

The Man in the Mirror

Solving the 24 Problems Men Face

The Desire To Be Independent

Unedited Transcript

Jeremiah 10:23, Matthew 5:36, Psalm 16:4, Luke 14:26-27, 33

Good morning, men! Would you turn in your bibles or go to in your bibles Jeremiah chapter ten, verse twenty-three. Jeremiah chapter ten, verse twenty-three. We are in the series, "The Man in the Mirror."

We want to begin this morning with doing a shout-out, and we have a group called the EUMM – Ellenton United Methodist Men of Ellenton United Methodist Church in Ellenton, FL. 12 men who have been meeting at the church for 5 years on the 2nd Wednesday each month at 8:00am using the Video Bible Study. Led by Richard Krieg and we are looking for an Area Director for the Ellenton, FL region. I wonder if you would join me in give a rousing welcome to these Methodist men over in Ellenton? One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, we're really glad you are here! That's just north of Bradenton in case you didn't know.

All right, again so the series is "The Man in the Mirror," and today we come to the desire to be independent. Probably, all of you have had or seen at least the experience of a little two or three or four year old child of yours or maybe a niece or a nephew who ventures away from Father, exploring the room, and suddenly realizes that it's on the other side of the room separated from Daddy, so turns around and rushes, and throws itself at Father's knee, and wraps around Daddy's knee and finds its security.

Then a few minutes later, bravery returns and couple minutes later the child is in another room, and then there's a big commotion as the child runs through the door and hurls itself at Father, almost knocking Daddy down because it knows that it can trust its Father.

The Situation

This morning, we are looking at this desire to be independent. Here is the situation. The situation is that this desire to be independent co-exists with an absolute trust in our Father when we are in this state of a surrendered life. We are wired with the need to be significant, and that kind of works against this desire, this idea of being dependent upon God.

We are wired to want to move across the room and be independent, but it works best when it's coupled with an absolute trust and loyalty in the goodness of our Father. I want us to explore how we do that. How do you do that this morning? Man is free, but he's not autonomous. Yes, man is free, but it's the freedom that a golfer has.

A golfer is free to put his shot, to place his ball, anywhere on the fairway. Anywhere within the limits. There is a place that is out of bounds, and there is a penalty for that. That's the kind of freedom that we have.

Autonomy means that we are self-governing. That we are completely in control. That we are completely in charge. That we make the rules. That we determine the outcomes, but that's not the kind of freedom that we have. It's the freedom that's like a bird in a cage. A bird in a cage can fly anywhere it wants to in the cage. Do anything it wants to in the cage, but it's still inside the cage.

There is a sense in which you and I have immense freedom. We are free, but God is freer. We have a freedom, but we don't have an autonomy. We are not self-governing. We are governed by God. By the way, even unbelievers, even people who have no faith in God are still completely and fully and totally governed by God.

Let's get these terms straight. The first one: independent. An adjective. Not influenced or controlled by others in matters of opinion or conduct. This would be the autonomous state where somebody does not have any government except what one's self, except onto oneself.

The second is the word dependent, which means to rely on or trust on someone or something for aid, support, favor, et cetera. The final definition is this idea of responsibility. To be responsible means to be answerable or accountable for something within someone's power, control, or management.

Here's the principle that I want you to think about, God wants us to use our freedom responsibly. While trusting him completely and not in our own strength. That's what God is looking for. The big idea for the day, how we do this? This is a little idea that we want to task to help us lead lives of dependence. Trust in God while acting responsibly. **Don't "make" it happen, "let" it happen.**

Some time ago I started teaching this idea. The distinction between making it happen and letting it happen. The role of the servant, the disciple, the steward is one who let's things happen. Acts responsibly. By the way, when you think about all of the different things that we strive for ... We are made to strive! Financial independence. Control. Some measure of control or a grip on our circumstances.

The ability to make major decisions like mate or children or career or where you're going to live. All of these things are things that we do. We are seeking some kind of ability to make those decisions with a degree of independence, but the Christian makes them with an absolute trust in God at the same time.

