

Book of Acts Series - Part 11 | the Upward Look

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon emphasizes the necessity of being filled with the Holy Spirit for effective Christian living and church functioning as demonstrated in the Book of Acts.

Duration: 48:06

Scripture: Acts 6:10, Acts 7:51, Acts 7:53-58

Topics: "Book Of Acts"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the book of Acts and how ordinary people were able to spread the gospel and grow the church despite facing challenges. The speaker emphasizes that the early Christians did not have the resources or support that we have today, yet they were able to turn the world upside down. The sermon also highlights the story of Stephen, who was full of the Holy Spirit and saw the glory of God before being stoned to death. The speaker shares a personal story of leading someone to the Lord and emphasizes the power of God's grace and the importance of relying on Him.

Transcript

I began a series months ago on the book of Acts, which is the fifth book of the New Testament. It's written by the only Gentile writer of any of the letters in the New Testament, a man by the name of Luke, who was a doctor. He wrote one other book, a gospel called Luke, and now he continues on and he gives us a story not of Jesus' life, but Jesus has died, resurrected, gone back to heaven in the first chapter, and now the Christian church begins.

And through the book of Acts, he takes snapshots of what the early church looked like, what the Lord told it to do, how it was to operate, what power it was to depend on, and this is very important for us because I just met some folks from California. They must go to a church in California. Obviously, you folks from Paris, France wouldn't be here unless you're Christians and going to a church, but what should the church look like? Should it look like something that I think it should look like, or you, or your culture? Should it be a black church, or a white church, or a French church, or should it be a Latino church? Or, I mean, what should it look, or should we be able to decide what it looks like? Or should we just go to the Bible and say, what did Jesus intend his church to look like? Now, there's an interesting idea.

We should model ourselves after the model in the Bible. Don't we do that with our individual behavior? If we're Christians, who should we try to resemble in our daily life? Jesus, how do we know what Jesus did, and lived, and said, and reacted? We go to the Bible, and we say, that's the Christ life. Now, God, help me to be what you want me to be.

I wanna be more like Jesus. Same way with a church, but very few churches make this jump. We should go to the Bible and say, now, what did God intend the church to look like? What did the Lord want us to be doing here on planet Earth? If he wanted us in heaven, we'd be in heaven.

We're not, we're on planet Earth. So what should we be doing here? What is the Christian church? Well, we've been learning a lot. We found out last week, one of the great episodes in the book of Acts, is when they began for the first time to delegate responsibility.

The apostles were kind of the main guys, the 12 apostles. But now, problems arose, and they had to delegate responsibility to other people. And that brought in what God always intended the church to be, which in America, unfortunately, we have an opposite trend.

And starting with the Roman Catholic system, that also brought it in more than 1,000 years ago, which was, the body of Christ is supposed to function like a body. What does that mean, the body of Christ? It's an invisible spiritual body. Jesus is the head, and all Christians make up his body.

What does that mean? The head gives signals to the body, like right now, my head is sending messages, my brain, to lift my right hand, or to stretch out my left hand, or to walk this way. So we're to be the body that carries out the directives of the brain, the head, the intelligence, who is Jesus Christ. He is the head, and we are called the body of Christ.

And now, his purposes are supposed to be carried out on the earth through his body, which is made up of Christians. But how does a body work? A body works with everyone having a different function. My wrist cannot do what my knee does.

My knee cannot do what my ear does. My ear cannot do what my eye does. But we need all those parts in the body.

So we established last week that one of the great weakening factors in the Christian church around the world is it's become platform-centered. Who's the preacher? Who's the pastor? Worse than that, you got now Christian celebrities, pastor-speaker celebrities, and then the people just sit, and they're spectators. And they watch what goes on, who's singing, they make their comments, they go home for a week, and then come back again to see the next show.

And that has nothing at all to do with the Christianity of the New Testament, as we're gonna see. The Christianity of the New Testament is that every member who's a Christian finds their calling in God and begins to carry it out, praying, singing, cleaning the building, counseling people. We found out the gift of encouragement, the gift of giving, all kinds of things.

Every member finding its part and carrying it out. And that is what summarizes the book of Acts. We see amazing things done by ordinary people, and you wonder, how did they do it? They had no buildings like this beautiful facility that God has graced us with.

They had no microphones. They had no choirs. They had no money.

