

The Spirit of Grace and Power

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the New Covenant and the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives, highlighting the difference between being forgiven and being saved from sin.

Duration: 1:16:22

Scripture: Exodus 2:23, Matthew 1:21, Matthew 3:11, Luke 11:1-2, Hebrews 4:15-16

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Gods Grace"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of distributing the word of God rather than simply producing knowledge. He encourages ministers to focus on providing spiritual nourishment to those in need rather than cramming their heads with information. The speaker also highlights the need for persistence in seeking power from the Lord and relying on His grace to overcome sin. Ultimately, the message emphasizes that Jesus came to set the captives free and offers deliverance to those who seek it.

Transcript

I want to speak today on grace and power in the Holy Spirit. I want to begin with the first promise in the New Testament. Yesterday I mentioned that when we come to the Word of God, if we don't come with an open mind, we may not see new truths.

We'll see the old truths again and again, and perhaps find new illustrations to explain the old truths. But if I come to God's Word thinking that I've already understood everything God has to show me, I can miss something new God has for me. And one of the things I decided many years ago was that I'd always let God change my thinking if there was something I hadn't understood properly.

That He would correct it and lead me into that which was correct. That He'd help me to understand His ways, even if it brought me into conflict with a lot of what is known as Christianity. You've got to be willing to pay that price.

If God sees in any of our hearts a desire to find security in people around us, and not in Him alone, He won't lead us on. If He sees in us a slight desire to please someone, you know what the Word of God says, if I seek to please men, I cannot be the servant of Christ. That is impossible.

So I want to invite you to open your minds as you hear, and say, Lord, show me, is this Your Word or not? Correct my thinking. Lead me in the path which is right. And let God convince you.

Very often when I speak to people, I say, and they say, yeah, now I'm gripped. I say, hang on. You're convinced because I said it.

And you've got some respect for me. Take that before God. You got it second hand from me.

Take it before God, make it first hand. Let Him convince you from His Word. And then you'll never shake.

Okay, the first promise in the New Testament is found in Matthew 1 and verse 21. The very first promise in the New Testament, where the angel told Joseph that this little baby that is going to be born to Mary, His name shall be called Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins. That's the first promise in the New Testament.

He will save His people from their sins. And that's why His name is Jesus. Many people who use the name Jesus don't know why He is called Jesus.

Here the angel explains it. His name shall be called Jesus because He will save His people from their sins. Now we use the word saved very frequently.

And very often we equate being saved with being forgiven. Now that's not true. And that's the distinction I want to make here.

This is a new covenant. As soon as you come to this, the previous page says New Testament. It's a new covenant.

This is something new, which they didn't have in the Old Testament. They had forgiveness in the Old Testament. Psalm 103, a thousand years before Christ was born.

David said, Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. One who forgives all your iniquities. Who heals all your diseases.

Who crowns your life with good things. That's material blessing. They had forgiveness of sins, healing from sickness, material blessing in the Old Testament.

What they didn't have was being saved from sin. That's why the New Testament begins with this as the very first promise. This is the distinctive feature of the New Covenant.

David could not say, Bless the Lord, O my soul, who saves me from sin in my life. No, he could only say, God forgives me. What is the difference between being forgiven and being saved from sin? Now very often when we talk about being saved, we talk about being saved from the wrath of God.

That's in a moment when we accept Jesus as our Savior. Without any works. Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.

That's the only way to be saved from the wrath of God. That is salvation from the penalty of sin. But now there is another salvation from the power of sin.

And that's what it's speaking of here. One day in the future, we'll be saved from the presence of sin altogether. That's future.

But right now, in between the time when I was born again and the time Jesus comes again, I have to be saved from the power of sin. And that's what's being spoken of here. Here's an illustration.

If my little five-year-old son was going outside the house and I said, son, be careful. They're digging up the road there. They made a big, huge, eight-foot pit there and don't go anywhere near it.

And like little boys are, they disobey. And he falls in the pit and says, Daddy! And I come running and say, what's the matter, son? And he says, well, daddy, I'm sorry. I disobeyed you.

I say, oh, he's there in the pit. And I say, okay, son, you're forgiven. Goodbye.

I want to ask you a question. Have I forgiven him? Have I saved him? That's the difference. That's the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant.

In the old covenant, they were forgiven, but they were still in the pit there to keep offering sacrifices every day. But now with one sacrifice, it says it's all over. We can not only be forgiven, we can be saved.

Jesus came. You should call His name Jesus because not even forgive their sins. He will save His people from their sins.

He will save His people from their dirty thoughts and from their lustful thinking and from their anger and from their bitterness against their wives and from jealousy and strife and every other form of evil. That's why we call Him Jesus. That's the message of the new covenant.

And if you haven't experienced it, it's because the God of this world, the devil has blinded our eyes to the full gospel. See, this is an expression that's used a lot in the world today. Full gospel.

People say we are a full gospel church. But what's the full gospel? It's being saved from our sins. It's no use saying we are a full gospel church if people living inside there are still defeated by sin.

Whatever gifts of the Spirit they may have. Jesus came to save us from sin. That is the full good news that I am not only saved from the wrath of God, but I can be saved from this wretched, sinful flesh of mine that has kept pulling me down, down, down for so many years.

You know, I have heard of a particular lunatic asylum where they give a little test to see whether a man has come back to his senses or not. They put him in a room with a tap open, a faucet open and the water flowing and they give him a bucket and a mop to dry the floor. And if he tries to dry the floor without first closing the tap, they know he still needs to stay there a little longer.

He will never end. He will be mopping the floor all his life. But you know, that is what Christians do with the blood of Jesus Christ.

It never ends. We are mopping, mopping and mopping. Well, that is good news that we have at least got a mop and a bucket.

