin reign in our mortal body so that we obey its lusts.

The mortal body that we have is a natural body that has many inclinations that are negative, that are not helpful to us. If we allow them to operate in our lives, we will move in the direction of sin.

Paul says: "...do not let sin reign in your mortal body". Therefore, it means that we can, we can stop it – we do not let sin reign. And that is our responsibility; that is not something the Lord Jesus did for us. This is the part we must do.

"...and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness..." Why do we sin? Do we sin because Adam sinned? Do we sin because we are born like that, we have no choice, we must sin?

It cannot be. A moral being has moral choice; sin is a moral choice. When we sin it is because we chose it. Paul says, "...do not go on..." that means you have been doing that; do not carry on this way, do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness. Do not continue in the path of sin. And what is the meaning of that?

The meaning is you were presenting the members of your body to sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness. That is our way of life when we were not walking with God. We chose the self-life; we chose the world and so, we were presenting the members of our body to sin. Our body has been used in the wrong direction for things not good, so now we must change. First we must discard the negative – do not go on presenting – but that is not enough.

He says, "...but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God".

So there are two aspects that we must make sure: First, present yourselves to God; “yourselves” refers to your moral being, your inner man, who you are, your moral character, your moral and spiritual life.

Present yourselves to God. First and foremost it has to do with your heart; it has to do with who you are, what you want, what you live for. Are you prepared first to present yourself to God – as those alive from the dead because now, we are alive in Christ? We died with Him, now we rise from the dead with Him. In that context, in this sphere of a new spiritual life we now present ourselves to God.

And he says, “...your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God”. Once your heart belongs to God, you must make use of all that you have in your being, in the body that God has given to us, all the members must be employed for the purpose of being instruments of righteousness to God; “your members” can be translated as “your parts” – the parts of your body, all that you have in the physical realm must then now be presented to express the meaning of your heart.

That is to say, as you give your inner man to God with all your heart, you must now express that in your outer man in the way you live your life each day; in every aspect it must manifest the meaning of having been presented to God, consecrated to God, offered to Him so that He can have the freedom to work in us.

The apostle Paul in **Romans 12: 1-2** expresses this aspect in these terms. He says,

Romans 12: 1-2

- 1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.
- 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

The apostle Paul has emphasized that we must give our total being to God, we must give ourselves to God. Here he tells us that in our daily lives, we need to express it in the way we walk before God. We must present our bodies a living and holy sacrifice. In the Old Testament, they presented the bodies of animals as sacrifice to God. Here, we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. In the Old Testament, they were dead sacrifices. For us, it must be a living sacrifice offered to God as our spiritual service of worship.

So, we are to give of ourselves fully to God in our inner man, in our outer man, in all that we have and in so doing we will not be conformed to this world. We will be transformed, we will prove the will of God, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

If we do not do that, we cannot experience true freedom in the Spirit. We will always live in bondage; we will be slaves to sin. So in order to be free from that condemnation of a life of sin, this is one major aspect that we need to appreciate: we need to learn to present ourselves fully to God, and this is an aspect of repentance.

There are different degrees in which we learn, experience and develop. It does not mean that when we have not yet developed the highest level in giving of ourselves to God then we have not truly repented.

There is a range in our development, but the important principle underlying it is: we must be genuine. When we say we repent, we mean it and we are prepared to give up sin to pursue righteousness. If that part is not true then there is no true repentance, but if that part is true and we are committed to that, it does not mean that we will not fail. But in the midst of failure, we will acknowledge, we will continue to repent, we will continue to be forgiven and cleansed, and we will develop further.

The difference between true repentance, and that, which is not true, is the meaning within our heart.

The Pharisees never truly repented (most of them). Although they may profess love for God but within their heart, there was not the commitment, the intention to live for God, to live a life of righteousness. So there was no true repentance.

There are others where there is a genuine commitment to live for God but they may fail. And in this regard, God is compassionate and understanding. He is prepared to forgive us even though we fail many a time. But let us not become complacent: let us not take it easy and think that we can just continue to sin and fail and come to God for forgiveness because if we do that, with time, our heart becomes hardened; we are no longer sensitive to God and we will move in the direction of further and further sin.

