

Our Top Priority

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon emphasizes the importance of asking for the Holy Spirit as the ultimate gift from God, encouraging believers to have faith in God's desire to bless them.

Duration: 19:06

Scripture: Luke 11:13, Acts 1:8, Romans 8:26, 1 Corinthians 2:10-11, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 3:16, Ephesians 5:18

Topics: "Priorities"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares personal stories of the devastating effects of alcoholism in his family. He emphasizes that those who contribute to leading others into a life of addiction will be held responsible by God. The speaker then highlights the importance of the Holy Spirit in the Christian faith, stating that without the Holy Spirit, believers are helpless. He emphasizes that the spread of the gospel in different countries is dependent on people being filled with the Holy Spirit. The speaker concludes by warning against the dangers of alcohol and urges listeners to avoid it.

Transcript

Jesus said in the book of Luke, if you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? Jesus is teaching here in the context of prayer. This is in the context of asking and seeking and knocking. And He's encouraging people to believe.

His disciples, those who are gonna believe in Him and trust Him, He's trying to engender faith in us. So He gives a human example of a family. Now, some people here that I'm conscious of right now, as I said that, had fathers or mothers that weren't very kind and charitable and didn't give you much.

But the typical situation is a dad, a mom, loves to give good gifts to their children, wanna see their children prosper. First thing Jesus is saying is, if you are evil compared to God, if you, out of love for your offspring, give gifts, how much more will your heavenly Father give gifts to you? How many follow it, say amen. And that should make for confidence now as we pray for ourselves.

To not believe that God will help us is to say we're better parents than God is. To wonder if, I wonder if this will happen. Jesus said that's wrong, because if you being evil give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give a good gift to the child? We're here today to pray, and when we pray, and by the way, you really gotta come and join us at 12 noon here on Tuesdays.

I think this was the largest number of ever people we've ever had here come and pray, and some are coming for 15 minutes, some are coming for the whole hour, some are coming for a half hour. Some come and then go, but there had to be way over 100 people that were in and out of this building or sitting at the end when we kinda joined together and prayed. But when we prayed, I agreed with a bunch of the folks here for their requests, and I said, God, we didn't meet here to do nothing.

We met here to ask you for something, and if we're gonna ask you, and we know we're asking according to the will of God, we know that you hear us, and you're gonna answer. We have to have faith when we pray, and we have to have faith in a father's heart. A father wants to give good gifts to the children.

So as we pray tonight, remember, the father doesn't give the gift to the child because the child's been perfect. No child is perfect. But the father gives the gift to the child because of his love for the child.

How many are happy God loves us today and wants to give us something? Lift up your hand. Well, look, we met here tonight. Either God wants to give us something tonight or he doesn't wanna give us something tonight.

There's no, the bug is on the rug or the bug is not on the rug. There's no third option. Either God wants to give good gifts to his children or he doesn't wanna give good gifts to his children.

Everything in Scripture tells us he wants to give good gifts to his children. Notice one other thing before I get to the main point is it's a gift. It doesn't say that the child put in a 40-hour week at the post office, and then the post office pays you the check.

That's not a gift. That's a salary. If you do anything for what God is gonna do for you, then you've lost out on the meaning of a gift.

Even prayer doesn't earn the gift. Prayer is just the hand, the prayer of faith. It's just the hand that receives the gift.

If you have to do anything, it's no longer a gift. You know, I have a gift for you. Oh, thank you.

No, before you do that, you gotta cook me a meal. Well, then that's not a gift. That's payment for a meal.

It's a gift. It comes from a Heavenly Father who loves us far more than Pastor Petri loves his three precious children, and I can assure you he loves them. So it's a gift, can't be earned.

It comes from a Heavenly Father, and don't make yourself and me, don't make us more loving than our God. There's much teaching, even in good circles, that brings in a subtle legalism that stops us from believing. That's why sometimes new Christians and children get more from God than people who have been around for 10, 15, 20 years, because we get into an earning kind of thing.

If I do this, he'll do that. Well, then it's not a gift, is it? Then it's you're earning something. But notice, as he's talking, Matthew has a good gift to those who ask him, but notice how Luke records, as he researches probably through a lot of interviews with Peter, notice what he says Jesus said on this occasion.

If you being evil, being human, not like God, if you love your children enough to give them good gifts, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask him? The thought came to me, when was the last time someone of us asked God, the Father, for more of the Holy Spirit? We ask him for a job, we ask him for a car, we ask him for healing, but what's a better gift than God himself, God the Holy

Spirit? What could be greater than that? We pray for things. God says, I want you to ask for me, myself. I'll give you myself through the Holy Spirit.

