

# SPENT



*Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew: Andrew went with Philip and they told Jesus.*

*John 12:20 ff*

This desire of the Gentile Greek people to see Jesus was a signal to him that the end had now come.

*Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."*

*John 12:23-26*



*Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies,  
it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*

And yet, in many ways, we find ourselves much more like a grain of wheat which remains on the shelf and preserves itself refusing to fall into the ground and die.

It sits up there on the shelf. Gets older and mouldier.

Conserves its energies.

Keeps itself safe....

because it is afraid to go down into that ground....

*afraid to spend itself.*

Why do we conserve our energies like this?

What are we saving ourselves for?

So we can get older and still remain alone?

## Misspent



*Dissipated Opacity jeni bump*

Granted, there are many spent lives at the bottom of the ditch.

Lives that have wasted themselves on all kinds of things.

### Dissipation

For instance; there are those who have *spent their lives on dissipation*. They have given themselves up to a lust, or to a passion, or to a thirst which has consumed them.

So what is left of their wasted bodies can think of nothing else but

that next drink or

that next hit or

that next orgy

until at last even that flame of desire and passion burns into ash and there's nothing left.

## **False Ideology**

And there are those also who have *spent themselves on a delusion that they thought was true.*

They were going to bring in the classless society or the new age. They were going to establish a new kind of church. They were going to bring in the New Order.

There are people who will spend themselves,

no sacrifice is too great,  
no price is too high to pay,  
no suffering too extreme.

And then one day they wake up and discover they have spent themselves on an ideology that is false. They have given themselves over to something that just isn't real. The movement that they are in is more corrupt than the enemy they have been fighting all their lives.

## **Idols**

There are others that have *spent themselves on an idol.*

Here's a man who spent his whole life worshipping his wife. As if his life draws its meaning from her. And then one day she up and leaves him.

or

A woman who makes an idol out of her child. Lives for that child. Does anything for that child.

Goes to any length for that child. Will scrub floors. Will do anything so that he can have anything that he wants. And then one day the child wakes up, tears himself out of her clutches and starts living a life of his own. And she's left alone.

Sooner or later whatever idol we live for is going to be smashed and we are going to end up with nothing.

## **Ambition**

There are those who have *spent themselves on a driving ambition for riches, fame, and power*

And again, nothing is too much to do.

No sacrifice is too great to make.

They'll go anywhere.

They'll do anything just to achieve this goal.

When they achieve that goal, they set a new goal.

And they keep going like this until finally they're burnt out.

And then all they can do is sit at the card table looking at the scrapbook of their past achievements, while other people swim in their swimming pools and play golf on their private golf course.

## Unspent

Perhaps we're inclined to pat ourselves on the back and say, "Well, praise God. At least we haven't spent ourselves on foolishness as those people.

We're still in tact.

We still have our health.

We aren't burnt out.

Here we are still unspent.

One day we wake up to the shattering truth that a life unspent is the most wasted life of all.



If we come to the end of our days never having sunk ourselves body, soul, and spirit into anything, our lives are more empty and pointless than the most hopeless drunk that ever lived or the most deluded revolutionary. At least they sank themselves into something.

***Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies,  
it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.***



When a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it's spending itself. It's sinking its whole existence into something beyond itself. That is what Jesus did and what he calls us to do.

*He who loves his life, loses it,  
and he who hates his life in this world  
will keep it for eternal life.*

Spend yourself ! Lose your life!

... in the one thing that really matters and the only thing that satisfies:

*The kingdom of God is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man finds and covers up; then in his joy, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*

*Matthew 13:44*

And when he sells all that he has to buy the field...

**He's spending himself.  
Pouring himself out.**

We will never taste the life which God has for us so long as we're measuring every ounce that we give to it to make sure we get at least an ounce, or maybe an ounce and a half, or two ounces back. When Mary took that costly ointment and anointed Jesus' feet she wasn't measuring. She was taking the best that she had and giving it, pouring it out. Oh, we don't mind taking the best that we have and pouring it out on ourselves. We'll make great sacrifices to achieve great things for ourselves. But she spent herself for her Master – extravagantly spending herself. Mary's life was in that ointment and her life would go for Jesus, just as the ointment went. And as her life was being spent there would be an aroma like the fragrance of that ointment.

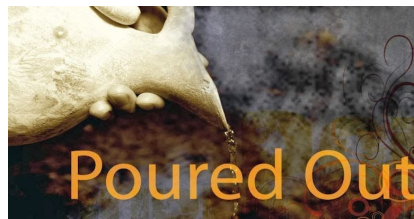


*The Woman of the Night and the Man of Light*  
Courtesy of Noro Hasina Harris

It might be easier for us to do this if we were in the throes of severe persecution – if each week when we gathered a few more of us would be missing, thrown into prison or executed for our faith. We could easily grasp what it means to spend ourselves if we knew that before the end of the summer we shall have to make the decision which will cost us everything we have. Soon we will die and out of our death for the name of Jesus will come life for countless others. One day we may have to live through such things and die such a death.

But what do we do in the meantime? Sit on the shelf and wait for the persecution? Surely we need to fall into the ground and die today, spend ourselves, pour out what we have. In fact, if we're not freely and gladly spending ourselves now we'll never have what it takes to spend ourselves when the persecution comes.

## Spending Ourselves



Surely we need to learn what it means to spend ourselves right now. Pour ourselves out now. Give ourselves to something!

