

Confessions of a Pastor  
*I'm Afraid To Give God Complete Control*

D. L. Moody was a 19th century American evangelist who not only preached about Jesus Christ around the world but founded schools for disadvantaged students and the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago to train missionaries and pastors.

D. L. Moody was an amazing man of God who wrote, *The world has yet to see what God can do with and for and through and in and by the man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him. I will try my utmost to be that man.*

That was a compelling statement. After over 1800 years of Christianity Moody said we still haven't seen someone totally, unreservedly unconditionally sold out for Jesus Christ.

On one level I'd take issue with that statement. There's been plenty of dynamic Christians down through the centuries. But in another sense I see what Moody was saying.

It's a monumental challenge for anyone to give God complete control of their lives. The truth is that outside of Jesus Christ no one could say that God was in control of their live 100% of the time.

What is the obstacle that keeps us from just trusting God with every aspect of our life without question? What is the obstacle that keeps you from wholeheartedly, utterly, just flat out 100% giving God absolute jurisdiction over your life?

This is week 2 of a series we're calling *Confessions of a Pastor*. We try to put things on the church sign that will really catch people's attention when they're driving down Riedel Road. I've had several people over the past few years say they first came to one of our services because they saw a sermon topic on the sign and said, "I just have to hear what that's about."

The problem is, the sign space is pretty limited so we can't put much on it. For this series we put "Confessions of a Pastor." Then this week we just added "Part 2" to the title. We thought about putting "More Confessions of a Pastor. Then next week putting "Even More Confessions of a Pastor" but then we figured people would say, "I don't

want to go to that church. That guy's got way too much to confess. It's taking him a whole month to do it."

Actually in 4 weeks we're just going to touch on some of the things I could share with you about my spiritual limitations.

But as we said last week, I just want to openly share my heart with you. I want to be real with you.

If somehow you get the idea that your pastor lives in some other world than you do, with none of the temptations and spiritual confrontations that you come up against, then the temptation is to just shrug off much of what I have to say up here as pie-in-the-sky stuff that doesn't touch you where you really live.

I live on the same planet you do. I deal with the same culture, the same temptations, many of the same fears, and the same concerns that you come up against as you live out your life.

We're on this spiritual journey together and my heart is to be able to be able to lock arms with you and serve our God together with you. My goal in this series is to look honestly at some of the pitfalls of living in a fallen world and gleaning God's wisdom for spiritual growth.

I'm going to be right up front with you this morning. It's a stretch for me to say to God "Here I am Lord. Preside over every moment, every thought, every action of my life." It's a stretch for me to say to God "Whatever you want me to do, wherever you want me to go, I'm ready no holds barred, let's do it!"

Why is that? What is it that gets in the way?

As we saw last week, none of us come into this world wanting God to absolutely rule and govern our lives. Even religiously oriented people want God on their terms.

You know how the Bible describes us just left to ourselves? Listen to this description from the New Testament:

*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. Ephesians 2:1-3*

Those are strong words. Dead in trespasses and sins. Sons of disobedience. Children of wrath. That's what God says we are. Separated from Him.

But now listen to what the Bible says as that passage continues:

*But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. Ephesians 2:4-9*

This is huge. God makes spiritually dead people alive through Jesus Christ, not through some system of rituals or religions but through faith.

By faith we appropriate what God has done for us in sending Christ to be our Savior. He finished the work. Jesus paid the price for our sins. That's why He said, "It is finished" from the cross just before He died.

We're forgiven, we're made alive, by receiving the gift of salvation Jesus purchased for us. Now we can fulfil the purpose for which we were created. We can worship and glorify God with our life. We can't pay God back for our forgiveness. But we can express our gratitude to Him by presenting our lives to Him as a living sacrifice.

The problem is, even as God's children we have a hard time giving it all over to Him. We want to be in charge.

What is it that can get in the way? What are the roadblocks, even when we're children of God?

I'd like to suggest that...

*I. The Root Of Not Giving God Complete Control Is A Misunderstanding Of God's Character*

**Turn with me to the Old Testament book of Judges, chapter 6, page 222**

God had warned His people Israel that if they disobeyed Him there would be consequences. Unfortunately they were slow learners and the book of Judges is the story of how they repeatedly disobeyed.

Over time they would begin to forget God and would fall into the pagan worship of the nations around them. In response, God often used those very nations to put the pressure on Israel. In Judges 6 it's the Midianites.

### **Read verses 1-6**

Think about what's going on here. Six hundred and fifty years before this God had chosen the descendants of one man, Abraham, to be His people. Over those 6 1/2 centuries his descendants grew into what we know as the nation of Israel.

