

Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



Those Feelings of Inadequacy

KEY PASSAGE: 2 Corinthians 3:1-7 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE: Exodus 4:10 | Judges 6:12-15
Jeremiah 1:4-6 | Acts 1:4-5 | 2 Corinthians 2:15-16

SUMMARY

Have you ever thought that if you could change something about yourself, then you'd feel adequate for the situations you're currently facing?

We all feel ill-equipped for life's challenges at various times, but the solution is not found in wishing and hoping that we could be different. God doesn't want a sense of inadequacy to become a stumbling block in our walk with Him. Instead, we should let these feelings motivate us to trust Him and believe His promises.

SERMON POINTS

The Scriptures clearly demonstrate that some of the Lord's greatest servants had these same feelings of inadequacy.

Moses saw his lack of eloquence as an obstacle to going before Pharaoh on behalf of God's people (Ex. 4:10). Because of his humble lineage, Gideon doubted his ability to deliver Israel from its enemies (Judg. 6:12-15). And Jeremiah claimed he didn't know how to speak when he was called to be a prophet (Jer. 1:4-6). In all these cases, the Lord assured each man that He would be with him.

Even the apostle Paul confessed that he was not adequate in himself for the ministry entrusted to him, but he then asserted, "Our adequacy is from God" (2 Cor. 3:5). That is the solution to all our feelings of inadequacy—knowing that the Lord enables us as we live in relationship with His Son Jesus Christ.

Areas of Inadequacy

Although we all experience times when we feel insufficient, the areas of our shortfall are varied.

- **Work.** Some people feel incompetent in their jobs because they lack a needed skill or are facing new challenges.
- **Parenting.** Others feel uncertain about their ability to raise godly children in a godless society.
- **Marriage.** Husbands and wives may perceive that they can't live up to each other's expectations and don't know how to build a mutually satisfying relationship.
- **Financial provision.** Some people feel unable to provide for their families as they desire, especially when they compare themselves with others.
- **Relationships.** Another source of insecurity is an inability to connect with other people and develop good friendships.

Reasons for Inadequacy

Inadequacy is a difficult experience, but it can also be a tremendous blessing. However, before we can discover the benefits, we must be willing to uncover the reasons for our struggles.

- **Feeling ill-equipped.** Our life experiences may lead us to feel disadvantaged. It could be a matter of education, intelligence, or economic position.
- **Poor self-image.** When we don't like who we are or think we're unworthy, we'll struggle with insecurity and feel undeserving of God's calling and blessings.
- **Comparison.** There will always be someone else who has more advantages, better possessions, more money, or greater abilities than we do. Until we learn

to accept the way God has made us, we'll constantly see ourselves as less than others.

- **Weak faith.** If we doubt God's promise to equip us, we'll feel unable to accomplish whatever He's called us to do. But He's given us His Holy Spirit to empower us. When insecurities creep in, believers should not be imprisoned by these feelings because Christ can enable us to overcome them.
- **Criticism.** It's easy to feel competent when others praise and compliment us, but if criticism comes, we may lose our confidence and feel inadequate.
- **Failures.** We all fail at times, but we must guard against living with a continual sense of failure that leaves us defeated and unable to move forward.

Results of Inadequacy

When facing daunting situations, we should focus on what the Lord has promised instead of what we feel. If we give in to our negative emotions, we'll suffer the consequences which are sure to follow.

- **Failure to take advantage of God-given opportunities.** Throughout our lives, the Lord presents us with new, and sometimes challenging, opportunities. These often begin as small acts of obedience, which are designed to take us to the next level in our spiritual growth and service. However, if we let our fears of incompetence stop us, we'll miss what God planned for our lives.
- **Refusal of God's call.** When the Lord calls us to serve Him, there are three things which often trip us up: (1) our fear of failure, (2) apprehensions regarding finances, and (3) concern for our families.
- **Forfeiture of God's designed blessing.** The path to His blessing is quite simple: It's a life lived in obedience. The Lord doesn't draw out the entire plan for us but shows us the way with each successive step of obedience. All our inadequacies should fade away when we consider the attributes of the One who has promised to go with us—He's all-powerful, all-knowing, loving, gracious, kind, and forgiving.
- **Lack of fulfillment.** When we let our insecurities and inability rule our lives, there will always be something missing. We won't be able to sense

God's power or the fullness of His presence with us. The Lord isn't looking for people who measure up to His calling. Instead, He calls those who are inadequate and uses them in their weakness to do something worthwhile.

Important Areas of Obedience

When the Lord calls us, there are two critical areas.

- **Salvation.** We should never let a sense of unworthiness stop us from accepting God's gracious offer of forgiveness through faith in His Son. We don't have to try to clean ourselves up first; He invites us to come as we are. There's no need to fear that we have sinned too much or that we can never change. Christ's death covers all our sins, and His Spirit empowers us to live in righteousness, holiness, and obedience. Our responsibility is to trust Jesus, rely on His strength, and walk with Him in the Spirit.
- **Service.** After we're saved, the Lord calls us to serve Him. Genuine satisfaction is only found in believing God and His Word, trusting Him in every situation, and living in obedience to His will. Feeling inadequate for whatever the Lord calls us to do is okay if we're willing to recognize that our heavenly Father is with us and promises to help us. With this mindset, we'll be able to say, "I can't, but I know God can."

RESPONSE

- Do you focus more on your inability or on God's promises? How would fixing your attention on His Word affect your attitude and confidence?
- Have you ever sensed God calling you to serve in some manner which seemed beyond your ability? Were you able to trust the Lord and step out in faith, or did you let your insecurities stop you?
- If you've ever obeyed God despite your inability, what did you learn from the experience? What blessings came your way?

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