

A Double Blessing (Part 6)

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon highlights the necessity of true repentance and understanding Jesus for receiving God's double blessing in our lives.

Duration: 29:02

Topics: "Double Blessing"

Description

In this sermon, Peter addresses the crowd that has gathered after witnessing the healing of a lame man. He immediately deflects any praise or admiration directed towards himself and John, emphasizing that it was not their own power or holiness that made the man walk. Peter criticizes the prevalent message in churches and on TV that avoids preaching repentance and instead promotes self-indulgence and material gain. He urges the audience to align themselves with the word of God rather than conforming to societal trends, emphasizing the importance of diverting attention away from oneself and focusing on Jesus.

Transcript

We're studying the book of Acts, which is the birth of the Christian church. And we're studying about how the church began. Because the problem is, this is an important study, because what you experienced in church, and what I saw growing up in church, we make believe that's the way church should be, and maybe it was wrong.

I see my brother and sister who grew up in Korea. I don't know where you grew up. Church of God in Christ, black church, white church, southern church, prejudice church, reverse prejudice church, prosperity church, every kind of church, quiet church, whatever.

But the book of Acts was given to us so we could see how the early church began and prospered, what Jesus intended for his church. Now, why that's important is, a lot of times people say to me, listen, we're all just one family of God, and as long as they talk about Jesus, I'm fine. It's not so simple as that.

This is a sidebar. Jesus said in the last days, false prophets will arise. Am I correct on that? Be very careful of them.

They'll be like wolves in what kind of clothing? Right, so they're gonna look very peaceful and all of that, but they're wolves. We know that cults, like the Mormons, they mention Jesus, but it's not the Jesus of the Bible. Christian science, that's a cult, that's not Christian, if you study their teaching.

It's not the teaching of the Bible. Jehovah Witnesses, they're mentioning Jesus all the time, but it's not the Jesus of the Bible, not the gospel that's in the Bible. In fact, if you're not a Jehovah Witness, you're not in it.

That's another way to know a cult. Any church or group that says unless you join them, you're not gonna be a Christian, you can't be saved, that's a cult, how many say amen? Is the body of Christ, like Carol said, it's big, it's big, it's big, it's huge. Okay, so now listen to what Paul did before we read briefly in the book of Acts.

Paul says to another church, but I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds, you Christians in Corinth, you may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you, to your church, these were these false apostles that followed Paul after he started the church in Corinth, they bad-mouthed him, they tore him down, they denigrated him, they slandered him, and they came in as being super apostles, powerful men of God, et cetera, et cetera, but Paul knew they were talking smack, so he's warning now the church there, and he says, if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, oh, oh, so just because someone says Jesus doesn't mean it's right. Are they talking about the Jesus in the Bible, the one that Paul preached? Or if you receive a different spirit than the one you received, or if a different gospel comes to you from the one you accepted when I was there, you put up with it easily enough.

In other words, you're being deceived. These people are playing you. But how are they playing you? They're not playing you by not saying Jesus.

Of course they're talking about Jesus, but it's not the Jesus of the Bible. You know, when people say, I wanna thank the Lord for everything he's done, we don't know what Lord they're talking about. He said, and you got the gospel.

Yeah, you got the good news, but it's not the one I told you about. Someone changed it on you. And then he says, and this is the most mysterious part, you've received a spirit, but it's not the Holy Spirit.

You're into something. It's like the man who came to me and told me that in the church that he visited up in Canada, the spirit came and was so strongly working that people were crawling like snakes on the floor in the altar area. And he said, the spirit did that.

Well, I don't know about that. But see, it's some spirit, it's some power working, right? So what I'm responsible for and what I have to answer to God for is that I want you to be able to discern from scripture what's wrong and what's right. In case I go off and I start trying to mislead you, you'll know, Pastor Simba is full of hot air.

That does not line up with the Bible. That does not line up with the Bible. Everything is to be checked by the Bible.

Not how it feels, not how it looks, but is it according to the word of God? All in favor, say aye. Aye. Okay, so now we're studying the church.

So now I just wanna throw this out to you. You all have had church experiences. We have all these visitors.

You've come from different churches, right? So I'm not asking you to check this against your church. I'm asking you to check your church against this. The word of God comes first because maybe the church that your grandma raised you in or your mother raised you in or my mother took me, maybe it wasn't right or maybe it was partly right but into bad things.