They were not looked on favorably by the Jewish religious establishment or the Roman Empire, of which they were a part of, and they turned the world upside down. The book of Acts is just out there. How the message spread, the gospel spread, which is what Jesus told them to do, the gospel spread, people were converted, like we see in Haiti, like we've seen here, and the churches kept growing and multiplying.

And when you wanted to know how they do this, what was their formula, what was their model, it's very hard to find it. It's just, they didn't have what we count as vital, but they had something that we sometimes don't emphasize enough. The main thing about them that made them such effective witnesses for Christ, without a doubt, the book of Acts tells us, is that they were full of the Holy Spirit.

They had a power, an ability. They had an eloquence, they had a fervor, they had a faith, they had a lot of stuff that you can't explain except by some supernatural power working inside of them. This, of course, was promised by Jesus.

In the book of John, he told the disciples, I'm gonna leave you, and they were sad. He said, no, it's good I'm leaving you, because I've been with you, but when I leave, I'm gonna send the Holy Spirit. He, the Holy Spirit, just as much a person as Jesus, the Son or the Father, he, the Holy Spirit, he will teach you all things.

I've been with you, he will be in you. He'll be working from the inside out. It won't be a legal religion like the Old Testament.

Here are the laws, try to obey them. No, it'll be Christ in us, the hope of glory. It'll be God working from the inside out, changing the way we think, changing the way we talk, how we react.

That's the secret of the New Testament church. Jesus, the last thing he told them was go in Jerusalem and wait until you're filled with the power that I want for you, and that power will come when the Holy Spirit comes on you. And they waited, and the Lord fulfilled his promise, and they were a spirit-filled church.

Spirit-filled church. They were all, it says, filled with the Holy Spirit. What does filled mean? Since the Holy Spirit is a person, how do you get filled with the person? What does that mean? I know water fills, this bottle that I just drank from is basically filled with water.

Okay, but that's water. How do you get filled with a person? Well, it means they were yielded to and controlled by the Holy Spirit. They lived their lives depending, expecting, yielded to the person of the Holy Spirit.

That's the only way you can explain the growth of Christianity. They didn't have money, they didn't have buildings, they didn't have technical advantages, but they had this dynamic working of the Holy Spirit in their lives. So we learned last week that when the first problem came, a question of distributing food, and an argument that broke out among the widows, we find that they chose seven men, and the qualifications of these men, just to handle the food distribution, that the qualifications were, they have to be known to be wise and filled with the Holy Spirit.

Obviously, not all Christians live wise lives, and not all Christians are filled with the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, how could it be a qualification? They could have said, just pick anyone. Do all Christians have the Holy Spirit living inside of them? Yes, or you're not a Christian.

The early definition of a Christian was, when you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you're born again, the Spirit comes to live inside of you. How many know God is living inside of you now? That's why the Bible says, we're temples of the Holy Spirit. All Christians are, we're temples.

What does temple mean? The Spirit lives within us. But obviously, not all Christians, we know that by behavior patterns and statistics now, and all of that. Not everyone who goes to church and says they're a Christian is living a life characterized by being filled with the Holy Spirit, controlled by Him, producing the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

The first fruit of the Holy Spirit is love. So if God is in you and He's working, you would love everyone the way God loves everyone. Am I right or wrong? Well, that means there would be no racism among Christians.

That's not true. No, the blacks are over there, the whites are over there, Latinos are there, Asians wanna get away from everybody, and everyone's doing their whole thing. And we're all talking God is love, which is the sign up there.

But obviously, something's out of whack here, right? Because otherwise, people live cultural lives. Latinos are more Latino than they are Jesus. The whites are more white than they are Jesus.

The blacks are more black in their culture than they are Jesus. So the only one who can change this is no teaching, nothing from Congress, nothing from anybody. It's gotta be the love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit.

Can we all say amen to that? When the Holy Spirit's controlling you, when the Spirit's working, you see people the way God sees them. You feel what God feels. You don't teach anybody anything.

In fact, you have to learn prejudice. You put interracial kids together in a sandbox, they're gonna just play. No, you have to grow up and learn that viciousness, that ugliness, that white prejudice, that black prejudice.

You gotta learn that, you gotta hear that. That stuff's gotta be injected into you before you can be nasty like people are. So they chose seven men, and one of them was a very unusual man, but he was just a deacon.

In fact, he didn't even have the title of deacon. His name was Stephen, and he's soon gonna become the first martyr of the Christian church. He's the first one to die for the sake of Christ.

