

Divine Intervention

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala emphasizes the necessity of divine intervention through prayer and waiting on God during crises.

Duration: 27:51

Scripture: Isaiah 64:1-4, Matthew 6:33, Galatians 6:7

Topics: "Intervention"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares personal experiences and lessons learned about the power of waiting on God. He emphasizes the importance of relying on God's power rather than our own cleverness. The speaker also highlights the need for action in spreading the gospel, but also acknowledges that there are times in life when we must patiently wait for God's intervention. He references the story of Israel in the Old Testament, particularly during the time of Isaiah, to illustrate the need for divine intervention and the consequences of turning away from God.

Transcript

I wanted to put a pause button here on the series that I started at the beginning of the year on the book of 1 Thessalonians. I just felt impressed this week that I'm to speak on something else, very vital. I just feel there's people in here, it's for all of us because it's from the Bible, but maybe there's some emergency situation here.

You need to hear this. You need to hear this. You need to understand primitive, not just Christianity, but primitive about primitive worship of God, how this all began.

We could find things like this, the beginning part, anywhere in the Bible, but then there's this one unique verse that I want you to focus on. The passage is just four verses found in Isaiah 64. Isaiah 64.

Notice this is a prayer because you see you're catching it, oh that you, and that's to God. So it's a real prayer, but it has metaphorical language in it. It has imagery, which is not literal to be taken literally, but it's symbolic of the cry of this man's heart, Isaiah's heart.

Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you, as when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil. Come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you. For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down and the mountains trembled before you.

Obviously imagery. Since ancient times, no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God beside you who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. Now that verb that's translated there in the NIV, who acts on behalf, is a very powerful word in the Hebrew language.

It has many alternate meanings. But literally how it could be translated is it has to do with make, manufacture, accomplish, and it could read in some literal translation have it this way. Since ancient times, no one has heard, no ear has perceived, the natural mind cannot understand this.

It has to come to you by the Holy Spirit's teaching. No eye has seen any God beside you, and now God is called the God who works for those who wait for him. There's a trait about God that is highlighted here.

He works on behalf, he accomplishes things for a class of people. What class of people? The ones who wait for him or wait on him. Now the beginning part of this is the very essence of religion.

It has to do, I'm not going to talk long, because I want to see if we can see some people move to a new position of waiting. There's a need in the prophet's heart for divine intervention. Israel in the time of Isaiah were getting hammered by other nations.

They had turned away from God, and because they turned away from God, God sent judgment on them. Try to get their attention, get them to turn back to him. And then also comes this horrible law of sowing and reaping.

If you sow to the Spirit and to God, you reap blessings. If you sow continually away from God, worship idols, sow to the flesh, you reap back, because that's a law, God says, sowing and reaping. As Israel is being waylaid and hammered, the prophet cries out, and you'll find this from the beginning of Genesis through Revelation, Oh God, if you could just open the heavens and come down.

Rend the heavens and come down. Make the mountains shake. Let the people feel your presence.

In other words, there's a cry for divine intervention. Isaiah has surveyed the situation and realizes it's not in Israel's power to get out of the bind that they're in. This is a huge, huge pivotal point in every life or nation.

When you come to the place where you realize that the situation you and I are in, the weaknesses that have been exposed in our own characters, the oppression of the enemy in our own life, the people who are plotting or planning against us as individuals or a nation, this is beyond us. If you believe in God, and this is from the beginning to the end, your look goes vertical, and you say, God, oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down. He doesn't mean literally like separate the sky and come down in some visible way.

He's not talking about that. He's saying, God, look at the pressure we're under. Look at the heartache we're facing.

God, you have to come and intervene because if you don't intervene, we're toast. We're going to be smashed to smithereens if you don't come down. In other words, we've run out of plan Bs.

There are no plan Bs. No more human cleverness. No more trusting in Egypt or some ally.

No more trusting in our educational degree. No more trusting in how smart we are or some friend we have who has influence. We're at the bottom now, and we have no one else to turn to but you, God.

Oh, God, that you would come down and help us like you have before because this was Israel's great history. You'll find it all through the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms and among the prophets. They will go back to the time of Passover, the very thing that's being celebrated now.

They will go back to Passover night when the blood was put on the doorpost, and God passed over, judged Egypt, the firstborn males, but gave salvation to Israel for only one reason, because they followed God's instruction. Put the blood on the doorpost. It's not that you're any better than the Egyptians.

It's because you trust in my provision, and in that case, it was the blood of a lamb. You don't have to put the blood on any door in your house. All you need is the blood of Jesus in your heart, covering your heart by faith in what he did on Calvary.