I told you openly that the church I went to as a little kid in Bed-Stuy that they brought me to, all white, Eastern European church, they were talking about Jesus, baptizing in Jesus' name, singing about Jesus, and they wouldn't want a minority within 100 yards of the church, those people. They were bigoted, prejudice. So now do I wanna follow that because that's what my folks were into? No, that's wrong.

Prejudice is wrong. Any kind of prejudice is wrong. So now what we wanna do is check ourselves.

So now in the third chapter, Peter has gone to the temple with John, a miracle has happened, a lame man's walking, he's jumping all around praising God, a crowd gathers, and now Peter is preaching the second sermon. We've already studied the first sermon and the Acts is full of so many wonderful truths. I don't know how long it'll take us to get through there but it's gonna be helpful to all of us.

So he's preaching the second sermon and we pick up the sermon because the people have run up to Peter and John when they saw the lame guy walking and they're looking at Peter and John like, you're the bomb, how'd you do that? So here's what happens. But when Peter saw this, them coming and staring at him, he replied to the people, men of Israel, why are you amazed at this? Or why do you gaze at us as if by our own power or piety or holiness we have made him walk? So now instead of saying to the people, yeah, look at us, we're special apostles, prophets, whatever, no, they go, no, don't look at us. You always know a true minister because a true minister, a true pastor, a true preacher always diverts attention away from himself and wants the people to be taken up with Jesus.

Anytime somebody plays to themselves like an entertainer, look at me, right? Then you know that's false. Something's going on that's gonna happen bad because why would a minister, after I talk about Jesus, why would I want you to look at me? I mean, think of me compared to Jesus. It's a mess, right? Who will help you when you're in trouble, me or Jesus? Who will be with you 24-7? Me, of course.

So any minister who draws attention to himself or pastor, he's disobeying what Peter did. Peter said, don't look at us. This is about Jesus.

A church that is a blessing, a Christian church, is not about them or a denomination or a race. It's about Jesus. And Jesus is not white or black or Latino or Asian.

Jesus is Jesus. So he diverts them to Jesus. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant, Jesus.

Notice, Jesus, although son of God, was a servant. He obeyed the father. So imagine what that means about we who follow him.

We're not in charge, we're servants. This is what bothers a lot of people. They won't follow Jesus because they want to be in charge.

And to follow Jesus, you have to be a servant. He himself was a servant. And servants take orders.

And that's the problem for a lot of us. We want God, we want blessings, we want prosperity, we want healing, but we're not gonna take orders from anyone. And then that creates a false religion.

There's no I surrender. And disowned him when you delivered and disowned him in the presence of Pilate when he had decided to release him. Pilate wanted to let him go, and you guys said no.

But you disowned the holy and righteous one and asked for a murderer to be granted to you. Who was that murderer? Barabbas. Remember, Pilate said, this guy's innocent.

I gotta get him out of here. And my wife warned me she had a dream not to fool with this guy. So I want to let him go.

Hey, I know you're screaming crucify him, but I'm gonna let one prisoner go here during the Passover. You know I do that every year. So I'm gonna let him go, okay, and be free.

The only other choice is Barabbas, but you know he's a wild man. He's a murderer, he's an insurrectionist. They went no, no, crucify Jesus, give us the murderer.

And Peter boldly tells them, that's what you did. That's what you did. But you disowned the holy and righteous one and asked for a murderer to be granted to you.

But put to death the prince of life. You killed the one who's the prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead. See, you killed him, but he was raised from the dead, and a fact to which we're witnesses.

The message of the early church was not just the cross, it was the resurrection. You killed him, yep, he went into tomb, but God raised him from the dead to prove that he was the son of God, and we saw him. We ate with him, we've been with him.

Now the crowd had a thing. Why would they make up such a story if they killed Jesus in Jerusalem, and they're preaching in Jerusalem, why would they put their lives at risk by making up a lie? Now the disciples said no, he was dead, but he's alive. We saw him, you can do what you want, but we saw him.

And on the basis of faith in his name, it's the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you now see and know, and the faith which comes through him. See, that faith wasn't made up faith. It came from fellowship and union and relationship to Jesus.

