

# Whatever It Takes

by Jim Cymbala

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*Jim Cymbala emphasizes the necessity of self-denial and yielding to God's will to experience true spiritual growth and fulfillment in life.*

**Duration:** 14:34

**Scripture:** Ecclesiastes 1:9, Isaiah 55:8-9, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, Romans 7:15, Galatians 2:20

**Topics:** "Obedience"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on his personal journey from the business world to the ministry and the battle he faced in accepting God's calling. He emphasizes that our ways and thoughts are not the same as God's, and that true Christianity requires denying oneself, taking up the cross, and following Jesus. The speaker admits to his own selfishness and the need to break free from self-centered desires. He highlights the importance of surrendering to God and following His will, rather than pursuing personal happiness or pleasing oneself. The sermon encourages listeners to embrace the truth of the Gospel and reject any new or false teachings.

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## Transcript

What I'm reminded of for those visiting from Allentown, those of you young, old, want to be used by God. Marita was talking and you hear the words of that song. Listen, that was only written 30, 40 years ago.

That's like another religion compared to what you hear today on television. No televangelist is gonna be, very few are gonna be saying, whatever it takes for my will to break, that's what I'll be willing to do. It's like go for the prize and God will help you fulfill your little selfish dreams.

But that's not the Christianity of the New Testament. Here's what comes to my heart as I'm sitting there. Jesus said, if anyone comes after me, he has to deny himself or herself, take up their cross and follow me.

Listen again, Jesus said, anyone, any man, any woman, wherever you live, whoever you are, I'm not saying this is the plan of salvation. The plan of salvation is not this. This is not what Peter and Paul preached when they had the masses in front of them.

But this is what the Holy Spirit wants to bring all of us to. If anyone would come after me, he has to deny himself. What's so bad about self? Because self is me, Jim Cymbala.

And Jim Cymbala doesn't want what God wants. Jim Cymbala wants what Jim Cymbala wants. And I can dress it up with a little religion once in a while, but my self is hopeless.

It only lives by one law, self-gratification. I want what I want when I want it. That's the root of all sin.

Sin, the root of all sin, is self-gratification. I don't care what God's law says. I don't care who I'm supposed to sleep with or not sleep with.

I sleep with who I want when I want to sleep with them. I don't care what the Bible says about that. I care about some rules, but then the others, I'm gonna just, you know, I want what I want.

That's why Christ came and died on a cross, so that we could have a new beginning and his spirit could come in us, which would give us the spirit of Christ. And what is that spirit? Jesus says in another place, and it's written about him in Hebrews, for it's written about me in the book, I have not come to do my own will, but the will of the one who sent me. This was the break that the law could never bring.

All of Moses, all of the law, it reflects in many ways the holiness of God, yes, and all of that, but we don't live in that age. We're not under the law, because everyone under the law is under a curse. We live under grace, because the law is good, but it has no power to change this rotten, selfish Jim Cymbala.

The law has no power. You could show me Mount Sinai quaking, show me whatever you want, I might get scared for a while, but in the end, I'm gonna do what I'm gonna do. Don't you understand what I'm saying? I'm gonna do what I wanna do.

And that's why Christ came. If the law could save anyone, he never would have gone through what he went through. He went through what he went through, so we could have a new beginning with a new center, no more Jim Cymbala, but Jesus as the center.

No more what I want, what he wants. How often what he wants. Here we go now, all the time.

How does he want me to talk? What kind of grandfather does he want me to be? No, that's what I want. No, no, not what you want, it's what Jesus, this is the heart of Christianity. And the dilemma today is you can go to church and be talking religious smack, as it were, and then go right back and live just totally for yourself, but then go to church on Sunday and do the praise and worship thing.

But when it comes to push comes to shove, it's, hey, look, Jim Cymbala is the most precious thing to me. That's why when I heard that song, that had such an effect on me, because I was in the ministry and selfish as all get out. When I preached, I just wanted to get through without collapsing because my sermons, as I've told you, were so bad, I fell asleep while I was preaching, not even the other people.

So I asked God to help me, why? To just get through, help the people, honor God, no, I was trying to get through. I'm being open now here, vulnerable. So God had to break that, is still breaking that in me.

And when I heard songs like that, I knew that was true. How many know that song is true, the words of that song? Lift your hand high if you know that song's true. And no matter what anyone else tells you, they got a new American Christianity, there's nothing new.

If it's new, it's not true, because the Bible says there's nothing new under the sun. It's just re-spinning old selfish stuff that we wanna cover up the fact that we don't wanna say yes to Jesus. So when the Lord put his hand on my life to go in the ministry, which I wasn't planning on, I was in the business world, that was

one big battle.

Whoa, you wanna see somebody fight? That was me. The ministry, I got plans. Atlantic Avenue on a Tuesday night with two people there and an offering of \$4? No thank you.

But how many know our ways are not God's ways? How many have found out in your life that what you think naturally is not what God thinks? Come on, lift your hand. And our ways are not his ways, our thoughts are not his thoughts. So if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself.

No to Jim Simbel. And take up your cross. What's your cross? What was the cross to Jesus? The cross to Jesus was the ultimate way that he said, not my will, but thine be done.

None of us carry around wooden crosses on our back, and if you wear it around your neck, it won't help you. It's the inner cross of every day, like Merida said, oh God, I wanna do what you want me to do. And in that death to self is explosion of God's power.

That's where the explosion happens. Not when you yell and you scream, when you die. Unless a seed, when it's planted in the ground, dies, it can't bring forth fruit.

