

A Prayer for Just Two Things

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking a pure heart, a steadfast spirit, and a willing spirit in our relationship with God.

Duration: 17:30

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Psalm 119:11, Philippians 2:12

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a steadfast and willing spirit in our relationship with God. He acknowledges that we all make mistakes and may struggle with being faithful to God's word. However, he encourages listeners to persevere and keep plodding forward in their faith, even when faced with discouragement or temptation. The speaker also highlights the need to overcome our natural resistance to God's calling and to be willing to step out in obedience to His plans for our lives.

Transcript

How many Psalms are there in the Bible? Anyone know? How many chapters in Psalms? 150. 150 Psalms. What's the longest one? What's the shortest one? Anyone know? It's 130-something, isn't it? Whatever it is, it has like two verses.

That's the one you want to read before you go to bed at night. The Psalms have different writers and we're not sure who wrote all the Psalms. And when it says Psalm of David, it could be, could not be.

The experts are not sure when they were written and all of that. Traditions develop around it but one of the Psalms that we're sure was written by David is one of the penitential Psalms. Penitential.

Everybody say penitential. This is where we get the Catholic word penance, doing penance. But what it means is there's about seven of them, I believe out of the 150 that are called penitential Psalms.

They are not praising God. They are not describing his greatness for the most part. They are the cry of a heart that has failed God.

Someone has sinned and they go to God for mercy. And those Psalms are called penitential Psalms. Now, the Psalmists are always intermittently saying, and God, don't remember my sins and forgive me.

Thank you that there's mercy. But some, that's the main theme of the Psalm. 32 is one of the penitential Psalms.

But the most famous is 51. Psalm 51, which you could read before you go to bed tonight. And it's by David after he had not just committed adultery with Bathsheba.

He was tempted by his eye gate. He went up. He should have been out fighting battles.

But he stayed at home. That's a lesson. You got to be where God wants you to be.

Otherwise, you become very vulnerable. And he went out and he saw her naked bathing. He was king.

He could do what he wanted. He called for her. And from their union, she got pregnant.

He tried to cover it up by bringing her husband home, who was fighting battles for him. He can't make this up. And Uriah the Hittite comes home.

But he says, no, I won't go home and sleep with my wife. He tried to gloss it over. They won't know who's the baby.

He was so faithful to David. And then David, don't ask how, but it shows you how wicked our hearts can be. David arranges for Uriah to be killed.

He tells Joab, his general, attack a certain place. Then have everybody withdraw except for Uriah. And sure enough, Uriah gets killed.

And then David's such a hypocrite at the moment. When they bring news back, by the way, we attacked, Joab says, and we withdrew. But by the way, just tell David, we lost someone in battle, a very important guy.

Uriah the Hittite died. And David is so full of hypocrisy that he goes, that's what happens when you go to war. You lose some people.

Meanwhile, he had planned the whole thing. So he's guilty of adultery and of murder. And yet, God says he's a man after his own heart.

Oh, how many are happy God is full of mercy? Could you lift your hand up, please? So then he writes this psalm after he lived for months. This is the man who killed Goliath, wrote all these psalms, anointed to be the next king. Months go by, and he's hiding his sin from God, how he's living, how he's sleeping at night.

We don't know, but we've had our own dealings with God when we're living in guilt, don't we? He says in this psalm, have mercy upon me, O God, according to your unfailing love, according to your great compassion. Blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

No excuses, no rationalizations. Just have mercy according to your unfailing love. I don't have a thing to stand on.

I am guilty. Just have mercy. And he goes on and on.

Then in the middle of the psalm, he asks for two things that not enough of us ask for. But since he asked for it, we know in inspired scripture that we should ask for it. The singers can ask for it.

Myself, all of us, we can ask for these two things. You don't hear many people ask for them, but when I describe them to you, you're going to say to me, oh yeah, oh yeah. I didn't even know you could ask God for that.

So in the middle of the psalm, he says, create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Everybody say steadfast. Say it again.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, two verses later, and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me. Everybody say willing spirit. So in the middle of this psalm, David, who must have been alone and wept, and now gathered his thoughts and analyzed, how did I do that? How did I do that? We all know that feeling, don't we? How did I say that? How did I ever get in this situation? You're not saying amen, but God knows, doesn't he, for all of us? So he says, God, grant me a steadfast spirit.