But I want to say the Gospel is even better news than that. That God can do something about that tap. Otherwise it really would not be good news.

If all that God could say to me, well, you are going to be forgiven, but you are going to be defeated by the same old lust all your life. I say, well, thank you, Lord, but I hoped it would be better than that. And it is better than that.

You shall call His name Jesus because He shall save His people from their sins. The very first promise, as soon as you turn to the pages of the New Testament. But we missed it.

We thought it was all genealogy. Somebody begat so and so and somebody begat so and so. And you did not come to this verse.

And you turned over and rushed through. But this is the very first promise in the New Testament. Salvation from sin.

I want to turn to Hebrews in chapter 4. In Hebrews in chapter 4 we read verse 15 and 16. We don't have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses. In other words, to put it in a positive way, we have a high priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses.

Why? Because he was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. Now, I am sure that God can sympathize with us even without having become a man. Because He is God.

But, you know, we always feel that you don't really understand what I am going through. You know, it's like if a very wealthy man goes to a slum and says, well, I really feel sorry for you folks and here is a little money. They will never feel that he understands what they are going through.

He lives in his palace out there. He is a multi-millionaire. What does he know about what we are going through in the slum? He may be a sincere person, very affectionate, very compassionate, but those people in the slum will never feel that he understands them.

And that's why God became a man. He came into this slum. That's the good news.

He loved us so much that He came into this filthy slum and lived here. And, wonder of wonders, He was tempted in all points as you and I are. I remember the first time my eyes were opened to this truth and interestingly enough, it was about 15 years after I was born again.

You know, Jesus once spoke about the ladder that Jacob saw. Jacob once had a dream where he had a ladder. He saw a ladder going up to heaven and the angels of God ascending and descending upon that ladder.

And in John chapter 1, when Jesus spoke to Nathaniel, He said that that ladder was Himself. He said, you'll see the Son of Man and the angels of God ascending and descending. And I always thought that that ladder, which came all the way from heaven, stopped a little short of down at my level.

I thought, Jesus couldn't possibly have come right down to my level to be like me. And the day my eyes were opened to this glorious truth, that, like it says in Hebrews 2.17, He had to be made like His brothers in all things. He became like me.

I wept tears of joy. I said, Lord, I never knew You loved me so much. I never knew that You loved me to become exactly like me, to lift me from the pit in which I was.

That the last rung of the ladder came all the way down to earth. It didn't stop some ten feet above me. Now, many people can't think of that.

That Jesus could become just like me. That He could be tempted just like me. They feel it robs Him of some of His glory.

It's not true. If a missionary, I mean, I live in a country that's had a lot of godly missionaries that have come from western countries, including the United States. I praise God for godly men and women who have come there and who have sacrificed and suffered to preach the gospel to people in my country.

And I've said to people in our land, I said, supposing a missionary from the United States where they live in such great comfort comes to our land and lives in a five-star hotel and visits the slum every day and preaches the gospel. Well, that still would be a sacrifice. But think of another missionary who comes from a similar wealthy background and comes and lives in that slum.

Whom would you admire more? Would you despise this person because he lived in the slum? No. The glory of Jesus became greater in my eyes when I saw that he became just like me. And that he was tempted like me in every single point.

I wouldn't believe it if it were not written in scripture. And he didn't sin. Now, I don't want to try and analyze that.

I just want to find the comfort I get from that. That when I'm tempted, I could now say, Lord Jesus, sometime in your walk in Nazareth, in those 30 years, you were tempted just like I am being tempted right now. Give me the grace to react and resist this temptation the way you did when you walked in Nazareth.

You know, in the Old Testament, the Old Covenant, New Covenant, there are many differences. One of them is this. The Old Covenant was full of commandments.

Thou shalt, thou shalt not, thou shalt, thou shalt not, thou shalt not, thou shalt and so on. That was good. But in the New Covenant, God gave us an example who said, follow me.

Now, supposing none of you knew how to swim and here I wanted to teach you how to swim. And there are two ways to teach you. One is to draw diagrams on the blackboard how to move your hands and legs and then say, OK, fellas, go jump in the river now and remember what you saw on the blackboard.

That was the Old Covenant. Absolutely accurate. Those diagrams were perfect.

How to move our hands and how to breathe in and out and everything. Wouldn't it be better, the second method, where I say, well, come along with me to the river and I jump in and say, follow me. That's the New Covenant.

That's why Hebrews says that the New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant. Jesus never gave us a lot of commandments like Moses. He said, follow me.

I've been tempted like you. There's not a single temptation any of us can ever face. Which he hasn't faced.

And he overcame. He never sinned. Now, we got to read scripture carefully.

He doesn't say he faced all the circumstances we face. No. He didn't have a drunken father.

He didn't have a nagging wife. He didn't have difficult children. He didn't face the temptations to impatience we face with other drivers on the road.

It's the same in India, by the way. It's actually worse. We have cows and dogs and everyone on the road.

And we have a lot more patience than you all get over here. He didn't face our circumstances. The Bible doesn't say it's not necessary.

But the temptations that come in those circumstances, he faced them. You don't have to face the same circumstances. The temptation to be irritated, the temptation to be impatient, the temptation to be angry.

He faced them all and he overcame. And he says, follow me. Look at my example.

And I want to say my personal testimony in the last 25 years since I saw this truth. And I'm sorry that it took me 15 years after I was born again to see it. When I'm tempted, I say, Lord, You were tempted like this.

Exactly like this. Maybe a temptation to compromise. Maybe a temptation to please some man.

Maybe a temptation to lust. Maybe a temptation to get angry. Maybe a temptation to anything.