But when you put the seed in the ground and it dies, what happens? The outer covering comes off, and the kernel then sprouts, and now you gotta plant a tree or whatever, a bush. Why? Because something died. Without death, there's no life.

There's no life without death. That's what Jesus taught us. Listen, I know this battle real good because I'm stubborn and I'm selfish.

That's just the way I am, and I haven't changed. Look at me, everyone, this is not a joke. Self never changes.

God doesn't wanna work with yourself. He wants to nail yourself to the cross. He wants that self to die daily.

Paul says, I die daily. Daily, I have to come and say, yuck. Paul, Saul of Tarsus, no, yes, Jesus.

The life that I now live, I live by faith in Christ. It's Christ in me. That's my new life.

But for that life to be there, there's gotta be the loss of the other life, and there's that battle going on all the time because that self wants to reassert itself. It doesn't like being put down and forgotten. Doesn't like Jesus in charge.

How many know exactly what I'm talking about? I'm not the most eloquent person, but if you know exactly what the battle I'm talking about, just lift your hand and say amen. So we're there, so we're there. Let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

And here's what the Lord made real to me in the last seven days. The best way to see death to Jim Cymbala is to say yes to following Jesus. No, no, I am following Jesus.

I'm a Christian. Listen again. The best way for me to get rid of me is not to keep hammering me because self always finds a way to shake and be shaken.

To shake and bake and dance around and avoid the blow. It's to say, I'm gonna follow Jesus. When, right now.

How, in everything. In how I talk tonight on my way home. And what I read before I go to bed.

Or what I watch or don't watch. Or who he wants me to talk to tomorrow. There's no other way to start.

You start right now, ahora. You start. Anybody would come after me? Let him deny himself, take up his cross.

Say adios to yourself. Because the more you try to get yourself happy, the less happy you are. That's a law.

The less, the more you try to please self, the more self starts scratching and says, give me more, give me more. Am I right or wrong? You know the way to be happy, young person, adult? Listen, don't try to be happy. Just follow Jesus.

And happiness will chase you all over the lot. You'll be so happy, you'll see goodness, mercy are following me, come on, all the days of my life and I'll dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Why? Because I'm not trying to be happy.

I'm not trying to be happy. I don't wanna be happy. I wanna do what Jesus wants me to do.

Then he'll take care of the happy. You'll never be happy by trying to be happy. When you forget yourself, you get so happy.

Oh, you get so happy. Now, the potential in this room is amazing. We got 50 some people from a church in Allentown who came all the way here on a bus, two hours plus, and after the end of the prayer meeting, go back on the bus, two hours.

They must want something from God, wouldn't you say? Come into a prayer meeting in downtown Brooklyn just to get more filled with God. And their pastor and his wife are here. And maybe in that group, there's some potential missionaries, ministers, people who are supposed to step out into some gift of the Holy Spirit, some calling, some singing ministry, writing songs, working with children.

I don't know what it is. And it's here in this room among us, too. You'll never know what the explosion can be until you just stop and say, God, I give it to you.

Whatever it takes, make me willing to follow you. Not my way, your way. I'm letting my agenda go.

You know, your agenda for your life. I have an agenda like you have an agenda. But listen, God has the best agenda.

Let's close our eyes. If you're here today and say, I know God's got his hand on my life to do something that I'm not doing right now. It's special, it's just for me, and I don't wanna miss it because I'm so involved with myself, my plans, my dreams.

Oh, listen, I could talk to you till midnight tonight about the battles I've had in my life and what I've learned about this. You're strong when you're weak. God's strength is not made perfect in your strength.

It's made perfect in your weakness. So Paul says, I'll glorify then in trials and tribulations and buffetings and all that. Paul says, I thank God now, I rejoice in trials and difficulties.

Why? Because God said my grace is sufficient for you and my power is made perfect in your weakness. It's when you yield that you become strong. When you're fighting to be strong, you become weak.

Is there anyone here who would say, Pastor, I just wanna spend some time with you at the altar. What's an altar for? It's not interesting we call this an altar. An altar is only one thing in the Old Testament.

It's to die. They brought the animals to an altar to kill them. Did not address them to kill them.

Jesus only got resurrection life, the experience of it from the dead because he had to die first. First comes Calvary, then comes Easter. Resurrection power.

If you're here today and say, I want that thing that God's put his hand on me for, it's not yet in my grasp, but I want it, but I know it's not gonna come by me trying to get it. It's gonna come by me just yielding everything to God, submitting everything to him. Then trials will turn into blessings.

Everything's gonna work for my good because I'm not fussing and fighting for my own way. Would you just come up out of your seat and we'll pray with you. Lord, we thank you for your word to us, which came really through that song they sang, which reinforces that verse.

If anyone comes after me, first thing they have to know is they have to deny themselves. I'll never be glorified in a life that's filled with self. My power can't be manifested in a life filled with self.

You won't even know my will as long as you're clinging to your own. Too much for us. We don't know how to do that.

So we ask you to break us and melt us. Whatever it takes, help Jim Cymbala to decrease so you can increase. That goes for all of us here, Lord.

Less of us, more of you. We praise you for being so patient with us because we do love you, but we're so many times so childish, so self-centered. We're loving you our way rather than loving you your way, Lord.

But that's gonna change as you grow us and mature us, Lord, by your spirit, through your word, through prayer waiting before you. If there's missionaries here, raise them up. Pastors, evangelists, teachers, future Lanny Wolfs, future Maritas, just raise them up, Lord.

People right here in our church, the plans you have for us, we can't even imagine. That's why we say yes to you, Lord, and you're gonna do it your way.

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