

When the Spirit Comes

by Jim Cymbala

The Holy Spirit is essential for a believer to be controlled by God and to be a channel for God's blessing.

Duration: 26:14

Scripture: Acts 13:52, Acts 14:27, Acts 18:24-26, Acts 19:1-2, Acts 19:6, Acts 19:11-12

Topics: "Holy Spirit Filling"

Description

In this sermon, the pastor shares his personal experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit at the age of 14. He emphasizes that this experience is not limited to strong Christians, but is doubly important for weak Christians as it can make them strong. The pastor also highlights the importance of being continually refilled and revived by the Holy Spirit. He explains that the Holy Spirit is the only agent of God on earth currently and holds all power, while forgiveness and merit are found in Jesus. The pastor concludes by discussing the miraculous acts performed through the belief in objects like napkins and aprons in the Bible.

Transcript

Today in the staff meeting, we read about Paul's first stop at a city called Ephesus, which was a great famous city 2,000 years ago. It had a famous temple called the Temple of Diana, which was one of the seven wonders of the world. It was a heathen city.

And we learned that in Paul's first visit, he went to the synagogue and reasoned with the people about the fact that Jesus, Yeshua, was the Messiah. And they pleaded with him to stay, but he said, no, I have to move on. I've got to go, but I'll come back if it's God's will.

He returned back to Jerusalem, then went up to the church in Antioch in Syria, where he was centered or sent out from. And then after a while, he decided to travel inland, not go by boat, but go northwest and visit the churches in Galatia and other places that he had started. This was his third missionary journey.

In his absence, when he had left Ephesus, a preacher, well-known preacher back then by the name of Apollos, who came from Egypt, from Alexandria, who was very eloquent, probably more eloquent than Paul and Peter put together, mighty in the scriptures, but didn't understand fully the things of God, especially concerning the Holy Spirit. He had gone to Ephesus and ministered there. Then he left and went back to the churches that Paul had gone to before there, Philippi and Thessalonica.

So now Paul arrives for the second time, but now to stay. And in fact, he's going to stay for three years. It's the longest place that he resided in that we know of in the New Testament, as he's going all over the place directed by God to preach the gospel.

When he arrives in Ephesus, in chapter 19 of Acts, a very interesting encounter happens, which has caused much controversy among Christians of the evangelical versus Pentecostal or charismatic stripe concerning what was really going on here because of the strangeness of the language. It's not language that we would use much today. So let's just look at it.

It's just a few verses and we'll tell this story, okay? While Apollos was at Corinth, see, he went back where Paul had been, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. And there he found some disciples and he asked them, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? They answered, no, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. Notice there, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? That indicates to me a couple things.

Number one, he picked up something that would make him ask that question. But number two, by asking them, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believe? He must have been indicating that there was some experience that you would know if you received the Holy Spirit or not, because he said, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believe? Well, if there's no witness to it or no experience of it, then you can't ask somebody, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? Their theology was obviously a little confused because they go on to say in verse two, we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. So Paul asked, then what baptism did you receive? John's baptism, they replied.

And if I could just interject that, that was all Apollos knew. Apollos, who had been preaching there, he only knew John's baptism, which was a baptism of repentance. In other words, you confess your sins and you say you're turning away from your sin and you're turning to God.

That's what repentance is. That's the only thing that it seemed Apollos knew about, and he must have influenced these people because they said, what baptism are you talking about? The only baptism we know about is we were baptized, we're repenting of our sins, and we're turning to God. And then Paul said, John's baptism was a baptism of repentance.

He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is in Jesus. On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. They were water baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.

When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke in tongues and they prophesied. There were about 12 men in all. And that's how the great church, at least Paul's activity in it, began in Ephesus.

Twelve men. Sometimes we only had 12 in a meeting, we wouldn't want to mention it because there are only 12 in church, but God doesn't go by numbers. God goes by what's going on.

These 12 people had an experience with God that changed church history because the first letter that Jesus writes in the book of Revelation to any church, which church is it to? To the church at Ephesus. And it's a great church. Although it had lost its first love, I know your work and your endurance and your strength and you don't endure false teaching and you try people who say that they're prophets and all of that.

Great church. And it kind of began here with those 12 men, at least Paul's involvement in it. That's also the city where Paul wrote the great epistle.

Maybe some people think the greatest along with Romans of anything he wrote, which is the epistle to Ephesus, which we call Ephesians. So when he came, there was something about them. Now it says they were disciples.

They had to be disciples of Jesus or he wouldn't have baptized them. So they were disciples of Jesus, but they only knew the baptism of Apollos, the baptism of John the Baptist, I should say, but that Apollos probably had been preaching, which was what? Sin is wrong. Turn from it and turn to God.