If we aren't pouring ourselves out now when things are as quiet they are, we'll never have it in us to pour ourselves out when the persecution comes.

Consider these four costs;

1. **Prayer** :Am I spending myself in prayer or when it comes to prayer, am I conserving my strength for other things?

*And he came out and went to the Mount of Olives as was his custom and his disciples followed him. And when he came to the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not enter into temptation." And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw and knelt down and prayed. "Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." And there appeared to him an angel from heaven strengthening him and being in agony, he prayed more earnestly and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground. And when he rose from prayer, he came to his disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow. And he said to them, "Why do you sleep? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation."*

Luke 22:39-46

Here we have a picture of Jesus putting his heart, soul, strength and mind into prayer, draining himself, while the disciples sleep. "Oh, my prayer life just isn't any good!" "I don't seem to have any joy!" "My mind wanders!" "Nothing happens!" But what are you putting into it?

Are you dipping your toes in the pool of prayer? ... or are you plunging in with everything you have? Life will verily come to your prayers when you die to other things and sink something into it – when you take hold of what it means to spend yourself before the Throne of God.

## **2. Worship: Am I spending myself in the worship of God or am I conserving my strength for other things?**

Worship of God -- why should that take strength?

*And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. The first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within and day and night, they never cease to sing, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come."*

*Revelation 4:6b-8*

"Oh yeah, but they're supernatural beings. They never get tired. Nothing to it for them!"

Okay, then what about an eighty-four year old woman?

*And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher; she was of great age, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, and as a widow till she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.*

*Luke 2:36-38*

Is Anna wasting her life doing nothing but worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day? Are these four living creatures wasting their eternity? They are spending themselves in the most meaningful, most worthwhile possible way: worshipping the true and living God.

How can it be called worship if nothing is spent? If we can't even lift up our voices? ...can't even spare the strength to concentrate on what we're saying? ... or to enter into what somebody else is saying, or singing, or praying?

If it costs us nothing to sing, "Glory be to God on high and on earth peace good will to men." "We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee"

--- is it worship?

**3. A Living Word: Am I spending myself in the pursuit of a living word from God or am I saving my strength for other things?**

*And behold, an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a minister of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of all her treasure, had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning; seated in his chariot, he was reading from the prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.*

Acts 8: 27b-31

Consider what this Ethiopian spent in order to get hold of the living word of God. He spent years studying Hebrew so that he could read those Hebrew scriptures. He travelled hundreds of miles, paid a considerable sum to buy this handwritten scroll of Isaiah. And now he's struggling to find God's word to him in these scriptures. We've got it in English modern translations, easy to buy and download. Bible studies all over town. "Oh, I find the Bible so hard to understand," "I get bored!" "God never speaks to me!" How desperate are you for a living word from God?

When you're desperate enough to spend yourself you will begin to hear God speak, even as the Ethiopian did that day.

**4. Serving : Am I spending myself in the service of Jesus or am I conserving my energies for other things?**

*If anyone serves me, he must follow me and where I am, there shall my servant be also.*

John 12:26



What's Jesus doing?

He's constantly pouring himself out.

Seeking the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Spending himself.....



bringing good news to the poor,  
deliverance to the captives,  
recovery of sight to the blind.

Laying down his life for people who have absolutely nothing to offer him except their desperate need of God's mercy.

And he says if we are going to serve him, then we are going to be there with him doing the same.

Again and again we say, "Oh, if only God would show me what my ministry is.

And by "ministry", we so often think of ....

Somebody standing up in front of crowds of people.

Somebody with a radio ministry.

Always some great big Ministry.

But that's not what God means by "ministry".

**Our "ministry" is *where we are now.***

All we have to do is open our eyes and look around at the harried, troubled, discouraged people that we deal with every day.

And when we see them, we'll also see Jesus in their midst, beckoning us to come with him and minister to them the forgiveness of the Living God.

One day soon we will each of us give an account to God for what we did with our lives.

Sure we're saved by grace.

I'm not denying that, but what are you doing with that life that has been saved by grace?

**Are you spending it?**

Or are you wrapping it up in a napkin, tucking it away to keep it safe?

**Conserving it?**

In whose name are you spending it? To whose glory?

**...unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it. He who hates his life in this world, keeps it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me, and where I am there he is also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him.**

**John 12:24-26**



**REBIRTH BY REV DONALD SUIGII LIU**

The world won't honor him, but the Father will.

What more do you want?

*Prayer: Lord may the cry of our hearts be... you are my God, my savior, worth all that I have. May we gladly pour out our lives, as an act of loving adoration like Mary did... with no thought at all of the cost. If we have misspent on anything, may we gladly stop and place our hearts and offerings where they truly belong. And sweet, dear Lord if we are headed toward empty, pointless lives that are shelved, alone and lifeless, give us the insight and the faith to see that it is not the cost that we are avoiding, but an existence bursting with life that we are missing. And Lord Jesus, keep us from measuring out what we spend and calculating the personal return. Help us to spend freely of ourselves now... To pour ourselves out in prayers until they spark with life... To pour ourselves out in worship that wells up from deep within our hearts... To pour ourselves into pursuing life from your word... To pour ourselves out in service to the people you bring to us, so that they can see the face of you, a tender, forgiving, loving and living God. In the end, dear Lord, when the final accounting comes... may we hear the beautiful words... "well spent, my faithful child".*



**THE LAMB  
WHO WAS SLAIN  
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN**