

Be Prepared to Be Weak



How to Be Led by the Holy Spirit (Part 8)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again sharing on this week's important theme, "How to be Led by the Holy Spirit."

But first, let me say thank you to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. Feel free to share with us your personal needs, your problems, your prayer requests. Each month our listeners write in to tell us of prayer requests that have been wonderfully answered.

Now, back to our theme, "How to be Led by the Holy Spirit." In my talk yesterday I shared with you that God is not impressed by the wisdom of this world. He has another kind of wisdom which appears foolish—the cross. And this wisdom is imparted by the Holy Spirit contrary to the spirit of this world. There are two spirits that Paul speaks about: the spirit of this world, the Spirit which is of God. And there's opposition between them. As long as we're under the influence of the spirit of this world we will cultivate a kind of wisdom which is of this world. But when we come under the Spirit of God and allow Him to teach us and guide us, we receive a totally different kind of wisdom which appears foolish to the people who are under the influence of the spirit of this world. But that wisdom of God comes only through the cross, through the revelation of the cross. And so, Paul says, if you really want to be wise, first of all, you have to become foolish by the standards of the world. You have to lay down that kind of worldly wisdom.

Today I'm going to share a parallel truth. God is not impressed by human strength and if you want real divine strength and power, first of all, you have to become weak by the standards of this world. And again, the key to this divine weakness which gives strength is the cross. You see, the cross symbolizes not only foolishness, which I spoke about yesterday, but also weakness. This is what Paul says—and we're back again in 1 Corinthians because this is one main theme of 1 Corinthians, the difference between human wisdom and divine wisdom; the difference between human power and divine power. And, the key to divine wisdom and divine power, which is the cross. So here's Paul again in 1 Corinthians 11:22B29:

> "For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom..."

And I have to tell you that statement is just as true today as when Paul wrote it.

> "...but [he says] we [believers] preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness."

There you are, you see. We're confronted by something that appears to one set of people foolish and to another set of people weak. But Paul goes on:

> "But to those who are called [by God], both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

You see, the two go together: wisdom and power. Then Paul goes on:

> "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

That's what I want to focus on today, the weakness of God is stronger than men. There is a kind of weakness which is the key to real strength. Then he says to the Christians: "Look at the kind of people you are. Look at the kind of people who become believers."

> "For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble: but God has chosen..."

And I want to emphasize all through my talk today—God has made his choice. It's no good arguing with God because He's made the decision.

> "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are..."

So God has chosen the very opposite of what man would choose with wisdom. And then Paul gives the reason:

> "...that no man should boast before God." (NAS)

Before God can really come into our lives and be to us all that He wants to be, there's one thing that He has to cast down and that is human pride. And there are two great sources of human pride. One is wisdom and the other is power. And God has to deal with those. They are barriers against the real revelation of God because human wisdom and human power do not impress God and they do not accomplish the purposes of God. We have to turn away from them. We have to be set free from them before we can experience the real wisdom and the real power of God. For that reason, God has chosen the unlikely people.

You know, I've seen several groups of Christians who have decided to be really strong and really have it all together and really do it right. The extraordinary thing is that God passes them by time after time and He finds some little group somewhere that doesn't have much claim in themselves but they're open to His Holy Spirit, to His wisdom and to His power.

Paul then gives his own testimony in 2 Corinthians about this source of divine power. And he speaks about a very painful experience where he was tormented by some kind of Satanic angel and he besought God to deliver him from this and God didn't. God didn't answer his prayer that way. Sometimes people tell me, "My prayers don't get answered." And I answer them in return, "Perhaps you've forgotten that `No' is an answer!" God did answer Paul's prayer but it was with a "No." And this is how Paul explains it:

> "And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations [that were given to Paul], for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me—to keep me from exalting myself!"

Notice the words "there was given me." Would you like that kind of a gift? An angel of Satan to make life difficult for you all the time? Personally, I believe that was the angel that moved around wherever Paul went, in every city he stirred up trouble, turmoil. He got him thrown into prison, beaten, persecuted, thrown out of the city, stoned. That was, I believe personally, the activity of that angel. Paul says:

> "Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me."

I can understand that. I think I'd pray the same prayer. But God said to Paul:

> "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."

What a tremendous revelation! God's power is only fully revealed in man's weakness. As long as man has his own strength, as long as man has it all together—he knows what to do, he's got the situation under control—there's no room for God. And God doesn't get the glory. But when we've come to the limit of our own strength and our own wisdom and we have no more resources, then God can release his wisdom, His strength, through His grace. So Paul goes on to make a statement that I really find it difficult to say "amen" to. I think I'm getting there but I'm not sure I've arrived.

