

The Power of Fire

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala emphasizes the transformative power of the Holy Spirit, symbolized by fire, to purify, guide, and ignite passion in believers' lives.

Duration: 24:41

Scripture: Genesis 1:1, Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 3:11, Matthew 6:33, Luke 5:1-11, Romans 6:23

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the need for a revival of the fire of the Holy Spirit in Christianity. He criticizes the intellectualization and marketing techniques that have infiltrated the church, leading to a lack of true consecration and passion for God. The speaker shares his experiences in Poland and New England, where he witnessed the same need for revival among pastors and churches. He references Matthew 3:11, highlighting the power of Jesus to baptize believers with the Holy Spirit and fire, and urges the congregation to pray for the fire of God to fall upon them.

Transcript

I was up in Massachusetts last Thursday to speak at a banquet for CBD, the Christian Book Distributors. It was their 10th anniversary. I did the first one 10 years ago, and now they had all these different speakers, and they had me back.

They had pastors from Maine all the way down to Connecticut. Again, it's shocking because of the way the landscape has changed because of the opioid crisis that's going on, and now the overdoses are happening everywhere. But in New England, in states that weren't known for drug abuse, it's now just a disaster.

So talking to these pastors, asked them questions, felt their hearts while I was speaking, and I came away realizing that the need they have, same need that I felt two weeks before whenever I was in Poland with hundreds of ministers. In Poland, where there's 700 cities of one size or another, and there's Christian churches that preach the gospel in 144. So almost 600 have no Christian witness.

It's the Roman Catholic Church. Great mission feels, but I saw the pastor, same feeling I had there, same feeling I know from doing the work of the Lord now, the years I've been doing it. It's all here.

Matthew 3, 11, look at it. I baptize you with water for repentance, but after me comes one who's more powerful than I, speaking of Jesus, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry, and that sandals I'm not worthy to carry has to speak of what a servant did. So what he doesn't mean sandals literally, but what he's saying is for that day, I'm not even worthy to be his servant, much less be over him.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. I baptize you with water for repentance. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

John the Baptist baptized people in water in the Jordan River. They were immersed in the water, and that was a sign that they had turned to God and that they were expecting the Messiah that John was talking about. The day of the Lord is at hand.

The Messiah is coming. When he comes, I'm not worthy to be compared with him. I can't even be his servant because I baptize in water, but he baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Fire is used here not as a separate thing from the Holy Spirit, but as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. It's a word of emphasis. This is often done in the Hebrew Scriptures, but also in the New Testament.

Holy Spirit and fire. In other words, Holy Spirit symbolized by fire. And as you know in the Bible, God has manifest himself and used the symbol of fire and used fire to do many things.

We can think of some verses of the essence of God. Our God is a consuming what? Fire. When the Israelites were in the wilderness, they were led at night by a pillar of fire.

At the judgment seat of Christ, when all of us stand before the Lord and have to give an account for the quality of the work we've done for him, starting most with me and the leaders here, every man's work will be tested by fire. Fire is a symbol here of the Holy Spirit. And without a doubt, for this church, for me, for the deacons, deaconesses, pastors, Poland, New England, everywhere, the greatest need we have is a fresh baptism of fire.

El fuego. The fire. Notice that God symbolizes his baptism, the empowerment, the possession of us by the Holy Spirit as a baptism of fire.

Now the Holy Spirit is symbolized elsewhere in the Bible by water, right? Jesus spoke and said on the last day, the great day of the feast, if any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink and out of his belly shall flow what? Rivers of what? Living what? Living water. He spoke this of the Spirit which had not been given yet because Jesus had not yet been glorified. So water is a symbol.

Oil is a symbol. Everything was anointed in the Old Testament by oil. The anointing is symbolized by oil.

Another symbol is wind. In fact, the same word for breath and wind is the same word there and spirit so that the wind of God, the wind speaking of the Spirit, Jesus said the wind blows wherever it wants. So these are symbols where we can learn about the Holy Spirit.

The wind is unpredictable. You don't know how the Holy Spirit will work. I just want to leave this with you so we can pray because this is where I'm at.

But I've been here ever since I went in the ministry. When I had 15 people in the church on Atlantic Avenue when I began and two or three people on a Tuesday night, I knew what I needed. I read enough in the scriptures and know enough about church history is that churches have to be touched by the fire.

Pastors have to be touched and invaded by God's fire, i.e. the Holy Spirit. Machinery, we've got plenty all over the country, even in Poland. Fire is another thing.

