

Living Orthodoxy

by Jim Cymbala

The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us direction, order, and power to do the work of God, and we need to be open to his voice and leading to be effective in our witness and commitment to God.

Duration: 23:29

Topics: "Orthodoxy"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of coming to the altar as a place of surrender to God. He encourages the congregation to ask God to separate and send them to spread the gospel, both near and far. The preacher also emphasizes the need for boldness and a radical commitment to God. He uses the example of Paul and Barnabas, who were sent by the Holy Spirit and the church to preach the gospel. The sermon concludes with a call for the congregation to pray for open doors and opportunities to share the message of Jesus.

Transcript

We read last Tuesday how they prayed when they were persecuted that God would help them and grant them boldness to speak and back them up when they spoke with a manifestation of his power. I want you to read this simply now with me here and then it will be a remark or two because we wanna pray. Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas Simeon, called the black man, Lucius from Cyrene, Manan, the childhood companion of King Herod, Antipas, and Saul, who would later become Paul.

One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them. So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way. So Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit.

They went down to the seaport of Seleucia and then sailed for the island of Cyprus, which is in the Mediterranean. There in the town of Salamis, they went to the Jewish synagogues and preached the word of God. Word of God here always means in the book of Acts, the good news of Jesus.

They weren't doing exposition of Old Testament verses, they were telling them the good news of Christ. John Mark, where we get our book of Mark, went with them as their assistant. Afterward, they traveled from town to town across the entire island until finally they reached Paphos, where they met a Jewish sorcerer, a false prophet named Bar-Jesus.

He had attached himself to the governor, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man. Here's an odd thing, the governor invited Barnabas and Saul to visit him for he wanted to hear the word of God, i.e., he wanted to hear the message about Jesus. But Elymas, the sorcerer, as his name means in Greek, not just Bar-Jesus, but Elymas, he interfered and urged the governor to pay no attention to what Barnabas and Saul said.

Here's a key sentence. He was trying to keep the governor from believing. Saul, also known as Paul, this is where his name is changed, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked at the sorcerer in the eye, and then he said, you son of the devil, full of every sort of deceit and fraud and the enemy of all that is good, will you never stop perverting the true ways of the Lord? Watch now, for the Lord has laid his hand of punishment upon you, and you will be struck blind.

You will not see the sunlight for some time. Instantly, mist and darkness came over the man's eyes, and he began groping around, begging for someone to take his hand and lead him. When the governor saw what had happened, he became a believer, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord.

I want you to just notice here, this is right to the point. God help me to be succinct and terse in my remarks. When we are doing the Lord's work, the work of the Lord, we have to not only depend on the Holy Spirit, but we have to expect him to do what he said he would do.

Whenever we're doing the spreading of the gospel work, whenever you're telling someone about Jesus, you are now drawing the promised help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was not sent to give us good meetings among Christians, and he does come and he strengthens us, and I thank God for that. But he was given so that we would be empowered to spread the good news of Jesus, spread truth, spread the gospel, wherever, in Korea, here, wherever.

I want you to notice, though, what we're so unused to, because it says as they were worshiping and praising God, the Holy Spirit said. It's so casual that we miss its significance. When Jesus was on earth, he said certain things.

He left and he said, I'm gonna send a spirit, he'll replace me. And just like Jesus said certain things, the Spirit says certain things. The Spirit said.

This was not a doctrinal statement. All doctrine and all truth for our faith is found in the scripture, and you cannot add or take away. How many say amen? Amen.

But notice when you're doing God's work, you need directions. When Jesus was on earth, he gave directions to his disciples. He said, go out two by two into these towns, and here's what you do, and don't do this and do that.

Those aren't for us to follow. I don't live in the Middle East. I'm not going to those towns.

We don't go two by two. Billy Graham never went two by two. That was the word for them at that time.

Jesus gave it, they obeyed it. Now he was gone. He's seated at the right hand of the Father, but he sent the Holy Spirit, and we're so unused to that language that it just like almost, we bypass it, because it makes us nervous, because so many of us have grown up in a church that downplays the third person of the Trinity.

The Father is a person. He sent his son into the world. Jesus is a person.

He died on the cross. The Holy Spirit is as much a person as Jesus is. He's just invisible to us, but he's just as much a person.