Bible puts that in there too. That kind of offsets the prosperity, successful living syndrome that you hear from some of the televangelists, that if you just love Jesus, it all works out, and you get the best job and drive the biggest car. No, that's an American thing that they're selling and hawking.

The truth is from the Bible, sometimes when you follow Jesus, you get in a whole lot of trouble. Am I right or wrong? You get in a whole lot of trouble, but Jesus said that would happen. So we don't have to twist it and sell it and spin it.

We should just tell it like it is. That's what Jesus said. If they hated me, they will.

If they rejected me, they will. It is what it is. So this man Stephen was unusual.

But remember, here was the point we established. He had no title. No one ordained him.

Nobody said he should do anything except wait on tables and hand out food. But when the Holy Spirit's working inside of you, you don't need credentials. You don't need ordination.

This man was never ordained. Nobody gave him a title. He had no business cards.

He had nothing. Just had God working. Watch what happens.

And that will be our simple lesson for today. Let's look. Acts 6, verse eight to 10.

Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace. What is grace again? God doing for you what you don't deserve. That's what grace is.

God giving you things you don't merit. He was full of God's grace and power. He did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people.

He was starting to move out now in the gifts of the Holy Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12 and 1 Corinthians 14. He's doing it because the Spirit is doing it. You can't put God in a box.

You can't tell people you can only do this, you can only do that. When God is working, it's gonna just happen. Are you with me or not with me here? It's not up on the platform where the action is.

God is where the action is. And God can use anybody, anytime. Opposition arose, however, from the members of the synagogue of the freed men, as it was called, Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria, that's Africa, as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia.

These men began to argue with Stephen. So notice what happens. Grace is poured out, and this always happens.

The minute God blesses you with something, opposition will come. That is the rule all through the Bible and all through history. If God blesses my brother and says, I want you to do something, and the brother said, I'm gonna obey, I'm gonna go out and do that, there will be opposition against him.

There'll be somebody fighting him because Satan's not gonna cheer us on. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and power. Now, working through these people.

They began to argue with Stephen, but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke. Look at that. Where'd he get that wisdom? He got it from God.

And notice the Spirit is capital S. The Spirit was helping him as they fought him and argued with him and attacked him. The Holy Spirit gave him responses. He'll do the same for us.

You don't have to go to school for 11 years and say, I have to know every answer to every question. No, when people attack, the Holy Spirit right then on the spot will give you exactly what to say. How many are with me? Say amen.

That's what the promise is from the Bible. So he had wisdom from God, and he had a Spirit helping him that they could not deal with, they could not overcome. Now, then he preaches a long sermon that goes from Acts 6 all the way through Acts 7. It's a long sermon.

He rehearses the history of the Jewish people, and now he's getting up to, he starts telling them about Jesus, that he was the Messiah. They don't wanna hear that. He's the one that they were looking for.

They don't wanna hear that. But he doesn't back up. And they must have had some physical reaction to him that made him now burst out and say this.

Look, you stiff-necked people with uncircumcised hearts and ears, you are just like your fathers. You always resist the who? Holy Spirit. That can be said, I think, about some churches today.

They always resist the Holy Spirit. They have their doctrinal traditions, denominational traditions. They have their plan and order for a service, and no one's breaking in, not God himself.

Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the righteous one. That's the Messiah. And now you have betrayed and murdered him.

Talk about a real talk sermon, right? You who have received the law that was put into effect through angels, but have not obeyed it. When they heard this, the crowd, they were furious and they gnashed their teeth at him. Bible's telling it like it is, or like it was.

But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, notice that. One translation has, because he was full of the Holy Spirit, he looked up to heaven and he saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "'Look,' he said, "'I see heaven open "'and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.' At this, they covered their ears, and yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city, and began to stone him.

Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their hands at the feet of a young man named Saul." Saul of what? Tarsus, and he's gonna become one day the Apostle Paul. And while they were stoning him, while they were doing it, Stephen prayed, "'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he fell on his knees and he cried out his last words, "'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' And when he said this, he fell asleep." And some people believe that Saul never could get away from those last words he heard Stephen say. Like what kind of man, when he's getting stoned, says, Lord, don't hold it against them? Who does that? That's crazy.

So notice, Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit. We need to pray, we need to sing, we need to believe, we need to ask God, God, I wanna live a spirit-filled life. If you're with me, say amen.