You can be an orator and know a lot of verses but you can put people to sleep unless you've been touched by the fire. Preachers need fire. The tongues that came on the early believers in Acts chapter 2, they weren't tongues of water, they were tongues of what? Tongues of fire.

So that's the need everywhere you go. And that message is very hard now to be received because Christianity has gotten very intellectualized and sophisticated and Madison Avenue and marketing techniques have invaded so that preachers now are studying the art of communication, how to win the crowd over, how to be persuasive. And even when they talk about consecration, this is especially so with young people and with millennial generation and adults of all ages, when they talk about consecration, really it's just a new dedication of trying harder in yourself.

But it has nothing to do with the fire. You know, like, say yes to God. Come on, just dig down deep and say, I'm going to really do this better than I've ever done, which of course is not what Christianity is about.

When he comes, Jesus, he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. So just listen here as I wrap this up. Important things.

First of all, fire purifies. When you're invaded by fire, your life is purified. Sin can't live with fire.

Cannot. You can know you're living wrong, dig at it, search, go inside, get a psychotherapist, a Christian psychologist, get one of us pastors to talk to you. All you need is a big fire to go off inside of you.

Because fire purifies. It has been said, if you have a piece of gold and the gold is dirty and you get some water, some soap, and you start to try to clean, and you go, whoa, this dirt is not on the outside of the gold. This dirt is in the gold.

How'd that happen? So you know the only way to clean it. Put it in the fire. The fire will melt it down, get out the dirt, and when it comes back together again, it's pure, shiny gold.

That's what they need on the reservation. That's what people need in Massachusetts with this percocets and all this other stuff. Or racial prejudice, or immorality, or pornography.

Fight it, talk about it, resist it, and all of that. The flesh will just laugh at you. But let the fire, oh my goodness.

Also what the fire does is before it purifies, it reveals who you really are. When you have an encounter with the fire of the Holy Spirit, you're humbled because you see who you really are. Wherever you see Christians or preachers parading around like they don't need God, and they're strutting around like a peacock, they just need the fire.

Because the fire takes away all the junk on the outside, all the cardboard and the coverings we have over ourselves, and it reveals who you are. And then you lament, you're humbled, you cry, oh God, have mercy on me. Nobody can convince you of that.

Only the Holy Spirit can do that. The fire reveals and then purifies. So if you're here today and you want to be more like Jesus, you need the Spirit of Jesus.

That makes sense. How would you ever, how would I ever be like Jesus without the Spirit of Jesus? And that Spirit of Jesus is the fire, is the Holy Spirit. Coming, breaking away, burning up Jim Cimbala and all his corrupt ways and all his selfishness and all his pride and all his whatever, and then just stripping me of everything so that there's nothing left but Jesus.

How many would like that fire more in your life? No, lift your hand high so that I know we're together. And it's for all of us. The other thing that fire does is fire gives light.

For most of the history of this world, the day started when the sun came up and the day ended when the sun went down. For most of the history of this world. You and I know nothing of that, because we're born in the era of electricity.

But centuries and centuries and centuries. When the sun went down, forget about it. It's dark.

Oh yeah, you could light a fire. Fire could give light. But you had to depend on fire.

Thomas Edison hadn't come around yet. No lamps, nothing like that. So you needed fire meant to give them light.

That's why at night the Israelites were led by a pillar of fire. Why? Fire shows you where you're going. Fire provides light.

On the darkest night just get a big bonfire and you'll know where you are, you'll know where it's dangerous. And that's what the Holy Spirit does. When you're baptized with fire, this book is open to you.

And you get light on the scripture. I don't care if you dropped out in the third grade. You'll read it better than a theologian.

Because the Holy Spirit is giving you light. You're just getting it. You're understanding it.

And I've read this book, truth be told, when it's been hard for me because the Spirit wasn't helping me because of my own fault. And then when I've read it at times where every few sentences there were things popping up in my heart and my mind like I never saw that, I never saw that. How many have ever had the Holy Spirit show you something in scripture that you never saw before and you know, where did I get that? No, he provides light.

He gives you light. If you're here also not only about scripture, always pray, Holy Spirit teach me as I read today. Read your word every day, but ask the Holy Spirit, even in a sentence, calm your heart, say Holy Spirit, give me light.

You wrote this, teach it to me now. Give me light. Give me instructions.

Be that lamp, be that light. Not only in scripture, but to guide me on what path I should go on. I mean all these decisions, what should I do? Should I talk? Should I not talk? This, that, the other.

