

A Prayer & a Promise

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer, holiness, and trusting in God's faithfulness for our sanctification as we remember Jesus' sacrifice.

Duration: 23:13

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:16

Topics: "Holy Living"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses the rebellion against authority and sin in society. He emphasizes that there is something in all of us that resists being told what is right or wrong, and that we should acknowledge that God makes the rules. The preacher encourages avoiding every kind of evil and not being lukewarm in our faith. He also shares a story about someone being called to ministry and emphasizes the importance of trusting in God's faithfulness. The sermon concludes with the preacher reflecting on his own struggles with living a victorious life and the need to rely on God's grace.

Transcript

You know, the Bible says that one of the ways they mocked Jesus when He was on the cross, they said, He saved others, He can't save Himself. And of course, there was irony in that. He saved others, He can't save Himself.

Here He's on the cross, why doesn't He come down? Of course, the Bible says, He could have saved Himself, but then in another way, He couldn't save Himself. Because the only way to save us was not to save Himself. Because unless a seed, when it's planted, dies, when it's planted in the ground, it abides alone.

But when the seed goes in the ground, it bears much fruit, many seeds produced. So as we take the bread, symbols of the bread in the cup today, we really should love the Lord with all of our heart. Amen? Just think what He went through for us.

At the time when they hurled those insults at Him, and according to, I think, the Gospel of Mark, the Bible says, all the disciples had fled. There were only some women who were faithful to Him who hung near the cross watching Him. He hung from 9 o'clock to 3 o'clock, but from 12 o'clock to 3 o'clock, there was like a total eclipse of the sun, and it was total darkness.

It was so frightening with the thunder and the lightning and rocks being split open, that even the centurion who was there said, surely when He died, this must be the Son of God. But not only were the people mocking on Him and spitting at Him and ridiculing Him, and He never said a word, but even the men on the cross, both of them were mocking Him at first. And then it dawned on one of them that this was no ordinary criminal.

This was someone special. But imagine how alone He was. His friends had left Him.

His disciples fled. The religious establishment was mocking Him and spitting at Him. The Roman soldiers beat Him within an inch of His life.

And then when He's hung on the cross, even the two guys next to Him are mocking Him. And He did it all for us. Don't we have a wonderful Savior? Nobody loves us like Jesus.

Not your mother, not your father, not your sister, not your brother, not your husband, not your wife. No one loves you like Jesus. To have a happy Christmas season, I want to remind you what makes for a deep, deep, joyous Christmas season or a deep, deep, joyous any day.

At the end of 1 Thessalonians, we can't use the screen, but listen to these words. There's a lot of little short verses where Paul is giving commands. Be joyful always.

Say that. Be joyful always. Pray continually.

Pray continually. Give thanks in all circumstances. Be joyful or rejoice evermore.

Pray continually. Give thanks in all circumstances. For this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus, to be thankful.

That's God's will for us. Paul's now giving just some final, he's ready to close the letter, giving them some instructions. King James has, don't quench the Spirit.

The NIV has, do not put out the Spirit's fire. Isn't that interesting? Like we were talking about what happened to me that day. The Spirit was burning within me.

Thank God I didn't put out the fire of the Holy Spirit. You say, no, if it's God's Holy Spirit, you can't put out God's fire. Yes, you can.

It says here, don't put out the Spirit's fire. So whenever you feel the Spirit working, drawing, working in you, you've got to give it attention and feed it attention and prayer and worship so the Spirit can begin to roar like a strong fire. Otherwise you can put out the Spirit's fire.

You can quench the Spirit. Oh, how many times we've done that? We quench the Spirit by loose conversation, by talking about things that are not right. And then we put out the Spirit's fire.

It's amazing. It's God's Spirit and yet it's so gentle that it can be quenched. Paul warns the church there and says, don't do that.

He instructs them. Do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything.

Hold on to the good. When there's prophetic utterances and God is speaking to the church, don't hold them in contempt. Don't hold them lightly.

Test everything because not everyone who speaks under the supposed inspiration of the Holy Spirit is speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. So test it. Is this in the Word of God or are they saying something foreign to the Word of God? Run it by somebody else because in the mouths of two or three witnesses, let everything be established.

In the multitude of counselors, there's wisdom. Great mistakes have been made down through the years. See, the devil, he'll try to make you to put out the Spirit's fire.

Then if you say, no, I want the Spirit's fire, then he'll tempt you into fanaticism and he'll try to get you to do weird things and people get their emotions mistaken for the Holy Spirit and they'll begin to speak in the name of the Spirit and they'll say, God gave me a word for you. I just talked to a pastor recently. He told me someone came up to him and said, I've been seeking the Lord and God gave me a word from you to his pastor.