Supernatural faith comes from God through a person who walks with him. He's given him this perfect health in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance just as your rulers did also, but the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets who said that he would suffer, Isaiah 52, that his Christ would suffer, he has thus fulfilled.

So now the crowds, he wants to wrap it up. Therefore, that means, now that I preach this, here's the therefore, here's the conclusion. Repent, from what, from your sins, from the way you're living.

Yeah, you're religious, but you're living in sin. Yeah, you go to the temple, but you're living in sin. And no self-effort will ever save you, so repent.

Own up, man up, humble yourselves. Don't compare yourself to another person, because you're not gonna stand at judgment day before another person, you're gonna stand before God. I might be holier than somebody else that you name, but when I stand before God, I won't answer for that person, I have to

answer for myself.

So he says repent, and turn around, return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. The name of this message is a double blessing, and here I give it to you, and I close. So much has already happened in this service.

I want you to just notice on the way to these two points, that whenever you don't accept Jesus, whenever you reject Jesus, you get Barabbas, who's a murderer. By rejecting Jesus, they got Barabbas, and that's a picture in life, of whenever I reject God's call, whenever I reject God's warning, whenever I reject the teachings of Jesus, I don't care how I rationalize it, I don't care who's applauding me and say, go, you're the man, go. When you reject what God has put in his word, and what he's shown you in your heart, you end up, it looks good, feels good, has tremendous promise, but it'll be Barabbas in the end.

It'll take your life away. For the thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy, John 10, 10, but Jesus said, I have come that you might have what? Not biological life, we already have that, I'm breathing, I was born to my parents, but spiritual life, the gift of eternal life. So isn't that amazing? Peter points that out.

Sure enough, you rejected Jesus, and what did you get in place? Barabbas, and we've all found that out. The deepest pain in our life has come when we did our thing instead of Jesus' thing. Am I correct? Broken homes, broken children, broken emotions, broken whatever, because instead of God's way, we said, no, I got a better idea than God's way.

I'm smarter than Jesus. No, I'm gonna fit Jesus into my life. No, you can't fit Jesus into your life.

You gotta get your life fit into Jesus. So, Peter sums it all up and says, here's the double blessing that God will give you if you do something. What does he ask them to do? He asks them, repent.

Now, I wanna ask you all, we heard that word in his first sermon, Acts 2, 38. Repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of your sin, and you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. God's gonna do something awesome in your life.

Now, just repent. Now, repent means, as we've learned, 180-degree turn. I'm living this way.

I'm the center, Jim Cymbala, what I like, where I wanna go, my dream, my vision, my everything, and now I turn from that, self-indulgence, and I say, Jesus, I will follow you. You're now the center of my life. I wanna please you every day.

If people don't like it, as long as you're happy, I'll sleep at night, because I used to not please you, but please my friends, and I had trouble sleeping at night. So having friends applaud doesn't help me. I don't care if the whole world applauds me.

If I'm not right with you, I'm not gonna have peace and joy that you want me to have. So I repent, I turn. I'm gonna walk a totally different way.

Now, that's the message that we're supposed to be preaching as churches and as ministers. Is that the message that you hear? I hope it's the message you hear in your churches, you that are visiting. Is that what you hear on TV? If it's not, turn it off, because they're playing you.

To get your money, they're giving you another message, which I think is more palatable to you. Don't change anything. You go, girl.

You just do what you wanna do, but send your money to me right now, and you will have a triple blessing for the next six months. How many know exactly what I'm talking about? Just lift your hand. In other words, don't change anything, because if I ask you to repent like God says I should, you might not like that, I might turn off the channel, and there goes my viewership.

Or you're gonna leave the church and not come back. Because, past simple, you gotta understand people. You can't be a dinosaur.

You gotta understand people are thinking different now, and you gotta go with the flow. Well, the word of God tells us that we're not to go with the flow. We're to go with the word of God.

And the word of God in love tells us, don't do that. When my grandson goes near some bad food, or starts to put something in his mouth that's bad for him, even though he cries when I slap his hand and take it away from him, do you think I care about those tears? No, I'm just trying to save his life. That's the way God is with us.

No, but it feels good, it looks good. Everyone's doing it, but God says, don't go that way. There's a way that seems right, but it's gonna end up in a brick wall.