Oh God, Holy Spirit, be the light that shows me what to do. When to go to the right, when to go to the left, when to be quiet, when to say no, when to say yes, just show me. God will do that because he said Jesus will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire, and fire gives light when everything seems dark.

It'll never be dark when the Holy Spirit comes. Thirdly, the Holy Spirit is symbolized by fire because fire makes things warm. I remember being in Argentina where my friends are from.

I was in the city of Mar del Plata, and Mar del Plata is like the Miami Beach of Argentina, and during December, January, February, March, everybody goes there like a resort. But I was there in like September or August, and it wasn't like cold, cold like we know cold. It never snows.

But they don't have heating in the houses where I was, and it was damp and just cold enough that you ever get a cold in your bones and you can't get it out? So I was in this house. I was freezing, but I didn't want to say anything. I was a guest, and I don't want to be an American complaining spoiled brat, so I just, you know, whatever.

And then someone said, Pastor Jim, come on into the living room. We started the fire. Ooh, those were good words to me.

And I went over to that fire, and there the fire was a big old fireplace. And then I went next to the fireplace. After I stood in front of it and it warmed me, I just leaned against the wall next to where the fire was.

And they said, come over and eat some empanadas. No, thank you. I want to just lay against this wall here.

Why? Because fire brings warmth. It makes things glow. Take something cold and hold it, a piece of steel, put it in that fire long enough.

Guess what? It'll be glowing. It won't be cold. It's cold and hard to begin with.

You put it in the fire, that baby is going to be hot, warm, and shining. And that's how it is with Christians. You know what Christians glow? The ones who have been baptized in the fire, controlled by the fire.

They're warm. They're zealous. They're ready.

Yeah, let's do this. Come on. And then when you don't have that fire, everything is, you're depressed all the time.

Everything's so hard. You ever meet Christians like that? Just no glow, no advertisement for Jesus. Why? Now, you can't teach that.

I can't tell people, come on, be zealous, be warm, and all of that. God's the only one who can make us that way. You hear a preacher, you know when he believes what he's talking about, because the fire has been applied, and you know when he's just going through the motions.

The guy's just preaching a sermon. You can tell that in a second. I know every time I speak from here, everybody who's here is watching.

Does he really believe this? Is this in his heart and soul, or is he just preaching a sermon? That's natural. That's the way it is. But oh, when the fire comes, you get warm.

You're zealous. You're not lukewarm. You're not cold.

You're hot. Fuego. Who imparts that? Only the Holy Spirit.

Remember what the old Methodist preacher Chadwick said, Christianity is hopeless without the Holy Spirit. Christianity is not a teaching religion. I'm teaching now, but at the essence, it's a supernatural religion.

Jesus was born of a virgin. How many know that's supernatural? God created everything out of nothing. That's supernatural.

He was raised from the dead. That's supernatural. He bore the sins of the world on them.

That's supernatural. Fishermen and tax collectors who had been failures were changed into mighty men and women of God. That's supernatural.

And when you do away with the supernatural, you got the worst kind of Christianity you can imagine. That's what's happening all over America now and around the world in other parts. Trust me, I go there.

It's all we're going to teach and disciple and reason this thing out. And there's a time for all those things. But without the fire, you're freezing.

You're freezing. I'm freezing. I'm not going to ask you to raise your hands, but I know you've had the same thing I have had.

Times of coldness in your life since you've been a Christian. Maybe you're here tonight and you're cold. I wonder why that could be if you're here in the prayer meeting, but it can happen to all of us.

No, fire purifies, gets the junk out of our lives. You get a new hunger for spiritual things, gets rid of things. You get sensitive about sentences.

You don't say things you would have said before. Other people think something's wrong with you, but they don't know. You've been touched by the fire.

It gives light. You know where you're going. You read the word.

Thank you, Jesus. I never saw that before. And as I just said, you glow.

You're warm. You have compassion on people. You're not remote and stiff.

I know some of you, when the meeting ends, you're going to race out of here and not talk to anybody. I feel so bad for you. You need the fire.

I'd like to get a big blowtorch and just start baptizing all of you, just everybody. Get on fire. Come on.

Do I get an amen here? Because when you're on fire and you're in love, you're animated. You're excited. Why? Not because someone psyched you up.

This is not emotional hocus pocus. This is the fire of God. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Who made you say that? The Holy Spirit, fire. I know I can do this. Lastly, do you know the old story in the 1870s? I think it's 1870s, 1880s, maybe.

70s, I think. I think her name was Murphy. In Chicago, she had a cow, milking it.

