

# Book of Acts Series - Part 32 | a Life for a Life

by Jim Cymbala

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of listening to the Holy Spirit and following God's lead, even when we don't understand the circumstances or the outcome.*

**Duration:** 44:25

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Acts 20:20-24, Romans 12:1, Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 9:14

**Topics:** "Book Of Acts"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker expresses concern about a translator who seemed to have his own agenda rather than accurately translating the message. The speaker then describes a song that was sung during the service, which expressed the idea of giving one's life to Jesus because he gave his life for us. The sermon emphasizes the importance of testifying to the gospel of God's grace and love, rather than focusing on judgment. The speaker also highlights the example of the early Christians who were led by the Holy Spirit and experienced tremendous growth despite not having the advantages and resources that modern churches have. The sermon concludes with a call to offer ourselves as living sacrifices to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him.

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## Transcript

We're going to continue the study that I began months ago on the book of Acts. And now we're really going to focus in on each Sunday and pick up the story as it unfolds, written by, who wrote the book of Acts? Luke. And what was he by profession? A doctor.

And what was he by ethnicity? He's a Gentile. He was not a Jew. He's the only non-Jewish writer of a book of the New Testament.

And he wrote another book. What was the other book that Luke wrote? Luke, yeah, great. Boy, we're really learning.

So he wrote Luke and Acts. And Acts is the story from the beginning of the birth of the Christian church. And we found out how Jesus ascended back to the Father and told them to wait for the promise of power from the Holy Spirit.

And after they prayed and waited for 10 days and worshiped the Lord, the Spirit came and now the action begins. The gospel started to go out, starting in Jerusalem, which is where they were, the capital of Israel

then. So the gospel spreads and Jews are being converted by the thousands as time goes by.

And then the gospel spreads not just to Jews, but to Gentiles. Peter goes to an Italian soldier's house named Cornelius. And now a new revelation comes to the Christians.

What were all the early Christians? Jewish. What was Jesus? Jewish. And the Roman Empire and probably even the disciples were figuring, well, the Roman Empire for sure thought this is an offshoot of Judaism.

This is some sect. But it wasn't, it was for the whole world. That's why Jesus said go into all the world and preach the good news, the gospel.

So now Gentiles are coming in. Now Gentiles and Jews were segregated people, a lot of animosity between them, a lot of prejudice. But the gospel comes and the love of Christ breaks that down and God makes out of two people one church.

There aren't two churches, a Jewish church and a Gentile church. And there is no black church or white church, no Hispanic church, there's no Baptist church, there's no Pentecostal church. God only has one church and we're all in it.

If you're happy you're in it, let's clap our hands and say amen to that. There's only one church. We're all in this together.

It's not like the Olympics, Norway versus Russia versus Sweden, Finland, USA and they compete. We don't compete at all, we support, encourage each other. Amen? And we appreciate each other alike, not one group over another group, one race over another race, one island over another island.

God wants that all dismissed from our thinking so that we love everybody the same, even as he does. The biggest persecutor of the church gets converted early on in the book of Acts and his name is Saul of Tarsus. He becomes the apostle Paul and we've been following his journeys and now he has completed his third missionary journey with different people at different times traveling with him and he's spreading the gospel in Greece and in what we would now call Turkey.

Now as we pick up where we left off a few weeks ago, he is on his way back to Jerusalem. Why? We're gonna find out in a moment. He's on his way back to Jerusalem but he has spent three years in Ephesus.

Ephesus is the major city of what is called in the Bible Asia but it is called now Turkey. And Ephesus, he spends the longest amount of time that we know in any spot and now after leaving Ephesus and going to Greece and visiting those churches there in Philippi and Corinth and maybe Athens and all of that, he's now heading his way back to Jerusalem but he wants to talk to the leaders of the church in Ephesus because as we're gonna learn, he knows by the spirit that he's never gonna see them again. So he gathers them to a place called Miletus and they're the bishops, the elders, the presbyters, the pastors, shepherds.

That one word, all those words mean the same thing. It's the leaders of the flock that God raises up to feed and protect and guide the sheep of God's church. He calls for them and he makes a famous speech which is studied a lot by pastors like myself and should be because he is now reviewing his ministry of three years among those men.

He's the one who ordained those men, selected those men and now he's telling them, he's reviewing with them how he ministered because he wants to encourage them. Hey, remember what we're doing here. We're ministering, we're shepherding the flock of God which only here in this speech he makes is this word found in the New Testament which he purchased, that God purchased by his own blood, the blood of God, i.e. Christ.

