

Follow the Leader

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon emphasizes the necessity of living by the Holy Spirit to achieve true victory over sin and transformation in the Christian life.

Duration: 19:03

Scripture: Romans 1:17, Romans 3:21-22, Romans 6:15, Romans 7:15, Romans 8:2-4, Romans 8:9

Topics: "Spirit Led"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that victory in life does not come from making promises or vows, but from being led by the Holy Spirit. He shares a personal story of struggling with attending school and making promises to God, only to continue disobeying. The speaker explains that living according to our human nature leads to disobedience and being enemies of God, as our flesh desires self-gratification. However, God sent His Son to condemn sin and human nature, so that those who live according to the Spirit can fulfill the righteous demands of the law.

Transcript

Maybe the most important chapter for believers in the whole New Testament, possibly, is Romans 8. I think it is. I'd nominate that. Paul has proven that the just shall live by faith and that we're accepted by God, not because of our righteousness, but because of Jesus.

Oh, how many are happy? Jesus is your righteousness. Our righteousness goes up, goes down, is spotted. Our behavior, we make mistakes.

But Jesus is our salvation. Then Paul answers the other question, which is, okay, now you're a Christian, sins are forgiven, but how do you get out of the old cycle of Jim Cymbala, his fallen nature, which centers on self, which wants self-gratification, whatever the thing might be, and how do you break that so that you're not just a forgiven person who still now is just going to have no life change to experience? So Paul goes in, in Romans 6 and 7, he's talking about this dilemma, the things I want to do, I don't do, and the things I promise, I will never do that, that's what I do. It's like going on a diet and saying you're never going to have carbs again, right? You say it, but then that's another whole thing about five hours later.

So then he never mentions the spirit. In fact, I think the Holy Spirit is only mentioned three times in the whole book of Romans up to chapter eight, and now all that's going to come is the Holy Spirit, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from that bondage of that old person. There are a lot of

Christians maybe here today struggling with how do I live victoriously? And this is the only answer.

Nobody can pray for you and deliver you, you have to walk this out. There is deliverance, there's prayers, there's blessing. I just, thinking back way, way, way back when we just first moved in the other building on Flappish Avenue, in fact, she was a Jewish convert, and she came to me visiting from I don't know where, and she said, would you pray for me? She was a large woman.

She said, would you pray for me? I have a demon of fat, and I've been going everywhere to get delivered from it, but nothing works. And I had never heard that. This is around the time when teaching was Christians can have demons in them and all of that.

I'm so glad that when you're saved, no demon can be living inside of the temple of the Holy Spirit. But what she wanted was a one-moment answer instead of facing the process of discipline, of God helping her, self-control, so on and so forth. Now Paul wants to say to them, this is the only way, path to victory.

It's worked out day by day, and it has everything to do with the Holy Spirit. Number two, there's pastors here now, and we discussed with them earlier today that Paul said to the Thessalonica Church, the gospel I gave you, our gospel came not in word only. I'm not just a talker.

I'm not a communicator, but it came with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with great conviction in his own heart. He was grabbed and controlled by the Holy Spirit. So whether you're an everyday believer like we all are, or whether you have a special ministry like these pastors, for it's not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, sayeth the Lord.

This is from the Good News Bible, and I find it so helpful. What the law could not do, that's the law Moses got, totally hopeless to change anybody, because there's no power in it. All it does is command.

When we hear the command, we try to obey, then we break it, and then the law can only do one thing, condemn. The law commands and condemns. It has no other purpose.

What the law could not do, not because the law was bad, the law was perfect, but human nature was weak, God did. He condemned sin in human nature by sending his own son, who came with a nature like our sinful nature, to do away with sin. God did this so that the righteous demands of the law might be fully satisfied in us, who live according to the spirit, and not according to the human nature.

That word human nature is translated flesh, it's the Greek word sarx, S-A-R-X, and what it is, is it's Jim's symbol apart from God. That's human nature, sinful nature, the flesh. What Paul here is saying is, we are fully justified and accepted by God through Christ.

Our righteousness, always Christ. But notice the characteristic that he's assuming that believers have, who walk or order their life, I love this better, who live according to the spirit, and not according to human nature. He's saying now, the characteristic of a victorious, mature Christian, is they're going to have their life controlled or ordered, they're going to be led by not the old human nature, which is still there, resident in us, but lying dormant, but they will not listen to the old way, the old Jim symbol.

He's a wretch and will always be a wretch. They will now live according and be led and be controlled by the spirit of God, capital S, who lives inside of every true believer. This is the chapter that says, and if you don't have the spirit of God, you don't belong to Christ.