Do you wanna live a spirit-filled life? So that you now become a blessing to others in a new dimension. You don't just eke through life, you just don't make it. You're not just a survivor, but you're more than an overcomer because a power is working in you that's totally separate from you.

It's God, the Holy Spirit working in and through you. That's the promise of the New Testament. Not barely surviving, going to church on Sunday, spending an hour, then going home and saying, I did my duty, that is so far off and gone.

No time for that now. Things are getting too wicked out there. The real Christians gotta arise now, the real people who wanna be like Stephen and the rest.

No more going to church and being a hero worshiper of some pastor, no, you gotta know God for yourself. You gotta know God, move in God, be used by God, and not say, oh, he'll do it, she'll do it. So now, I just wanna leave with you in closing these characteristics of being filled with the Spirit.

Because the Bible says, Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, why would Luke be inspired to stop and in the middle of this emotional, terror-filled scene of him being stoned, why would he say, Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit? Why would he do that? Why didn't he just say, Stephen, the guy who was preaching, the deacon who had been chosen to wait on tables? No, he makes it a point to say, Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, and then he says a number of things, and I wanna leave you with this. These are the signs that accompany being Spirit-filled. This is what we can look forward to.

This is what we can ask God for. This is what happens when someone's Spirit-filled. Not all Christians, some of you are visiting and maybe are questioning the theology I'm giving you here from the Bible, but it's obvious, right, that all churches are not Spirit-filled, because one of the churches Jesus wrote to, it was in Laodicea, and he said, because you're neither hot nor cold, but you are lukewarm, I'm gonna vomit you out of my mouth.

Now, if you tell me that church was Spirit-filled, then words don't mean anything. I mean, why talk? Why read the Bible? How could a church be Spirit-filled and lukewarm? No, but he said they were Christians. He said, I stand at the door and knock.

Let me in, we'll fellowship. What are the signs that we see in Stephen that can encourage us today, that God wants to do in us? Hey, God wants to do this in us. You don't need ordination, you just need God.

You just need to believe in God, the Holy Spirit, and want God to do this. So the Bible says, and Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, as they were doing this, when they heard him conclude the sermon, they got so angry, they gnashed their teeth at him. They just, argh, like that, I'm gonna kill you.

You're laughing, Stephen wasn't. And the Bible says, he looked up to heaven. See, that's the first thing the Spirit helps you to do in the Christian life, is you constantly look up.

When the Spirit's controlling you, no matter what people are saying and doing, you're looking up to heaven. You're seeing eternity, you're seeing God. You're realizing where your help comes from, you look up.

Many people never look up, even though they're Christians, they hardly look up, except in extreme circumstances. But Stephen was always looking up. You know, the Bible says, our citizenship is in heaven.

So he's looking from where he came from, he was born again from heaven, and now he knows that one day he's gonna go back there. So the Spirit puts this instinct in us that instead of looking horizontally, or down, and seeing all the circumstances of life, and the stock market, and the president, and the Congress, and the Democrats, and the Republicans, and the gangs, and the crypts, and the bloods, and the value of money, and all of that stuff, and the crime statistics, instead of living in that, which will make you a nervous wreck, Christians look up. They lift up their eyes, and they rejoice in the middle of every kind of situation.

Because everything down here is changing, but when you look up, nothing's shaking. Nothing is rocking and rolling up in heaven. God is seated on the throne, and is not even moving a half an inch.

You might say, what's gonna happen? He's got the whole world in his hands. Can we all put our hands together and say amen to that? So, somebody watching on the webcast, you're a nervous wreck, you're not sleeping, ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit, so your instinct will be, look up. Don't look in, that's depressing.

Don't look down, don't look around. Looking unto Jesus, look up. Sometimes when we pray for people here at the altar, it so hurts me, I love the people, I wanna help them, but we're praying and trying to lead them to pray, and they're looking down, and they're mourning, and they're just thinking of their circumstances.

Listen, if you think of your circumstances, if you just, if your world is what you see with your eyes and your five senses are receiving, that is a depressing life, but when you look up, oh, oh, thank you, Jesus. Oh, when you look up, it all changes everything, doesn't it? Don't look down, don't look inward. There's no answers there.

Don't look around you to the government, or to America, or to whatever country you're from. Paris doesn't have the answers. Washington, D.C. doesn't have the answers.

The answers are up, oh, praise God. The Spirit makes us look up, look up. You ever meet somebody who's heavenly-minded? It's so good.

