

God's River

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala emphasizes the vital role of the Holy Spirit as the source of life, joy, and victory in the Christian experience.

Duration: 30:19

Scripture: Genesis 15:1, Isaiah 41:17-20, John 3:8, John 7:38, John 14:26, 1 Corinthians 2:4, 1 John 1:7, 1 John 4:4

Topics: "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the significance of Jesus' incarnation and sacrifice for humanity. He explains that Jesus came to earth as God in human form, performed miracles, and taught the word of God. Before his crucifixion, Jesus told his disciples that it was necessary for him to leave so that he could send the Holy Spirit. The preacher highlights the importance of the Holy Spirit in believers' lives, as it provides them with joy and peace even in difficult times. He then references Isaiah 41, where God promises to provide water in barren places, symbolizing the Holy Spirit's presence and provision in believers' lives.

Transcript

I want to talk to you about water. I want to talk to you about one special reality that water symbolizes. And this is kind of a famous passage.

In fact, one of the most well-known devotional books in the world comes from this passage. Let's look at it in the scripture. It's found in Isaiah 41.

The poor and the needy search for water, but there's none. Their tongues are parched with thirst, but I, the Lord, I will answer them. I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.

I will make rivers flow on barren heights and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water and the parched ground into springs. I will put in the desert the cedar and the acacia, the myrtle and the olive.

I will set pines in the wasteland, the fir and the cypress together, so that people may see and know, may consider and understand that the hand of the Lord has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it. On the barren heights, I'm gonna let there be rivers. And in the valley, which many times speaks of gloom and difficulty, I'm gonna let there be springs of rushing water throughout both the Old and the New

Testament over and over again.

God is likening His Spirit to water. Jesus, on the last day, the great day of the feast, said, if anybody's thirsty, let him come and drink of me. Out of his belly shall flow rivers of, He spoke this of the Spirit, which had not been given yet, because Christ had not been glorified.

In Revelation, it says that there's a river that flows out from this heavenly throne, whatever the symbolism means, and every place the river goes, there's fruit and there's trees, there's fruitfulness. Now, of course, what water meant to the people in the Old Testament and the New Testament era, because that's 2,000 years ago and more for the Old Testament, water meant one main thing, which meant life. No agua, no vida.

No water, no life. You end up in the desert and you're there long enough and you don't have water, you will die. There's no bottles, there's nothing you can carry except over your shoulder, but when that all runs out, you're gonna die because the law is still no water, no life.

The body is made up mostly of water. So to them, it wasn't like us who turn on a tap and say, you want hot or cold water? We shower, we take that for granted. No, water meant something different.

Now, when it speaks of the Holy Spirit, it speaks about a couple things. It speaks, number one, about satisfaction. Those who are thirsty and parched, he's not just talking now about I'm gonna provide water when you're thirsty in a desert place, but he's speaking spiritually.

When you're thirsty and you're longing for something and nothing in this world can satisfy it, I'm gonna provide the water of the Holy Spirit so that you will drink and be satisfied. Sometimes wonder if 80% of all the ministers in America and the churches in America even believe in that or would preach that, that there is no satisfaction in life without an experience with the Holy Spirit. He's the water of life.

He's the one that Jesus gives. Not only that, but wherever the desert was where there was nothing growing, God says I'm gonna supply water in such quantity that now there'll be fruitfulness, there'll be trees, there'll be plants. Other people will be able to eat off of what is growing.

Why? Because it was just arid before, but now there's water. So in the driest life, the most struggling Christian, the deadest church, no converts being made, if you'll just turn to me and let me pour my spirit into you, there will be fruitfulness. There will be life.

There will be results in human beings being satisfied and one to Christ. And all of this is only possible through the water of the Holy Spirit. He that drinks of that water will never thirst again, Jesus said.

The water of salvation, the water of the Holy Spirit. And notice what God says is the answer. When you're on a barren height and you're struggling to get over it and barren heights are very desolate and lonely, when you're up there with little hope of like how am I gonna do this? He said right there in the hardest place in life, I'm gonna send a river, I'm gonna make a river that will flow into you.

And you'll be able to get over that mountain. You'll be able to succeed. You'll be victorious.