That's what John the Baptist went about saying, right? Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, right? But John said, I baptize you with water, but there's one who's coming after me. He's going to baptize you with the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, and with fire. Fire being a symbol of the Holy Spirit, not a separate baptism.

So Paul must have wondered what he picked up. Paul was discerning, and as he went around these disciples, nothing was wrong in their life. He didn't say anything was wrong and preach a big sermon to them about the sin in their life.

He said, no. Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? There was something missing. Isn't that true? Isn't that what can be so true in our lives? We can love the Lord, but there can be something really missing.

Obviously, the statistics about Christendom today and what's going on in the church, it's not that people don't have Bibles and confess Christ, but I wonder how many people Paul might ask today. Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? I know you believed. I know you believed.

There's no doubt that you believed, but did you receive the Holy Spirit? That's not a question that we ask too often of people, and this is a strange moment because we don't know what message did they hear? What was the gospel that Apollos gave them? It was about Jesus for sure, but there was something wrong in that message, which shows that you can be a Christian, but not give the people the whole counsel of God. You can be missing. We can believe and love the Lord, but not understand all that God has for us and be held back because of ignorance.

So Paul wanted to take that ignorance from them, so he told them, oh John the Baptist baptized for repentance, but he prophesied about someone who would come after him, and there's something greater that God has for you. So let's break this down. The Bible says, some people argue and say those men were not believers.

Those people were not believers. Well, the problem with that, with those 12 men, is they had to be believers at one point because the Bible says Paul baptized them. You don't baptize people who are unbelievers.

You only baptize people who are Christians. Amen? The water doesn't make them a Christian. Believing with your heart makes you a Christian, and Paul recognized that, and he put them in the water.

When they came out of the water, nothing had changed. Nothing had changed, and then the Bible says about these baptized Christians that he laid his hands upon them, and he prayed, and the Holy Spirit

came upon them, and they began to speak in tongues, other languages that they didn't know, just like they did in Acts chapter 2 when the church was born. That was the first experience of Peter and James and John and the other disciples, and they began to prophesy.

They began to speak inspired speech. Prophecy is not just predicting what's going to happen. It's under the influence of the Holy Spirit to say things that reveal the heart of God, that have power to bless and lift people up and help them toward God.

That's what prophetic utterance is in the widest sense of the term. It's speaking inspired by the Holy Spirit, not just predicting what's going to happen in the next election, and there'll be earthquakes in the earth and all of that. It's something more than that, and here, 12 men whose names we don't know that Paul just met, he asked them a few questions.

He baptizes them. They come out of the water. He prays for them, and the next thing they know, they're speaking in tongues, and they're prophesying, and there were just 12 of them.

The basic teaching of the Bible is that every Christian has the Holy Spirit living within them. If you're a believer here today, you have the Holy Spirit living in you, for Romans 8 says, if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Jesus. To be born again means the Holy Spirit is living within us, but my brothers and sisters, we all know people that are alive that are almost comatose in hospitals right now.

Are they alive? Yes. Do they have strength? Can they help anyone else? No, they can't even help themselves, but are they alive? Is there the breath of life in them? Yes, there is, but the Bible also teaches that there is a fullness of the Holy Spirit. The Bible calls it being filled with the Holy Spirit, which is a blessing that God wants for all of us.

Why? So that we can help be a blessing to other people with this overflow of the influence of God as God controls us. We can say things, and do things, and pray things, and step out. In fact, some of the things are so amazing that can happen when the Holy Spirit is upon you.

They're called miraculous, and sometimes even among the miraculous things, there are bizarre things that God can do. In the same chapter, in one of the most mysterious verses, I'm not going to explain it because I don't understand it, but I think I should read it to you from the Bible. This, God did extraordinary miracles, not just miracles.

Miracles mean they're extraordinary, but these were extraordinary miracles through Paul so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured, and the evil spirits left them. Now, what in the world was that about? Did the people believe in the napkins or in the handkerchiefs? Did they believe in the aprons, or were they praying? How did God do that? It doesn't tell us. So when the Bible is silent, what are we supposed to be? Silent.

But God was sure cooking something up there, and Paul was being used to bless people through the influence of the Holy Spirit on his life because one of the gifts of the Spirit is miracles. Miracles don't come by trying. It's a gift that comes by the Holy Spirit.

So the sign of a healthy church, the sign of a church that pleases God is when the believers not just love each other, not just study the Word, not just faithfully give, all those things are good. But on the end of Paul's first missionary journey, he left one city, and the Bible simply says a description that we would never use today. There's no denomination in America that uses this, and it says, Paul left the city, but the

disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.