I say that to all of you here. To have the blessing of Jesus and put your trust in him, just make the simple turn and say, God, I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired. I don't care if you're making 500,000, or 50,000, or 5,000.

What is money gonna help you when you die? What if you gained the whole world, Jesus said? Remember what he said? What would it profit a man if he, what? Gained the whole world and lost his, what? Lost his soul, what good is it gonna do you? You're gonna die, and we're all gonna die. We're all gonna die. Every day we pick up the newspaper, people that didn't plan to die, dying, right? It's gonna happen to one of us sooner or later, all of us.

So repent and put your faith in Jesus. You can't be totally for Jesus unless you turn. You can't have Jesus and be like this.

Repent means here, and a lot of us try to live in society's telling us you can have both. You can have the world, sin, sleeping around, whatever, but have Jesus too. Lord, I want you to bless me.

Can't make it without you. My sin, well, you know, God understands. No, no, no.

Oh, how many wanna just totally serve Jesus with all your heart? Come on, put your hands together in me. I'm gonna follow you. I'm not gonna listen to some false teacher or some false preacher.

Now, I'm not making that up. I'm just reading to you from the scripture. Repent and return.

That word means turn around. And what will happen? Here I close. Here's what I offer everybody in the building.

I'm authorized by Jesus Christ to say this to you. If you will repent and put your faith in Christ, every sin you've ever committed will be blotted out. That's what Peter said.

When Jesus died on the cross, he provided a way by shedding his blood, which we'll celebrate next Sunday, so that every sin you've ever done. Come on, look at me. The ones that no one else knows.

Across the street, look at me. The ones that no one else knows, but you know. And instead of living in guilt, condemnation, instead of being afraid to die, you can have perfect peace.

God so loves us that although he's perfectly holy, he has provided a way where every sin would be obliterated. The word means to erase. In the old days, there was no acid in the manuscripts, so when they would write things, they had to be careful, because if someone took a wet rag and wiped it, it would wipe off all the lettering.

And here's what God says to us today. Everything you've ever done wrong from the time you were five years old. I stole something from my brother when I was about eight.

You ever steal anything when you were little? Come on, look at me. Own up. Anybody ever steal anything? Lift your hand, I wanna see how many thieves we have here in the church today.

Oh, we got a lot. How many are happy the blood of Jesus washes us, come on, from every sin, every immorality, every lie, every curse, every wrong attitude, every everything, it's gone. Now let me just add one thing.

That means that it's almost always bad practice to think about past sins. It's not humble and it's not spiritual. Because if God has erased them, why would he want you thinking about them? Now, sometimes I would admit, probably could be, that God brings back a memory to us just to teach us, don't fall in that trap.

Remember how the devil got you last time? Don't fall in that trap. But God doesn't want me dwelling on something that he's already erased. So if you're here today and Satan has been playing with you and demonically bringing up your past mistakes, even though God has forgiven you, you gotta resist the devil because he's the accuser.

When I'm living in guilt, I'm not gonna enjoy God's peace and joy. So the enemy tries to rob us of that by saying, like that woman years ago had like four or five children by three or four different men, happened decades before, godly woman. And she came to me, she said, you know, pastor pray for me because I sometimes think, could he really forgive me for the way I was living back then? Yes.

Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be whiter than snow. God loves to wipe it out. And if you're here today and you don't have that peace and joy from putting your faith in Jesus Christ and giving him your life, you can experience that before you leave.

But one last blessing. This is a blessing not many people know about. Now notice our part and God's part.

What does Peter tell us is our part? Repent and put your faith in Jesus. What's God's part? I'll erase everything you've ever done wrong. I can't do that.

I am not asked to do that. God will do that. Tears won't do it.

Only the blood of Jesus will do it. My part is to repent, turn, be sincere. Don't be an actor.

Be sincere and say, God, I need you. I don't want to live Jim Cimbala style anymore. I want to follow you.

Now here's the second blessing. So that once you become a believer, seasons of refreshing can come from the presence of the Lord. See, God not only forgives our past, he knows that sometimes in life's

journey, it gets hard.