Why? Because I'm gonna make a river in that barren place. And in that valley that you go through in life where things are sad and it's difficult, the bottom falls out. Your children go to pot right in front of you.

And you're just going through a very difficult time. Or Satan comes in like a flood. He comes in like a roaring lion.

God says right in that valley of mourning, loss of a loved one, a friend betrays you, a husband walks out on you, whatever. In that place, I'm gonna make springs of water. You won't lose your joy.

You won't lose your peace. Because no matter where you are, if you'll just look to me, I'll provide the water of the Holy Spirit. That's why a long time ago, a great Methodist preacher by the name of Samuel Chadwick said Christianity is hopeless without the Holy Ghost.

Listen again. Christianity is hopeless without the Holy Spirit. It's hopeless.

Oh no, but pastor, I have my Bible. You won't even be able to read it and understand it unless the Holy Spirit helps you. He's the one who inspired it.

He's the only one who can teach it to you. It's hopeless. Trust me, I've tried to read this by my intellect too many times and got nothing out of it as a minister.

And then I've read it sometimes, and in five verses, things are jumping out and speaking to me all over the place. What's the difference? Same guy reading, same medium IQ. What's the difference? It's revelation from the Holy Spirit.

He begins to teach us. You can believe in Christ in your mind, historically, that he was born of a virgin, crucified under Pontius Pilate, risen on the third day, that he died for the sins of the world. There'll be no life to your experience.

There'll be no joy. There'll be no peace. There'll be no boldness, even though intellectually you affirm that, unless the Holy Spirit is working.

He's the one that Jesus said, when he comes, he'll make everything pertaining to me real to you. I'll be real to you. Otherwise, he becomes just a story, a historical figure, a theological position.

Christianity, indeed, is hopeless without the Holy Spirit. Preaching is hopeless. Oh, you can entertain people.

You can make them laugh. You can be an orator, but to really see change in people, you have to have the Holy Spirit helping you. Paul says in 1 Corinthians, the second chapter, the fourth verse, I wonder what seminary teaches this today.

I can't find one, for my preaching was not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit, so that your faith might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Listen to his philosophy of preaching. What did that look like? I'm not talking about emotionalism now, someone that wants to just write me off as the organ playing and working people up into a frenzy.

I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about the Bible. Paul says, my preaching, the greatest minister ever known, was not with wise and persuasive words.

Pastor Simba, that's what every seminary tries to do, make you wise and persuasive. What should you be, unwise and unpersuasive? I'm just telling you what Paul said. My preaching was not with wise and persuasive words.

I didn't tickle your ear. You weren't talking about me when you left the auditorium, but with a demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit. When I preach, God helped me preach, so you knew it was God speaking to you and not a man, so that your faith would not stand in the cleverness and wisdom of a man, but in the power of God.

Can we say amen to that kind of preaching? So Christianity is in decline in America today. You can't spin it any other way. No faith talk will get around it.

It's in decline. Every statistic, every poll done by Christian organizations shows Christianity is in decline. It's not because the world's too hard, and it's certainly not because God has lost his power.

It's because the church is now leaning on something other than the power and person of the Holy Spirit. And even preaching the Bible, the letter kills. Only the Spirit gives life.

Only the Spirit of God working with the Word produces life. So who is this Holy Spirit? This Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead. The Father revealed his Creator and the Holy One of the Old Testament who gave the Ten Commandments to Moses.

He sent his Son to provide a sacrifice for all the sins you and I have committed and the sins of the whole world. God knows we needed a Savior. Isn't that true? He sent his Son.

His Son appeared about 2,000 years ago. God in the flesh, Emmanuel, God with us. The incarnation happened.

God took on human form, walked on this earth, taught, preached, did miracles, walked on water. And when his time was up, he did what he came for. He hung on a cross and he died for the sins of the world.

But before he died, he had told the disciples, it's good for you that I leave. And they were, time out. It is not good for us that you leave.

Why are you going? You're everything to us. He said, no, because unless I go, I won't be able to send the Holy Spirit. But when he, the Spirit, he, a person, when he comes, oh, I've been with you and that's why I can't change any of you.