But that's the only time that phrase is found. So now he is talking and what we wanna do is pick up what's for us. You might say, Pastor Simba, this is for you because he's talking to leaders.

But what we wanna learn is why did Luke put this in the Bible, not just for pastors. What was the spirit of the early church that made it so effective? Why was it growing and so aggressive and so many converts made? Well, good lesson for us, in America, the Christian church unfortunately right now is shrinking but God can turn that around, can he? But what do we have to learn? What can we learn from them? How did they do that? Because they don't have the advantages that we have. For example, no choirs, no sisters, no buildings, no carpet, no political favor, no freedom at many times, no New Testaments written out, no printing presses, no radio, no TV, no nada.

And yet, it explodes. So let's pick up what he says, just a few sentences here in Acts 20. Let's look at it.

You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything, verse 20, that would be helpful to you, but have taught you publicly that was in the synagogues and then that lecture hall that he ended up in that we read about earlier, and from house to house, those probably the house churches that existed then. Remember, no church buildings. I have declared to you, both Jews and Greeks, i.e. Gentiles, that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

Notice there, there's no two messages for Gentiles and a different one for Jews. Jews and Gentiles, black and white, everybody gets saved the same way. What is the message? Confess your sins and turn from them and put your faith in our Lord Jesus, who we've been hearing about.

And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. This is very strange. I only know that in every city that he travels to on the way there, the Holy Spirit, the one who has compelled him, warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me. If only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me, the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. Let's go back to verses 22 and 23.

And now, compelled by the Spirit. Why is he going to Jerusalem? He's compelled by the Spirit, by the Holy Spirit. He's going to Jerusalem, he has to, why? The Spirit's told him to, not knowing what will happen to me there.

I only know this, I have partial understanding, that in every city, the same Spirit is warning me that prison and hardships are facing me. That sounds totally backwards. Next verse again, 24.

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me. If only I may finish the task, the race, and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me, the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. Notice, that was what he wanted to talk about, the gospel, the good news of God's grace.

Not his judgment, there is judgment in the Bible, but our message is his love, his favor, his mercy that's being offered by the giving of his son Jesus. So what can we learn from that? The first thing we learn, not only Paul, but others in the New Testament, Christians, were regularly led by the Holy Spirit. He went to Jerusalem because he felt compelled in his spirit by the Holy Spirit that that's what he should do.

It was on no travel itinerary, no board or group of ministers told him he should go. He got no invitation to go from Jerusalem. He felt compelled by the Spirit, capital S, Holy Spirit, to go to Jerusalem.

This is something that we have lost, unfortunately, to many of us. We are not open, we are not listening, we are not sensitive to the Holy Spirit's instructions and guidings and compelling and promptings. We regulate our lives, we go to church on Sunday, and although we say God is alive, we don't act it out by saying God is alive through the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is alive, he carries out, he's the executive of the Godhead, he carries out the plans of the Father and the Son so that the body of Christ can grow and be fed and be encouraged. So we see regularly in the book of Acts that regular believers like Ananias in the book of Acts earlier, and now in Apostle Paul, it's constantly, they're led by the Spirit, they're prompted by the Spirit to talk, to say something, to pray, to go, and they obey those promptings. Those promptings are not in the Bible because they had no Bible, and even though we have a Bible, the Bible doesn't give us those promptings of what we're to do every day, who we're to talk to, where we should travel, where we should go, what missions trip we should go on, what ministry we should join in the church, what special offering we should give, who we should call at nine o'clock at night and say God laid it on my heart, I'm supposed to pray for you.

Well, where do you get that? I just feel prompted by God, may I pray for you. That happened regularly to them. We are more structured.

We are now part of the Western intellectual mental-dominated world of I make my plans and where I get in trouble, I need God, but the idea that God is still speaking and leading. Now notice, this is no addition to Scripture. The dodge that a lot of people use on that is, that doesn't happen today.

Pastor Jim, you're preaching fanaticism. The Spirit is done speaking when the Scriptures are complete. We have the canon of Scripture, Matthew through Revelation, so it's over.

The Spirit isn't speaking. Oh yes, he is. He's still speaking.

Can I get a witness here? He is still speaking because if they needed his direction for minuscule things like that, we don't need his direction. Paul the apostle who saw him needed that, but you don't need it. I don't need it, I doubt that.