So let us consider an example of this man who wanted eternal life: **Mark 10: 17-23.** We read of this man who ran up to the Lord Jesus and he knelt before Him and he asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

So we are told that this man wanted eternal life. The Lord Jesus told him, "You know the commandments, 'DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'" The Lord Jesus basically told him: "You must keep the commandments of God; you must walk in the positive direction." His reply seemed very positive. He said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up." So it seemed that he had obeyed all God's commandments and he was doing the right thing. The Lord Jesus said this to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

When the Lord Jesus said these words, the man was very sad and he went away. He was not prepared to obey the Lord Jesus, to give up his property in order to follow the Lord Jesus.

So what does this mean? Some of us may think if that is the case, how many people will become Christians? How many people are really prepared to sell all that they have and give to the poor and become a Christian?

Here we need to appreciate that what God is looking for is not in terms of the outward forms of things. It does not mean that if we sell all that we have and give to the poor, we can become a follower of Christ and if we do not do that then we cannot become a follower of Christ.

What God may ask of us to do may vary in different situations and for different people. He knows what is in our heart and what He tells us is appropriate for us. He wants to see: "Are you truly repentant? You say you love God; you say you keep all the commandments of God - is it so? I am just giving you one simple instruction: Sell all you have, give to the poor and follow Me." He was not prepared to do that. So it means that his appreciation of the Lord Jesus, his commitment to do the will of God, was not of substance; there was not that reality of repentance required of him in that situation.

Sometimes, we can make it very easy for people to become Christians: All they need to do is just to acknowledge they are sinners, accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and they go to heaven. And we can persuade many people to do that, and they think that they are going to heaven.

Well, in some instances it may be true when they do that, they go to heaven because there is a genuine response in their heart to God.

But in many instances it may not be true because there is no genuine repentance. All they want is to be forgiven and to go to heaven and carry on with the life that they have wanted to live all this time – there is no difference.

Repentance must mean we turn to God and we have chosen to live for God. It is not something extra: that we are doing God a favour by now giving our lives to Him; it is part of the meaning of repentance. After we have become Christians and there is genuine repentance, this problem can continue to exist: the meaning of our presenting ourselves to God.

We have considered the example of Ananias and Sapphira on various occasions and I will not read the passage in **Acts 5: 1-5**. Here we see that Ananias and Sapphira, they were Christians having fellowship with the disciples, but they lied to the Holy Spirit. They did not give all the proceeds of the sale of the land but they wanted to give the impression that it was so. They had not properly presented themselves and what they had to God in order to do the will of God. They were still concerned about their own name and reputation and what people may think of them and so Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit..."

This principle can happen to any believer. We need to be very careful. When we do that it shows that we have not properly presented ourselves to God and we are in danger of being led astray in increasing measure by the powers of darkness. We can actually be serving the evil one even when we are supposed to be serving God.

So then some people may think: If I present myself to God and I look at the example of Ananias and Sapphira and this rich young ruler, then what I can do is to offer all that I have to God in more complete forms and in more extreme ways.

Well, the apostle Paul tells us that that is of no use unless something has happened within the heart and there is meaning in the things that we do.

1 Corinthians 13: 1-3

- 1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.
- 2 If I have *the gift of prophecy*, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.
- 3 And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

The description of these various areas may seem very spiritual, very positive and indications of a man who is very much given to God to live for God. But something is missing, and that is love: love for God and love for others. There must be the moral transformation within us for these things to be meaningful. These outward expressions have no value unless they arise from love. We give all our possessions to feed the poor, we surrender our bodies to be burned but if there is no love, it profits us nothing. There is no value in that.

So it is not the outward forms and expressions that are the important things. It is the love within us, the meaning within us: If that meaning is real, is genuine, is deep then even if we falter and fail in some of these outward expressions, it is not so serious. We want to, we seek to but sometimes we are not so careful, well, we may fail and falter. But if there is a genuine love for God and we are prepared to do that which is meaningful before Him, and our love for people is genuine, and we are not seeking for personal gain then what we do will have value.

Now I want to consider with you what being presented to God should mean in our daily lives. We can consider examples in the Scriptures that can help us understand how meaningful it is to live a life that is properly presented to God and at the same time to understand that it is very difficult to live that way.

Hebrews 11: 24-26

- 24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,
- 25 choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,
- 26 considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.

Here we are told that Moses, when he had grown up, made a very decisive, definite choice: to present himself to God, to live for God according to His will and His ways.