You're proud and you don't know what you're doing. That was from the Holy Spirit. That was no more from the Holy Spirit than the man in the moon.

But people to try to be spiritual can say things like that. So if anyone ever approaches you in the meeting here, we don't know who comes in the doors and you think we can watch this huge building and overflow. So you be careful when someone walks up to you and says, God gave me a word for you.

You listen to it. You be respectful. Don't hold it in contempt, but you test everything and you hold on to what's good.

As somebody once said, eat the meat and spit out the bones. Because sometimes a lot of people have a lot of bones in what they're saying. Some people are full of meat.

They're saying words that encouragement, but you don't believe everything. You don't be gullible, but you don't be disbelieving. You have to find the balance of being open, but testing everything by the word of God, by prayer, meditation, talking to other people.

This is what someone told me. I just learned of somebody in another country, somebody who no more was called to the ministry than this monitor is. Somebody came and gave him a word, leave your job and go to this country.

But I don't speak the language of that country. No, the Lord says that when you get there and you get off the airplane and you put your feet on the tarmac, you will be able to speak that language automatically. Thus sayeth the Lord, and do not disbelieve, but believe.

And the person did it and ruined their life. Ended up shattered, went, left their job. No more call to do that then than I could do brain surgery.

And they went and their feet hit the tarmac and guess what? Nada, nothing. They couldn't speak anything. Come on, how many know that just like there's a true word of God, there's a false word of God.

Are we right here on this? So Paul says, here's the attitude to take. Don't hold prophetic words in contempt, but test everything and hold onto what's good. Avoid every kind of evil, avoid every kind of evil.

There's different kinds of evil. And as Christians, since Christ died for us, we want to avoid doing the things that put them on the cross that he suffered for. We don't want to grieve him.

We don't want to hurt him in what we do, how we think, how we talk, how we treat others, how we respond. Avoid every kind of evil. There are things that are evil.

There are things that if your eyes look at it, they're evil. There are things that if you say that are good, and there are other things, if you say they're evil things. So avoid every kind of evil.

That's the secret to having a great Christmas because the happiest Christmas is the holiest Christmas. The more like Jesus Christ, you and I act, the deeper, the joy, the deeper, the peace, the more compromised our lives are and mixed in with evil things and things that are not belonging to Christ that takes away robs us of the peace and joy and power that God wants us to have. Rabbi Zacharias wrote a new book.

He wanted to call it From Oprah to Chopra. From Oprah Winfrey to this guy, an Indian dude who's on the public television talking just total nonsense. What a book.

Analyzes the spirituality that Oprah Winfrey spins out from millions and millions of people and then goes into the pseudo new age religion, eastern mysticism, Hinduism of this fellow Chopra who's become a multiplied, multiplied, multiplied millionaire telling everybody to live simple while he's making millions off of telling them to live simple. And in that book, it's a prophetic book, and I have to write him and tell him how the book blessed me, is blessing me. And he says, it's amazing that audiences love to hear God's promises, but the moment you speak authoritatively that something is wrong and that they shouldn't do it.

Modern day society rebels against that because there is an anti-authority, anti-sin movement in the world today. Tell them that they'll be prosperous. Yes.

Tell them God loves them. Yes. Say you shouldn't do that.

Who are you to judge? Am I right or wrong? And that's in all of us. That's in all of us. There's something in us in the flesh that resists being told, no, you don't make the rules.

God makes the rules. You don't decide what's right or wrong. You can't decide that two and two is four.

It's four. You can't say, no, I think it's five. You could say that it's still four.

He just brings that up beautifully. He's such a great writer. Well, here, Paul says, avoid every kind of evil.

Wouldn't that be sad if we took communion and remembered his blood and we didn't want to avoid every kind of evil. We were just going to walk lukewarm, loose, fool around with stuff that we know is evil. Wouldn't that be terrible? That would not be worthy of the Lord.

How many want to walk worthy of the Lord? Just wave your hand at me. Yes. I want to walk worthy of the Lord.

Here's the prayer. Notice how he closes this letter. Here's the prayer.

Would to God that all pastors, starting with the one speaking, would pray more this way for his members. And tell me how often you hear this kind of prayer on TV or on radio or even in books. May God himself, he's praying, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through.

May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul prays. He says, now, may God himself, God, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through.

In other words, separate you from all impurity, sanctify you, get rid of all the junk, get rid of all the things that are bog us down. Notice, may he sanctify you through and through. May the work be deep.