In other words, I don't want to be up and down and down and up. On Tuesday, full of God. On Thursday, full of hate.

On Saturday, praising the Lord. And on Sunday, too. But then on Monday, getting upset and screaming at people that I should be loving and helping.

I'm so tired of going up and down. So God, give me a steadfast spirit. Keep me steady.

I don't want to just sometimes serve you. I want to all the time serve you. Anybody here with me on this? In other words, give me a steadfast.

Notice, he knew that that was one of his problems. Because every one of us tends to fluctuations. The sign of maturity is a steadfast spirit.

Someone who's there. You know, among preachers, there's not a joke, but a thing you say when preachers talk. I know I use it a lot to people.

And it's true. There's three gifts that you can get from God when you're a minister or pastor. You preach, you pray, and you plod.

P-L-O-D. You just keep going. Like an ox.

Just the next step. I know, but there's discouragements. That's okay.

I'm going to take another step. No, I'm going to get up there and preach again. But your last sermon was terrible.

God will help me again. God will help me do better. You preach, you pray, you plod.

And what you find out when you're a minister is many times God does more through your plodding than he does through some of your preaching. Because you've got to keep at it. The devil is always tempting us to quit or to go down or give up for 48 hours or go on a binge or let it all hang out and vent and go crazy.

And God is saying, no, I'm going to give you a steadfast spirit. So what David is saying is, God, I don't want to be up and down like a roller coaster at Coney Island. I want to be like this.

You know, in the merry-go-round, there's two kinds of horses, right? There's the kind that just stay level and then there's those other ones that are going up and down. David said, put me on that steady horse. I

just want to keep going.

Give me a steadfast spirit. We're talking about a former employee here, Esther Colon, who came to the church when we were in our first building and was one of Carol's first choir members who could really sing. She was a blender more than a soloist, but one of the nicest blending voices.

And then she worked here at the church, whether in choir practice, whether in the church, whether on the office. She went through, husband walked out on her. Steadfast.

Steadfast. And that's a gift from God. That's a grace from God.

Notice David didn't say, God, let me show you how steadfast I'm going to be. He said, no, God, grant to me a steadfast spirit. Keep me steady every day close to you.

Like that song we're singing. You're all I need. Draw me close to you.

Never let me go. Keep me steadfast. How many want to be more steadfast in your walk with the Lord? Not reading, no, I'm on fire.

I'm going to read 11 chapters today. Then the next three weeks you don't pick up the Bible at all. We want to be steadfast every day.

You know how the Bible, by the way, is learned? I learned this a long time ago from people way smarter than me in the scripture. The Bible is not learned by long readings. The Bible is learned by every day.

A little here. A little more there. Then the next day.

Then the next day. And I don't care how long you read it. You never learn it.

Nobody knows the Bible. We're all learning the Bible. Amen? But how you learn it is just add it.

Keep at it. Putting those verses in. Understanding a little bit more every day.

God, grant me a steadfast spirit. Because he said, how in the world could I kill Goliath and write, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, and then be part of what I just got done with? What in the world is going on? Oh God, grant me a steadfast spirit. How many see the need of that in your own life like I do? Just say aloud, amen.

Okay. Lastly, and grant me a willing spirit. See, you don't hear many people pray, God keep me steadfast.

You know what we do instead of praying it? We promise it. God, I know I messed up. But wait until you see what I'm going to do for you now.

Come on, do I strike a chord here with some of us? Alright God, I know I messed up. And I haven't been faithful in the word. But boy, wait until you see this now.

I'm going to just wear my Bible out. And then it goes on for a few days. And then the next thing you know is, oh, why am I watching all this television and my Bible is just sitting five feet away? Why haven't I read it? Oh God, give me a steadfast spirit.

But God, give me a willing spirit. Because there's certain things God asks you to do that your flesh and the world and the devil stir you up to fight against it. Let's just concentrate on the flesh.

There are certain things that our old nature, which we still have to deal with, our own nature fights against it. So God could call one of you that stood there to do something for the Lord. He could call Pastor Park to a country to go and visit to set up something.

And Pastor Park and the natural could be saying, I don't want to go there. I don't want to go there. That's a hard trip.

That's a killer. I've got three kids and my wife. I want to be near them.

And then God just, do it. Come on, I'm calling you. And there's something in us that fights against sometimes what God wants us to do.