He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. This carried with it so much privilege, so much potential in this world. He gave it up. He chose instead to endure ill-treatment with the people of God. He gave up enjoyment of the passing pleasures of sin – the contrast between the two.

What he chose was something that most people will consider negative but in the eyes of God, it was very positive. He had presented himself to God, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. So he had the right sense of values. He knew that God's kingdom was the truly worthwhile kingdom to live for. He knew that what God offered to him was true riches and what Pharaoh could offer to him was not worth it.

So we see that Moses gave up himself in order to properly live for God.

Hebrews 3 tells us how Moses is regarded as someone who was faithful to God. He was faithful to God who appointed him in all His house. Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later.

This is a very significant description of Moses: faithful in all His house, in the house of God. God highly regarded him.

So it must mean that Moses' commitment to God, his consecration of himself to God, was of a very high quality, and it is recorded as an example for us to learn: to give up the things of this world, to be identified with God and what He wants to accomplish; to be identified with the Lord Jesus.

So Moses can be properly regarded as a very good example of a man given over to God, to live for God, consecrated to God.

However, even for a man like Moses, there were difficulties along the way. He had to learn to deepen in his commitment to God, to develop a higher quality, to live at a higher plane.

Exodus 4: 10-16

- 10 Then Moses said to the LORD, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue."
- 11 The LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes *him* mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?"
- 12 "Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say."
- 13 But he said, "Please, Lord, now send *the message* by whomever You will."
- 14 Then the anger of the LORD burned against Moses, and He said, "Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently. And moreover, behold, he is coming out to meet you; when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart."
- 15 "You are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I, even I, will be with your mouth and his mouth, and I will teach you what you are to do."
- 16 "Moreover, he shall speak for you to the people; and he will be as a mouth for you and you will be as God to him."

We notice here clearly stated: Then the anger of the LORD burned against Moses. This tells us that God was angry with Moses, His faithful servant.

Moses was a man of very high quality and yet we are told here God was angry with him. Why? Why was God angry with Moses?

Was it because Moses was very selfish, he wanted his own way, he wanted honour from the world, he wanted enjoyment in this world, he wanted the praise of men?

No, it was none of these things. In fact, we can say the reason for Moses' failure was a noble reason; it was a very good reason but it was a failure. Moses had lost all self-confidence. Previously, he was a man of words and deeds in Egypt and he was very capable; he was looked up to, he had confidence. But now, he was a fugitive, he fled from Egypt, he was living in the wilderness; he had no more confidence in himself. So when God called him to go and deliver the people of Israel, Moses said, "No, no, no! I can't do it."

So God explained to him in response to what Moses said ("Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue."), and the LORD said to him, ""Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes *him* mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?"

So Moses wanted to give excuse for not going. He felt totally inadequate so he said, "I have never been eloquent... I cannot do it." But God explained to him, "Who has made man's mouth? I am the One who created you and if I call you to go, I can enable you to do what you need to do." So He said, "Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say": all the power of God available to Moses to enable him to fulfil the will of God. But what did Moses say?

"Please, Lord, now send *the message* by whomever You will."

If we take the sentence as it stands then "whomever you will" applied to Moses. God had chosen Moses then Moses should therefore go. But that was not his meaning. What he meant was: "Please, Lord, now send *the message* by whomever You will except me. Don't send me; send someone else. I can't do it." It was in this context that the anger of the LORD burned against Moses.

That shows that he had not presented himself to God totally.

If he had presented himself to God absolutely, fully, then he would have been willing to do anything that God wanted him to do. That is a logical consequence.

If you really give yourself fully to God, it means you are willing, you are prepared, to do anything that God wants you to do. And of course in order to do that, you have to trust Him, that He will enable you. God has promised: "I will be with you; I will enable you." Will we trust Him so that we can fulfil His will?

So Moses failed in this area. But his failure is very different from the failure of most people. His failure was one of lack of confidence in himself, which is a good thing, but when seen in the context of God's call and God's instructions and God's promise then it is no longer a good thing.

In ourselves we should not have self-confidence, but when God tell us, "This is what I want you to do and I will enable you to do" and we continue to say, "No, I can't, I can't", then that is not honouring to God, that is not in accordance with our commitment to live for Him.