We don't describe churches that way. We don't describe deacons or deaconesses that way, but that's God's plan, that we would be filled, i.e. controlled by the Holy Spirit. Obviously, every believer, brothers and sisters, be reasonable with me.

Is every believer controlled by the Holy Spirit? That church in Laodicea that was lukewarm, going to be vomited out of Christ's mouth, were they controlled by the Holy Spirit? Well, of course not. How could they be controlled by the Holy Spirit, and He is so displeased with them, He's going to vomit them out of His mouth. That's impossible.

So that shows you can be a believer, but not be anywhere near what God wants you to be. And the world's going to miss out. The world's not going to be glorified the way God wants it to be.

And the only difference is not anything you or me that we could produce, but it's strictly from God. For it's not by might, nor by power, nor by education, nor by computers, nor by money, but it is by my spirit, saith the Lord. And there's a tremendous, in some circles, there's a tremendous prejudice against the Holy Spirit.

You talk about the Bible, you'll get a lot of amens. You talk about what Jesus did on the cross, you get lots of amens. You just start mentioning the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and everybody gets nervous.

But the Bible is full. Look at what we just read. Bible says in Ephesians 5, keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Keep on letting the Holy Spirit come upon you so that you can be a channel for God's blessing. Now, let me just say one other thing before a personal note. I grew up, and I've read a lot of books that give so many qualifications to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and they discourage me.

Because they would say, if you're going to be filled with the Holy Spirit, here's what you have to do. You have to be overcoming in sin in every area of your life. Your tongue has to be under control.

Your marriage has to be in perfect order. Your marriage has to be in perfect order. You've got to be totally sold out to God.

You've got to be consecrated to the place you're ready to go wherever. But the only way you can be a blessing to others the way God wants you to do is in this secret of being filled and anointed and having the Holy Spirit come upon you. In fact, Paul got his name.

His name used to be Saul of Tarsus, but his name changed in the book of Acts when at a certain moment, someone full of the devil was opposing him. And it says, and then Paul, full of the Holy Ghost said, and his name changed from Saul to Paul at the same time where it says, and now Saul, who is called Paul, full of the Holy Spirit said, and he began to move in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is not fanaticism.

This is not the guys on Christian TV trying to get your money. I'm not talking about that. That's bogus.

A lot of that is just bogus. I sometimes think 70% of the stuff blamed on the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit has nothing to do with it.

And I grew up seeing all that stuff. People pushing you over so you would fall in the spirit. But if you're going to fall in the spirit, why they have to push me over? But listen, that's all just bogus.

But don't you get it? If you laugh at that and you joke about it, then you'll miss the real because you'll become a cynic. You'll become a cynic and you'll say there is no Holy Spirit. And then you're left with yourself.

Well, here's the thought I want to leave with you. What were the big spiritual qualifications of these men? They were just baptized in water when they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul just said, have you ever seen the Holy Spirit since you believe? We don't know if there is a Holy Spirit.

Well, what were you baptized with? With John's baptism. That's all we've heard about. No.

John baptized for repentance. That's fine. But there's another dimension of this thing that God has for you just repenting and feeling sorry for your sins.

So he took them and he put them in the water and he baptized them, right? And he brought them out and they were still the same 12 men. And then he laid his hands on them. And then the Holy Spirit came upon them.

What were their qualifications? Had they been serving God for 20 years? Had they been fasting for 40 days? Had they memorized most of the New Testament? No, they were just people, but they had faith. They had faith. You know what God's looking for? For faith.

I was in a conference in another state some years ago and I had to get up and just say to the people who were all there who were laying 23 things you had to do to be filled with the Spirit. I said, where would you get that in the Bible? Got to be sold out, consecrated, do this, do that. Where do I see that in these 12 men? They just got baptized.

They got out. They were filled with the same Spirit that Paul was. It's for you.

It's for me. And if you say, pastor, I'm a weak Christian. How could it be for me? No, it's doubly for you.

Because if you're weak, he can make you strong. Come on, let's put our hands together. I close.

Listen, today's a special day to me. It's on February 14th. When I was 14 years old, I had this same experience.

And I was thinking about it today because every February 14th, I get try to get alone and just think about this. Today, I lamented how little I've done for God since he came upon me. I was a believer.

I was a Christian kid. I was born again. I knew I was a Christian.

And I was sitting in a church meeting on a Sunday night with my best friend then, Carol's brother, talking to him the whole meeting about sports. His dad was preaching. I didn't listen to one word.

I'd been hungry for God in the past, had fasted some days and sought after God. But I don't know, I couldn't seem to break through. We got so out of order in the meeting that my father-in-law from the pulpit said, could my son and his friend stop talking while I'm preaching? And my mom and dad were about eight rows behind me.