The Problem

What's the problem with this? Don't make it happen. Let it happen. Well, here's the problem. God has given us enough freedom and power to on our own achieve mediocrity. You have enough power on your own to achieve mediocrity. You see this all around. Men not relying on the power of God, but relying on their own power. Their own strength. Their own ability which is a meager kind of unaided power.

It's like ... Well, I hadn't thought of my illustration in advance so I can't think of one either. But it's like trying to run a motor without it being plugged into the electrical outlet. Yeah, there is kind of potential power, but it's not really plugged into the power. That's not a really good illustration either, but you get the idea.

Because we have a little power, we tend to trick ourselves into thinking that we have more power than we actually have. The problem with that is then most of us tend to depend on this strength that we have. The four B's: beauty, brains, bucks, and brawn. It might be your physical appearance. You might have all of your life been attractive to other people because of some kind of physical appearance. You've been able to rely on that, instead of relying on God.

Maybe it's your intellect. Maybe you are actually a very bright person, because of that intellect you have been able to take that little strength that you have and marshal it and multiply it, but without depending on God you have been unable to achieve everything that God would really have for you.

Maybe it's financial. Maybe you have been able to achieve a certain amount of financial independence. Again, the operative word there: independence. It feels like you don't have to rely on anybody. You're in control because of the money that you have. Maybe it's your strength. Maybe it's some kind of physical strength, or maybe it's some kind of mental strength.

Maybe you just are the most determined person in the world. The most persistent person in the world, and nothing can stop you because of this determination. Of course, this determination comes from God, right? Nevertheless, because you have this innate determination, this ability to be competent, then you have the ability to think that you're operating independently from God.

Jeremiah chapter ten, verse twenty-three says this. "I know, Oh Lord, that a man's life is not his own. It is not for man to direct his steps." You see that? You get that? Here's the problem: as a result of depending on beauty, brains, bucks, and brawn, when you do this and the world is encouraging you to do this, Colossians two: eight says, "See to it that no one takes your captive through hallow and deceptive philosophy which depends on the basic principles and traditions of this world."

Some of us get taken captive. As a result of that, what happens? Turn to Psalm, chapter sixteen, verse four. Psalm chapter sixteen, verse four. What happens is that Deuteronomy talks about how we tend to become proud. In fact while you're turning to Psalm sixteen, I'm just going to read to you a verse out of Deuteronomy.

He's talking about when you become prosperous and successful, you may say to yourself, "My power and the strength in my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the Lord your God. For it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms His covenant which He swore to your forefathers as it is today.

Then in Psalm chapter sixteen, verse four, when we do let the basic principles, and traditions, and philosophies of this world take us captive this is what happens. Verse four: "The sorrows of those will increase who run after other Gods." When we make idols. We become lukewarm. We lose our first love. We look out for our own interests rather than those of Jesus Christ. We have anxiety because the pursuit of our will when it does not equal God's will equals anxiety. We miss the mark. We even can experience spiritual death by never even coming to God in the first place.

It's bad enough for those people who have lost their first love who've gone to the prodigal lifestyle, but just think about the agony. Think about how it was before you believed, if you believe. Think about how it was before you believed. Think about the sense of overwhelming depression. The searing pain in your soul of not knowing God and using all of that power that you've been given by God and all of that

strength, and all of that intellect, and all of that competence, all of that persistence, all of that determination, all of that money. You've tried everything! Everything! Everything ... To find some peace.

All you end up with is this agony of the soul. This dark night of the soul that brings you to God. There are men out there that you know who are still living in spiritual death. They don't know God because they believe that the little bit of strength that they have is enough to get them where they want to go. Again, God has given us enough freedom and power to on our own achieve mediocrity. Watch for those men. Watch for those men who are realizing that their strength is not as big as they thought it was. Watch for them.

The way that this desire to be independent manifests itself, it manifests itself in the idea of trying to be financially independent. Trying to achieve financial independence apart from God. Should you be trying to achieve financial independence? Absolutely! But we should be doing that as the little child who even though the child goes across the room to seek independence, it does so because in fact the very reason that it can do it is because it knows that its Father is sitting securely in the room and fully trusting that its Father will always be there.