When I get betrayed that night, you're all gonna flee. You're all gonna be weak because I'm outside of you just telling you words. But when he comes, he's gonna be inside of you.

He's gonna change you from the inside out. And that's why it's good for you that I go. And after his resurrection, the last command he gave them before he departed was wait in Jerusalem until you're endued with power from on high.

For this fulfills the Old Testament promise. It's not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. The Holy Spirit is the only God who's on earth.

He is God, the Holy Spirit. Co-equal with the Father and the Son in a Trinitarian Godhead thing that we cannot understand. But he is God, the Holy Spirit.

Anybody gets converted, it's the Holy Spirit who convicted that person. Any preacher successful, it's the Holy Spirit who helped them. Anybody reads the Bible and gets something out of it, it's the Holy Spirit.

Anybody gets an answer to prayer, it's the Holy Spirit working in the earth. He's the one now carrying out the purposes of God on the earth. The Son has done his work.

He's back in heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father. And you know what he's doing right now for us? He's praying for us. He's making intercession for all of us.

So this is the era of the Holy Spirit, but you wouldn't know it for most Christians' lives. You would not know it for most Christian churches. The Holy Spirit is hardly mentioned.

Many people are afraid of the Holy Spirit because of excesses done and fanaticism and crazy things done in the name of the Holy Spirit. But don't you get it? That's the devil playing us so that we won't open up and yield ourselves to the power of the Holy Spirit. And what are we left with? A Bible study and then go home.

There's gotta be something more. That's not the religion of the New Testament. The book of Acts tells us that they loved one another, studied God's word, preached the gospel, and God worked with them.

Who God? God the Holy Spirit worked with them. He's the one who sent people on missionary journeys. He's the one who calls people into the pastorate.

He's the one who makes Christian converts strong witnesses for him. He's the only one who can give boldness when you're persecuted. I don't care what laws they pass in Congress.

I don't care who's in the White House. How's that gonna change anybody? If the church is the church, we are the light of the world. We are the salt of the earth.

And if the church is operating in the dimension of the Holy Spirit, things are gonna happen in any church. And if they're not happening, don't blame it on secular humanism or the Republicans or the Democrats. That's a joke.

It's because we're not apprehending what God wants us to apprehend, which is the blessing of his Holy Spirit. There's power in this river. The name of this message is God's River.

God has a river. I once was in the Midwest for a family reunion on my wife's side, and I saw the Mississippi up close for the first time. And it was surging.

And that was a wide river. And the power of it just took your breath away. The mighty Mississippi.

That's nothing compared to God's river. Now let me tell you something, the dilemma that a lot of us are facing and why we need to pray. Most people, when we see things in our lives that are not right, we try to get a victory separate from the river.

There is no victory outside the river. There are no answers outside the river. You can't talk yourself out of depression.

The only answer to sadness and depression and melancholy is the river of God's joy. Because the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy. The Spirit produces joy.

When you're troubled and you're all messed up in your mind and you're bothered, the only answer to that is the peace of God. But who brings the peace of God? The peace of God doesn't walk around by itself.

It's an outflow of the Holy Spirit.

For the Spirit gives love, joy, peace. When you want victory over angry outbursts or your tongue is not under control and you keep sinning with your tongue or sinning with your body or sinning in any way, the only answer is the river. He's the one, the only one who can sanctify us.

But wherever He flows, there's holiness because He's the Holy Spirit. The Bible says there's none good but God. So how will I be good unless God is controlling me? Listen, there's none good but God.

There's no creation that's good but God. And the only way I can be good is if I'm partaking of God through the Holy Spirit. That Holy Spirit is the answer.

One time I was in Argentina and there was a street that I used to walk down, a dirt road is what it was, but wide, going to the campgrounds where I was preaching at a huge camp meeting in a place called Mar del Plata. And the place was littered. Kids would come there, the people in the campgrounds, their papers would fly and newspapers and wrappers and food stuff.

And I used to notice every day I walked down this dirt road that it really was getting nasty, just all littered up. But then one day the sky opened up and it poured, it poured. I saw it rain once in Manila in the Philippines and it was one of those rains that took my breath away.

This was some kind of rain, flooded everything. The next time I walked down that road, there was no paper, no garbage, no anything. You know why? The river washed it away.