I would say we do need that. And when we have our first love, you'll notice, many new converts are very sensitive to that. So he speaks, the Spirit carries out his work.

So I'm compelled by the Spirit, Paul says, I got to go to Jerusalem. If someone had said why, he would have said, I can only give you one reason, the Spirit told me to. And I wonder how many of us are every day asking God, lead me, Spirit of the living God.

I'm not talking about fanaticism. I'm not talking about being weird. Some people make believe when they act weird that the Spirit is telling them to do that, but some people who are weird are just weird.

Do I get a witness? They're just weird, has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit. But I'm talking about the real thing because what Satan likes to do is take the excesses of the weird ones and the crazy ones and some of the stuff you see on the TV and the Holy Ghost told me, you're supposed to give me \$5,000, 100 of you and all of that stuff so that we will block out the Spirit. But without the Spirit, brothers and sisters, how are we gonna do that? How are we gonna do that? How will you know what blessing you could be if you were only open to the prompting of the Spirit? Now, how does the Spirit lead us and prompt us? Paul says, I feel compelled by the Spirit.

The Spirit, the Holy Spirit, does not communicate initially with our minds. He communicates with our spirits. You have a human spirit and the Holy Spirit begins to lay burdens or suggestions and then they're transferred to the mind but they initially come through the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit working with my human spirit, the real Jim Cymbala, the essential Jim Cymbala is not my mind or my emotions or my body but it is my spirit, my human spirit. And that's one of the skills we have to learn as pastors and as Christians to know that inner voice of the Holy Spirit speaking. Now, he could speak audibly.

He rarely does that I've heard of in church history. He can't speak through other people but even when he speaks through another person, the witness has to come to your spirit. That's God talking to me.

And to be able to discern the difference between emotion, my mind, my upbringing, my culture, and then that voice of the Holy Spirit. Oh, to be prompted and to know what you can do, what to say, when to be quiet, where to go rather than make your own plans with your and my limited IQ. Your IQ is probably higher than mine but just think face life with all of its complexities based on your IQ and my IQ.

But God, the Holy Spirit knows what's happening around the bend. He knows Jesus' plan for your life but how can that plan be worked out unless the Spirit is prompting us? One day I turned to my wife driving in a car. We were pastoring at the Newark Tabernacle.

That was our main job. And we had just, to keep the building open, pastored a second church, the Brooklyn Tabernacle on Atlantic Avenue and there was no money there. It was hardship, just couldn't pay the bills.

Forget anything for us. As leaders, it was just holding together by some chewing gum and string. And here we were pastoring in Newark.

We had a house that my parents made possible for us in Maplewood, New Jersey. And we were coming to Brooklyn, New Jersey and we had little babies and we're racing back and forth. And one day driving in the car, God just spoke to me and I said, Carol, I believe we're supposed to leave where we have the salary and the position and more stability.

I believe we're supposed to give all our attention to the Brooklyn. And she just turned to me and said, I do too. But how would I know that? How would I figure that? It was illogical.

If you would have known all the circumstances, you say, don't do it. Do not do that. You have children, do not do that.

But you see, the Holy Spirit knows everything. How many want, starting today, not talking about being fanatical, how many want to be more sensitive and open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit? Now, if you

don't believe in that and you think I'm teaching something false, I have no argument to make with you. I'm just telling you, how do any missionaries go to a mission field except the Spirit prompt them? How would you find in the Bible whether you should go to China or Thailand or the Ukraine or Africa? How would you know that? Those words are not in the Bible.

And yet God has a plan. And He does it by the leading and prompting of the Holy Spirit. But now let me move on.

Notice this. When the Spirit prompts you, He doesn't give you all the information you would like. Because Paul says, He's told me to go to Jerusalem.

And I said, what else? What am I gonna do there? Nothing. Just go. This is why a lot of people are leery of being prompted by the Spirit because we are control freaks, aren't we? We want our itinerary.

I want an aisle seat on JetBlue if I'm going there. I wanna know what am I doing when I'm there. I want a daily schedule.

So many times when God leads us, He doesn't give us the full picture. Why? That's His business. He wants to see if we have the faith, childlike faith, to just do it.

Just obey. Just do it. Just say it.

But what if she says, just say it. But what if she's not home? Just call her. But what if she says, no, don't pray for me? Just pray for her.

