

Audio Sermon: Blocked and Guided by the Spirit

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala emphasizes the vital role of the Holy Spirit in guiding and empowering believers while encouraging a deeper relationship with Him.

Duration: 24:31

Scripture: John 16:7, Acts 16:6

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Guidance"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the person and work of the Holy Spirit. It discusses how the Holy Spirit restrains, directs, and invites believers to know Him more intimately, guiding them in their decisions and actions. The narrative from Acts illustrates how the Holy Spirit can lead, restrain, and empower individuals, even when they may lack knowledge or understanding.

Transcript

The main thing we all have to learn, that I have to learn more, that you have to learn more, is to understand the person and the work of the Holy Spirit. The Father sent the Son, the Son accomplished what He was to accomplish, and then rose from the dead after dying on the cross for our sins, and then ascended to the right hand of the Father. You always have to go back to this basic fact.

And then He said, it's good for you that I go, because unless I go, the helper, the Spirit won't come. But when I go, I'll send Him to you. And I have been with you, but He's gonna be in you.

And He insinuated and taught Jesus that everything He was to the disciples, the Holy Spirit would be, and even more. It is true that even those disciples who lived with Him for three and a half years, He didn't produce a whole lot in their lives, because when He was arrested, they all fled. So you would think at least He would get loyalty into them, but they were weak like Jell-O.

And it wasn't until the Spirit came that you see a change in them, in Peter, and James, and John. Because the Holy Spirit is our main weapon, the one we have to depend on, Satan in the fight tries to take away from the church, and I would sadly say, and has succeeded greatly in taking away an understanding and a knowledge of the Holy Spirit from most churches. They are not open to the Holy Spirit.

They do not believe in the present day ministry of the Holy Spirit. I know a young man who's going to a school, a Christian school, he took a class in the book of Acts. He just started it in the fall.

He called me totally just saddened, because the teacher told him at this Christian school, we're gonna study the book of Acts, but everything in here can never happen again. It's not for today. This is all just what happened 2,000 years ago.

So, it's forget about it. And that's the view of a lot of churches. They are so afraid of abuses of the Holy Spirit.

They are so afraid of Pentecostal and charismatic excesses that the devil has just done an incredible job of playing both sides and making them extreme. Crazy manifestations and things not found in the Scripture which are blamed on the Holy Spirit, and the other side reacting and saying, well then, you know what? If you think that's the Holy Spirit, I don't wanna know about the Holy Spirit, because that's insane. Let's just study the Bible and then call it a day.

Each side becomes more extreme, and now people who emphasize the Word and the Spirit, the church is very, very hard to find that balance now, either off on one side or off on an anti-Holy Spirit jag. But the truth is, we only have the Word of God as our rule of faith, and the Bible tells us that in the early church, the Holy Spirit was everything. In fact, he's the only one who's been put in charge of the Christian church.

No pastor is in charge of the church. No bishop, no pope, no anybody. The only person in charge of the Christian church is the one that God sent to be the executive of the church, which is the Holy Spirit.

Just as Jesus was in charge of the disciples, the Holy Spirit is supposed to be in charge of the church. But it's harder, it takes more faith, because he's invisible. Jesus walked and talked, and you could see him and talk to him, crucify him.

The Holy Spirit, that's another whole thing. But he's the only one in charge of that Bible school. He's supposed to be in charge of this church, this pulpit, what the choir sings.

Every decision, every naming of anyone in any office, it's supposed to be done, led, and governed by the Holy Spirit, he's in charge. When pastors talk about, here's my vision for the church, that's really weird, because you're not supposed to have a vision, you're supposed to find out the Holy Spirit's vision for your church. And the vision is basically found in the Scriptures.

I just wanna point out three things about the Holy Spirit tonight, and then we can pray for more of the Holy Spirit in our lives. I want him more in my life. Is he in my life? Yes.

Have I experienced the Holy Spirit? Yes. Has he helped me and continues to help me? Yes. Do I need more of him? Double yes.

How many know he lives inside of you, you're a believer? Okay. But how many want more of him, see? That's the trick that ministers will say, don't pray for the Holy Spirit, you already have the Holy Spirit. But that's a trick with words.

We have the Holy Spirit living in us, but we want him to control us more. We want his gifting, we want his direction, we want him involved in our lives. Every day should be, look, when Peter, James, and John and the disciples were walking with Jesus, what was every day? It was a Jesus day.