We should be seeking our financial independence not because we are afraid of what will happen if we don't become financially independent, but because we know that we can trust God to help us be responsible. To live responsibly.

Another way it manifests itself is just trying to take control over people and circumstances. Trying to control our environment because if we can be in control, then we can be independent instead of going with the idea of not trying to make it happen, but just letting it happen.

Taking life as it comes. Taking people as they come. Accepting people as they are. Not trying to change and control them. Men, if you are trying to control your wife, either aggressively, passively, overtly, covertly, it will backfire! I've told you before but not in many years, the twenty seventh year of my marriage was the year it almost fell a part because I had been doing that for years! In small ways ... Look, I'm a refined controller, all right?

I am an astute manipulator. I have been described as shrewd, and I don't know if that was meant in a nice way. I am a salesman for crying out loud. I make my living by persuading people. I thought I was being quite successful persuading my wife only to find out that one day she says, "You know? I just don't feel safe with you." Wow! I am a guy so what do I do? I make the right apologies. Lay out a game plan. Bam! Fix it. Fix it. Control it. Fix it!

Guess what? These things don't self-correct just because you decide they are going to self-correct. That took another three years after that of really me changing who I am to what we are talking about today. In other words, stop trying to make it happen, but let it happen. Let that marriage happen. Don't try to make that marriage happen. Let it happen. Don't try to make that financial independence happen. Let it happen. Be responsible. Do what you're supposed to do, but then trust God.

Another way it manifests itself is in self-reliance or self-sufficiency. Look, I struggle with this all the time. If I'm struggling with this all the time, I'm pretty sure you are too. I know how to put together a good talk. Right? I know how to build an organization. I know how to put together a real estate deal. I know how to negotiate an awesome price for a new car. I know how to do these things. This is my skill set. Part of my skill set.

Here's the problem, I don't need God to do those things. I don't! No. I have all these things because God gave them to me, but now that I have them, I can turn around and depend on myself if I want to. I can be self-reliant. I can be self-sufficient, and it is a huge temptation, man. It is a huge temptation to walk in here for example, and rely on my own ability. It is.

It's a huge temptation for you to walk, if you're a lawyer, into a deposition and rely on your own strength or an accountant to rely on your own expertise, or if you're a landscape maintenance worker, to rely on the fact that you have so much experience taking care of lawns of this particular type that you know exactly what to do, and depend totally on yourself. Just be self-sufficient.

I'm driving in here this morning. The last thing I do when I drive in today is I say this prayer. I say, "Lord, I know I don't need You to give this talk, but Lord I know that this talk will not have power, all the power that is possible for it to have if I do rely on myself. In other words, Lord, I can go in there and give a very mediocre talk. I can achieve mediocrity on my own. It may seem in the way of the world, it may even seem like it's superior, but Lord, You and I both know that if I use my strength and the power that You've given me, You've given me just enough to be mediocre."

I didn't say all of this this morning. I'm kind of embellishing a little bit. But I did pray, "Lord, I don't need You to give this talk, but I want to give this talk for You and Your Glory. Right now, I repent of any self-sufficiency to either prepare or deliver this message, but rely only upon Your Holy Spirit."

Second Corinthians, two: four, "To not depend on clever and persuasive speech but only on the demonstration of the Spirit's power." Now, that doesn't mean that I can't still diminish what God wants to do because I'm a human man, but I release all the potential, you see?

You do that too when you're repairing a car. You've repaired this particular problem eighty-four thousand times, or whatever it is. There is some sense in which you can rely on yourself if you want to, but you can also turn that over to the Lord for His Glory and repent of any self-sufficiency to do that repair, and who knows?

All right. Here's the truth. Here's the truth. John three: twenty-seven says, this is John the Baptist, he says, "A man can receive only what he has been given from heaven. A man can receive only what he has been given from heaven."

John chapter fifteen, verse five. Jesus says, "I am the vine. You are the branch. He who abides in me and me in him will bear much fruit but apart from me, you can do nothing."

First Corinthians, chapter four, verse seven: "What do you have that you did not receive?" Psalm one twenty-seven, verses one and two: "Unless the Lord builds the house the laborer labors in vain."