Jesus spoke about him as a he. When he comes, he will guide you into all truth. In another part of the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit told Philip, the evangelist, when he was all by himself in the desert, go join yourself to that chariot.

Go over in that chariot. That's not a word of doctrine. That doesn't refute anything from Scripture, but it was the word that he needed to hear.

So now the Spirit speaks in the church. How? Through the gifts of the Spirit, or definitely not by an audible voice, but most likely through the gifts of the Spirit. The Spirit says, Barnabas and Saul, I want them to go and do some work for me.

Separate them for the work that I've called them to do. The Holy Spirit has, he's a person with a will, and he expresses himself. Usually in the Bible, he's always lifting up Jesus and extolling Jesus, and he doesn't mention himself much in this book, even though the book was written by him, and he's the best teacher of the book, better than any human teacher.

The Holy Spirit will teach you what his book says. He wrote this book. Men wrote it, but they were moved upon by the Holy Spirit.

So we love to celebrate that the father loved the world and gave his son. We love to celebrate Jesus dying on the cross. We just remembered that.

But very, very, very few minuscule churches now honor the Holy Spirit. Many of them are acting atheists. They're doctrinally sound, but they deny the person of the Holy Spirit.

They don't want him. They don't want him to speak and lead. They have their own plans.

They have their own committees. They have their own presbytery. They have their own discussions.

And to be simple and childlike and follow his directions is not something that is happening much around the world today, in the Western world especially. China might be very much different than that. So the Holy Spirit just said, see, he gives orders.

When Jesus left, he put him in charge of the church. No pastor's in charge of the Christian church. The Holy Spirit is in charge of the Christian church.

No apostle, no pope, no committee, no denominational leaders are in charge of anything. The Holy Spirit was put in place to administer the Christian church. We're not supposed to make decisions except we try to find the mind of Christ through the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

So the Holy Spirit just said, Bill and John, I want you to go and do something. And they just took it like, yeah, that's what Jesus said would happen. To us, it's like strange.

It's just foreign to us. Now, some of you that are visiting, you grew up in churches that preach against fanaticism and weird things that are done in the name of the Holy Spirit, and we're with you on that. But

you've thrown out the baby with the bathwater.

By guarding against heresy and fanaticism, you've denied the real person of the Holy Spirit. So now all you're left with is the Bible without the Holy Spirit teaching it. It gets very dry.

And meetings are very dry and predictable. But that's all certain people have known for 100, 200 years. Go to church.

Nothing like what happened in the New Testament. Nothing at all like it. There's no indication meetings were just run in some kind of scripted way.

They were open to the Holy Spirit. Here as they were worshiping, they were open and guess what? He spoke. Forget how he speaks.

Different ways, different times. But he spoke. And notice it's not a doctrinal word.

It's a personal, directive word. Barnabas, Saul, leave to a work I've called you to do. So they leave.

Notice that he called them to work. And I want to just reiterate that now. What Jesus said is needed today.

The fields are ripe unto harvest. What is few? Laborers, workers, people who want to work. With all due respect, going through a praise and worship service here at the church, hearing the choir sing, that's not work.

That's a blessing. Having a Bible study with me last Thursday night, that's not work. Maybe work for me.

Maybe work for the choir when they sing. Because they're trying to communicate a message. But that's not work.

That's a blessing. Work is to go out and face people who don't know Jesus and try to get a breakthrough. And spread the gospel with them.

How many are with me? Clap your hands so far, okay? That's the work. Obviously, that sweet lady with her children was called by God to go to China. Somehow she felt God speaking to her and say, separate me.

Her, I don't know her situation. But there she is over in China trying to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. But whether you do it in your neighborhood or wherever, the Holy Spirit is the one who sends us and gives us openings to do the work.

Just keep your eye on the Holy Spirit in this. So they leave now, sent off by the Holy Spirit and the church. So there's a double witness.

The church said, yay and amen to what the Holy Spirit had said. So now they're sent off, Saul and Barnabas and Saul, and they're with John Mark, who's an assistant. And they're traveling through the island and they get to a place where the Roman governor, Rome is the dominant empire at that time, and they're controlling that island.