The definition of a Christian in the early church was those who have the Holy Spirit. That was the definition, not who comes to church, not who joined the membership, not those who even intellectually believed that Jesus once lived and died. It's saving faith that causes us to be born again, and the spirit lives inside of us, and he's the only answer out of the old Jim Symbola doldrums of making promises, turning over new leaves, for what? We're going to break it.

I won't ask for a show of hands, but how many of us, since we're Christians, we see ourselves slipping up, messing up, and we make a promise. I'm never going to say that again. I'm never going to do that again, but you did.

I did. So what's the victory? It's not by making promises. It's by this.

Watch how God works this for us. Those who live as their human nature tells them to, oh, is that a good translation? Those who live as their human nature tells them to have their minds controlled by what the human nature wants, but those who live as the spirit tells them to have their minds controlled by what the spirit wants. So now look, every day, every hour of every day, we have a choice as Christians.

We can go back and pay attention to the flesh, Jim Symbola, make him the center, and listen to what he tells me to do, my sinful nature, or now that the Christ lives in me through the spirit, I can be open and listening and say, God, you control me, and notice the people who do that, let the spirit control them and tell them to. They have their minds controlled by what the spirit wants, and Weymouth's translation in that place is they have their thoughts shaped by the Holy Spirit. Behavior is a product of thought.

You think of something, it creates certain appetites or delights, then you do it. There's a few instinctive actions, like when a doctor hits your knee in an exam and your leg goes up without you thinking, but you think, as a man, think is so easy. The only way you and I are going to be changed, if the Holy Spirit starts shaping our thoughts with what He wants and what He likes.

Do I get an amen here? Notice, you don't overcome the sin by fighting against it, and you dirty dog, I don't want to do that again. No, when you're led by the spirit, you get so consumed by what the spirit wants and how He shows you how great Jesus is and where He wants you to go that you don't even have time. What was that going on? No, I don't want to think about that anymore anyway.

Jesus, give me your thoughts, give me your desires. Imagine that, God giving me His desires in my heart through the spirit, I start to desire what God wants. I start to think about what God thinks about.

That's what the promise is here. Those who go by what the spirit tells them to do have their thoughts shaped by that, because unless God changes our thinking, He can't change our behavior. He cannot change it.

So instead of the old thing I grew up in, going to the altar, getting saved, promising God, then go back, cut classes. I didn't cut classes, I cut whole days. No, I did.

I cut whole, to be honest with you, one time I cut whole weeks. You lost respect for me so quickly. I did.

Rasmus Hall High School, sophomore year, is the number one delinquent, truant that you could meet. I wanted to hang out. I want to go to school.

That's the truth. But don't you think I got convicted of it? Don't you think on Sunday I would promise God, it's got to stop. I'm sorry, God, that's wrong.

I'm lying to my parents. I'm going to go back to school. It's good my mother's not here tonight.

She doesn't know about a lot of this. I'd cut again the next day. Not cut a class, just disappear.

Play ball. Do something useful. The next Sunday, you're laughing at me, but you've been there too.

Ah. Paul says, no, that's not the answer, making promises and vows. You've got to be led by someone.

I'm either going to be led by Jim Cimbala, he's going to shape my thoughts, he's going to direct my emotions, or the Spirit's going to do it. How many want the Holy Spirit 24-7 directing our thoughts, directing our minds? He will lead you away from cigarettes. He'll show you how filthy and dirty they are.

You'll not even want them. That's how people get delivered. They see it in a different way because the Spirit is showing them his view of it rather than just knowing what the doctor said and trying to fight it and so on and so forth.

Verse six, to be controlled by the human nature, that's you, results in death, separation from God. To be controlled by the Spirit results in life. You know what? When you're led and guided by the Holy Spirit, there's such a peace to it.

When you're in the flesh doing your own thing, it is such a miserable life when you're a Christian. Come on, how many have found out, try to run away from God, backslide? It's just so nasty. It's so nasty.

There are two more verses. I don't know why I put them in. Let's look.

And so people become enemies of God when they are controlled by their human nature. This is how hopeless the human nature is. They do not obey God's law, and in fact, they can't obey it.

Those who obey their human nature cannot please God. As long as Jim Simbel is in charge, there's no way I can possibly please God, because what Jim Simbel wants is the opposite of what God wants, and what God wants is the opposite of what I want in my flesh. I want self-gratification.

I want what I want when I want it, and I'll never change. Notice, brothers and sisters, God never works with you. He's not trying to change your flesh.

No one told me that when I was younger. I probably wouldn't have cut so many days from school if someone would have helped me. I was trying to improve Jim.