He blessed them, gave them His laws, and really centered His love on Israel in a special and unique way. And yet, in spite of all of that, 4 different times in the book of Judges you read the phrase *the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD*.

They worshipped false gods and look where it got them; cowering around, hiding in shame, living in constant fear.

### **Read verses 11-12**

The angel of the Lord, which is the Old Testament term for God when He appeared to people, greets an Israeli named Gideon by saying, *The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!*

What was the mighty man of valor doing, practicing his samurai skills to use on the Midianites, praying that God would use him to lead an army?

No, he was threshing wheat in a wine press so he could hide out from the enemy. Not a very convenient place to try to thresh wheat, but it helped Gideon hide what he was doing.

Gideon was a nobody. He was just an average everyday person, but God's going to use him in a strikingly significant way. But Gideon has a misconception about God. The Angel of the Lord says, "The Lord is with you," and look how Gideon responds. **Read vs 13**

Talk about not understanding God. "If God's supposed to be with us then why is all this happening? Where is He? Where are His miracles? What about His promises? God's just given up on us!"

Gideon was clueless. God doesn't make promises and then break them. Israel was under the discipline that God had promised would come if they worshipped other gods. God was actually keeping His promise by using the Midianites to bring Israel to

their senses.

Now look at this.. **Read verse 14**

“Gideon, I have a job for you to do. I’m sending you to run off the Midionites.”

**Read verse 15**

God calls him and he responds by saying, “Are you talking to me? I’m no one special.”

And here’s God’s answer... **Read verse 16**

God delights in taking nobodies and using them. All they have to do is realize He’s with them and as long as they remain dependant on Him they can do whatever it is God has for them.

Gideon wasn’t anything special but God was going to work with and for and through and in and by him. All Gideon had to do was be willing to see God as He really was and allow Him complete control of his life.

You might find yourself thinking, “Who am I to do anything for God? I’m just a regular guy who works to support his family, or I’m just a single mom trying to raise my kids and pay the bills, or I’m just a 13 year old trying to survive middle school. What can I ever do that’s significant in God’s kingdom?”

That was Gideon. And Gideon would ultimately have a decision to make. Would he trust God with his life or wouldn’t he? Was God going to have complete control?

The biblical account goes on to tell how Gideon struggled with his faith. He even put out some wool and asked God to build his faith by making it wet when the ground was dry and then making the wool dry when the ground was wet with dew.

I guess even people who get messages directly from God need their faith bolstered a bit.

But God was patient with Gideon and walked him through the process. Through all of this Gideon was learning lesson after lesson about the character of God.

In the end God narrowed Gideon’s army down to 300 men and told them to pull off such a unique surprise attack that the Midianites became so confused they just took off and ran.

*I. The Root Of Not Giving God Complete Control Is A Misunderstanding Of God's Character*  
*II. Sometimes We Believe That We'll Be Miserable If We Give God Control*

Have you ever felt like this, "If I give God complete control of my life He's going to ask me to do something that I don't ever want to do?"

"What if He asks me to talk to my friends about Jesus? What if God wants my to love my wife like Christ loves the church? What if He wants me to pack it up and be a missionary in another country? Maybe even Iran or Pakistan!"

See, If I'm in control I get to choose. If I'm in control I can stick with the stuff that makes me happy. Or at least I think it will make me happy.

God has our good in mind. In fact, look at **Psalm 37:4 page 498 Read vs 3-5**

If we delight ourselves in the Lord God; His goodness, His majesty, His ways, and those are the things that excite us then God will place His desires in our heart. His desires become our desires.

When we put the steering wheel of our life in His hands and trust our most able and faithful God to bring it to pass, even though we may see no evidence of it He's going to bring the impossible to pass in our lives.

The Bible says, *Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.* It doesn't say that if we delight ourselves in the Lord, if we live our lives for Him, and for His purpose, He'll will make us miserable.

It says just the opposite yet many Christians live as though they believe that God will just burden them down.

Listen to these verses:

*For He satisfies the longing soul, And fills the hungry soul with goodness.*  
Psalm 107:9

*Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy?  
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance.*  
Isaiah 55:2

*And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.*

John 6:35

*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*

Romans 8:32

Isn't it interesting that we believe that all that God has for us in the future, heaven, eternal life, the kingdom, all that's the good stuff. We'll enjoy that. We'll like that. But somehow we wouldn't enjoy God's plans for us in this life.

The character of God isn't going to change in the future. He's *the same yesterday, today, and forever*. Hebrews 13:8

*I. The Root Of Not Giving God Complete Control Is A Misunderstanding Of God's Character*

*II. Sometimes We Believe That We'll Be Miserable If We Give God Control*

*III. Sometimes We Fear What God Has For Us*

If we give God complete control of our life He might take us way outside of our comfort zone. He might stretch us a whole lot more than we want to be stretched. That's a scary thought isn't it?