I go to Hebrews 4.15. You were tempted like me and you didn't sin. I want to do the same thing. I want to see your footsteps.

And I want to plant my feet in your footsteps the way you walked in Nazareth. And I want to tell you it works. Now I want to go to the next verse.

Hebrews 4.16. Because it goes on from that. He says, therefore. And like someone said, whenever you see a therefore in scripture, see what it is there for.

What's it there for? Why does it say therefore? It's because it's connected to the previous verse. Therefore, let us. Because we have a high priest who can sympathize with us.

Who's walked this way. Who's tempted like us. Who became like us in everything.

And who understands the struggle. Who understands the need to resist sin unto blood like it says in Hebrews 12.3. Who faced such a great contradiction of sinners against himself. Hebrews 12.3 and 4. Let's look unto him and run this race.

Let us therefore draw near with great boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy. That's what we need first. And that we may find grace.

We need two things. Mercy and grace. Mercy is an old covenant word.

You don't find grace in the old covenant. Even in the one or two places where it says Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. What it means is he found favor.

It's not speaking about that grace which only came through Jesus Christ. According to John 1.17. There was no grace in the Old Testament. There are people who say grace means the undeserved favor of God.

Now, I beg to disagree with that definition because everybody in the Old Testament got the undeserved favor of God. Nobody gets favor that they deserve. Every human being right from Abel's time got undeserved favor.

Grace means more than that. Mercy. That's an old covenant word.

It refers to forgiveness. Jesus never needed mercy. We need mercy because we've all sinned.

The best of us have sinned and we will probably sin till Jesus comes again. In one way or the other we could slip up anytime. We don't have to but we might and we often do.

We need mercy. That's the first thing we need when we come to God. Mercy that deals with our past.

But we now need something to deal with our future and that's grace. Now, for many years I never knew the difference between mercy and grace. I thought these were just interchangeable words.

I've discovered that not interchangeable words. Mercy is old covenant and grace is new covenant. We have mercy and grace in the new covenant.

And so, mercy first of all to blot out my past so that the guilt of my past doesn't hang over my head. Mercy that justifies me and justification is another word which is more than forgiveness. I never understood the meaning of that for a long time.

To be forgiven, that was wonderful but to be justified and this is how the Lord showed it to me. It's like, here I'm standing in a court accused of thousands of wrongs and crimes that I've committed and the judge listens to all that the prosecutor has to say against me, the law of God is the prosecutor and I'm guilty of all of them and the judge has mercy on me and says, OK, you're forgiven. I walk out, happy.

But as I walk out and there's a crowd outside the court house, I walk out happy but with my head hanging down because I'm a criminal. I'm a murderer, I'm an adulterer, a thief. That's forgiveness.

I'm forgiven. I'm free. I don't have to go to jail.

Now, consider another scenario. Here I am, standing before the judge and he examines carefully all the charges against me, examines all the witnesses and says, these are all false charges. There's nothing wrong with this person.

He never did any of these things. He can go free. This time, I walk out of the court hall with my head lifted up.

That's the meaning of justification. It's unbelievable that God Almighty, against whom I've committed so many sins, could not only forgive me but declare me righteous. Look upon me as though I'd never sinned in all my life.

It's unbelievable, but it's true. And if you believe it, you will say, my glory and the lifter of my head. That's what God is.

He lifts up our head. There's no need for a single sinner forgiven by Jesus to walk with his head hanging down. We're not only forgiven, we're justified.

And never forget that, brother and sister. Today, God delights over us with shouts of joy. We're forgiven.

Justified. But there's more. What about this flesh of mine that's always dragging me down and down and down? Is there an answer for that? There certainly is.

God offers us grace. I want to go back for a moment to Matthew's Gospel again. We looked at the first promise in the New Testament.

Do you know what's the second promise in the New Testament? That's also interesting. The first promise is, He will save His people from their sins. The second, Matthew 3, verse 11.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. Do you know that the New Testament begins with two promises? The very first two promises of the New Covenant. Don't miss either of them.

One, He will save His people from their sins. And two, He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. And the devil's made sure that he's got people scared of both.

Somebody talks about being saved from sin. Oh, holiness. This is dangerous teaching.

Perfection. Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Oh, those are those fanatics who go do crazy things.

And what's the result? He's killed two birds with one stone. He's got some people off on a fanatic extreme. And he's got other people reacting to that and not wanting this truth at all.

I remember what God said to me once concerning different doctrines. What the Lord said to me was, Don't let your understanding of a doctrine ever be a reaction to the extremes you see in certain Christians. Don't let your understanding of a doctrine be a reaction to the extremes you see among certain Christians.

Get your understanding from God's Word. Forget the extremes and the fanaticism that you see in others. Because I got turned off from the baptism in the Holy Spirit because I saw a lot of fanaticism.

I'm not a Pentecostal. I'm not a charismatic. I never have been.

I've never belonged to those churches. I always wanted to be a Christian, experiencing everything the New Testament offers. I remember once when I was seeking God for this, I said, Lord, I don't want what I see around here.

I want what Peter, James and John got on the day of Pentecost. I want that. That's the second promise in the New Testament.

It's for me. Let a million people go to the fanatic extremes. I'm not bothered.

I get what God's Word promises me, what Peter, James and John got on the day of Pentecost, which transformed their lives. And I said, I want that. I want power.

And do you know the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Grace? In Hebrews chapter 10 verse 29, He's called the Spirit of Grace. And that is, Grace comes to us through the Holy Spirit. What is baptism? Baptism is immersion.

To be immersed in the Spirit of Grace. Why should anyone be afraid of that? That's the very thing we need. I need an immersion, a drenching in the Spirit of Grace.