Just open your mouth. What if she'll never talk? Just do it. Come on, how many here have ever been prompted to do something by the Holy Spirit? Oh my, listen.

I've been prompted to get up out of the bed in the middle of the night and go to my Bible by the Holy Spirit because I was starved inside. I was so busy during the day trying to help people that my own spirit was crying out, getting weaker by the hour, and the Holy Spirit had to wake me up and get to your word, read, eat, eat food. You fed your body, but you cheated your spirit.

Oh, the Spirit knows exactly what we should do, but He doesn't always give us all that we would like to know. And that's where we have to have faith. When the Spirit prompts you, you gotta walk out on a limb, but what if it breaks? Walk out.

Come on, how many are with me? Say it. Let's put our hands together. Just walk out.

Do it. Say it. Go there.

This prayer meeting on Thursday night for the, against trafficking, that was born of the Spirit. The young, the woman, the sister in our church, who kinda has given birth to that and the people around her. That was, nobody trained her or told her to do that.

That's something born of the Spirit, and we're standing with it because it's needed. But the minute I heard it, I knew that didn't come from her. That came from the Holy Spirit.

Where's it gonna lead? We don't know, but let's do it. As you obey the Spirit, you learn more as you do it. But if you ask everything to be explained, you'll never step out.

So you that are insecure and fearful and shy, that's a challenge for you because you're afraid to step out and obey the Spirit because you're always asking what if, what if, what if then, what should I do? What if she says, what if he says? What if the bottom falls out? What if the branch breaks? Then you'll never be led by the Spirit. You gotta just obey. Spirit of God, now if I'm wrong, if I'm imagining this, help me.

You know how many times I say this for the glory of God, excuse the self-reference, but how many thousands and thousands of times over the years, both here and in the previous facility, I am praying and asking the Spirit to guide me even for the service, what to do, what to say because I don't know. And I sometimes feel to do something or say something and my heart begins to beat and I don't wanna make a mistake and I know I'm very human, very frail. So I pray and I say, God, this is the best thing I feel.

I feel you're prompting me to go out and tell the people this and lead this certain song. So God, if I'm wrong, could you please stop me or have something else happen? And it is amazing how faithful God is if you want to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. Come on, let's all say amen to that.

Amen. Okay, now, let's bring this to a close. Paul says, no, I don't know the whole thing, but I gotta go.

I only know one thing. The same Spirit in every place I'm going and affirming the churches and encouraging, every place I go, the Spirit is speaking probably through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, through tongues and interpretation or prophetic utterance. Every place I go, they tell me, as we're gonna read on and find out, he gets one last warning coming up.

That'll be interesting when we hear about old Agabus, the prophet, who took a girdle, Paul's girdle or garment, and put it on himself and says, thus sayeth the Lord, whoever this girdle belongs to is gonna be bound in Jerusalem. And Paul still goes. So Paul says, the only thing I do know is that every place I go, the Spirit is warning me that imprisonment and hard times are waiting for me.

I can't get the whole itinerary, but I've gotten warnings to prepare me that this is no easy road I'm leading. See, that's so foreign to us. See, our Western minds and the popular concept of American Christianity, the prosperity movement and the faith talk and all of that, even the misapplication of I have plans for you to bless you and prosper you and all of that, I mean, yes, but that's true in a New Testament sense.

Not always an easy walk for Christians. Just go to Saudi Arabia and try to be a Christian. Open a church in Pakistan, tell me how you make out.

So we're talking about claiming bigger cars and these people, our brothers and sisters, just wanna live another day. Or see their husbands get out of prison. How about the guy, the Christian guy in North Korea? He's still in there, isn't he? Where's his prosperity, where's his car? Now, if we suffer with him, we'll reign with him.

The reward isn't here. My mom's the oldest in the building. She's 99 right now sitting listening, but her life is a vapor.

We're all just passing through, but when we see him face to face, come on, no end of peace and joy with streets of gold and everything else that God has promised for those who love him. So now this is foreign to us, isn't it? We have to get our minds renewed because we're talking like Christian slogans and Christian smack in a way so that it all just like we wanna sell this to you serve Jesus and yeah, do the bump and whatever. It's all gonna work.

No, sometimes you get a beat down. Sometimes you get rejected. Sometimes a boss, because he can pick up your Christian, will let you go over a person who doesn't do as good as you.