Every day they woke up, what was the main thing of their day? Jesus. Where's he going, where are we gonna eat? Where are we gonna live, what are we gonna do? When are we traveling, when are we staying? It's Jesus day. And now that he's gone, he has turned it over to the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Christ.

So, here's the things I just wanna leave with you. Maybe you need to hear this, someone. I believe you do, because I just prayed to try to move away from this message, or exhortation, it's not a message, a little exhortation, but I feel like we need to hear this.

So let's look at Acts chapter 16. Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia. Having been kept by the Holy Spirit, from preaching the word in the province of Asia.

When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus, notice the same interchange, Holy Spirit, now called the Spirit of Jesus, all the same person. The Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas, which is on the coast.

During the night, Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia, that's northern Greece, standing and begging him, come over to Macedonia and help us. After Paul had seen the vision, we, Luke includes himself, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. So let's just analyze what we see here.

We find out this about the Holy Spirit, that as he lives through us and in us, he is often responsible for restraining and constricting us and stopping us from doing what our plans are to do. If you look at the map of Paul's second missionary journey, this is his second journey, he had gone, the first journey up into the Galatian area, where we get our letter to the churches in Galatia, and now he's with a different traveling companion and he's up in his second trip, and let's see, looking at it like this, look at me, so here's the Galatia area, and straight ahead is an area called Asia. Not Asia to us, but Asia to them, Asia.

And by the way, in Asia are all the seven cities that Jesus wrote to in the book of Revelation, and the main city over there is Ephesus. Those are the cities that are over there, and he wants to preach the gospel. Wouldn't that be a good thing? They need the gospel, he has the gospel, he's a preacher, he's an apostle, he wants to go.

And the Holy Spirit says, no, you can't go. How did the Holy Spirit show them that? How did he make that known to them? We're, it's silent on that, but they sensed a restriction of the Holy Spirit. Was it a good thing they wanted to do? Yeah, but not every good thing is God's thing.

Oh, but I see need. Not every need are you supposed to get involved in, because God has other people that he's moving all around, so you can't have a knee-jerk reaction and say, oh, I see a need, I gotta, no, I see another need, I see another, no, I got a letter, somebody from Africa said they need \$500 for their orphanage, I gotta send that, I gotta do that. I mean, you'll be broke and you'll have a nervous breakdown within six months, right? So one of the offices of the Spirit is just like Jesus stopped them from doing certain things, the Holy Spirit stops our plans and restricts us.

Not only does he do it, look what it says. They wanted to go into Asia, watch me, this is, I'm moving in the map from east to west. They wanted to go in Asia, but the Holy Spirit restricted them, stopped them, and they were sensitive.

So now he turned toward the north and he wanted to go to Bithynia, which is up here, to minister, and the Spirit of Jesus said, don't do it. How I long tonight to be sensitive to the leadings and the restrictions of the Holy Spirit, to be led and know that the living Spirit of God, the Spirit of the living God, is directing our footsteps. Now notice if the Spirit many times, you know, I've had this told to me and it had happened in my own life when I was in college, you're about to go into the wrong party, the wrong place, the wrong thing, and the Spirit just makes you so uneasy and is telling you, do not go there.

That club is not where I want you to be. That group of people is not where I want you to be. You will not glorify my name in that place.

Do not read that magazine article. Do not watch that movie. That will contaminate you.

And the Spirit restricts us. And I hope that we're open to that. How many want to be open to that, right? Because God is saying, don't go there.

Because once that thing gets motion, then the flesh kicks in, now you have a problem. But notice this is different. This is a good thing.

They want to preach the gospel. And you can wear yourself out and waste your life just reacting to what people ask you to do and where you think you see need when it might not be you're the one to meet that need. God got a lot of people.

He has timing for all these places. He has other people that he's moving around. You're not the one to go there.

Someone else will go there, right? Otherwise, every invitation I get, I have to say I'm going, why? Because someone invited me. Well, that doesn't make any sense. I have to pray and say, God, where do you want me to be? Where does he want you to be? What does he want you to do? So we find out that the Spirit restricts.

And I want you to know today, ask God, God, make me sensitive to the restraining influences of the Holy Spirit. Most times, we're looking for the leadings of the Holy Spirit, and that's important. We're gonna get to that in a second.

But remember this, he not only leads, he stops. And when he says stop, you better stop. I know, but I don't see anything wrong with that.