Not only is the Holy Spirit the greatest gift that God has for us, because it's God himself, it's at the crux of salvation. Jesus died 2,000 years ago to pay the penalty for our sin, but once you put your faith in Jesus, the other part of this glorious salvation is not just forgiveness of sin. Jesus brought another element in, and when he spoke of the Spirit, you must be born what? Again, born of the water and of the Spirit, born naturally and supernaturally, and what is that new birth that gives us a new heart and a new mind? It's the work of the Holy Spirit coming into our lives.

So as the Bible tells us, no one can be a Christian unless the Holy Spirit has come to live inside of them. And what Jesus did on the cross had to be done so the vessel could be cleansed so that the Holy Spirit could come and live inside of us. The vessel first has to be cleansed, and it took the blood of the Son of God to do it, to cleanse our hearts.

And now that we've been made clean through the blood of Jesus Christ, simultaneously, as it were, the Holy Spirit comes to reside inside of us. How does he live with all these different Christians inside of us? I don't know. Don't even think about it.

Just know that we are temples of the Holy Spirit. How many say amen to that? The Holy Spirit lives inside of us. The greatest gift you can ever get from God is not a new suit or a new sofa, but it's God himself.

So how does that work? Obviously, there are degrees to which people are filled with the Spirit or experience the Spirit. And this is proven by this verse written to Christians. Ephesians 5, verse 18.

Do not get drunk on wine. And by the way, can I just stop here? I wanna say something to everybody. Listen up.

Don't hang around Christians who drink alcohol. There is a new trend now. I just heard about this.

I'm gonna write about it in my book. I was debating on it, and then my wife told me something out of the blue, and then I heard something else. A church in the city here, one of these trendy churches, who have an open bar during the baptismal services.

No, no, don't laugh. That's something to cry about. Great praise and worship and then an open bar.

Something's wrong with that. So listen, I wanna just tell you some that you have liberty and all of that. I don't wanna argue about drinking wine with a meal, although I would in this country with billions and billions and billions of dollars lost to the economy because of alcoholism.

But I don't wanna talk about that. Jesus changed the water into wine. Some say it was grape juice.

I don't believe it was grape juice because the Bible says here, don't be filled with wine where it's in excess. If it was grape juice, you could have all you want. How many say amen? So it was wine, and you gotta be careful of it.

But I'm not talking about that. The current trend now in America in two theological seminaries that I just heard of in the Midwest, professors, leaders came to me and said, they've just dropped the prohibition against the faculty drinking socially. I'm talking vodka.

I'm talking about hard stuff. I wanna tell you something. Listen, any of you that dabble in that or think that you're having your freedom and you're not gonna come under any bondage, my dad went to one party, one office party, and was offered one drink.

And my mother's here tonight. She was beat off and on for 22 years because of one drink. He lost his job and his self-respect.

He never made it to my wedding because someone offered him one drink, and that was his weakness. His grandfather, my grandfather, was an alcoholic before that and attacked my mother with a knife when I was about four years old. So if you are part of anything that draws anyone into that kind of life, God will hold you responsible.

Oh, yes, he will. Who would he hold responsible? Didn't Jesus say if you cause one of these little ones to stumble and to sin, it would be better if a millstone were put around your neck and you were thrown in the bottom of the sea? So there's this new, and especially with the younger age Christians who are like, we're not corny with all those rules. I'm not for rules either.

But listen, let everything be done to edification. You can't give up a drink for Jesus Christ. And don't tell me you have liberty.

What if it stumbles somebody else? We have people in our church here. We're former alcoholics. What if they're invited to a baptismal service and someone offers them a drink? Are you serious? And they get caught back into that spiral? Listen, you're looking an alcoholic son, okay? This stuff is like dynamite.

I don't touch anything because I don't know what's in me. I can justify stuff from the Bible just like you could. I don't touch it because I don't know what's in me.

Pastor Petri, his whole family is like that. Who knows what's in us? Why would we want to dabble with that? That was all for free. That has nothing to do with all my sermon.

But that just, I'm gonna write about it. And I don't care who attacks. I'm gonna write about it because it's the right thing.

Will you all protect me when they come from me? You got my back? Sylvia, you got my back? Okay. Getting back to our verse. Don't be filled with wine.

That just came to me then because of something that I've just been learning about that's just so horrific. We gotta get the word out to our young people and transitions age and everybody else. Don't flaunt your liberty around us because you could be used by Satan to pull someone down into a pit.

Well, but that's our culture. Hey, drop your culture. Drop everything that would hurt anybody else.

Can we all put our hands together and say amen to that? When I think of what my mother went through, she's a better person by far than I am. What she went through because one person offered one drink. One drink, one drink, just one.

Don't be filled with drunk on wine which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the spirit. Notice, be filled with the spirit.

If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask him? Now it goes further. Be filled with the spirit. What does that mean? It's likened to alcohol.