Oh no, that wouldn't happen. Oh yeah, that could happen. Jesus said, if they hate me, they'll hate you.

No servant can be greater than his master. So Book of Acts is renewing our minds. So let me close here with this main point.

Notice the spirit prepares us many times for hardship. It doesn't tell Paul all the details, but he says, Paul, gear up. Gear up.

Not gonna be an easy one. Now, not everyone lives a life like the apostle Paul. Not everybody gets beat down and put in prison.

God has a different plan for all of us. But notice this, when the spirit leads us, he doesn't tell us everything we wanna know, but he tells us enough that we need to know and many times is to prepare us for what might be happening. Oh, I thank God that the Holy Spirit loves us and is gonna inform us what we need to know and prepare us, whether it's good, bad, or indifferent to the senses.

But now we come to the one sentence that explains early Christianity in one nutshell and it makes a challenge to all of us. Paul says, but everywhere in every city I go, I just know prison and trouble, tribulation, trials are awaiting me. But who cares because I count my life for nothing.

There it is. I know it's from another universe. I know you're listening to me and saying, what are you talking about? The early Christians figured, and this is the name of the sermon, a life for a life.

You gave your life for me, so I give my life for you. You died for me, so now I live and die for you. I can't keep living for me because you died for me, so I don't care.

You can't stop that. You can't beat that. When a person who doesn't live anymore for themselves and is totally sold out for Christ walks in a room, that's greater than President Obama, President Carter, President Bush, Queen of England, or anybody else walking in because they're just people.

But a person sold out, totally consecrated, doesn't care if they live or die, doesn't care about their comfort zone, oh no, no, no. Now you're in a totally different world, but this was the early church. This is what we've lost because of our culture, our adapting.

We take the Bible and try to fit it into our culture rather than trying to look at our culture in light of the Bible. Paul said, I don't care. That's how World War II almost turned around, especially the latter part of it in the Pacific when the Japanese, who were gonna be defeated because after the Battle of Midway and America winning that with Britain and Australia, but especially America there, it turned, that tiny empire, as warlike as they were then and as brilliant and the manufacturing of the tools of war, they were so good at it.

Everyone knew, we don't know how long it'll go, but the tide has turned. So America's moving on, moving closer, moving, conquering the islands, freeing the Philippines and all of that stuff. Ah, but then the Japanese came up with something that almost turned the whole war around, Kamikazes.

Nobody had ever seen that in warfare. They didn't wanna live. They got in planes.

Sometimes they ran out of good airplanes, so they just put anything together that would fly and they put a bomb on the nose of the airplane and one pilot in it and they would just fly and look for ships, United States ships, British ships, the Allies, and they would now just, they swore to their emperor, I will live for you, I will die for you, and now it's my joy to die for you, and now they would head down, not trying to fire something at the ships, no. They were the bullet. They were the torpedo.

So now strong men broke down because they're manning the guns on the decks of the ship and they're firing at these planes, but heretofore, planes would fly, try to drop a bomb, fire at them, and then escape. You know, you wanna escape, you wanna live, don't you? Not these. These were coming for your grill and strong men broke down and had nervous breakdowns because they couldn't take the pressure.

I either shoot him down or he explodes on my ship. It almost turned the war. What happens here in terrorism? When someone wants to give up their life, it's very hard to stop them.

Am I right or wrong here? Are we learning that everywhere? Now, if you wanna leave a bomb and then escape or something like that, that's another thing, like those two brothers up in Boston, but if you want to just say, no, I'm blowing myself up, I'm taking you with me. Now, that's another whole story. Professor Hamblin, in closing, what's that got to do with me? Here's what it's got to do with us.

You say, possibly, or I say, that was the Apostle Paul. He was like a super Christian. He was like an Apostle.

Pastor Nimble, we're talking Apostle here. He was special. I'm just a person.

I'm just Sister Mabel, Brother Joe, whatever, whoever you are. It's different for me. I just go to church on Sunday.

I have a job. I'm trying to raise my family. I wanna go to the Virgin Islands on my vacation.

Just relax with this. Ah, but my last verse from the Good News translation, Romans 12, verse one. So then, my friends, this is written to the church.

So then, my friends, because of God's great mercy to us, I appeal to you, Paul says, offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer. I appeal to you, offer not your money, not a bouquet of flowers, not a lamb, not a calf.

Offer yourselves. Don't kill yourself. Just put yourself living on the altar as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated.