Are you gonna trust your brain or are you gonna trust the Holy Spirit? If they would've argued with Paul or had a vote, democracy, let's vote. You can't vote, you gotta get the mind of the Holy Spirit, the mind of Christ. God, what do you want me to do? I know, I pray, and I feel, I know that all these people are going to the Philippines not because they just feel like getting on a plane and working hard for 10 days.

They feel the Holy Spirit wants them to be on that trip. Pastor Parker's constantly praying, God, where do you want us to break out to? Where do you want us to go? What new places? How can we help? Am I right, brother? This is what he's praying. Why? He can't figure this out.

He's smarter than me, but he's not as smart as God. Only God knows where we're supposed to be. And when he restricts you, don't chafe.

But I want to, and that's what I feel. Just trust the Holy Spirit. He knows everything.

Number two, when they stopped, Paul was caught in a place where he didn't know what to do. So here's another word. He's stuck and he doesn't know what to do.

When you have plans and the Holy Spirit blocks you, what do you do? You don't know what to do. So I want to encourage you today. If in a given situation you don't know what to do, fine, you don't know what to do.

Wait, wait. Don't make up something else to do. The way we are is, oh, I can't do that, then I'll do this.

No, just wait. He honored the Holy Spirit. I need a word from God.

Maybe you need a word from God today. What to do? God will give you that word. So as they waited, suddenly, through the agency of God, in this case, a vision at night, he saw a man from Greece saying, come on over and help us.

He shared it with the brothers that he was traveling with and they said, hey, you know what, Paul? That's from God. We feel a confirmation. And they all concluded, always remember, if you want to be led by God, you have to be humble enough to say you can be wrong.

If you think you never make a mistake, you won't be led by God because now you think your thoughts are God. They're not. They're your thoughts.

They're my thoughts. But when God speaks to us, I should be able to share it with the brothers and say, pastors, come on. God put us to work together.

What do you feel about that? Don't we talk about that? Like all the time, we talk like that. Don't we, Pastor Lincoln? This is what I feel. What do you all feel? Because you think God would show me something and hide it from all the good men I'm working with? Never.

You think God would just show you and never hide it from everybody else who loves you and who's spiritually minded? No. They wait, he gets this vision, and they all feel like, you know what? We're heading to Macedonia. There's another interesting thought on that.

You know the first place he went to? Philippi. And guess where he ended up in Philippi? In the slammer. Got a beat down.

And at midnight, he's with Silas. Wouldn't you think the devil would tempt him and say, you were led by God to come here? Oh yeah, this is beautiful. God led you to go to prison.

But do you know how sure they were that God led them? Even though they got a beating, they knew converts had been made. And at midnight, they were singing and praising God. Because when God leads you and you know you're in his will, it's the happiest place in the world.

Come on, let's say amen there. Happy, doesn't look good. Got a beat down in prison, but I know I'm here because the Spirit led me.

The Spirit led me. When you're not sure, oh, you're always trying to read the tea leaves. Oh, it doesn't look good.

Maybe God didn't lead me. Oh, it's looking good. God led me.

No, you gotta know, God led me. God led me. What does it matter how it works out? When God leads you, he leads you.

God restrains, this Holy Spirit restrains. God also directs. Notice, the minute he gave them that direction, it says they quickly left.

They quickly left for Macedonia because they knew God wants me on the road. I've been waiting, trying. God has been blocking.

I don't know why he blocked. Do you know probably Paul died never knowing why God blocked him. But we're not supposed to know everything.

Just get the next step that God has for you. I know, but Pastor Zimbala, why did that? When is that to you or me? Leave it with God. When we get to heaven, he's gonna explain everything to us.

Look, here's all you and I need, the next step. And when you take that, guess what else you need? The next step. That's all, just the next step.

I know, but why couldn't I go, leave that with God? God knows what he's doing. How many have had experiences in your own life like me? You look back on your life and you see how God blocks you from making a mess. Lift your hand.

Has God ever helped you like that? He has me. So God restricts and restrains, God directs. But then notice this, and this is where we wanna counteract this through prayer.

Look at Acts 19. While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. And there he found some disciples and he asked them.

Notice, he found some disciples and he asked them, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And they answered, no, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. So Paul asked them, what baptism did you receive? John's baptism, they replied. Paul said John's baptism was a baptism of repentance.

He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is in Jesus. On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, which means they were certainly saved when he got there, or for sure they were saved after he dealt with them for a little while because then he baptized. You don't baptize people who are not Christians.

So these are Christians, disciples, believers. And when Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. And there were about 12 men in all.