And the cow kicked over a lantern, a light. And that little thing knocked over. She walked away, wasn't minding it.

It caught on fire. But the thing about fire, fire is catching. Fire sets other things on fire.

And did you know that all of Chicago just about burned down? That's the great Chicago fire of whatever year. I should have my facts a little better, but I'm not clear about all of that. But I know it was a cow that kicked over that.

And once a fire starts, and you don't even have to say to a fire, now fire, I want you to move over here and set that on fire. Fire does it all by itself. It's the nature of fire to spread.

In fact, you see a Christian who's been touched by the fire, the person is contagious. You can't stop them. No, you can't stop a person on fire, can you? Or a church.

People go into churches, and many times they feel cold. They don't feel love. They don't feel Jesus.

They don't feel God. That's such a terrible advertisement for Jesus. He said, I'll baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Fire, change you. Christianity is not self-help. And if you're here today, I want to take a burden off your back as I get done here.

Don't try to change yourself. You can't. Just tell God you're a mess.

Just say it to him. I'm a mess. I've made 34 promises to change, and I never kept one.

So now I get it. It's what you said. Without me, Jesus said, you can do nothing.

What I need is fire. And that way you get all the glory, so that when I'm changed and you purify me, and you give me light and revelation, and when you make me warm and vibrant and loving, I have to give you all the glory because I know it's not me. I'm a cold piece of steel without you.

You believe that? That is the word of God. Every head bowed, every eye closed. If you're here, and just say, Pastor, I want the fire like you do.

I want to be baptized afresh with the Holy Spirit and with fire. I need the fire. I'm so tired of trying, struggling.

I'm so tired of trying to purify myself. Let the fire come and purify me. I don't know what to do.

Instead of trying to figure it out and being anxious, let the fire, the light of the Spirit guide me. I want to be an influence to others. I want to be on fire for God.

I want to be warm and loving and kind. I can't do it in myself. I'm not made that way.

Oh, fire, come and make me what you want me to be. Let me touch others and set them on fire. Oh, God, let our church set other churches on fire.

Set that whole reservation. I don't care what the history of the Navajo people are. Nothing can stop your fire, God.

Nothing can stop your fire. If you're here today, and you want to stand in front of us here, and we'll stand later and pray with you, you just say, Pastor, I'm hungry, like you are with the leaders up there. I want more of God.

I want the Spirit's fire in my life. I want the fire. I don't want some gentle psychological influence.

I want fire. Get out of your seat and just come up here and stand with it. Stand in front of us, or kneel, or sit, or whatever you want to do.

Pastors, deacons, deaconesses, J.J., lay hands on these people, will you, please? Lay hands and pray that the fire will fall. Oh, God, let your fire fall on us. Let the Brooklyn Tabernacle, Lord, be a place where people come and experience your fire, Lord.

They catch your fire. They sense your fire, your warmth, your love, your revelation, your purity. Purify us by your fire, Lord.

Everybody in the building that's sitting there, just lift your hands up to God and begin to worship Him and call on His name. Come on, everyone. Just say, send the fire, Lord.

Send the fire. He'll know what you mean. Send the fire.

God, send the fire on me, Lord. Send the fire. I don't need more books.

I need your fire, Lord. I don't need more money. I don't need more clothes.

I need your fire, Lord. Send the fire. Send the fire, Holy Spirit, come.

God, send the fire upon us. The fire that purifies. The fire that gives light.

The fire that makes us full of your love and zeal for your work. The fire that touches others. Just lift your voice and worship Him.

Come on, worship Him. He's your Savior. Come on, He's your Savior.

Worship Jesus. Glorify Jesus. Open yourself up to the Holy Spirit and His fire.

Oh, God, come, Lord. Come, Lord. Come, Lord, in a new way, in a fresh way.

Fresh wind, fresh fire, Lord. Indeed, Lord. Fresh fire, Lord.

Send the fire. Every woman, every man, on our church, on every church in New York City, God, send the fire. All over Argentina, send the fire.

In Chaco, send the fire. The reservation of the Navajos, send the fire, Lord. Just fill up some of those believers, some of those young people.

Just fill them with your fire, and we'll see that thing spread all over northern Arizona, Lord. For with you, nothing is impossible. Nothing can stop your fire.

Burn out the draws. Purify us. Sanctify us.

Get rid of everything that's not of you in our lives. Every attitude, every wrong desire, every human plan that's not of your will, burn it. Burn it up, Lord, with your fire.

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