You talk to people, they have a peace, they have a joy. Why? They're always looking up. If you look around, you're a nervous wreck, but I've been around people, they just have this peace and that calm, and then you realize they live in this world, but their heart is always gazing up.

Oh, God, I love you, I praise you. Oh, I praise you, God. So what did he see when he looked up? Now, he wasn't looking just with these eyes.

This is talking about now something that the Bible calls revelation. When you look up with your heart and your eyes to the Lord, he begins to show you things through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings what the Bible calls a spirit, capital S or small s, a spirit of revelation, where things are revealed to you that other people don't see.

This is the secret of Christianity. We're seeing things and hearing things nobody else is seeing and hearing things. You know, like Freddy over there, he hears bass notes.

You know, there's a bass player over there hitting bass notes, or he's playing the keyboard. He's a phenomenal keyboard player, and he's hitting a bass note. I don't hear bass notes.

My wife hears bass notes. If you play the wrong bass note, my wife will turn quickly and say, that was the wrong note on the bass. I don't even know what the bass note is because her ear is picking up things I can't pick up.

When you're filled with the Holy Spirit, you're seeing things and hearing things nobody else is seeing and hearing, and you're rejoicing and saying, praise God, and everyone else is going, ah, like that, and you're going, hallelujah, praise God. Come on, let's say amen to that. Praise God, praise God.

Or you're fanatical, you're an escapist, you're living in an imaginary world. No, these things are more real than this carpet. The things of God are more real than the carpet.

The things that you perceive through the Spirit are more real than what you get through your senses. For example, you look up at night and you see a star, and you say, that star is right there. It's not there.

No, it's so far away, by the time the light gets to us, we think it's there, but it's moved far away, or we've turned away from it. So the eye can fool you, but God can never fool you. What did he see? Through the

Holy Spirit, he saw the glory of God, it says.

He saw how huge God is. Oh, that's always refreshing. Problems that we face in life can seem so overwhelming until you look up through the Spirit and see the glory of God.

He created the heavens and the earth out of nothing. And when the Holy Spirit gives you a taste of how great God is and the glory of God, the awesomeness of God, unbeatable, unchangeable, unstoppable, when you experience that through the Holy Spirit, your problems become so little. Your problems haven't changed, they're just so little now because you have seen the one who's gonna help you is so big.

Come on, we've all lived through that. When we were getting this building done, and we had to raise, or God had to supply, we never raised money once here. Never asked for pledges once.

We had to get dozens of millions of dollars one way or another. And I was in Argentina, and right before I had left, this is for you visitors, or some pastor that's visiting now needs encouragement. Before I left, the people who were lending us some money, a religious organization, had called me and said, hey, Pastor Cimbala, we just did some checking.

Even if we lend you the millions of dollars that you need, and I know someone else gave you a million dollars, you're \$6 million short. You won't get the first phase done. You won't have people meeting in your building.

Even if we lend you the money, you're \$6 million short. I don't know how we signed it and gave you the money, but you're \$6 million short. They said, how are you gonna get it? I said, now wait a minute.

You called me, I never called you. And that was the truth. You call me and offer to help.

I told you we were doing this by faith. I know, you're doing it by faith? What are you, like trusting God? This was a religious person, a Christian. I said, yeah, I'm trusting God.

They said, that's good. Now how are you gonna get the \$6 million? I said, no, you don't get it. When you trust God, you don't know how he'll do it.

You just know that he'll do it. So the person said, the person said again, kind of not smart alecky, but almost. So what are you gonna like call a day of fasting and prayer in the church and all of that? And I said, yeah, we've done that in the past.

We could do that again. He said, yeah, that's great. So you're gonna just like cry out to God? I said, yep.

He said, that's good. Now how are you gonna get the \$6 million? So I got near an edge. I could feel myself getting irritated.

So I said, you know what, sir? Really, we're not accomplishing anything in this phone call. I went away to Argentina. On top of that, ministering to third world pastors in poorer areas of Argentina, the church paying for their feeding because I knew somewhere if you give, it shall be.

If you bless people, the blessing will come back. Brothers and sisters, if I know anything, if you bless and give, it will come back. And if you do it as a church, it'll come back.

So I'm down there and just before I was gonna return, I said to my wife, I'm going out for a walk because that \$6 million number got to me. And you know what the devil started saying? You'll never complete the building and they're gonna laugh at you. You did this whole project by faith and you're talking all this Jesus smack and you're talking about all this stuff of what God can do and you're not gonna finish this building.