Has anyone ever had that battle? So David realized. So he said, God, grant me a willing spirit. Take that resistance out.

Take the stubbornness out. Just think, we can pray about that. We could ask God to do that.

God, not only give me a steadfast spirit, but give me a willing spirit. Melt me so that I want to do your will. If you don't want to do something God wants you to do, did you know that he could change you and you'll want to do what he wants you to do? You can't go through life saying, I don't like it, but I'll do it because I'm a Christian.

You can't go through life like that. That's no testimony. God has to melt us.

Amen? Are you with me on this here? I know we've been praying hard for a lot of things, but before I close, God, grant me a willing spirit. You know, like God speaks to you and says, go apologize to someone who you haven't been talking to for 10 years. And you go, no, God, they're the ones who caused the problem.

No, you go say you're sorry. No, I can't. Speak to them in the night, God, and bring them to me and they can say hello.

Let them bow before me and then I'll know that you are God. No, I want you to. But we resist that.

We don't want to do that. But that's where we have to say God, give me a willing spirit. Now, that's in the Old Testament.

So whenever you read something in the Old Testament, you ask yourself, is that true in the New Testament? What verse does that correspond to? So here's a beautiful verse in Philippians. For it is God, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God, listen, who works in you both to will and to do according to his good pleasure.

He actually puts the willing in it. What kind of pastor would I be if every day I come to this church to be with you and all that and I just went, oh, I don't believe this. I got to go back there again and do that.

What kind of, how would God bless me? How would I be a help to anybody? No, you got to do it. Praise God. Oh, I can be with the people again and I can do the best I can to encourage them.

You have to do it with a willing spirit. Amen? The worst thing to have in church is to have workers who don't want to work. But you have to put a guilt trip on them.

Alright, I'll do it. You don't want that. No one likes that.

David said, I know what I need. God, grant me a steadfast spirit and grant me a willing spirit. Break that thing in me that fights against what you want to do.

As I alluded to it before, when God started to deal with me about going in the ministry, I fought, fought, selfish, stubborn. I'm not doing that. That's not what I went to college for.

And where will it lead? What will I do? I don't know what to do. I'm not doing that. And God just kept dealing with me.

Isn't it wonderful how patient God is with us? He deals with us and we fight him and instead of just saying, forget it, I'll go to somebody else. He waits. He knocks at the door.

Let me in. I want to help you. I want to bless you.

And we need to pray today, God, give us a willing spirit. Let's close our eyes. Anybody just feel their need of praying that I can lead, pray over you or have someone pray over you? Pastor, I need a steadfast spirit.

My problem is I get erratic. I'm up, down, down, up, up, down. I want God to give me a steadfast spirit.

The maturity of just keeping at it. Staying close to him. You may stand and I'll just include you in the final prayers we dismiss.

Is there anybody here who needs a willing spirit? You know God's calling you to do something or on the job or whatever, put up with someone or whatever he's calling you to do. Go somewhere, say something, pray for someone and it is just so hard. Oh, I got one, forgive someone.

God is saying forgive him and you're just like, I can't. I cannot forgive. Just stand.

God will help you. He's going to give you a willing spirit. Lord, you see the people are standing and you know everything about us.

You know everything about me. You know what I battle with. You know the attacks of the enemy in our lives.

And we pray today, not just for mercy, we thank you for your mercy that our sins are gone. We're clean before you. There's no record of sin against us in heaven because we've confessed them.

But now we pray for something more. We pray for a steadfast spirit. Keep us steady.

Help us to grow and be mature by being steady. Not erratic like children. One day up, next day down.

One day crying, next day laughing. Give us a willing spirit to let go of certain things. To forgive certain people.

To go where you want us to go. Not fight you. Fight you.

How can we fight the one who has nail prints in his hand? Help us, Lord. You gave your life for us. There's nothing you're going to ask us to do that will ever hurt us.

So grant us, just those of you standing, lift up your hands in a sign of surrender. God, grant us a steadfast spirit. Grant us a willing spirit.

Do both of them by your spirit in us. For we ask it Father in the name that's above every other name, the powerful name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. In his name we pray.

And everyone said Amen. Let's give God a hand clap of praise, shall we? Praise him for his word tonight. His word.

A steadfast spirit. A willing spirit. Turn and give somebody a hug and a handshake and happy Thanksgiving.

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