I will serve him. I will obey him. I will go where he wants me to go.

I will say what he wants me to say. I will witness. I will pray.

I will be his. He owns me because since he gave his life for me, I have to in turn give my life back to him. What else is fair? What else is fair? He's gonna die for me, and then I'm gonna just pull him out on Sunday morning to the Tuesday night prayer meeting? Does that make any sense at all to anyone? He gave his life.

He was nailed to the cross for me. I heard the transition singing. Jesus paid it all.

All to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed me white as snow.

So now, what are we gonna do with that? So in the upcoming future here, in the next couple months, I'm gonna go back to where I was two years ago in Hong Kong and what they've invited me to do, and I felt prompted by the Holy Spirit after turning down 10 other invitations to go because they're bringing hundreds of underground church pastors from mainland China, underground, hundreds to be trained. They have me speaking in two and a half days 11 times. I don't have enough sermons for that, but God will help me, they don't need sermons.

So half of them have been in jail, and when I was around them, I felt so unworthy that only God and my heart know how I felt. I was with my friend Rabbi Zacharias. He wasn't speaking that morning.

I was the one to speak. They had other apologists there, brilliant people, Christians, and I heard them singing, and I knew that half of them in jail, and I'm gonna tell them something because they live Romans 12.1. They don't know about go to church on Sunday and nice building. They don't even know Christians in other parts of their own city because if they got caught, I asked them, they would be tortured and maybe give up the name, so nobody knows anybody.

You just know the group you meet with. So they're singing praise and worship, and I'm sitting on the side, and there's hundreds of them, hundreds and hundreds, and I'm telling you, they were worshiping like Jesus was like eight feet above them, and they're singing, and they're lifting their face, and they're singing in Chinese, and they're singing and praising God, and I'm like, God knows if this is true. I said, God, if there's a way that I don't have to preach and I could just be a part of this, could you please get me off the hook? But not my will, but thy be done.

He didn't get me off the hook. I had to go and speak, but as I'm listening to them singing, trying to think of the dialect that they were speaking, and they're praising God. One melody came that just got me, so I had this brilliant Chinese brother who was trained in Stanford, born there, though, and he was my translator.

He was so quick and so bright. Oh my goodness. Before I finished my phrase, he was preaching.

I got worried that he had his own sermon and that he wasn't even translating what I was saying, so he's just going like this, like this, look, boom, boom, boom, boom. We got in a flow. It was amazing.

I said to him, what's that song? That melody is beautiful. I said, what's that song say? He goes, wait. Oh, he says, this is what this song says, and they're singing it to God, so the song went something like this.

So dear Jesus, we know you gave your life for us, and you died for our sins, and you died for us, so now since you died and gave your life for us, we give our life to you. We will live for you, and we will die for you, because what else could we do? Since you died for us, we will die for you. Logical, wasn't it? And they just sang it, not your typical Sunday morning American praise and worship song, right? Well, it was simple.

It was biblical. I present my body as a living sacrifice. I'll live for you, but if you want, I'll die for you, because I'm going to be with you.

I beseech you then, brethren, by the mercies of God, don't live for yourself. Early Christianity had only one brand, it seems, radical. I shouldn't say that.

There were always backsliders. There were always lukewarm people, but what exploded the church was that these people were crazy for Jesus. One last postscript.

Obviously, that verse says this to us. It's an appeal. I appeal to you.

Present your life, your body, as a living sacrifice. Present it. Okay, that's our part.

We can present it, but brothers and sisters, how many of you are aware, at least if you're made like me, you can say that, but that without God's help, you can't do that. Am I right? So the New Testament is interesting because there's appeals, but then there's the power of the Holy Spirit to help you do the appeal. It's just not the appeal, present your bodies, come on now, let's do it.

No, the minute you turn to it and say, I want that, the Holy Spirit can come and fill us and energize us so we get crazy for Jesus, so we don't care anymore who likes us and what our aunt or uncle thinks or what our peers think. And everybody's coming out of the closet in our society, except for Christians in many places. Everybody's bold for what they believe.

I'm a Democrat, I'm a Republican, I'm this, I'm that, and nobody cares what anyone says. They're just right up in your face. And the early church was in love and sweetness.

I only have one desire, Paul says. I got to do what he called me to do. I got to be what he wants me to be.

Soon this life will be over. I'm not living it for myself because he gave his life for me. When he died, I died.