There are two ways we can be immersed. One is you go into a river. And the other is if there's a flood of water falling down from heaven.

If I stand under a river flowing down, I can be drenched. And that's what the Holy Spirit is. The river of God flows down from heaven and I stand under it and I get drenched.

And it's grace all the way. Grace, grace, grace. And grace is not undeserved favor.

Grace is power. Grace equals power. I want to show you that from Scripture.

I don't want you to ever believe what I say if I cannot show it to you from Scripture. 2 Corinthians 12 Paul says about a time in his life when God allowed him to suffer a thorn in the flesh and he asked the Lord to take it away from him and the Lord said to him, 2 Corinthians 12 verse 9 My grace is sufficient for you for my power is perfected in weakness. What is my grace? My power.

It's the same thing. My grace is enough for you because my grace, or in other words, my power, is made perfect in your weakness. And Paul understood that.

He says, well, then I'm okay. I'm alright because the power of Christ is going to rest on me. That's what grace is.

And when God says, my grace is sufficient for you, what it means is that my grace is sufficient to handle anything that you'll ever face in your life. If I send my son to the shop to buy something worth five dollars, I'll give him five dollars. But if I send him to the shop to buy something worth a hundred dollars, he can't buy it with five dollars.

He needs a hundred dollars. So I give him a hundred. That's what it means when it says my grace is sufficient for you.

Exactly according to what your need is. Is the pressure very great? Grace is going to be very great. Is it a hundred dollars you need? You'll get that.

My grace is sufficient for you. I praise God for this, that there'll never be a situation I ever face in life where the Lord won't give me enough to pay the bill. Praise the Lord for this.

This is the good news. There is no temptation that's going to be too strong for me. There is no giant in Canaan's land that's not going to come under my feet.

Not one. Sin shall not have dominion over you because you're not under law, but you're under grace. You're not under the old covenant, you're under the new covenant.

You're not just one receiving mercy, but you're receiving grace. I want to show you another verse. It's not so well known unfortunately as my grace is sufficient for you.

My grace is sufficient for you has been popularized throughout the world. It's a very famous verse on grace. But I've discovered another verse which is a much fuller statement on grace.

I think it's the most wonderful statement on grace in the whole Bible. I don't know how many of you have noticed it. It's in 2nd Corinthians chapter 9 and verse 8. 2nd Corinthians 9 verse 8. It says here that God is able to make all grace abound to you that always having all sufficiency in everything you may have an abundance for every good deed.

Here are seven times you get a picture of totality. Notice that. All grace abound always, all sufficiency, everything, abundance, every good deed.

I've never seen a verse like this in the whole Bible. Seven times. All grace is going to abound to you.

Always. Not just sufficiency, but all sufficiency. Not just in most things, in everything.

And for every good deed, I just won't have enough. He's going to give me \$200 when I need only \$100. An abundance.

This is the gospel. That's why a Christian is to be an overcomer in every situation. You know what, how Ephesians 6 describes the Christian? Beautiful.

Ephesians 6 verse 13 it says, having overcome everything, you'll be able to resist in the evil day. That's why Ephesians 6 verse 13, having overcome everything, to stand firm. No matter what the situation.

Sister, are all your six children sick at the same time? God is able to make all grace abound towards you, that you having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance to do every good deed for all those six children, and still to greet your husband with a happy face when he comes home from work. That's grace. Is it possible? You say no, well, according to your faith, be it unto you.

But if you say yes, but if you say yes, according to your faith, be it unto you. The answer is the same. I think of that story where two blind men went to Jesus, and Jesus asked them, you know the story in Matthew chapter 9. What do you want me to do for you? He said, we want our eyes to be open.

And then he asked them a question. Do you believe that I am able to do this for you? He didn't ask them, do you believe that if you just try a little harder, you could see a little bit? That's not what he asked. Do you believe that if you just try a little harder, you could overcome that sin? That's not what he's asking.

It's like asking a blind man, can you just try, try just opening one eye a little bit, see if you can see a little bit. That's not the gospel. Do you believe Jesus said that I am able to do this for you? It's got nothing to do with your ability.

It's got to do with whether you're willing to let Jesus do a work in your life or not. And I thought, one blind man goes in first into the room and he says, Lord, I mean, I'll be happy if you open just one eye. That'll be enough for me.

I could see the road and I could walk around. I believe that you can open one eye. And the Lord says to him, according to your faith, be it unto you.

And he goes out with one eye open and he's so happy. And the other blind man goes in and the Lord asks him, do you believe I can do this for you? And he says, sure. I want both eyes open.

And he says, according to your faith, be it unto you. And he goes out with two eyes open. Now you have these two blind men.

And now this first man, he says, hey, this is heresy. Jesus opens only one eye. How in the world did you get two eyes open? Does Jesus give forgiveness and victory? No.

Only one eye. And he starts the one-eyed denomination. And he gets a whole lot of people who have faith that Jesus can open one eye in that church.

And here's this other one, it's usually smaller, of a few people who got both eyes open. And they are dubbed as heretics and false teachers because they preach that Jesus opens two eyes. This is what's happened for two thousand years.

And I want to say to you, brothers and sisters, you can have your choice which one you want to join. According to your faith. Not according to Jesus' ability.

No. If it were according to Jesus' ability, we'd all have both eyes open. But it's according to your faith, be it unto you.

For years, I belonged to the one-eyed denomination. After I was born again, I was on my way to heaven. My sins were all forgiven.

But that was about all. I had the mop. I had the bucket.

And the tap was always open. Till God had mercy on me. You know, I've discovered one thing.

You don't understand scripture, you don't get new revelations on scripture by study. You get new revelation of Jesus when you have a new need in your life. It's not by sitting and studying Greek and Hebrew.