I thought God would improve Jim. He can't improve Jim. Jim is hopeless.

If you could only accept that about yourself, you're hopeless. That fleshly nature operates by I want what I want when I want it. The only way God can change me is to put his own spirit inside of me, so that I don't have to live out of that old guy anymore.

He'll never change. He'll never change, but I didn't know that. I was always trying to change it, and when I saw the flesh rise up or make a suggestion, I thought, I thought I was saved.

No, that's who he is. I don't have to listen to you. You be quiet.

I'm following the spirit. I know where you're coming from. That's Jim Simbel.

His day is gone. Christ is in me now, so you don't get shook by, oh, I got this suggestion. That's what temptation is.

Satan doesn't appeal to the spirit in us. He appeals to that fleshly nature. You start giving yourself to that.

You start indulging the flesh, and then it gets very strong, and that's why Christians can do crazy things. Then people who don't understand this say, I thought he was a Christian. Yeah, he's a Christian, but that flesh is unchangeable, so don't try to change it.

Just say, in the flesh, Paul says, dwells no good thing. Kaput. It's gone, but ah, I can do all things.

How? Through Christ who strengthens me. Where? Inside of me. The spirit of the living God.

Let's pray. If you're struggling here today, you love the Lord, but you're struggling with some resentment you can't let go, some habit. I don't know why cigarettes come to my mind.

I never smoked. I never drank, because my dad... I grew up an alcoholic, so that's not a temptation so much to me. I was always afraid of it.

But you can come tonight, and we can pray with you. You can just say, Lord, I give up. I'm not going to try to change.

Now I got it. It's not I, but Christ who lives in me. I can't change.

I'm a chain smoker. How could I change? Can a leopard change his spots? No, I'll never change, but you can change me. Teach me how to walk in the Spirit.

Fill me with your Holy Spirit. Take control of me like you've never had before. Don't let me live carnal.

Help me to live spiritual. Teach me what Romans 8 is saying here. Teach me that.

Have my... God, I want my thoughts shaped by the Holy Spirit. I want my desires. Imagine, my very desires.

Instead of desiring the junk, I want to desire righteousness. Not by law, not by psyching yourself up, by the Spirit. Anybody here struggling with something? I don't... You know, drugs, crack.

If you have drugs with you, bring them, or your cigarettes. When you're done, you can just leave them on the steps. We'll take care of everything, but you got to resolve now.

I'm not living this double life. I'm not going to live half in, half out. I'm going to live in victory.

Christ is in me. Not going to live back and forth. That's what that line means.

I give you my life. I yield my life now and beyond. Anybody here struggling with anything? We're not here to embarrass you.

Come on. It could be resentment, bitterness. You're just struggling with some besetting thing where the flesh just keeps poking its ugly head in.

Then you lose your peace, and then you go through it over and over. Start fresh here today. The perseverance of the saints is made up of 10,000 new beginnings, and one of them is today.

Anybody want me to pray for them? Just come up out of your seat and come to the front and say, Pastor, you don't need to know what it is, but what you said tonight, that's how I want to live. I want to live in the Spirit. I want to walk in the Spirit.

Just come out of your seat and come up here. You know who you're going to be prayed for, not just by me. You're going to be prayed by some of our visitors.

Come on up. Come down from the balcony. I know this is a little touchy like.

People might look. No one's looking. God's looking, and he's seeing that you're sincere, and he's going to help you.

If you've got something nasty that's on you, you can leave it with me. If there's something nasty in your apartment or your home, you're going to throw it out the minute you get home. The Spirit's going to help you do that.

Just throw it out. Get rid of it. That literature, whatever.

Some of us are fighting battles with other appetites. We can't get it under control. Now you got it, how you control, by the Spirit, not by promises or a fiery sermon.

Those that do what the Spirit tells them to do have their thoughts shaped by the Spirit. Father God, I thank you for the people who have come forward. They love you.

They wouldn't be here tonight if they didn't love you, Lord. But like all of us has gone through times of struggle, not understanding your grace and the power of your Spirit. We've tried to improve ourselves so that we could please you, but we give up tonight.

We're never going to improve ourselves. I myself am hopeless. I'll never change, but I can be that new creation you want me to be as I follow the dictates and the leadings and the promptings of your Holy Spirit who lives inside of me.

God, help my brothers and sisters to know along with me that Almighty God lives inside of us. Almighty God, the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in us. There's no habit too strong, no problem too complex, no tendency too overwhelming.

We want to live pure. We want to be like Jesus. We want to be holy, but the only one holy is the Spirit.

So we yield ourselves to you, Lord.

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