Now, how about that? How about that? You're 6 million short. You don't know any rich people. You don't have some national pulpit.

You signed away all your books and everything, but that's not gonna get \$6 million. So 6 million is a number that will get your attention. And it got my attention.

Just came on me one afternoon. I'm telling you as God is my witness. I was in Mar del Plata.

I could tell you the hotel I was in in Argentina and it got to me and I went out for a walk. I had to have a talk with God because 6 million sounded like 6 trillion to me, right? Come on, how many have ever had a problem? It's bigger than the Empire State Building, right? It's just overwhelming, right? I went out and walked for hours by myself. It's a good way to pray.

You walk because then you don't fall asleep. You don't get in a position where you get stiff. You just keep moving and talking to God, but you gotta get to a place where you're not walking with anyone where you can just flow to God.

So I talked to God, poured it all to God, and then I began to cry out to God and cry out to God. I began to pray and pray, just walking for hours. And then I finally got to the place where God like opened my heart and he just showed me how great he is.

How great he is. And like that \$6 million, \$6 million was like I needed money for lunch. That's all I needed.

I needed some money to go down to the new Astor Diner down here or the new Apollo, I should say, and I'd get something. That's how I felt. I came back.

I just was like, ooh, God's gonna do it. And he said, don't call anyone. Don't do anything.

I got this covered. I got it covered. That's how I came back, total peace.

From agitation to peace because I figured God is so big. When you see God, your problem's this big. When you don't see God, the problem is big and God is like this, right? Am I right or wrong here? We've all lived through that.

I got back my first day, the very overnight flight, first time in the morning. I got in, emails, phone messages, and all these things. This is for somebody here now who's hanging on to God.

You don't know how he's gonna do it. He's gonna do it if you'll trust him. If you'll just let the Holy Spirit show you how big he is.

And at like 12 noon and then at 10 after 12, or was it 11 and 10 after 11, I opened two letters that changed the life of this church. The first letter was from a person I had met once. I wouldn't have known him if he walked in the building.

And he said, God used your choir singing a line that stopped me from making an investment that I would have done. I would have lost everything. I was visiting your church that day and God spoke to me.

I'm gonna give your church a million dollars. 10 minutes later, I opened another letter. I took that letter and ran into the people who were controlling the money and pay it.

And I said, we just got a million dollars. And they were like, praise God, praise God, praise God. I went back, 10 minutes later, opened another letter from a woman who I've yet to meet to this day.

She wants to stay anonymous from another state. And she said, I heard you're in a project. I believe God has spoken to us.

I'm giving your church \$5 million. So wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, stop, stop, stop, stop. I didn't ask either of the two.

They don't know me. I never met the woman. The man is now a friend, a trusted friend.

But the woman, I've never met. Why didn't the total come to 4 million or 8 million? No, exactly the number that the man said to me. So how are you gonna get 6 million, pastor? Pastor.

So, guess the first phone call I made. Yeah, brother, I gotta talk to you now. I gotta tell you a couple of things here.

Come on, is God awesome? Is God great? God is big, our problems are small. But listen, in the natural, \$6 million was about to bury me. I'm telling you the truth.

I cried like a baby. I don't think I could make it. Maybe you've never walked with that kind of weight.

I did. And even though I was representing you, I'm the pastor. The pastors, we all voted unanimously.

We're gonna move ahead and try to get this building. He saw the glory of God. He saw Jesus seated at the right hand of the Father.

When you're filled with the Holy Spirit, you keep seeing Jesus. And you know that he loves you because you know what he's doing in heaven at the right hand of the Father? He's making intercession for us. See, the devil will try to make you live carnal and you'll think Jesus is against you.

The Holy Spirit will show you that Jesus loves you and is praying for you right now. Not only gave his life, listen, shh, not only gave his life for you, not only died on a cross, he's making intercession right now. He's praying for Jim Cymbala right now, ahora, now.

Not mañana, ahora. He's praying right now for us. See, that's what the Spirit does.

Makes you look up, you see the glory of God. You think, oh, God is so big. I can deal with any of this.

That's why Paul said, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Because when you're filled with the Spirit and he's controlling you, you're ready to take on whatever life may bring. And you see Jesus and you know he loves you.

Everyone holds still. He knows he loves you. He's with me.

He's not out to hurt me, he's out to help me. He's making intercession. Imagine how he's praying for some of us who are in trouble and maybe living the way we shouldn't be living.