This is a beautiful story. It shows that it's possible to be a Christian and know nothing about the Holy Spirit. There are churches today that are Christian churches.

I'm not gonna deny they're Christian. They know nothing about the Holy Spirit. No, that can't be.

Oh yeah, listen. He went to these people. They believed in John's baptism.

He told them about Jesus, which they might have already heard about, but they had a limited understanding of the plan of God for their life. They just knew Jesus died on the cross, washed away my

sins, and then notice how good God is. Paul says, no, you don't.

John baptized for repentance, confession of sin, but then he told us get ready for Jesus. And he told them about Jesus. They must have put their faith in Jesus.

He baptized them. And when they came up out of the water, he laid hands on them. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit that they knew nothing about, which means God can take care of us and bless us even though we're ignorant.

It's an open heart, not a full head that he's looking for. It's just a heart that opens up like a child. You have to understand all the theology.

They didn't understand anything. They just told them. We don't even know who you're talking about.

He said, oh yeah, let me pray for you. And the Holy Spirit came right down upon them. And now they were speaking in tongues and prophesying like the early church did in Acts chapter two.

So we learned that the Holy Spirit can restrain us. Oh God, make us more sensitive to restrain us. Don't make that phone call.

Don't answer your wife that way. I'm talking about little things, big things, all things. No, turn the other cheek.

Don't say a word. I know, but he's wrong. I know, but don't say anything.

Yes, thank you God. Help me, give me grace now to just be quiet. So he restrains us.

He changes our plans, but then he opens doors and tells us, move now, go, come on, quick. This is what I have you to do. And lastly, he invites us to know more about him.

That's what I want for all of us tonight. I want to know more about the Holy Spirit. I don't want to read books on theology about him.

I've done those hundreds of them. I want to know more about him in my own life. How many want to know more about him in your own life? Leading, directing, oh, hindering.

Oh, I know, but that's a good thing I want to do. I know, but did you pray? Did the Holy Spirit give you the okay? Do you feel peace about it? I really feel like God's trying to save somebody here from a wrong decision. Could we just close our eyes? If you're here today and you need the Holy Spirit to direct you, need a word from the Holy Spirit, you have to come open.

Pastor Cimbala, if he wants to restrain me, I'm willing to be restrained. If he wants me to step out, I want to step out, but I gotta hear from God. I can't handle this on my own.

And I want to know the Holy Spirit better. I don't want a partial knowledge of salvation. I want everything God has for me.

Just step out of your seat and come up here. We're gonna wait and sit and pray and wait and worship and be open and be quiet. Maybe pray, whatever we're gonna do, just come on up and stand right here.

We got deacons, deaconesses that will pray with you. God's gonna give you that direction that you need. Just come, stand right here on the edge.

Lord, we say yes to the Holy Spirit of God directing our lives. Holy Spirit, you are welcome into this place called Jim Cimbala. My heart, my mind, all of us say welcome.

Welcome, we say to you, welcome. You are welcome. Hold us back from things that are not your will for our lives, even good things.

Always warn us about the obvious bad things, evil things, but Lord, we don't want to spin our wheels doing things you never called us to do. Lead us like you led Paul and his team. Constrict us, restrain us at times, but then God, propel us, commission us, send us out with power and blessing.

And when you lead us someplace, help us not to doubt your leading because it doesn't work out the way we think. Help us to have faith in you, that you know what you're doing and that all things work together for good to them that love God. Holy Spirit, teach us more about yourself, your voice, your ways, your direction.

Make us sensitive to your gentlest touch. Just the littlest nudge we want to be sensitive to. If we're moving in the wrong way, take away our peace so that we'll know to check and stop and say, help me, Holy Spirit, help me, God, help me, Jesus.

We surrender our church, the leadership, the deacons, deaconesses, pastors, congregation, musicians, sound people. Holy Spirit, you are welcome. BT Kids, the choir project.

Do what you want to do. Direct Carol, direct everything. Just govern everything, Lord.

We just want to stand by and watch you work and cooperate. For those who feel that calling on their life to do that extra new thing for you, direct them. Restrain them where it's not of you, but then propel us when it is of you.

Lord, we thank you for all these beautiful people on this most miserable of nights. It is good to be in your house, Lord. And however it is outside, it is warm in our souls tonight.

Get us home safely with the peace of God, the shalom of God resting upon our hearts and minds. In Jesus' name, everyone said. Amen.

Give somebody a hug, a handshake. Amen.

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