When you get drunk, what is the alcohol doing in your life? It's controlling you. What does the Bible say God wants for all of us? Is to be controlled, not by wine, not by vodka, but by the spirit. The fullness of the spirit means to be controlled.

The spirit isn't a water or a gas that you fill up in a container. That's just imagery. He's a person.

He wants to not just be in us, he wants to take control of us. Our minds, our tongues, our eyes, everything about us. Speaking to one another.

Notice what's linked with spirit-filled living. Speaking to one another with psalms and hymns and songs from the, oh, isn't that good? Song, see, the King James has something like spiritual songs with a small S, but the real meaning of the Greek there is songs that come from the capital S. Songs that the Holy Spirit gives. God can give you a song.

You can sing Dios ha sido bueno, but then you can just be alone sometime in the shower or driving and start singing whatever song the Holy Spirit gives you. How many believe in it still today, right? The songs that the spirit gives. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.

There's soulful music, there's sensual music, and then there's spiritual music. And the music is linked to being filled with the spirit, controlled by the spirit. When you're controlled by the spirit, you wanna sing to God.

When you're living carnal, there'll be no song in your heart. Come on, how many have found that in your own life? Am I right? I've had periods of time years ago when I just caught myself, and it's like the Lord reminded me, you haven't sung for two or three days, but oh, when God's working in your life, you're singing, and it sounds good, right, to you? I don't have a good voice, but it sounds good to me when I sing. I can't get in the choir, but I can have my own little, why do we need to ask God for the spirit? Why do we need to be filled with the spirit? How about this? There's no way you can have joy and peace and patience and kindness except the spirit produces it in you.

For the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, meekness, kindness, temperance, self-control, all of that. It all comes from the spirit. Notice it's not you.

It's the fruit of the spirit growing in you. You can't teach love. What a silly thought.

You can talk about love. You can't teach kindness. Oh, I'm gonna go to that seminar and learn to be kind.

No, you'll learn about kindness. Only God can make you kind. When you're controlled by the Holy Spirit, you can get real kind.

To experience the joy of the Lord, the peace that passes all understanding, these are all linked in the New Testament to the Holy Spirit. The evangelical church, especially over the last 100, 150 years, has totally de-spirited the New Testament. We've made Christianity into a teaching religion.

Teaching is involved, but oh my, without the Holy Ghost, without the Holy Spirit, we are helpless. Do I get a witness here? We are helpless, so helpless. Like Jesus said, without me you can do nothing.

Number two, the church will never spread. The gospel will never spread in Ethiopia. The gospel will never spread in Iran.

The gospel will never spread in Syria unless people are filled with the Holy Spirit. So, for you shall receive power when the Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be my witnesses. Notice the linkage.

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and then you're gonna be witnesses for me everywhere. To experience joy and peace, it's the Spirit. To be bold, to understand scriptures, to be able to discern what people are going through so you can minister to them, to be able to counsel people, you need the Holy Spirit.

To read the Bible and understand it, you need the Holy Spirit. To keep going and fighting the devil every day, you need the Spirit. Strengthen your heart.

Always, everything that Paul prays about, read his prayers in the New Testament. I pray, I bow on my knees that God, by his Spirit, might strengthen you in the inner person. No, Paul, teach them to be strong.

No, I can't teach them to be strong. God can make them strong. I can teach them that they need to be strong, but I can't make them strong.

Only God can make you strong, because all power belongs to God. So here's what we're gonna do now. We're gonna lay hands on you, walk among you, and just, we're gonna spend time for you to ask God, God, I want more of the Holy Spirit.

Bow your head with me, no one moving. God, I want more of the Holy Spirit. What's more important? You race home, or you spend time with God, and you ask him, God, fill me with the Holy Spirit.

God, give me the good gift. It's a gift. No, pastor, I'm not ready for it.

I'm not what I should be. It's a gift. Don't you get it? The Holy Spirit makes you what you ought to be.

You don't wait till you are what you should be to ask for the Holy Spirit. You come just the way you are. You say, Lord, I'm a child.

Give me this gift. Give me a greater measure of the gift. I wanna be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

I wanna be led by the Holy Spirit. I want the illumination in my mind of the Holy Spirit. Just come out of your seat if you're hungry.

We're not gonna race. We're not gonna rush. We're gonna just stand for a while.

Anybody here wanna come? Just come up. Father, we pray for all of those that are picking up children. We pray that they'll have a good day in school tomorrow, all of our children.

We ask that you'll get us all home safely. But God, the prayer meeting doesn't end when we leave here because you're as close as the mention of your name, Lord. Visit us when we lay in our bed tonight or when we wake up in the morning.

And fill us every day more and more with your Holy Spirit. Now, Lord, let your face shine upon your people and give them shalom, peace. We pray this in Jesus' name.

And everyone said? Amen. Hug somebody. God bless you.

The Lord be with you.

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