The water got so high, you know, like this, and started running downhill that as the rain teemed down that it just picked up all the loose debris and it just washed it all away. When I walked down the street, I couldn't even believe it was the same road. I said, what happened to all the junk? Ha, a river comes by, it's gonna pick up everything.

Listen, a lot of us have made this mistake that when we see weak areas in our life and this area and that area and we want counseling about this thing and that thing, and we're trying to pick up with one of those things that they use in the park when they pick up the little sticks with the little whatever on the end, right, and they're picking it up. Did you know what? You're not gonna get a lot done that way. God's answer is a river because when the river comes, it just washes everything away.

I'm not talking about forgiveness of sin. Forgiveness of sin is only through the blood of Christ, but I'm talking about those troublesome areas in our life that we battle with, lack of self-control, lack of this, lack of that, sinning with our mouth, some besetting sin. We try to fight against it in ourselves, quoting a verse when really what we need is just a downpour and a flow of the river of God.

Can we say amen to that? If the Holy Spirit is controlling things, it's gonna be good. When he's not controlling things, poking its ugly little head will be the world, the flesh, Jim Cimbala, or the devil. Pastor Cimbala, that's so simplistic.

You're right, and it's in the Bible. Wherever the river is not flowing, wherever God's Spirit is not controlling, go to church, even read the Bible. Unless that river is controlling, flowing, unless there's life and energy coming from the Spirit, the world, the flesh, the devil, he'll be poking in there.

But where that river is flowing, oh, what a defense against the enemy. What a victory over the flesh. That's why Paul says, walk in the Spirit and you won't fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Let the Spirit control, let the river run. Let the river flow. And then murder, wrath, adultery, fornication, all those other things, they're not gonna be controlling you.

Here's what'll be happening when the river's flowing, love, joy, peace, meekness, kindness, self-control, boldness. But you're not trying to have boldness, you're trying to have the river. This is the problem.

Listen to someone who's fought a few battles in his life. When you're looking for the thing instead of him, you get in trouble. You're fighting it, this little thing, that little thing.

Here's the solution to it all. River of God, flow, flow, fill me, come, fill me. That's why even after the day of Pentecost, when they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, two chapters later, when the persecution hits the church, they go back to a prayer meeting and the Bible says, and everyone who prayed as they lifted up their voices, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

Well, wait a minute, I thought that they were filled and the Holy Spirit worked in their life in the second chapter, he did, but you need it again in the fourth chapter. You can't live off of what God did in your life five years ago. Listen to me, listen to me, I maybe have more experience in this than some of you here.

You can't live off of anything God did in the past. It's gotta be new every day, it's gotta be fresh water, gotta be, come on, let's say amen to that. Let's affirm it, it's gotta be fresh and new.

And here's the problem with the Western mind, Western terms of Western civilization, because we're conceptual and we like to think and have concepts and doctrinal statements. The thing about a river, the thing about water is it's not worth two cents unless you experience it. When you're thirsty, you can see all the pictures of water you want, study and understand H₂O and what that means chemically.

It will not help you. You gotta drink it. And see there now, now see here's where we come to the parting of the ways for some people, because they're taught religion is going to church and just filling your mind with more thoughts about God.

But experiencing the Holy Spirit is like, I don't know about that, I'm not a charismatic. Well neither am I, I'm trying to be a Christian, a New Testament Christian. How many wanna be New Testament Christians? That's all I wanna be.

I don't wanna be Pentecostal, charismatic, Baptist, evangelical, those words are not in the Bible. I just wanna be, I wanna have everything God promises me as a believer. You gotta experience.

You gotta experience the river. When was the last time you had a fresh experience with God the Holy Spirit? Because that's who you will need in 2013. That's who I'm gonna need.

Instead of picking up this, and I don't care how strong the habit is when God the Holy Spirit comes. When do you hear the testimony of this man next Sunday at three o'clock? Just crazy childlike, heard somebody say something about what God can do and he believed it like a child and God did it. But it was an experience.

When you're dealing drugs and shooting drugs, you need an experience. Drugs are an experience. God has a deeper experience than any sexual hangup, than any drug addiction.