I don't know Greek and Hebrew. But I had needs in my life. And I said, Lord, is there an answer to this need in my life? And without any knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, He showed me that sin need not have dominion over me.

Now, I want to say to you, my brothers and sisters, I don't care what sin it is in your life. Jesus can deliver you from it. It doesn't matter which it is.

I told you yesterday how as a young man, I struggled with lustful thoughts and nobody ever told me what I could do about that. I told you yesterday, I thought everybody preaching up there had no problems with lustful thoughts and it was only me. That's why I thought, Oh boy, why am I always struggling with these thoughts? Is it because I'm a maniac? It's because I didn't know the way.

I was forgiven. The tap was open. I was mopping, mopping, mopping, mopping till I found something better.

That Jesus could not only forgive me, He could deliver me from the power of sin when I was too weak to deliver myself through the Holy Spirit. And I thought of this, you know, this verse came to me at that time, God delivers only people who seek for victory like this. I want you to read this verse in Exodus chapter 2. In verse 23, in the middle of that verse it says, The sons of Israel, Exodus 2.23, The sons of Israel sighed because of their bondage and they cried out and they cried for help because their bondage rose up to God.

I want to ask you, my brothers and sisters, how many of you have sighed because you were defeated by sin? Wept at night and say, Oh Lord, there I lost my temper again. Lord, there I lusted with my eyes again. Who sighed? There are a lot of people who don't sigh.

No wonder they don't get delivered. The children of Israel sighed. You know, sighing is more than crying.

It's crying and saying, Oh, when will I ever be free from this? From this bondage. And they cried for help, rose up to God. And it rises up even today.

And it says, God heard their groaning and He hears the groaning even today. Here and there, not among many of His people. Most believers are just content in their defeated condition.

But here and there He hears some crying out for an immersion, a baptism in the Holy Spirit of grace and power. And God, verse 24, remembered His covenant in that day with Abraham. And today, through Jesus, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, God remembers that.

And He saw the sons of Israel and He took notice of them and He delivered them. And He is the same today. But He waits for us to sigh and cry.

Now I want to turn back to Hebrews in chapter 4 where we saw that we may receive mercy. That's what He does for us, first of all. My need is not for more money to get a better car or better house.

These are the stupid things being preached in Christendom today, unfortunately. My need is to be delivered from this wretched nature I inherited from Adam, from sin. And when I'm delivered from that, all the other things will fall into their proper place.

So, help in time of need is when I'm tempted. Now, imagine a mountain climber, someone who feels he's an expert at climbing mountains and at one particular place he slips and he's hanging on by his fingers over the cliff. But he's too proud to ask for help.

He says, I'm an expert. And he falls to the bottom. Then he has to ask for help.

And the ambulance comes along and picks him up. That's forgiveness of sins. We fall.

Say, O Lord, please forgive me. And the ambulance is always there, mercy. Takes me.

Fixes me up. I'm okay and I go mountain climbing again. And again I'm hanging by my fingers.

One day I'm still too proud to ask for help. And I fall again. And the ambulance comes.

And this is the cycle. That so many Christians live in. Always the ambulance.

Thank God for the ambulance. Isn't it good news that there's an ambulance available when you've fallen? Mercy is available, forgiveness. But, think if this person next time when he's about to fall is a little humbler.

And says, I'm not such an expert. Please help me now. Then he will find grace lifting him up in his time of need and making him stand.

Now, which is his time of need? I agree his time of need is there when he's fallen and broken his bones. But, there was another time of need prior to that. Before he fell.

Now, what I want to ask you brothers and sisters is when do you want God to help you? After you've fallen or before? That's the question. When is our real time of need? When are we going to break out of this cycle of always falling and getting the ambulance and falling and getting the ambulance and falling and getting the ambulance? Are you sighing? Is there a sigh because Lord, I'm sick and tired of this. I want a better life.

There is a better life. You know, not everyone can come to Jesus. Jesus said, Come to me those who are weary and heavy laden.

Those who are sick and tired of their defeated lives. Come to me. In another place he said, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me.

That means if anyone is thirsty for a better life than he already has. If anyone acknowledges that there is a dryness in his life, there is a deadness in his life and he is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. There is plenty of water there.

And not only to satisfy you, it can flow out from you in rivers of living water to bless other people. This he spake about the Holy Spirit. But he got a thirst.

That means you got to have a longing for something more than you have right now. And it's got nothing to do with how many years you've been a believer. You may have been born again yesterday and you can have a thirst and God can fill you with His Holy Spirit.

But if you don't have a thirst even after 25 years, you'll just be the same old condition. You'll be going around with a mop in the bucket till Jesus comes. But all I'm saying is there is a better way.

I'm not forcing you. I'm just saying, come up higher, brother. You're invited.

It's free. But it's up to you. If you're satisfied down at those low levels, you can stay there.

But Jesus invites you higher. So that's our time of need. When we are about to slip and fall and He can keep us.

Now, if you don't believe this, I can give you a little homework. The next time you're tempted, think of the area where you're falling most of the time. Where the ambulances had to come and pick you up.

In what particular area? You know, it speaks about Hebrews 12 about the sin which so easily besets us. And that may be different in different ones. Okay, what's the one in your case? Is it anger? Is it sexually lustful thoughts? Whatever it is, think of it now.

The next time, and that could be tonight, it could be tomorrow morning. You won't have to wait long for that. For the sin which so easily besets us.

But the next time you find yourself tempted in that area and you're about to fall, try this. Come boldly to the throne of grace. Humble yourself.

You're not such an expert mountain climber. Just humble yourself and say, Well, Lord, I'm just a failure. Now, Lord, let's show me that this really works.