So the governor is there in Paphos, and God, which they must have prayed for before they sent him off, which we're gonna pray now. They must have prayed, God, give us an open door. Give Barnabas and Saul an open door to preach because God can open doors.

What does that mean? Opportunities. The person says something, whoop, that's a door. Or you're invited to go somewhere and tell us your story.

There's an open door, right? They were always looking for open doors and we have to look for open doors. And we gotta pray for open doors. How many would like some open doors from the Spirit to get the message of Jesus across? So the door opens, why? The governor says to them, come, I wanna hear you talk.

I wanna hear about this message about Jesus Christ that I hear you've been talking throughout and all around here. I wanna hear what this is all about. He's running Cyprus for the Roman empire, but there's this open door that the Spirit has made, but as usually happens, for every open door, there's an attack of Satan.

For every open door, there's a blockage from Satan. What kind of blockage? In this case, it's always different, but in this case, it's a man, a witch, or someone pretends to have supernatural powers. His name is Elimus, let's leave it at that.

And Elimus sees that the Roman governor, who has influence, wants to hear the message, so he tries to turn him away from believing in Jesus Christ. So always remember this. When you and I are witnessing for Jesus, we should look for open doors, but we should also be aware that there is most likely gonna be something, some element, some force trying to turn people away from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That's the way it works. Now it says, and then Saul, who was called Paul, it was at this moment where his name was changed, and now his name goes always first. His name goes before Barnabas.

The whole story, it's always Barnabas first, because Barnabas was an older Christian. But just because you're older in the Lord doesn't make you more powerful in the Lord. Saul had some special gifting from God, so his name now becomes Paul at this moment.

And now, from now on, it's Paul and Barnabas. And Paul, this man is gonna write a good number of the books in the New Testament. So it says, full of the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit shows him what to do.

Listen now. Whenever you and I are facing obstacles, open doors from God, but at the same time, a blockage from the devil, we have to ask the Holy Spirit, even while we're going through it, pray in your spirit, pray under your breath. Holy Spirit, show me what to do.

Whatever the problem is, the Holy Spirit knows what you're supposed to do. Whatever the problem is, there's always an answer. Talk, be quiet, walk away.

It's not the moment. There's always an answer. And in this case, the answer was a Lulu.

The Holy Spirit reveals to Paul something that God is gonna do to help them. Because remember, they had prayed. Now, God, in the early church, God, as we go and do your work, you gotta back us up.

You gotta show your power. It just can't be our zeal and our enthusiasm and even the right message. As we speak your word, you stretch out your hand and do something that people will know like, wow, this Jesus is alive.

How many get it? Say amen. Amen. So now we're gonna see the fulfillment of that.

Paul is doing the work. Barnabas is doing the work. An open door comes, whammo.

Now the enemy throws a roadblock in. Now what to do? And God backs them up and shows Saul. The only way he could have said what he said is that the Holy Spirit showed him something that was about to happen.

That's called a word of knowledge, usually, in the New Testament writings. So he gets a word of knowledge that God is about to do something. And he says, imagine how you have to be sure that God is speaking to you.

He looks right at the guy in front of Sergius Paulus. He says, you son of the devil. Full of mischief.

You evil, cunning, sly fox. That's my version. It's a Polish version of that.

You're always lying and trying to twist the ways of the Lord. But behold, you're not gonna see for a while. How could he know that? How could he possibly know that unless you believe in the power of the Holy Spirit? You might be here today and say, God doesn't do that anymore.

Listen, according to your faith, so be it unto you. But as for me and my house, come on, we believe the Holy Spirit is still alive. He's still alive.

Come on, he's still alive. Holy Spirit, we praise you. We honor you.

You're not gonna see for a while as a judgment from God because you're trying to block what we're trying to do with this man. And sure enough, the guy couldn't see. Now, no one has ever been given power to make people blind.

In the New Testament era, no one in church can just say, I don't like you. You're not a deacon that I really appreciate. You're gonna be blind for three or four months, then we'll talk, okay? How many are happy nobody has that power? A lot of us would be walking around like that, I'm afraid.

No, God showed him, the Spirit showed him. The Spirit can, oh, amazing things. He'll come when you do God's work.