May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless, blameless, blameless. That means without blame. A lot of us think Christianity is just God helped me through another day and all the pressures of life.

But Paul is praying. May the God of peace sanctify you through and through so that your whole spirit, soul and body may be kept blameless. There's not one thing anybody can say wrong against us at the coming of Jesus Christ.

Notice where sin and evil things can reside. They can reside in your body. You can do things that are impure with your body, in your mind and with your tongue, with your emotions, have evil things, unforgiveness, bitterness, slander, talking, evil speaking, cursing.

Paul says, I know where the background you came from. You were heathens. You lived any way you want.

But I'm praying that God, the God of peace, that he will sanctify you. Not clean up your own act. May God do it.

The God of all peace. He's the only one who can do it. If God is holy and only God is holy and then God tells me to be holy, who has to do the work? God.

The Bible says there's no one holy but God. All we like sheep have gone astray. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

There is none righteous, no not one. And yet God says, avoid every form of evil. How would that happen? Well then God, the Holy One, has to impart that to me.

He has to change me. He has to change you. You can't lift yourself up by your bootstraps.

We don't have the strength. But notice, in every part of our being, you ever meet someone on the outside of their life, they would never smoke any weed. They would never rob anybody.

But with their mouth, they destroy people, destroy churches, or people who don't even use their mouth so much but you're with them and they have a deep resentment, anger, prejudice against other people, people who are different than them. You're just with them and you can feel this deep resentment and bitterness. They're not doing anything wrong with their body on the outside.

They're polluted in their heart, in their mind, their spirit, unclean thoughts, unclean heart. Paul says, come on, now that Christ died for you, go all the way. You just don't want to be saved.

God wants to make you more like his son every day. Now let him do it and I'm praying that it'll happen. He'll sanctify you through and through.

When I was growing up in church, I was little. I didn't pay much attention but I would hear people testify like this in church. They would get up and say, I want to thank God tonight.

How many have ever heard this one? I want to thank God that I'm saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Ghost. Come on, how many ever heard that in your life? Lift your hand. I used to just go, wow, that sounds good.

So in other words, God doesn't want to just save us and say, all right, then one day I'm going to bring you to heaven. Now until I bring you to heaven, just live any old way. You think God wants us to do that after he gave his son to die for our sins? You think he wants us to be contaminated again? No.

So Paul prays. I'm praying that God, God make us more like Paul. May God sanctify you through and through.

That you'll be blameless, won't talk wrong, won't react wrong. Your body will be pure. Your mind will be pure.

Your tongue will be pure. Your heart will be pure. I'm not getting any amends, but this is in the Bible.

This is in the Bible. How many want God to just sanctify you? Just make you more like Christ? Don't you ever get sick and tired of being sick and tired of yourself? That's the prayer. Now here's the promise.

Perfect for us tonight. May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus.

We don't want the Lord Jesus Christ to come and we're fighting with someone, cursing at them. We're stealing something. We're involved in some behavior that Christ died for and now Christ is coming and we go, no, no, no, no, no.

We don't want to live that way. Come on. God's been merciful to all of us.

How many want to be ready when he comes? Watching, waiting, and let the world laugh. You think they'll be laughing when Christ comes? No, no, no. Everybody was laughing at Noah when he was building the ark.

You old fool. You old fool. Building an ark.

How stupid is that? Even the guys who helped him would build the ark. The people who had to work with the iron and put the joists together and build that ark. Moses didn't build it all by himself.

The thing is huge. I was once in a replica in Hong Kong of the ark, the actual ark, the same measurements in the Bible. I was on the ark.

They have someone built one as a Christian center there. Huge thing. Think about the men who worked on it.

And they must have been laughing when they were working. That fool, he pays us to build this crazy thing. That crazy old man.

There hadn't been rain. Everything was so dry. Then some clouds formed.

That's nothing. It'll blow over. Can you imagine all the people who mocked? Do you think they were mocking? They were banging on that door, but God shut the door.

And God's building an ark right now. And we're in that ark. The ark is Jesus Christ.

Amen. Come on. Let's put our hands together.

We're in the ark. And now Peter warns us. Peter warns us.

Know this. In the last days, there will be mockers. Mocking and saying, where is this coming of the Lord? You so stupid.

You holy rollers. You this and that. You just got to let it go.

Don't suppress. Just, you know, go with the flow and all that. There's a day when that will end.

Brothers and sisters, I got to be a faithful servant of God. They'll come a day when they'll be banging on. Imagine the screaming, banging on that door.

Let us in. We're sorry we laughed at you and it was too late at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says, here's what I want.