That's what salvation is, not by works, not by earning, not by trying to live a good life, not by trying to go to the Brooklyn Tabernacle, be a Catholic, be a Protestant. Those are dead ends. You need a personal relationship with Jesus where you know he died for me.

Can we put our hands together and say, amen? He died for me. But they would look back, the prophets, and say, oh, do we remember when you sent the plagues on Egypt, and then you got us out, and then we came to the Red Sea, and oh, how you extended your hand of power, how you delivered us. We were toast back then, but you saved that toast.

We didn't end up toast. We end up conquerors, victorious, not because of us, because of you. You divided the waters.

You punished the enemy who was coming after us. And then all the way through their history, you provided the manna in the wilderness, and then you led us by the pillar of cloud during the day, the pillar of fire by night. All the way through, you raised up David to be the king after your own heart, and you gave him the ability to slay the giant.

And all the way through, they look back on what were the high moments of their life when God opened the heavens and came down. The highlight of any life is when God acted on your behalf, when he delivered you out of a situation, when he provided something that wasn't there. Now the prophet is saying, God, do it again.

It's not like we don't know you can do it. You can do it. Oh, but if you would run the heavens, and if you would just come down and deliver us, we need divine intervention.

Everybody say divine intervention. Say it together to two words. One, two, three.

Divine intervention. Now if you don't have faith that God still divinely intervenes, well then according to your faith, so be it unto you. I'm not going to fight with you.

But if anything is true in the Bible, anything is true, is that he's rich in mercy to everyone who calls upon him. Everyone who has enough faith to pray. You'll always know people who have true faith because they pray.

They call on God. Not mental faith, not intellectual affirmation of certain truths in the Bible. We're talking about faith in su corazon, in your heart.

When you believe that there's a God, you do what people have done from time immemorial, which was back to Genesis 4. And then men began to call on the name of the Lord. We don't know why, but that was the beginning of religion. No Bible, no synagogue, no Protestant church, no reformation, no choir, nada, nothing.

But some instinct came in men where they looked around. Maybe a baby was sick. Maybe there was a drought, and the crops were going to perish, and they knew that meant no food.

We don't know why and how it happened, but at a certain moment, men began to look up and say, he's not just creator. He's a God that you can call on, and he opens the heaven, and he comes down, and he intervenes in your life. He supplies things you didn't have.

He opens doors that you've been knocking on for years. And that's how religion began. The first people who belonged to God were not called Jews.

They were called men and women who call on the name of the Lord. They prayed. That's why Jesus said, affirming an Old Testament passage, my house shall be called a house of what? Not teaching, not singing.

That's great. You ought to have been there and all of that. That's great.

It all has its place. But if we don't have transactions with God, why are we coming to church? I don't know about you. I need God's help in my life.

How many are with me? Lift your hand. I need God every day. How many need Him every day? I need Him in small ways, big ways.

I need Him every day. And that's why God said, my house shall be called a house of prayer, because I love you more than you love me, and I want to help you. But the way I send help is when people call to me.

When they ask, they shall receive, if they ask in faith. So let's bring this to a conclusion, because I told you I didn't want to talk long. I want to do this.

Listen, there are two kinds of people in the world in one way. God doesn't see ethnic distinctions. He doesn't know Italian from Irish.

He doesn't know black from white. That's the junk we've got into in society, putting up barriers between people. God just looks down and sees us all, and He loves us all.

He loves us so much, He sent His Son to die for us. But someone has well pointed out, you can't distinguish all humanity this way. There are people who pray and people who don't.

Possibly that's the way God looks at the earth. He also looks at those who are His children, who have been born again, and those who aren't, who either mock Him, ridicule Him, turn away from Him, or just merely religious, but don't really know Him. But if you know Him, you pray, because you can't get saved without praying.

Nobody can become a Christian without asking God to forgive them of their sins. True or no true? And you have to ask Him in your life, God have mercy on me, a sinner. That's a prayer.

True religion always is accompanied by prayer, always, at all times. And that's a sad commentary on what's happening in America today, because churches meet for teaching and singing, but the element of prayer is almost gone out of style like high button shoes. It's like a new day.

But there is no new day, because God doesn't change. Your needs, He wants to meet, if you just ask Him, if you'll bring it to Him. But notice this verse goes deeper.

What it says is this, He works for those who wait for Him, not who pray, but who wait for Him. So what's the picture? There's no God like the true God. There's all these false gods and false conceptions of God.

But the true God is a God who says, trust in me, and trust in me enough that you pray the prayer of faith. You pray believing in me. You're able to come to Isaiah's position.

God, you did it, done it before, come and do it again. Oh, you would rent the heavens and come down, and change our situation, and deliver us, help us. Bring that daughter back.

Bring that daughter back. Heal this fractured relationship. God, you have to do it, because we tried everything else.