Struggling, getting discouraged. He's praying for you right now. Don't you feel it? Don't you feel it? Don't you feel those little pressure sometimes? So the Bible says that they couldn't take it, they dragged him outside and now they're throwing stones.

They're not throwing pebbles. We're talking about rocks here, folks. And they're heaving it at him.

And to be stoned, which people are still stoned in certain parts of the world today, that's a bad way to go. Because you have no one to protect you and people are just venting their fury and their anger and their hatred and throwing rocks and you're gonna be killed from one of the blows. Or first a concussion, knocked unconscious.

That's if you're lucky. And they're stoning him. And now to further infuriate him because the spirit, he's full of the spirit.

He goes, wait, I see Jesus standing. I see him. That's all they had to hear.

Now they said, let's finish it. And here's the other thing the Holy Spirit does and only the Holy Spirit does. Makes you look up instead of looking down.

He makes you see how big and great God is so your problems can be handled. He shows you Jesus so you don't live in guilt and condemnation. Devil doesn't want us to see Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

Doesn't want us to meditate on him and realize how much he cares. The last thing the Holy Spirit did was he prayed. You know, churches, I'm going somewhere in the next 60 days, it doesn't matter where, and they said, would you come and run a prayer meeting like you have in your church? They think that I can run a prayer meeting.

The only one who can cause people to pray is the Holy Spirit. For Paul says in Romans eight, we don't know how we ought to pray, but the spirit helps us. Sometimes with groans too deep to be uttered.

The Holy Spirit is the one who makes us sometimes wanna lift our hands. Did you ever feel a prompting from the Holy Spirit? Just lift your hands and worship God. Haven't you ever felt that prompting? Well, the Holy Spirit is the only one who can cause people to pray.

You can't teach prayer. Prayer is caught, it's not taught. You can teach about prayer, but you can't teach people to pray because if the Holy Spirit isn't working in them, they're not gonna pray.

They're gonna say prayers in their head. They're not gonna pray with su corazon. They're not gonna pray with their hearts.

Only the Holy Spirit can stir you in your heart to pray. That's why I want you to join with me on Tuesday. Let the spirit work on you.

He'll lead you away from American Idol to the prayer meeting. That's where you will go or whatever's on on Tuesday. He'll show you that it's more vital, more important.

But see, I can't tell you that. You'll go, yeah, sure, sure, sure, sure. When the Holy Spirit shows you, oh, you'll say, wait a minute.

My son, his soul is at stake. I'm gonna be in the prayer meeting praying for my boy. I wanna see God shake New York.

I'm not gonna get it sitting, watching television on Tuesday night. See, but I can't teach that. Nobody can teach that.

We need the Holy Spirit. Isn't it a telling fact that leading pastors in the nation have visited here? Some have snuck in on Tuesday, and they tell me, I don't know how you do it, but we don't even have a prayer meeting because if we had one, no one would come. So let me get that.

A lot of people will come for an hour of service and hear the guy's sermon and its cleverness and its eloquence, but if you have a free chance to talk to Jesus and get answers, there's no interest. That can't be a good sign. But see, the difference is the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the one who prompted Stephen to say, you're going now. Here's how you end, pray. And finally, who but the Holy Spirit could make you pray this prayer? Father, don't keep this against their record.

As the stones are hitting you, as the blood is rolling down, tell me who in the world can make you do that but God, the Holy Spirit. Can't teach that. That's something God does.

He's praying for the people, and the word that's used in the Greek language is an accountant's ledger. Pros and positives, negatives, an account ledger, assets, debts, and he's saying in the Greek language, God, erase that. Don't have that be something negative against them as they're stoning you.

Well, wait a minute. Didn't I read about someone else who was dying? Oh, yeah, Jesus said, Father, forgive them for they know not what they're doing. And they were what to him? Crucifying him.

So the same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead was now working in Stephen. And you know what? If you got somebody who's really done you dirty, put the knife in your back and turned it once or twice, the only one who can help you to forgive him is the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can soften your heart.

It could make you pray for somebody. It could give you compassion for people no matter what they've done. I hit a wall some years ago at a prison.

I met a man who had a sentence of 2,000 years. Most people die in that prison for murder, and they have life sentences, double life sentences there. The average sentence is 91 years there in that prison.

This guy had a sentence of 2,000 years because in the state of Louisiana, every time you rape someone, they just throw like 150 years on. And this guy was a serial rapist. I didn't know that.