When God says, "I will be with you," our response should be, "Thank You, Lord. I will move together with You, I will trust You and I will do what You want me to do." That is not self-confidence; that is not arrogance. That is faith; that is trusting God meaningfully. So this aspect is very important for us to consider.

If we want to have true freedom in its fullness then we must learn to give up ourselves to God absolutely so that no matter what He requires of us, we will not hold back in any area, in any circumstance. And we can trust Him that He will enable us to do all that He wants us to do.

But the problem is that very often, we are not willing to do that because we are not inclined to it, it is not so pleasant, there are dangers, there are difficulties, there are problems... So we withdraw from that, we do not want that path and so we can give excuses why it cannot be done, why it is not appropriate, why I have other alternatives, I have other priorities. So, we need to seek God to appreciate how we can live our lives so that He has the full freedom to call us to do anything He wants us to do and to fulfil His will as we should.

Now let us go to the perfect example for us to follow: the One who never failed, the One who gave His life absolutely to God to live for God as the perfect Man. We need to learn from Him to appreciate how we also can live a life like that: fully given over to God.

Luke 22: 41-44

- 41 And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and *began* to pray,
- 42 saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."
- 43 Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him.
- 44 And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.

We know that this is a description of very intense agony in the life of the Lord Jesus just prior to the event of the cross. He faced the most difficult task of His life and He was going through the most difficult time that He could ever face.

But then He chose to come into this world in order to go through this event. But as it drew near, as the intensity increased He knew that it was going to be an extremely difficult time: difficult not just in terms of physical pain but especially in the moral and spiritual realm in His fellowship with God – the sins of the world that He had to bear, the horror, the filth, the negativeness of all the sins of men on His shoulders. It was something extremely difficult for Him to bear.

So He said, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me..." This is an expression of how difficult it was. It was not an expression of unwillingness but an expression of how difficult it was and if there were any other way of fulfilling the will of God without this, He would want it. But He made it very clear: "...yet not My will, but Yours be done." Whatever it is, His choice was God's will.

This is something that all of us need to learn. Can we say like Him in the most difficult of times: "...not My will, but Yours be done"? "...not my will" does not mean that this is not His will because it is His will to choose God's will. But "not my will" here is to emphasize that His concentration, His focus, His emphasis, His choice is God's will, whatever it is. No matter how He felt, no matter what situation He had to go through, the issue was the will of God.

And that should be the way we go through life: our focus should not be what I think, what I would like, what I prefer, what I think is more suitable. Ultimately it must be: what is truly God's will.

But many people may not know God's will because they are not prepared to face it, they are not prepared to seek God to know His will. So they can say, "I don't know, I don't know", so they carry on doing their own will.

But the Lord Jesus was very clear - He knew the Father's will. So too we can know if we live for Him, we can walk with Him, He will lead us and when we recognize, will we walk with Him?

It was so difficult: He was praying very fervently... His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. And yet in that context He did not waver from this direction: "...not My will, but Yours be done". This is an expression of His presenting Himself to God to the fullest absolute level.

He gave Himself to God and His body a sacrifice unto God. Here He not only lived as a living sacrifice but He also died as a sacrifice for mankind: offered up to God for the sins of men.

Hebrews 5: 8-10

- 8 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.
- 9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,
- 10 being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

He was a Son and yet we are told, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. The Lord Jesus Christ was perfect in the Godhead but as He came into this world and took on human form, He was going through a different experience. He was going to express His life as a Man for us to learn from, to see, to behold.

And for Him to fulfil that function well, He had to be tested, He had to be trained, He had to go through difficulties so that we can see in Him our perfect Example. The Lord Jesus was forty days in the wilderness tempted by the devil. It must have been a terrible time: what kinds of temptations that he would have brought to Him. But He had to be tempted so that we can see He overcame, He never gave in to the evil one.

He suffered the rejection of men; He suffered the pain of the cross; He suffered the consequence of sin on mankind as He bore our sins in His own body on the cross.

And we are told: ...having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation...

The Lord Jesus Christ became the source of eternal salvation because He became perfect through suffering. That does not mean that He was not perfect before He came into this world.

He was perfect but He was perfected through suffering to be the Saviour of the world, to be the perfect Man representing us on the cross, to be the perfect Man overcoming the evil one at the cross. He was made perfect through suffering as a result of which He could be designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek: a high priest representing mankind before God – He was the perfect high priest.