Give me grace. Let's come boldly to the throne of grace to receive mercy for my past failures. Okay, we got that.

But to find grace now to help me in this particular moment in my time of need. You know what will happen? After a few moments you'll find, Hey, I didn't lose my temper. Hey, I could resist that evil thought.

This is the gospel. It's a message of deliverance. Jesus came to set the captives free.

He came to open prison doors. He came that we might walk as free people. No longer as slaves to sin.

Never again in our life. That's why He gives us the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of grace.

People ask me this question. What is the mark of the baptism of the Holy Spirit? What's the sign of being filled with the Spirit? I say the same thing that Jesus said. I can't say it better than Him.

Acts 1.8 The Holy Spirit will come upon you and you shall receive power. Power. That's the evidence.

Nothing else. That is the evidence. If you don't have that, whatever else you got, you missed it.

You need power. Power to be a witness for me, Jesus said. Not just to bear witness.

I hope you know the difference between being a witness and bearing witness. Bearing a witness is included in being a witness. But being a witness is more than bearing witness.

You shall receive power and you shall be. Not you shall do. You shall be.

There is a lot of emphasis in the Christian world today on doing. What are you doing for the Lord, brother? I am being. And from being, I am doing.

You can do without being. But I want to be first and then do. You shall be witnesses unto me in every part of the earth.

America, India, everywhere. God needs people who are witnesses and I need power for that. I need power.

I need grace. This grace which is power. This which comes through the immersion in the Holy Spirit.

Praise God for such a wonderful gospel. Amen. And that can take care of all my needs.

Do you remember that Old Testament story? I think it is in 2nd Kings chapter 6. Where this widow came to Elisha and said the creditor has come. I am in debt and the creditor has come to take my sons away captive. I don't have time to turn to it.

You can read it sometime. 2nd Kings chapter 6. And Elisha asked her a question. What do you have in your house? And she says your servant has nothing except a vessel of oil.

It is like saying we have nothing except the Holy Spirit. And Elisha said what do you mean nothing? That is the answer to all your debt. That is the answer to all your problems.

Go and get as many vessels as you can and keep pouring. And it says she got vessels from all around her neighbors and she kept pouring and it never finished. That is the picture of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

They couldn't experience it in the Old Covenant. We heard about our debt the other day. Our debt of love.

Every person we meet we got to recognize I owe this man something. I owe him something. Even if he is a stranger.

I owe him something. Perhaps just a smile. OK.

But I have got to clear a debt. And how do I clear this debt? That was exactly the question this widow asked Elisha. How can I clear this debt? I am in terrific debt.

Do you recognize that you are in debt? Most of us don't. Most of us don't recognize that God because he loved us so much has permanently placed us in debt to every single human being we meet on the face of this earth. That was the crime of the Levite and the priest when they saw that man lying on the ground and didn't do anything to help him.

That's the answer. And we say we got nothing. You think you are going to clear the debt by going to one more meeting? Listening to one more tape? Reading another book? No, brother.

You need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The answer is there. Ask God to fill your heart with the Holy Spirit.

And like it says in Ephesians 5.18 Be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. That's the answer. And God wants to give that to every single one of us.

That's the second promise in the New Testament. He will save his people from their sins. He will immerse you in the Holy Spirit and on fire.

But, like everything else, we got to acknowledge our need. I couldn't get forgiveness of sins till I confessed I was a sinner. Why is it the Pharisees couldn't get forgiveness of sins? Because they pretended that they were not sinners.

And Jesus said, well, then I didn't come for you. You fellows are healthy. I came for these poor, sick people.

And if we sit, now apply the same logic or the same steps to being filled with the Holy Spirit. Here Jesus comes offering what is the first thing? Forgiveness of sins. And here are a bunch of people who say, we're okay.

The Lord says, okay, I didn't come for you. Here are some people who say, Lord, we really need this. We're sinners.

Okay. They get it. Forgiveness of sins.

And now He comes with the fullness of the Spirit. And here are a whole bunch of Christians who say, Ah, we got it. We got it when we were saved.

They were convinced doctrinally about something or the other. The Lord says, fine. You're okay.

I'll leave you alone. But here are these other hungry, thirsty Christians who say, Lord, I don't care what doctrine. I'm dry.

I'm dead. I don't need a doctrine. I need power.

They get it. You know why you haven't got it so far? Because someone convinced you about a doctrine. You know, I know there's a lot of doctrinal disputing about baptism in the Holy Spirit.

And I say, I don't get into this at all. I remember when I was born again. And I was in a brethren assembly where they didn't preach about being filled with the Holy Spirit.

They told me I got everything when I got converted. And when I said, Lord, I don't know what it is, but I certainly, to be honest, I can't say that rivers of living water are flowing out from me. No.

My experience is more like a hand pump. You know, in India we have some hand pumps. You pump and pump and pump and pump and a few trickles of water come out.

And then when you recover a little bit, you pump some more and pump some more, a few trickles come out. Yeah, a little bit comes out. A little bit was coming out of my life.

What was certainly not a river and certainly not many rivers. And Jesus said, He who believes in me from his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. I just had to be honest.

I said, Lord, that is not true in my life. And I don't want anyone to convince me doctrinally about something which is going to make me miss the most important thing in the Christian life and discover at the judgment seat of Christ that I missed something God had for me. I don't want that tragedy.

So I seek you, Lord. I don't care about terminology. Call it what you like.

It doesn't matter to me. I want rivers of living water flowing out of my life. That's how I began to seek God.

And I want to say God met with me. He changed my life. He changed my ministry.

My ministry was such a strain before that. Oh, struggle, struggle, struggle. And a few drops had come out.