I met him, and he wanted to talk to me. He said, I heard last you last time, he had been in the same six by 10 cell for 33 years, 23 hours a day, same cell. And I happened to meet him by the providence of God on the first day he was out of that cell, and he was in a dormitory, and he was walking around his cot like this, just his cot, and just walking around.

There were cots everywhere. And I see him walking like this and just staring at his cot. Look, is this man mad? Is he crazy? So I went over, engaged him in a conversation because that's what I'm there for, to talk to people about Jesus.

He starts talking with the warden, and I asked the associate warden, one of the assistant deputy wardens, what's his sentence? 2,200 years. I go, what? So the guy said, I'd like you to talk to me about God. Would you come back and talk to me about Jesus? So I'm a minister, I'm a Christian, so I said, yeah, I'll come back, John.

I went in the car to drive me back to where I stayed in the prison, and I said, what's he in for? And they told me, which I won't go into, there's children here, and nasty, nasty, nasty. Children ruined. Held families at gunpoint while he did his work.

I went in the room. As God is my witness, I cried, and I said, God, I can't go back and tell him about Jesus. I'll try to break his back.

I'll throw him through a window. Please don't tell me you love him too. I'm telling you the truth.

I had a battle with God. Lord, your grace is so amazing. Is it that amazing? No, I'm telling you about something serious.

I was torn between doing what I know I should do, but I didn't want, I'll tell you the truth, I'll say it, I didn't want him to be saved. I know that's horrible to say, but I'm telling you the truth. There was something in me.

You can't do that and then just get life. And then God began to show me my ornery little heart and all the sins we've all committed. And I broke, and I saw the glory of God, and I saw the love of Jesus, and I went back and I led him to the Lord.

The warden tells me every time, he says, you know, he's doing so great now. He's serving the Lord. He'll never get out of there.

Obviously, he's gonna die there. And he says, he tells everybody, Pastor Cymbal is my spiritual father, but I got to the place where I could weep over him. I'm telling you the truth.

That has to be God, because in the natural, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. I'm not praying for you. I got something else for you beside a prayer I'm gonna give you.

But how many are happy that God is God and we are not God? Lift your hand up. Close your eyes with me. Close your eyes with me.

Lord, your grace is so amazing. Here's how we're gonna close. Just join hands with the person next to you.

Put your Bible down. Don't stand, just sit. Just sit.

That's what we're gonna ask God to do. That his Holy Spirit will come and begin to control us starting this moment like never before. That we will look up and not look down and around us constantly.

The answers are not around you, I can assure you. The answers are up. I will lift up my eyes to the hill from whence cometh my strength and my help, my help comes from the Lord.

God, the Holy Spirit, help us to look up. Help us to see how great God is so that our problems can become manageable to our minds. Grant us faith as we see how big you are.

Help us to see Jesus loving us, praying for us with the nail print still in his hands where he died for us. Give us a spirit of prayer where instead of fear, instead of anxiety and sleepless nights, we will pray. Spirit, teach us to pray.

Spirit, teach us to pray. As a church, to pray. Help some of the people here who never pray.

Teach them how to pray. Give them a burden to pray. Lord, today, give us that spirit of mercy.

We let go of all resentment and bitterness that we have against people who have done evil to us. We've done evil to you and you showed mercy. We release those people because your grace is so amazing.

Father God, we thank you for your love, your grace. We're like overwhelmed today by your grace. All service long, we can't get away from it.

That if it weren't for your mercy and grace, where in the world would we be today? What ditch of life? What pit? But we're here because you love us so much. We present ourselves as candidates to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Spirit of God, control us so we look up and not look down and around.

We're constantly having the upward look. We pray that you will show us the glory and vastness and greatness of God so that we will not be overwhelmed but we'll be more than conquerors. Help us to always see Jesus all day long, having died for us and now in making intercession, praying for us at the right hand of the Father.

Teach us to pray. Give us a great prayer meeting Tuesday. And lastly, Holy Spirit, give us the mercy of God.

Help us to forgive the unforgivable. You know the battle I had. You know how you helped me through that because I did not wanna show mercy to that man.

You know that. You know what I told the people is the truth. But we thank you that you can take our hearts of stone and make them strong.

Make them soft and tender and kind. Take away all resentment, bitterness, prejudice of every kind. And let this be the sign that we belong to you, that all men see how we love one another.

We ask this in Jesus' name. And everyone said. And everyone said even louder.

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