We're sick and tired of being sick and tired. So God, you got to come. That's faith.

But notice, faith prays, and then after you pray, things don't change immediately. And now here comes the crux. God is a God who works for those who trust and pray, and then after they lay it before the Lord, they have enough faith that even though nothing happens visibly to the eye, they're willing to wait for Him, for His timing, for His sovereign will, for His plan, which is not our plan.

Neither are His thoughts our thoughts. Neither is His timing our timing. So now the Bible says, when you're striving, and working, and fretting, and worrying, God is paralyzed as it were.

But the moment you stop and say, God, I trust in you, and I will wait for you to stretch out your hand. The moment you begin to wait, there's a new working by God, for He works for those who wait for Him. God's power comes to its maximum efficiency, not when you're working, but when you're waiting in faith.

Now, for clarification, there are certain commands from God in the Bible that even though He has to work with us, it means action on our part. Like this one, go into all the world and preach the gospel. Do we need to pray that the gospel will be blessed, that it'll go out in power, that people will be converted? Yes, but we gotta go.

You can't sit back and wait. You gotta go. That's an action verb.

Go. Go. So you go.

But then there's a lot of other situations in life, ladies and gentlemen. Oh, haven't we been there? Where you do believe, and you say, God, come down and help me. But nothing happens immediately.

And now comes the test. The hardest part of faith is waiting. Because here's the alternative a lot of us have chosen.

There's a mess. It's breaking our heart. It's pressuring us, keeping us up at night.

We pray. We believe. Nothing happens.

Oh, I don't know. I don't see God doing this. Let me try to help this thing along.

And the more you touch it, the worse it gets. How many know where I'm coming from here? I know. In other words, you touch something that God has said, if you'll just wait, I will work it.

My power is made perfect when you trust me and you wait. But if you try to do it yourself, that means you don't have confidence in me. And now you'll make it worse.

Have we not all done that? Have we not all tried to solve our problems instead of God's way by waiting for him to do it? Why does God wait and ask us to wait? Because his timing is different than ours. And he wants maximum glory from that answer. So he's waiting for a few things to happen so that when he does answer, he will answer.

He works for those who wait for him. When he answers, he'll get praise and honor and glory like you and I can't even imagine. Come on, let's say amen to that.

Put our hands together. He works for those who wait for him. His timing is different than your timing.

And what's the temptation? There's two. One I already gave you, and as I close, it's to try to help God along. Oh my goodness, how ridiculous that must seem to the angels.

Oh, look down there. Jim Simba thinks he has to help God like God is a little short on power and on wisdom. And look at him.

What a mess he's making of this situation. It's as if God says, angel, stop. Holy Spirit, just wait.

I got to wait till he gets tired. And when he's run out of energy to try to fix it in his arrogance and his pride, then I'm going to work for him if he'll just learn to wait. What a revelation.

He works for those who wait. That's against everything because we're all type A's. We're all going to fix it.

Oh, we're going to fix it or worse. We try to fix it. We see it gets worse.

Now we're waiting for God. Instead of waiting, we worry ourselves to death. If you're here today, I have a word for you.

Your worry won't change anything. Your anxiety, you're laying awake at night, you're biting your nails. It will not change a single thing except negative stuff in your own body and personality.

Worrying won't change anything. Those are the two alternatives we have. Working ourselves when God says, wait for me, or, all right, I give up on that and now I'm just going to worry and fret and be negative and cynical and unbelieving.

God says, no, there's a better way. Just wait and worship. Have enough confidence in me that I'm going to come through.

This church is here because people have prayed. I'm here because people have prayed. Nothing exceptional in me at all.

I'm the most average, below average person around, but people have prayed. I won't go into all the stories about how this church was founded, its formative years. This choir is here.

My wife is doing what she's doing because people pray. She can't read or write music, but she just keeps doing it, what she does. I'm happy.

It's based on God's power and not our cleverness. How many find that a better way to do it? Say amen. I could tell you the time, as you've heard me say, when God supplied six million bucks that we needed as a church in 10 minutes from two people that I didn't ask, but the gun was at our head timing-wise.

He supplied that. I could tell you that story, this story, that story, all learning that lesson myself. Jim, stop and just trust me.

Wait for me. I will do it. Just wait expectantly.

Don't be worried. Don't be anxious. Don't be panicking.

Don't be calling everybody and going off. Wait. Worship.

I work for those who wait for me. But maybe the biggest lesson is when my oldest girl, that's a perfect example of it. She got away from my wife and I emotionally.

She got away from God spiritually, and she was going down a terrible road. I should have picked it up earlier. I didn't, but now we're in the soup.

I tried everything. Look at me. I'm going to tell you the truth.