> "Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

I don't meet many Christians nowadays that are boasting about their weaknesses. I hear a whole lot of preachers that are telling about their strength and their gifts and their accomplishments but, honestly, people who boast about their weaknesses are pretty hard to find. Paul goes on with an even more amazing statement:

> "Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong." (NAS)

Would you say that? Would I say that? I'm well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties. For Christ's sake, mind you. It all has to be for Christ's sake. It's only when we're in the service of the Lord and doing everything for Him.

Then Paul sums it up in those simple words, "when I am weak, then I am strong." That's a lesson we all have to learn sooner or later—and the sooner the better if we're really going to experience the power of God released in our lives. He will not release it through human strength—only through human weakness.

You see, actually trusting in our own strength brings a curse. That's a statement that most Christians have never absorbed. But in Jeremiah 17:5 it says:

> "This is what the Lord says: Cursed is the one who trusts in man, [man includes yourself] who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord." (NIV)

You see, you cannot depend on your own strength and on the Lord at the same time. If you are depending on your own strength, your heart has turned away from the Lord and you are under a curse. God's grace and mercy is aimed to keep us from the curse and sometimes He has to do very drastic things to us to do that.

Let me sum this all up in Ephesians 2:8B10 about the grace of God. Paul says:

> "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (NIV)

I want to bring out certain truths from that without commenting in detail. First of all, grace begins where human ability ends. As long as you are able and you can do it by yourself and in your own strength, God's grace is not released. When you've come to the end of your ability, that's the beginning of God's grace.

Secondly, God's grace is received only by faith—we cannot earn it.

Thirdly, it leaves no room for pride. I'd like to count sometime how many times Paul says in his epistles that no one can boast. You see, the great enemy of God's grace is our pride.

And finally, all the glory goes to God, not to us. And you see, that's where the Holy Spirit comes in. Because Jesus said, "When the Holy Spirit comes, He [the Holy Spirit] will glorify Me [Jesus]. He hasn't come to glorify us, he hasn't come to make us seem big or important or clever or strong. He's come to reveal the grace an the power and the wisdom of Jesus in our weaknesses.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. My talk tomorrow contains an important warning, "Don't Go Back to Rules!" Be sure to tune in.

My special offer this week is my book Purposes of Pentecost. This book explains why God has given us the Holy Spirit, all the many ways in which the Spirit is ready to help us and to do for us the "exceedingly abundantly above" anything that we ourselves would ask or think. Also, my complete series of talks this week on "How to be Led by the Holy Spirit, Part 2" is available in a single, carefully edited cassette. Stay tuned

for details.

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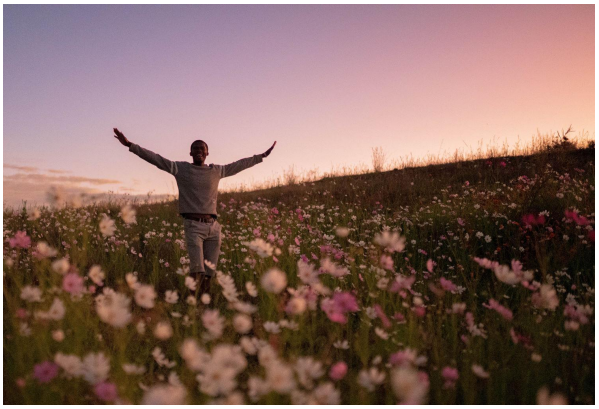

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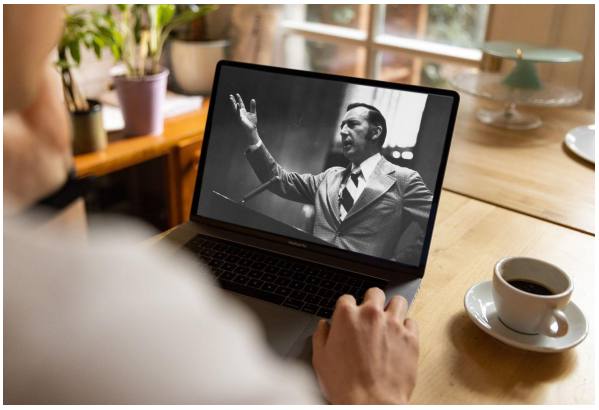

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