So, we may wonder: Why is it necessary to go through so much suffering to become perfected?

There are many ways we can appreciate this but one simple way of looking at it is that when life is easy, it is also very easy for us to profess we love God with all our hearts. But when life is difficult, it is also difficult to genuinely profess that we love God with all our hearts.

So in order for God to help us understand ourselves as well as to develop our lives then it is necessary for us to go through times of suffering and difficulties so that it will become clearer: Do we truly love God? Are we willing to take our stand in what is good in the midst of difficulties and pain and suffering? Or will we be like the seed that is planted without much soil? It grows up very quickly but when the sun comes up, it withers?

The Lord Jesus has shown us the perfect Example: a life given up to God. He went through much suffering but He never wavered from His commitment to God. So too for us: If we want to live a life of freedom in the Spirit, our commitment to God must be total, complete and absolute.

And this we can develop progressively in different stages and God will show us if we are willing to learn where we have failed, what we need to do and how we can grow.

Ultimately it is very important for us to recognize that the issue we are considering, in the end, when all is said and done, it is within your heart.

It is not primarily the many things that you may do or not do, but it is what is in your heart. And what is in your heart may not always be clear to other people and it may also not be very clear to yourself, unless you are willing to be honest before God, you are prepared for God to search you, show you, teach you, deal with you.

If we are prepared to do that then we can have true freedom because God will be with us: whatever situation that we go through, He will be with us. And not only will He just be accompanying us, but also He will see us through, He will empower us. As He put it: He will strongly support us in whatever we go through and whatever we do.

That is why God spoke through his prophet to King Asa: "For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His." This is in **2 Chronicles 16: 9**.

It is a very interesting, very meaningful verse. The eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth – it tells us that God is looking very closely; He is searching very carefully. And what is He looking for?

There is only one thing: those whose heart is completely His.

This is the thing that God values the most.

But many of us may try to offer something to God instead of our heart; we want it to be replaced by something easier.

To give our heart fully to God is very, very difficult but to give something else, even all your riches, is a very much easier thing to do.

But this is what God is looking for. He will strongly support those whose heart is completely His. And this is very, very meaningful. What does it mean when he says He will strongly support? When we live our lives each day, if our heart is completely belonging to God then the outcome of the way we live our lives will be: we will constantly be seeking God to understand what is in His heart, what is meaningful to Him. If this is the way we live our lives then the things that we do will be very meaningful things and in that context, God will strongly support us. He will help us, empower us, enable us to do those things that are really good and meaningful, which are in reality what would be most meaningful in His heart.

So that is a context for a very meaningful fellowship with God: We love God and we love the things of God, and God loves us because our heart is good and we are united with Him.

So this is one major area if we want to live our life free from the condemnation of sin in our hearts, where we continue in sin. The Lord willing, in the next message, we will consider another aspect of what we must do in order that we can be free from the condemnation in our hearts.

Today, we have sought to appreciate that if we want to live properly, we must ensure that we have fully presented ourselves to God to walk in His ways and fulfil His will.

Otherwise we will not be able to fulfil God's call in our lives. Most Christians, while they love God, are still preoccupied with their own ideas, preoccupied with what they think, what they prefer, what they would like to do and how they should do it. This is contrary to a life presented to God.

A life fully presented to God means we constantly seek God to understand what is meaningful to Him. We give up our own desires, we concentrate on what is meaningful to God and whatever He wants of us, easy or difficult, simple or complex, is not a problem to us because God will strongly support us to go through whatever the situation might be. And that is why the apostle Paul could say, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

So we have no excuse. Many people are giving excuses: "I can't do this; I can't do that. I don't have this ability; I don't have that knowledge".

But there is no excuse because whatever God wants you to do, He will enable you to do if you trust Him. So all of us can fulfil our part in the body of Christ, whatever God may assign to us, whatever He may want us to do.

So let us then come before the Lord and ask Him to help us to ponder over our lives: Have we properly given ourselves to God? When we say we love Him, is it true? How far have we gone, how deep is it?

When we say we appreciate forgiveness of sins do we really recognize the meaning of sin so that we want to turn away from it, we want to turn from going our own way to going God's way and therefore, we will give our lives to God?