He will come when you do God's work. You sit around and just talk to Christians, why would he come? I said to my wife, I'm going into a new like understanding of things in my heart and in mind. And I said, Carol, just think of all the meetings that we grew up around.

Pray, oh Lord, send the Holy Ghost, send the Spirit right now. But it wasn't to do anything, just to have a good service. Come on, Marie, you grew up the same way.

Just come Holy Spirit, why? We wanna feel you, we wanna be encouraged. And he does come and he's so gracious, but that's not why he was, that's not why he came. He's a person.

He came to help us witness for Jesus. He came to help us do the work of the Lord. What's the work of the Lord? Spread the gospel and then when someone gets converted, work them through it, disciple them, pray with them, fight the devil with them, cry with them, laugh with them, work it through, then win some more.

You can't do that without the Holy Spirit. Can you have church? Yep. Can you direct a choir or form a choir and have a one hour meeting that's all just programmed like a box? Yep, you can have that without the Holy Spirit.

But win souls? No way. Takes the power of God. Overcome the darkness of the evil one that he puts, blinds people.

I wanna just charge you this. If you wanna be used by God, we gotta be open to his voice and leading and prompting and we gotta give him immediate obedience. When he said, separate me Barnabas and Saul, no one looked around and said, did he really say that? Is that true? What are we gonna leave everything? Where are we going? He didn't say.

He just said, go. Should we go? I don't know, should we vote? No, he said it. He said, don't vote.

He said, go. How many are radical enough believers that you believe the Holy Spirit still does those kinds of things, right? Knock on the door, call someone at a given moment, whatever. It works in many different ways.

How many say amen to this? You wanna be more open to the Holy Spirit. Come on, say an amen. And now listen, when he speaks and opens the door and he tells you what to do, we gotta ask God for grace tonight.

We're gonna obey. Will it be hard sometimes? I know, but he'll give grace. You never know until you step out what God can do.

This is the downfall of so many churches. Never gonna step out and do something we can't do that's dangerous, never gonna confront the world where it is, but oh God, come and do a new thing in our church. Why? If you don't wanna do his work, why would he send the Holy Spirit? No, the Holy Spirit is for people who wanna make a difference.

Would you bow your heads with me? Anybody who's under 30 years old who wants to make a difference on this earth for Jesus, and my words from scripture have touched your heart, and you wanna surrender yourself anew to the Holy Spirit and say, here I am, Holy Spirit. Get out of your seat and just come up here. Anyone under 30 years old first, come on.

Just get out of your seat. Care for your 14, 29, 30. Come to the altar.

Altar is a place to surrender. Come down from the balcony. Father God, separate us, send us, open doors for us so that we can tell people about Jesus.

Send us near, send us far. But we wanna hear your voice sending us. Give us boldness where we've been shy.

Help us not to fear the face of man. But to be radical in our commitment to you, Lord. Start with me, do a new work, Lord.

Do a new work in my life so that I can spread your gospel. Just like we pray, every eye closed, just like we prayed before. We're gonna end by every man, whether you're in the audience and you're beyond 30 years old, woman, or up here in the front with our teens and 20-something.

Turn and get a guy. If you're a guy, get a girl, get a girl partner. If you're a man, get a man partner.

Woman, get a woman partner. And let's just pray out loud for each other right now. Don't wait, both pray out loud.

God, make us men and women of the Holy Spirit, men and women of the gospel. Help us to reproduce what we just read about, Lord. By your grace, by your power.

Make us Holy Spirit people, Lord. Filled by the Spirit, led by the Spirit, inspired by the Spirit. Pray.

Use us. Use us, fill us. Send us.

Equip us. Speak through us. You are welcome in this place.

Lord, let's give God a hand clap loud of praise. God, we pray that the group from Kentucky will be blessed and get home safely. And friends from Pennsylvania, Teen Challenge, Korea, wherever they might be visiting from, God, all these different groups, Staten Island, we thank you for them.

Get us home safely and open the door for us to talk for you. Tonight, tomorrow on the job, this week, to share love, to invite to church, to share Jesus, to pray for, encourage. Let us be your hand extended.

And we're gonna depend on you, Holy Spirit. Do your work. Do your work in us and through us because we're spreading the good name of Jesus.

Thank you, God, for all your goodness. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen. Turn around and hug a bunch of people.

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