I said, Lord, that's not how it's meant to be. That's not how Jesus ministered. That's not how the apostles ministered.

I want my ministry to be rivers of living water flowing in many directions. Now, if you knew what I was when I was converted, a shy, fearful, timid, introverted, reserved type of person who wouldn't like to stand anywhere, I know God changed me. And I believe that He can change anyone.

But it's according to your faith, be it unto you. If you continue to believe that Jesus opens only one eye, that's all you'll have till the end of your life. According to your faith, be it unto you.

I'm not asking you to have faith for better cars and better houses and things God's not promised. I'd like to have hair on my head, but I don't try to trust God for that. I'll get it one day when Jesus comes again.

But there are other things. I'm not asking you to, you know, all the books on faith you find in Christian bookshops are the type of books which tell you how you can get hair on your head and new teeth where teeth have fallen off and better cars and better houses. I tell you, I'm not interested.

What's the use getting a better car and a better house if I'm defeated by anger in my life? What's the use of that? What's the use even speaking in other tongues if I lose my temper in my mother tongue? That's no use. You mean the Holy Spirit can control only other tongues and He cannot control the mother tongue? Boy, that must be another spirit. I say if the Holy Spirit can't control my mother tongue I don't want other tongues.

Let me deal with my mother tongue first and let Him teach me how to have the law of kindness in my mouth when I speak to my wife. If that isn't there I got sick and tired of these believers who praise God in other tongues on Sunday morning and shouted their wives in their mother tongue Sunday afternoon. I said this is not the Holy Spirit.

And I said, Lord, I want that tongue of fire that was on top of those believers that made the Holy Spirit control my speech 24 hours a day. Control my tongue. That is what we need.

Victory over sin. Along with whatever gifts God wants to give us. I believe that the devil has done a tremendous work in confusing people in this area because he knows this is a very vital area in the Christian life.

He's made a lot of people go to one extreme and he's made a whole lot of other people fall over the cliff on the other side, going to the other extreme. And it doesn't matter to the devil which end of the cliff you fall over, so long as you reach the bottom. Dear brother and sister, let's shame the devil and let's say, Lord, I'm going to seek you for what you promised.

I'm not going to seek you for things which are not promised in the word, which are not going to help me in eternity and which are not going to help me to be a more effective witness for you here on earth. But I do want to trust you for that which I need to make me a more effective witness for you here on this earth. I want you to turn to Luke chapter 11.

Luke's gospel chapter 11. The disciples once came to Jesus and said, Lord, teach us to pray. And do you know the answer to that? Now you ask most questions, what answer did Jesus give when they asked him this question? Teach us to pray.

They only say the Lord's prayer. Well, they asked him to teach them to pray and he said, when you pray say verse 2, Father, hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come and so on. But did it stop with that? No.

He went on and that's what I want to show you today. He taught them to pray like that and then he said, he's still answering the same question, Lord, teach us to pray. And he told them what to pray for.

He said, verse 5, supposing one of you has a friend and he goes to him at midnight and says, friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has come and I've got nothing to set before him. And from inside he answered and said, don't bother me, the door is shut, my children are in bed and I can't get up. I tell you, even though he'll not get up and give him anything because he's a friend, yet because of his persistence, he was still answering that question, teach us how to pray.

With persistence, he will get up and give him as much as he needs and I say to you, ask like this and it'll be given you. Seek like this man sought and you will find. Knock like this man knocked and it'll be open to you.

We still haven't finished. For everyone who asks like this, receives and he who seeks like this, finds and he who knocks like this, it'll be opened because supposing one of you fathers, your son asks for fish, will he give him a snake? No, never. If he asks for an egg, will he give him a scorpion? And now we come to the final point.

How much more will your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask? If you don't ask, how should we ask? Like this. That's the point. It's all the answer to that first question.

Lord, teach us to pray. What do you need to pray for? This is what we need to pray for. Lord, what is the meaning of this man going to his neighbor and saying, give me three loaves.

Jesus said, ask the father for the Holy Spirit, for the power of the Holy Spirit, for grace. Ask. And how shall I ask? Supposing I don't get it immediately, keep knocking, keep seeking, keep asking.

Lord, I'm not going to give up till you give me power. There's one more thing which is very, very important which I want to mention here. See here, he's primarily speaking about our ministry.

And he's talking about somebody who has come to us in need. I told you about clearing the debt. Here is a man who has come to me in need.

And I'm surrounded by people with need in this world. And when I see their need, I can do one of two things. You know, when this fellow came, this chap comes to my house at night.

Just imagine, I'm the person here. He comes to my house at night. And I ask him, well, have you eaten? He says, no, I'm hungry.

Well, I'm sorry brother, our refrigerator is empty right now. We already had our meal. Let's just praise the Lord and go to bed.

We'll see how it is in the morning. That's not what he did. He felt he's hungry.

I must meet his need. I must do something about it. That's where it begins.

That's where a real seeking after God for the power of the Holy Spirit begins. When I see the need of another person and I'm trying to help him and I don't have it within me what it takes to help him. Then what do I do? I can ignore it and say, well, I can't help everybody in the world.

I'm okay myself. I've eaten my meal and I'm alright. That's how most Christians live.

And that's why they never experience the genuine power of the Holy Spirit. And a lot of people who are so-called seeking for the power of the Holy Spirit today, you know what they're seeking for? They're not seeking for power to help others. Oh, no! They're seeking because somebody got up and gave a testimony that they got tickled down their spine when the Holy Spirit came upon them or they got thrown into some corner or they began to mutter something or... They're seeking for some experience like that other testimony they heard in that meeting.

They're seeking for something for themselves. They're not got one single thought about somebody else in need. Whereas Jesus said, when the Holy Spirit's come upon you, you'll be my witnesses to all those needy people in the uttermost parts of the earth.