The old Jim Symbol, the old Paul died. Why? So that now on I can live a new kind of life for the one who died for me. Don't we need more of that? Our part is, God, I surrender.

I want you to, when we close here, I want you to lift up your hands and your hearts and say, come Holy Spirit and do this for me. I don't want to be lukewarm. I don't want to be a nominal Christian.

I'm reading now how God intended it to be, how the early church spread. I want to be obedient and surrender to the voice of the Spirit. And Lord, as you speak to me, this is how this works out, and this is why the voice of the Spirit goes with this whole thought.

As the Spirit that prompted Paul to go to Jerusalem, as that Spirit speaks to you and me, we have to ask God for the power and grace. Yes, Lord. Yes, Lord.

I don't care who laughs at me. And if I make mistakes, I'll learn from it, but I'm going to keep listening. And I'm going to keep obeying.

And I'm not going to be a sluggard. I'm not going to be lazy. I'm not going to go to church on Sunday.

I'm not going to be a member of the tab. I'm going to be a follower of Jesus. Come on, let's say amen to that.

Amen, we're going to follow Jesus. Close your eyes with me. If you're here by any chance, visiting or a member here, and you say, Pastor, it goes deeper than that, I have heard a prompting of the Holy Spirit.

I have felt it. I think I know what God wants me to do, but it's hard to surrender to it. I feel called to go or do or be something that it's out of my comfort zone, and it just troubles me, or I battle with it.

But today, God spoke to me through you and the word, of course, of God. I will follow where he leads me. I want my life to be a living sacrifice.

I want to be a church attender. Oh my goodness, that's just grievous to even hear that. Christ died on a cross so that I would go to church on Sunday.

That just hurts to hear that said. No, he died on the cross so that Jim Cimbala wouldn't live anymore for himself, but through the Holy Spirit, he would live for the one who died for him. 100%, 360, 24-7.

Laying aside all plans, if need be. Changing plans, obeying the promptings of the Holy Spirit, outside the box. And others might say you're fanatic, others might say you're crazy, what does it matter? At the end, you won't face them, we're going to face Jesus.

If you feel God's been dealing with you, like decades ago, I sat in meetings struggling with this call on my life, but just too afraid or too selfish or too proud or too something to really just say yes. If you have that, you can get out of your seat right now and just come up and stand at the altar. But those who feel God has called me to something but I'm not doing it yet because, and there's some behind me right now who need to hear that.

Because you're not operating in the way that God's called you to operate, you know that. Come on, you know that. I say that as a brother in Christ, I'm not condemning anyone.

God has to open the doors, I know that, you can't push them open, but you got to say yes, you got to say I surrender all. Pastor, listen, I've hidden the thing, it was 10 years ago I felt God do that. Well listen, that word has been quickened to you today by me.

Every eye closed, repeat after me, everyone in the building, dear God, thank you for giving your son, Jesus, thank you for dying for me, you gave all your life for me, I now give all my life to you. I will say what you want me to say, I will go where you want me to go, but empower me by your spirit. I will pray those prayers, I will talk to those people, I will go on those trips, I will visit those houses, I will be bold for you, because I don't care anymore.

What anyone thinks, you are my savior. You are my savior. Make me wholehearted.

Make me wholehearted. Unite my heart to fear your name. Unite my heart to fear your name.

Dear Jesus, I ask you to encourage all of our hearts today. We have heard your word, I have heard your word, I am convicted. Make Jim Simba look totally yours, Lord.

Help us to all present our lives as living sacrifices, on the altar. We thank you that we can lift our hands and sing praise and worship, but this is our spiritual worship. This is the deepest worship.

When we present our bodies as a living sacrifice. Use our eyes, use our mouths, use our ears. We give you our legs, our arms, our strength, our minds, our brains.

Use us. Use us to glorify Christ. The folks in the front, Lord, who have come forward, you know exactly what's transacted between you and them.

Encourage them today. Open the door that nobody can shut. Prompt us by your spirit as to timing and content.

And where you lead us, we will follow. Now, Lord, we pray for the rest of the day, just give us a blessed day and help us to draw near to you. And stay there, and stay there.

Not draw near and drift away, but stay there close to you. We love you, we appreciate you. Let your face shine on us all day long, we pray, in Jesus' name.

And everybody said, you know what, I want to end on a triumphant note. Let's put our hands together and give God a clap offering of praise. Come on, mas fuerte.

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