Brothers and sisters, does it not get hard? 20 some years ago when my oldest girl was away from God and I would be preaching in that other building with my heart broken and I would be preaching and sometimes I would be so burdened for her, she was out of my house. Do you understand this was my oldest girl, my Chrissy, and I was preaching and I didn't know where she was? Do you understand what I just said? And I would be preaching and I would start to pray while I was preaching for my daughter while I was trying to talk to you and that would frighten me and I would feel so beat down, pouring myself out trying to minister to others but just praying, no answer, praying, no answer and you get worn out on your inside. You see, I have a body like you do and I have a mind and my body can get tired and my mind can get tired.

How many, you felt your body in that heat on Friday, right? What does it do? It just makes you feel like that. Your mind can get tired when it has too much on it but did you know your spirit, we're triune beings, we're not just body and mind, we're spirit and when your spirit is beat down, when your spirit is disturbed, when your spirit is fatigued, the Bible says a lot of things can happen in life. I'm paraphrasing from one of the Proverbs.

A lot of bad things can happen in life that you can endure but who can endure a wounded spirit? No, you can't even go on. So God says when those times come, I want you to come into my presence. What does that mean? That means to acknowledge him and to worship him and to wait before him in your kitchen, in your bedroom.

On the subway, in the church. God, I'm beat down, I'm worn down, it's hard. Come refresh me.

And that word means blow on something that's tired and hot like a cool breeze. Oh, didn't we need a cool breeze? I didn't wanna leave that diner, not because of the food but because of the air conditioning. I didn't wanna leave that place.

I knew when I get out there, that thing is gonna beat me down, that heat. And God says, come in my presence. Don't give up, don't run out of gas.

Continual seasons of refreshing. That's why churches should have great emphasis on prayer meetings because especially when we devote ourselves to prayer, God comes and refreshes us. How many have ever walked in this building like I have, beat down, tired, fatigued spiritually and you left with God refreshing you? Just wave your hand at me.

Come on, wave your hand at me, I wanna know. Is that not our experience? And God says, that's why if you turn to God, he'll not only forgive all your sins and wipe them away but every time you're going through that stress, devil attacking, people being mean to you. People can be so mean and you're wounded and you don't know what are you gonna do and then you come into his presence.

Oh God, I pray you. We got Karen here and some of the singers? Or Karen's not here, is she here? Yeah, bring Karen in here and get those singers up here. We're gonna sing about the blood of Jesus.

That's what I wanna sing about. Everybody, bow your head. Come on, bow your head with me.

Bow your head, we're gonna close. But before we close, I just want two people to walk up here, two kinds of people. First of all, anybody here, Pastor Cymbala, I wanna turn to God today.

I wanna put my faith in Christ and I wanna know for sure that every wrong thing I've ever done has been erased. I can make a mistake on a lot of things in life. I cannot make a mistake about that.

I'm not going by anybody's opinion and wake up in eternity and find out, oops, I was wrong. Some preacher, some friend told me something that's not true and now I find out when it's too late. No, anybody here, you wanna know total forgiveness of every wrong thing you've ever done, 20 years ago, 20 minutes ago.

You come out of your seat and you stand here, I'll pray for you. Number two, anybody here beat down in your spiritual life because of attacks of the enemy or your own failures, you just feel like tired, oppressed, fatigued and you want God to just revive you today. That's what some of the translation said so that you can have a season of reviving from the presence of the Lord.

Come out of your seat and come up here. You know, who of us don't wanna celebrate cleansing of all of our sins? Who of us here doesn't need refreshing seasons of reviving from the presence of the Lord? So everybody, repeat after me. Dear God, forgive me of my sin.

I wanna be right, I wanna live right. I wanna live right. But I need a savior, I need a helper.

I need you, Jesus. I confess my sins and I put my faith in you. Wash away every blot, forgive every sin.

Make me that new person that only you can do. Refresh me today from the Holy Spirit. Not just my body and mind, but my inner spirit.

Refresh me today, strengthen me. Give me your peace, I need your peace, Lord. Grant me your joy, unspeakable and full.

Full of glory. Now today I put my hand in yours. And I'm gonna walk with you.

You are my strength, you are my savior, you are my Lord, you're everything. I'm not gonna try, I'm gonna trust. I'm not gonna run in my own strength.

I'm gonna rest in you. Thank you, Jesus. I love you, Jesus.

Te amo, Jesus. Te amo, Señor. In Christ's name I ask this.

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