I tried everything. Name something. I tried it.

Use money. I tried that. Screaming.

I tried that. Emotional outbreaks. I tried that.

Yelling. I tried that. Discipline.

I tried that, but she was too old to discipline that way. Just name anything that you would try to do when your oldest girl, a daughter you love so much, is going to destruction, to destroy herself. I tried everything, and with everything I tried, she got worse.

She got worse. Name anything that you could think of. I tried it.

This is two and a half year nightmare. You know, when's your daughter, you just don't sit idly by. You want to try, and that's, oh, that was me.

Boy, try, try, try, try, and then when I saw her getting harder. You ever pray for something, and instead of it getting better, it gets worse? How many have ever had that wonderful experience, right? A voice says, gee, you better stop praying. The thing will totally explode, and boy, God had to get a hold of my stubborn little heart and say, you've preached about prayer.

You've read about prayer, but now I'm going to teach you something about prayer. Stop talking to her, and don't tell any more people. I told very few, just pray and wait for me, and that's when the breakthrough came.

God turned her around in a way that I could have never dreamed. God visited her in the middle of the night. She wouldn't listen to my voice, and she might not listen to your voice, or that situation.

You can't solve it. Can you get to that place where you know this thing is too big for me? I can't solve it, but I believe that there's a God who can open the heavens and come down. I believe in divine intervention.

I believe in a Jesus who's not dead. He's alive, but he works for those who not just trust him and pray, but then who are willing to go the extra step and wait, wait with joy, wait with expectancy, so there was a breakthrough one night in that situation, and this was new to me back then. I was up at one o'clock in the morning sitting in the living room in Queens where I lived then, and pouring out my heart.

Yeah, I had to preach, but you think that was on my heart preaching sermons? When your daughter, you don't know where your daughter is. Look at me. I didn't know where she was.

Do you know what that feeling is? It's not a good one. She's a teenager. She has a baby now, and I don't know where she is, so I pour out my heart to God, and I felt the Lord speak to me and say, do you believe I can do this? Yes, I know you can.

Do you believe I will? There's a big difference between can and will. How many say amen? But he helped me. He gave me faith.

I said, you will. I can see myself, bathrobe on, and the Lord I felt speak to me and say, well, if you know I will, then stand up and praise me. But God, she hasn't changed.

I know, but I work for those who wait for me, and if you'll just praise me for what you know I will do, you will see the glory of the Lord. You will see what I can do, and I remember hot tears coming out of my eyes, rolling down my cheeks. I see myself now, as God is my witness, pushing off the arms of the chair and standing all alone at 115 in the morning.

No one saw it, but no one needs to see it. God saw it, and I lifted my hands, and I began to praise him. Was I crying? Yeah, but I was praising him.

He works for those who wait patiently, expectantly. Close your eyes. If you're here today, you have a situation you want God to know you're going to wait for him now.

You're going to take your hands off of it. God has spoken to you. Get your hands off that thing if you want me to work.

You're going to stop worrying and be anxiety-driven. You want to give it to God, and you're willing now to say, I'm waiting for you. Stand up quickly if you're in a situation like that, and come quickly to the altar.

Come quickly from the balcony or downstairs. If you're in the choir, come and stand behind me. God, I'm giving you today, Sunday, the 24th of April, I'm giving you this situation.

I will not worry, and I will not fuss with it. I am tired of trying to fix it myself, but I believe what your word says. You're a God who works for those who wait for him.

Bring that daughter back. We're waiting for that son to come back. We're waiting for that spouse to change his or her attitude and be reasonable and soft.

Open the door that has to be opened only by you. Supply the monies that we've tried so hard to get, but we can't get it. You have to supply it.

Open the heavens and come down. Rend the heavens. Come down.

Work among us. Show your power. Let the world know that you're not dead.

You're alive. You're a living God. We just don't go to church to study intellectual principles.

You're the God who says, I'll never change. I'll never leave you, and I'm the same yesterday, today, and forever. We're going to wait.

We're going to worship. We're going to be expectant. We're not going to be negative.

We're going to be positive. We're going to be happy. We're going to praise you even through tears because sometimes it hurts, but we're going to wait because our God is never late.

He's always on time. Lord, I pray one more thing before we dismiss. Give us a heart to seek after you.

Some of these folks, Lord, who need you so desperately, give them the grace of prayer. Daily prayer. Prayer in the prayer meeting on Tuesday.

Build faith in them that there's no telling what you can do to those who faithfully call on you and wait and worship. Build our faith. Build expectancy.

Give us a good rest of the day. We thank you for everyone who's here. Bless them and their families in Jesus' name.

And everyone said, every man hug about three men. Every lady hug about three ladies. Come on.

God bless you.

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