He can heal your heart. He's healed my heart. He gives you peace in a storm.

It's all the Holy Spirit. And you don't just open your mind, open your mind while I speak so you know that I'm speaking the truth from God's word. You gotta open su corazon.

You gotta open your heart. And say, God, I need you in 2013. I need a river flowing in my life.

I'm not gonna make it. I don't have the equipment to make it. I'm telling, look at me, I've been telling God, I can't make it unless you come with that river and help me.

That's all I've ever known in my life. Without formal training and not a gifted speaker and very limited resources intellectually and all of that, I have lived on that edge all the time. God, please let the river flow.

I can't make it without that river. The devil's too strong. Sin's too strong.

Complexes are too strong for us. Oh, but when God comes, when God comes, when God the Holy Spirit begins to do something new in your life, well, what will that look like? No. No, I'm not telling you.

Don't you put God in a box. You can't put God in a box. It's not gonna be like anything you saw or read about in the revival.

Don't do that to God. Just say, God, I need that river he's talking about. I want that joy, the peace, the power.

I want you to just clear out the clutter in my life. Just a good flow of a river will do it. Oh my goodness, it'll wash everything out of there.

Don't fight the little things. The positive is better than fighting the negative. God does subtraction by addition.

He takes away stuff from us, not by trying us to pull it out but by adding something that'll drive all the junk out. Come on, how many want all the junk out? I want all the junk out. Close your eyes.

I want all the deacons who are here. Come on up and stand, all the deacons. Deacons and their wives, stand here at the front.

How will the church be strong unless the deacons have that river flowing through their lives? What are they gonna give people unless they've received something from the Lord? What kind of wisdom and counsel will they have? Wisdom comes from God. Wisdom comes from the Holy Spirit. Everything comes from the Holy Spirit.

Everybody in the balcony or downstairs, pastor, that was for me. I don't want a dry intellectual Christianity in 2013. I want what Jesus promised.

And out of your belly will flow rivers, not a trickle, not a faucet tap, rivers. I need rivers, pastor. I'm desperate for rivers of the Holy Spirit, a new dimension of him working in my life.

If you're a visiting minister or missionary and my words have quickened something in you, get out of your seat. Anybody feeling that need, get out of your seat and come stand with the leadership here at the church. Just get out of your seat and come.

Father God, our soul thirsts for the living God. You told Abraham, I am your exceeding great reward, not a thing, you yourself, not some land, not some money, but you said, I am your exceeding great reward. And what we need, Lord, in 2013 is we need Y-O-U.

We need you. We need you, sweet spirit of God, healing us, energizing us, taking away laziness and undisciplined living, providing love for unlovely people, giving wisdom when we don't know what to do, giving us patience when we feel irritated. We can't teach these things to anyone, Lord.

They come by the spirit. Forgive us of our trespasses. As we forgive those who have sinned against us.

Lead us not into temptation, but by your spirit, deliver us from evil. For greater is he that's in us than the one that's in the world. Spirit of God, I invite you to control the meetings of the Brooklyn Tabernacle this year like you never have before.

I ask you to override my concepts, any other pastor's concepts. We will throw away every agenda we have in front of all these people. We cry to you and say, Lord, have your way in every service, every counseling session, in every message.

Save us from putting you in a box and saying this is how God works. For the wind blows where it wants to. Nobody knows where it came from.

Nobody knows where it's going. We plead the blood of Jesus Christ over every sin in our life. We repent.

We say we're sorry, God. And that's the only qualification for a new experience with your Holy Spirit, that we walk in the light even as you are in the light. Any pastor or missionary that's here today, Lord, strengthen them, quicken them by your spirit.

Let this year be a Holy Ghost year, 2013, full of the Holy Spirit. Teach us, Holy Spirit, who you are. You always come to glorify Christ.

There's no Holy Spirit religion, it's Christianity, but teach us the way you work. Teach us to a point where we have your thoughts and your desires, but we confess our need. We'll never be satisfied by anything in this world but by you, river of God.

We will never overcome all the assaults of the enemy without power from on high. We will never do it. God, we're telling you, we will go under unless you strengthen us.

We won't see converts won. We won't be bold for you unless you continually refresh us with the river called the Holy Spirit.

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