Look at a couple of Scriptures with me.

**Jeremiah 29:11 page 695 Read vs 11**

NIV and NASB use the word "plans" instead of "thoughts." This is God's declaration of His good plans for His people. That verse was specifically speaking to God's people, Israel but if it true for them nationally how much more appropriate is it for God's spiritual children?

There's nothing to fear when it comes to giving God control. He is completely, 100% trustworthy.

Some times we're reluctant to give God control of our lives because we don't really believe that His plans for us are actually better than their own.

We think, "I have my life planned out. I know what I want to do my life, where I want to live, who I'm going to marry, where I'm going to work. I don't want God messing up *my* plans."

We have a knack for being stubborn and proud. Our stubbornness and pride are caused by sin, and this causes us to refuse to let God take control of our lives. What we

are basically saying is, "I don't want, God, controlling my life. I want to do things MY way."

The truth is that God created us with specific plans and purposes in mind, and there's no way we're going to improve on them.

One godly writer said: "God will choose for you what you would choose for yourself, if you had enough sense to choose it."

God wants us to know that His plans for us are good plans. And we'll begin to see them unfold as soon as we put aside our own agendas, and submit to His.

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*IV. Sometimes We Doubt God Because Of Past Hurts*

We're like Gideon when he said, *if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us?*

In Gideon's case the difficulty was coming as a wake-up call to a sinful and rebellious nation. Sometimes God using suffering to get our attention.

Sometimes trouble is the natural result of our disobedience to God. Sometimes it's because of other people's disobedience to God and we get caught in their wake.

Trouble and suffering can come as a natural result of living in a fallen world that won't be renewed until the kingdom.

It's hard, when life has let you down and you're still reeling from pain, to see how God could want the best for you but that's what He tells us in the Bible.

*Proverbs 3:5-6 NIV Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.*

Life can be hard. I've experienced some painful things that on the surface could look like God let me down. Fortunately, for some reason, I never came through those things doubting God's wisdom or faithfulness.

But you may be one of those people who do. You may wonder, "If God's in control of my life, then why does He allow painful things to happen to me?"

Listen to this promise: *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.* Romans 8:28

In her book, *Startling Beauty*, Heather Wilson tells her amazing story of redemption. She and her husband moved to an inner city neighborhood to attend college. They planned on moving out after graduation but got hooked up with a dynamic inner city church and decided to stay.

She writes, "With transformed attitudes, we began sitting on the front porch instead of hiding behind shuttered windows. We invited the kids who once broke out tulip stems to join us in weeding, and we organized block parties and community rummage sales. There's no denying it: if it weren't for the church, I wouldn't have been living in that place four years and two kids later."

Heather Wilson stayed in the city to serve God.

One night while her husband was at a church meeting and her children asleep she was startled by a tall man with bulky arms standing just a few feet from her bed.

The man then pulled a knife out of his pocket and raped Wilson in her own home.

Once he left she ran down the hall to check on her children then dialed the church.

Again she writes, "The man who answered was a dear friend of our family. 'I need my husband!' I cried. Those were the only words I could choke out.

At that moment, I wasn't thinking about whether I'd ever be able to trust the church again or the God I worshipped there. I wasn't aware of the crisis of faith I would endure in the coming months. At that moment, all I knew was my pain and shame and terror and loss."

Heather Wilson had a good reason to question giving God control of her life.

The journey of trust wasn't an easy one. Only someone who's gone through her experience could even begin to know just how hard it was.

Heather Wilson concludes, "It's been more than a decade since the rape, and I've experienced many life changes since then. I gave birth to a precious baby girl, conceived on that fateful night, and now she is my daily reminder of God's restorative love. We adopted one of the little boys who used to pluck our tulips, and now he's a godly young man who brings much laughter to our family."

Today Wilson is an accomplished Christian author, pro-life speaker, and community activist. On her web site she has this statement of vision: "To rest in Christ's love so that I may be filled with the Spirit and bear his fruit; to be motivated by biblical principles, and to act on them; to look beyond my own perspective; to be humble before God and people."

That's called learning to trust God.

Do you find it hard to give God complete control of your life? I know at times I do. Sometimes it maybe fear, other times it may be that I'm still learning about the character of God. Getting to know God is a life long process for sure.

What about you? What is it that might be standing in the way of you being able to say, "God take all of me. I want to be that person who's wholly consecrated to You. I want to see what You can do with and for and through and in and by me."