And if we had... If people had sought God with that... with this parable in mind for the power of the Holy Spirit like he said, they'd have got the genuine experience. And they'd have got the genuine power. And it would have made the church like an army terrible with banners like it says in the Song of Solomon.

But it isn't. Why is the church so weak? You know, when I... when we sing that song, Hold the fort for I am coming. I'll tell you honestly, I have a little bit of a reservation about it.

It's a picture of a beleaguered church struggling and the devil somehow, Oh Lord, please come. We're about to be defeated. That's not it.

That's not the church, an army terrible with banners. There is no hold the fort for I am coming anywhere in the New Testament. Jesus said, I will build my church and the gates of hell... See, we're attacking the gates of hell.

The other fellows have got to cry out for help. The gates of hell will not prevail against this church. Don't reverse it and say that the gates of the church will somehow survive when the forces of hell attack it.

I am not holding any fort. We go full steam against the devil and the promise is the gates of hell will not prevail against the church. The church is triumphant.

Satan will not be able to make inroads into our church and destroy people. He will not be able to get into that family and destroy those children because we're going to stand and deliver that family from the power of the devil. That's what we're here for.

That's what God's servants are here for. We're not here just to preach messages. Anybody can preach a message.

Just go and read some books, listen to some tapes and you've got material to preach for next Sunday. That's not a servant of God. A servant of God is called to do what Jesus did.

It says he went about doing good and delivering people who were oppressed by the devil and we are surrounded by them. There are needy people in our churches whose families are suffering. The devil's got inroads into those families.

Are the gates of hell going to triumph or not? No. The church must go against them. We've got to bind the strong men and spoil his goods.

Deliver people who are under the captivity of Satan. For that we need the power of the Holy Spirit. That's why we need the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, I give you authority over all the power of the enemy. Nothing shall be able to stand before you. Over serpents, scorpions, over all the power of the enemy.

This is how we should be, brothers and sisters. But here we are praying, Lord heal my back ache and I want a better car and I want a better house and all these stupid things that believers are paying. I say, forget about whether my back ache is healed or not.

I'm going to chase the devil out of that home. I believe we need to have our vision lifted. We need to see what the Lord is calling us to in these last days.

I want to encourage you my brothers and sisters. Forget doctrinal differences. Forget terminology.

Call it what you like but ask God to set you on fire. And if you don't like the term baptism in the Holy Spirit, okay, drop it. Ask God for rivers of living water to flow out from you.

Ask God to set you on fire. Is there anything wrong with that? Anything doctrinally wrong with that? And if you don't have, if you don't like tongues drop it. That's not the most important thing.

Ask God to set you so much on fire that you'll be able to deliver people who are oppressed by the devil around you. That's the most important thing. And if he gives you other gifts, take them but don't go seeking after them.

Seek for that power which will help you to deliver other people around you who are in need. I know for 35 years consistently I have prayed one prayer. I have earnestly coveted to prophesy.

Because the Bible says so. Earnestly desire the gifts of the Spirit. Why have I coveted to prophesy? There's hardly a meeting that I come to where I don't see God before and say, Oh God I want to prophesy.

I want to give a word that will go straight to the hearts of people and I don't have it within me. I don't have the loaves. My refrigerator is empty.

There are people in need. I come to you. Lord give me that which I can give to them.

And then it becomes easy. You remember the way the 5000 were fed? The disciples didn't have to produce the loaves. Praise the Lord.

I always say, I'm only in the distribution business. I'm not in the production business. I can't produce.

I can't produce a message. But I can distribute if the Lord gives it to me. And when my basket is empty I just go back to the Lord and say, Lord there are a few more people hungry out there.

You got some more? Plenty. Plenty for everyone. It's distribution we're called to, not production.

Don't waste your time cramming your head trying to produce something. And you fill your head with knowledge and that's how what happens in a lot of pulpits. People are busy preparing on Saturday for what they're going to give on Sunday and it's like getting a lot of things in and vomiting it all out on Sunday.

That's not what people need. They need food. And you cannot produce it.

That's the first thing you've got to recognize. In my younger days I thought I could produce it and I gave out what I would call vomit. What I had taken in, digested and vomited out.

But I found a better way. I began to seek God like this man here for prophecy for words that would exhort edify comfort, build up God's people. And I want to encourage you to seek God a little more.

I'm not saying intellectual preparation is wrong but all I'm saying is spiritual preparation is much more important. That's all I'm saying. You've got to walk with a clear conscience before God.

You've got to walk in humility. God gives His grace only to the humble. Keep your face in the dust before God and say, Lord, I'm empty.

Help me to deliver people who are in need. I believe our churches are full of such people. They need help.

They need to be delivered. And we need to give them that which will set them free. I want to encourage you to seek God to set you on fire.

There is no respect to persons with God. What He's done for one, He'll do for another. But He wants us to have faith.

Faith that He will give us grace to help us in our time of need so that we don't fall into sin. Faith that He'll give us that power those loaves to feed that needy person who has come to us in His need. Let's pray.

Fill my cup, Lord. I lift it up, Lord. Come and quench this thirsting of my soul.

Lord, we want to come to You with open hearts, with hungry hearts, seeking You for that which only You can give. We don't want to be satisfied with experiences and thrills. We want rivers of living water to flow

out from us in these last days to quench the thirst of needy people around us.

Help us, Lord, we pray. Help us to honor You that we might be a church like You want us to be, an army against which the gates of hell will never prevail in our local church situations. We give us grace, we pray.

As we cry out to You, there are needy, hungry people here, thirsty. I pray, Lord, You'll satisfy the longing of their soul. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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