Proverbs sixteen, verses one through four: "To man belong the plans of the heart, but from the Lord comes the reply of the tongue. All of man's ways seems innocent to Him, but motives are weighed by the Lord. Commit to the Lord whatever you do and your plans will succeed."

Proverbs sixteen, verse nine: "In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps. Proverbs chapter nineteen, verse twenty-one: "Many are the plans in a man's heart but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."

Proverbs twenty, twenty-four. Did I use that one yet? "A man's steps are directed by the Lord. How then can anyone understand his own way?" Proverbs twenty-one, one: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. He directs it like a water course wherever he pleases. Sparrows are bought and sold for a penny and yet not one of them falls to the ground apart from the will of the Father."

He's got this, and He's got you. So what? So what does that mean for us? Well, what it means is, is that we can do this big idea with confidence. He's got you, so you can do with confidence this idea: don't make it happen just let it happen. You don't have to worry about making it happen. Just let it happen. He's in control. He's got this. That's the so-what, but what's the now-what?

What To Do About It

In 2011, the greatest natural disaster in terms of its economic impact in history occurred when a tsunami destroyed hundreds of miles of seashore in Japan when a 9.0 earthquake struck on the northeastern shore of Japan. Twenty-nine thousand people died in that catastrophe.

In a little town named Aneyoshi, a little fishing village, a fishing village that was completely destroyed by the way, the highest waves ever recorded in history struck land. A hundred twenty-seven point six feet, and yet even though this little fishing village along with hundreds of miles was completely destroyed, not a single home in that village was destroyed, and no one present in the village, the thirty-four residents that live in the little village, not one of them perished.

Here's why. On the single road that leads into that little village, is a stone tablet in the ground that's about four feet high. Its called a "tsunami stone." There are hundreds of them scattered around Japan. Some as many as six centuries old that have warnings about tsunamis and this particular stone said this, "Do not build your homes below this point."

In 1896, a tsunami wiped out this village and there were only two survivors, but they rebuilt their homes down on the shoreline and then in 1933, another tsunami swept through and there were only four survivors. They decided to erect this tsunami stone warning the people not to build their homes below this point. The people of this little village heeded the warning of their ancestors. They built their homes on higher ground.

The bigger picture is, as I said these dot the coastline but they have become to most Japanese, relics of a by-gone era. There is this sense in which because of advanced technology and higher sea walls that we don't have to obey the rules of our ancestors. We don't have to obey these stones that are scattered throughout our country. Because they forgot or ignored these ancient warnings, they doomed themselves to repeat the mistakes of the past.

God has given us stone tablets. God has given us a record of what will happen if we don't heed the warning not to build our lives below this point. He's given us the level above which we can achieve something beyond mediocrity, and it's an absolute dependence on Him. It's an absolute dependence on Him.

I don't know where you are on your walk this morning, but the idea here is just don't make it happen, let it happen. Maybe you've been trying to make it happen, and if so, what I want to do is I want to close and I just want to give all of us an opportunity to humble ourselves, to repent of our self-sufficiency and to surrender or re-surrender our lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Closing Prayer

"Our dearest Father, we come to You humbly today. Lord, we want to be financially independent. We want to have some control over our circumstances. We want to be able to make independent choices, and You want that for us too while at the same time responsibly and fully trusting in You. Father, we each realize that all day everyday we are tempted to trust in our own strength our own power, and not rely upon You. We want to come and repent of that today. We also, Lord, want to surrender our lives in a fresh way to You."

Just pray this prayer silently to yourself if it agrees with your spirit. "Lord Jesus, I humble myself before You, and I repent of all self-sufficiency to live not only the Christian life, but the Christian life here in this world. Father, I have gotten off track and I repent. I now surrender my life in a fresh way to You."

Some of you may want to surrender your life for the very first time. If so, just say, "Jesus, I surrender my life to You in faith and repentance. Or to re-surrender your life, Lord, I've taken back control, I want to give it back to You. I surrender to You. Now Lord, make me into the kind of man that I know You want me to be. I know it's a journey, and so I pray that You would surround me with other brothers that I could make this pilgrimage with. And I ask it in Jesus' name. Amen."