And I could feel my father's eyes burning through my neck. I didn't dare turn around because I knew when I got home, I was going to get it. I focused toward the end of the service.

They made an altar call. I felt so unworthy. I felt so bad because here I was, I wanted to live better for Christ.

I couldn't even, I was talking about the Yankees during the sermon. I'm telling you the truth. This is for a purpose.

But God had to do it that way with me because I was an achiever. I was a legalist. I wanted to do something to earn something from God.

See, I couldn't take a gift. I had to earn. I was around people who tell you, do it, do it, do it, do it.

And they tried to pray for me that I would be filled with the spirit. Trust me. They would yell in my ear, monosyllables.

They would try to get me to speak in tongues. One lady went like this with my lips and I would be crying. That's the truth.

And one, they would have hold my hands up and I'd be praying. And I was so sincere as God is my witness. I was sincere.

And one would be holding one hand and be saying, hold on, Jimmy, hold on. And this one would be saying, let go, let go, Jimmy. And I would say, hold on, let go.

What am I supposed to do here? That's the truth. Not this Sunday. I just came and I knelt.

I just knelt. And I started to cry because I felt so guilty, felt so dirty, so soil-like. How can you go to church and not even pay attention to the word of God when it's preached? And I was 14 years old.

I wasn't eight, six or five. I was 14. And then a young lady from the church came.

She had a crocheted shawl on and she just knelt with me. I was alone at the altar. I could take you to 6th Avenue, 2nd Street right here in Brooklyn and take you to the church.

The altar is still there. The church is still there. I go in and visit it once in a while.

And I go to the spot where it happened. And she just started praying. She never lifted her voice higher than this.

And she just started saying, help him, Jesus. And suddenly the fire of God. It was so awesome on me and in my heart that I thought I would burst.

I thought it was like pain. And trust me, I wasn't making anything up. You couldn't get me to make things up.

I was obstinate and nasty. You couldn't fool me. That woman who tried to shove people down, I didn't like her.

And I got on the line to be prayed for. And I dug my feet in that carpet. I said, you just come and try to push me over, lady.

And she laid her hands on me and she said, oh, I rebuke this proud spirit here. I wasn't buying any of that. You're not pushing me over.

You know what? If God is real, let it be real. I don't need anybody pushing me. If you got to push someone over, have somebody catch you.

Someone catch you. Yeah, because if we don't catch them, they might break their head open. Well, why would God knock them down to break their head open? I mean, that doesn't make any sense whatsoever.

I began, this fire went through me, totally outside of me, totally not me. I'm telling you the truth as God is my holy witness. He knows.

He knows what happened February 14th. And suddenly I began to speak in other languages. I didn't know what I was saying, but I could not hold it in.

And it was painful, but it was joyful. Something was going on inside of me. It was so awesome.

I think I went on for 20 minutes or longer. I was a new person. Did I have struggles after that? Yeah.

Did I was a rebellious? Yes. But whenever the devil would come to try to get me totally away from God, I would go back to that date. You could no more proof to me that God's not real because of that day.

I know God is real because God visited me. God filled me. God gave me love.

God gave, I mean, he began to work in me. Now look, I've had to be refilled 10 billion times. I need to be re revived and quickened by the Holy Spirit.

But that began another dimension because then I realized it's not about Jim. It's about God working in Jim, brothers and sisters, not about you. It's about God.

What God is looking for tonight. You think he's looking for intelligence or talent? He knows everything. He's interested in smart people.

He knows everything. He's interested in just simple people who will say, God, I want everything you have for me. If I have helped anyone in this world through any book or any sermon, I can tell you totally it's the Holy Spirit.

Because I am so ordinary and frail and ill-equipped. But when God comes, oh, praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.

Come on, let's put our hands together. Let's put our hands together. Come on, let's really put our hands together.

Oh, come Holy Spirit, we love you. All Paul did was lay hands on 12 people he just baptized. Don't say they took three months ministry preparation courses.

They were just people, guys, but hungry and open, full of faith. And there was a man who was anointed by the Holy Spirit who prayed for them. And God gave him something that changed the course of history.

The only agent God has on earth right now is the Holy Spirit. The father sent the son, the son sent the spirit. The son is seated at the right hand of the father.

He's coming back when he's coming back. But right now, all activity, all energy, all power is in the spirit. All forgiveness and merit is in the son, but all power is in the spirit.

All power. Do you want the Holy Spirit to come upon you? Are you not so self-conscious that you don't care what he does with you? Are you willing to cry and break and let him take control? Are you willing to give up your tongue and your mouth and your mind and your body to him? Or do you want to be in control? Because if you're in control, you'll always be in control. But I'm telling you, it's not fanaticism when the Holy Spirit takes control.

Oh my. Difference between night and day.

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