You want you to be blameless, be living clean lives. That's the prayer. Here's the promise.

The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. Listen, the one who calls you is faithful. Say that the one who caught and he will do it.

Say it again. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it louder. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

You just memorize the verse in the Bible. First Thessalonians 5:24. The one who calls you is what? And he will do it.

Now listen, you're looking at a person who grew up in a church and when God saved me, he made me aware that he was holy and I saw that I was sinful and I had so many bad attempts at trying to live a victorious life. The harder I tried, the worse I got. And this is the way it is with most of us.

For salvation, erasing our sins, giving us new life. We know we can't do it. We just say, Jesus helped me when it comes to living and overcoming life.

Now I'm going to do this, but no faith was the one who has called you. He will do it. Paul prays, make God the God of peace, sanctify you.

You can't sanctify yourself. How can a leopard change his spots? You can't do it. And that was the great revelation that John Wesley had.

I just read it the other day. Wesley said, I saw for years that I could only be saved by the grace of God. God doing it for me.

But then it dawned on me that just as salvation is a gift that you receive by faith, so is sanctification. It's God who works in you both to will and to do according to his good pleasure. It's God.

And the harder you try to be like Jesus, have you ever tried to be like Jesus? I've tried so many days to be like Jesus when I was 18, 19, 20, 21. Oh, trying to be like Jesus. It lasted like a half hour.

Come on. Don't laugh at me. You've done the same thing.

Somebody raised their hand here. Ever try to be like Jesus. And then whoops, Jim Simba keeps coming out.

Oh, it's so good to just say, Jesus, it's hopeless without you. I could no more live a clean, holy life, but faithful is the one who calls you who will do it. He will do it.

Did he wash away your sins? Did he wash away your sins? Has he forgiven you every trespass? What did you do? What was the great thing you did to get him to do that? You just believed by faith. You're justified and by faith, we're sanctified. And by the way, if anyone listening to me today has something at home that is not in keeping with Jesus Christ, would you please go home and burn it or throw it out? I'm talking about a book.

I'm talking about a DVD. I'm talking about music. I'm talking about something.

It's unclean. Why would you want that in your house? Christ gave your house to you. Why would you want something dirty in your house? Come on.

Can we all say amen? If you're here tonight and you're battling some habit that you have drugs, you have some weed on you, you have whatever, or you have cigarettes and you know, this is polluting my body. My body is the temple of spirit. You can give me the cigarettes tonight.

I'll throw them away. It'll be the last cigarettes you'll ever smoke. You'll say, no, I need to have the patch.

No, I got something better than the patch. I got Jesus Christ. He's better than the patch.

Come on. Come on. Can we all say amen to Jesus Christ? So if God's talking to you tonight, close your eyes with me.

God puts his finger on something in your house, a weapon, something that's, that's something that's not right. Horoscope, all that stuff. You don't need that to tell your future.

Read the Bible. That's your future. Because when you open yourself up to that, it's not good.

God search us as we wait in your presence and may the God of peace sanctify you through and through spirit, soul, and body. The one who calls you is faithful. He will do it.

Lord, we thank you for the bread and the cup tonight that your body was offered up as a sacrifice for Jim Cimbala. And I can say tonight that because of Calvary, all my sins are forgiven. There's not one record against any of us who are Christians, nothing in heaven.

There's no mark of anything we've ever done because Jesus paid for it all. There are iniquities. I will remember no more.

You said, thank you father. Thank you for loving us so much that you gave us your son for some of us giving an offering as hard. You gave us your son.

My son is up here, Lord. I wouldn't give him for anyone. And you gave your precious son for people who hated you, who crucified you.

So we thank you. Gracias Senor. Thank you Lord for the blood and the cup and the bread, which represents your body and help us to not be sleeping, but to be awake.

Help us not to be weighed down by the cares of life, but to be alert, to have our priorities in order spiritually, Lord. Take away every unclean thing from our spirit, our soul, our body. Sanctify us.

The work is way too much for us, Lord. We can't do it. But we present ourselves as living sacrifices tonight.

Work in us. Cleanse our mouths, our tongues. Cleanse our hearts.

Give us mercy and forgiveness for people who have been injurious to us. Sprinkle us with clean water. Give us that wonderful peace that when we lay in our beds, our conscience is clear and we're praising you with a pure heart.

And we walk in the light. Get us away from all darkness, Lord. All hiding, all secrets, because that's so unworthy of you who have given everything for us.

Keep us alert, watching, waiting, praying, studying, working, loving, talking, encouraging of us every day to live that way. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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