

# Audio Sermon: Trusting in Our Own Means or the Power of the Holy Spirit

by Jim Cymbala

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*The sermon calls believers to trust solely in God and the Holy Spirit rather than in human methods or techniques for success in ministry and life.*

**Duration:** 20:25

**Scripture:** Habakkuk 1:15

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Godly Humility"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the danger of worshiping man-made methods and techniques over giving God all the glory and honor. It draws parallels from the book of Habakkuk where the Babylonians, despite being used by God, were arrogant and praised their own tools. The message urges listeners to rely solely on God's strength and not on worldly strategies or achievements, highlighting the importance of giving God the praise He deserves.

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## Transcript

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For more messages, log on to our website [www.SermonIndex.com](http://www.SermonIndex.com) Now, here's today's program. In the book of Haggai, God speaks through the prophet and he tells the people, this is a very interesting thing. I'm going to punish you and I'm going to use the Babylonians to do it.

Habakkuk is caught up in a dilemma because he's saying, wait a minute. How can you use people more wicked than we are to punish God's people? This is Habakkuk. This is where, by the way, the famous verse is found in the Old Testament, which Paul turns and uses in Romans, the just shall live by faith.

So Habakkuk is having this dialogue with God. It's a short book. You can read it in easy sitting.

And he's just trying to figure out like what's going down with all of this. And I will go on the tower and wait to see what he will say to me. Some interesting passages there.

But when he's describing the Babylonians, he says something that just jumped out at me because it applies to a lot of church work that we do. Sometimes it can apply to ministry on college campuses. It can apply to us in everyday living.

It's a warning to us. So he's describing the Babylonians who are wicked people, even though the Lord is going to use them for his own purposes here, just like he used Pharaoh and Egypt. And then he says this in Habakkuk, the first chapter, verse 15 through 16a.

The wicked foe, that's the Assyrians, that's the context, pulls all of them, the nations that he's conquering, all of them up with hooks. He catches them in his net. He gathers them up in his dragnet.

And so he rejoices and is glad. He's likening what the Babylonians are doing to a fisherman. So he says they just roll through the countryside and they defeat everyone in their way.

They're like a fisherman who just pulls the fish up the way he wants to, right? Victorious and successful. And then verse 16. Therefore, he sacrifices to his net and he burns incense to his dragnet.

So what the Lord is teaching us here is the immediate application is the Babylonians are arrogant and a proud people. And when they roll through the countryside, they're always victorious. And they're the ones who succeeded the Assyrian Empire.

They conquered the Assyrian Empire, which was the one who took the northern ten tribes into captivity. The Babylonians were conquered in turn by the Persians, who were then in turn conquered by the Greeks, who then were in turn conquered by the Roman Empire, which lasted for a long time. But the Babylonians are the big guy on the block now, and they're full of themselves and they're arrogant.

And they're like a fisherman who just fishes and pulls it up. And then he says this thing that has grieved God, and you could see it provokes God. He says after they do what they do like a fisherman, they sacrifice an offering to their net, and they burn incense to their dragnet.

In other words, they pay homage not to the God in heaven who gives victories and supplies every good and perfect gift. They praise the tools and the techniques that they use, and this provoke God. They sacrifice to their net, and they burn incense to their dragnet.

Right now one of the things plaguing America is a lot of the techniques and philosophies of church growth. And it just absolutely alarms me as I travel around the country, and now it's invading some other countries, but I leave it to America to lead the way in this kind of silliness. You talk to pastors who don't talk about the Lord anymore.

They do not talk about the Lord. Don't tell me they do. I'll tell you they don't.

I've sat and had lunch with them. They don't talk about the Lord. They don't talk about the power of the Holy Spirit.

They don't talk about how powerful the Word of God is. They don't talk about the name of Jesus that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess. They talk about the last conference they went to and the new technique or church growth methodology that they learned.

They burn incense to their net. They sacrifice to their net and burn incense to their dragnet. And then they change after two years to yet another thing that will work.

So recently I sat with a woman who asked me to counsel her. At that time she was part of another church, working for another church, and I didn't want to do it at first. She said, no, I think you could help me look at this objectively.

So what happened was she began a talk, and she was very discouraged in the church she was going to. The church had been going south. There was apathy, giving down, no converts, not a lot of things to praise God for.

So she told me, yeah. But what's discouraged me is a number of years ago all the leadership of the church, the leadership hauled the whole staff out to a church in another part of the country because, quote, that church is big and they know how to do church. You know, hey, come on, let's be real.

They know how to do church. They got like cell groups and like lights, and they do things with PowerPoints, and, you know, they like make believe it rains during the service while the man is preaching or something or whatever. So they came back and they implemented all of these techniques, and about 18 months, two years later, church was further south.

Now nobody knew what to say. Everybody's tiptoeing around like, whoa, people are leaving the church. So then she told me some more months went by, and then the pastor had cast that vision to the church.

That's the word they used, cast the vision. The vision turned out to be a bubble that didn't work because only God works. Brothers and sisters, look at me.

Nothing works. No system in Ethiopia works. No methodology works.

Dimming the lights in the prayer meeting doesn't work. Nothing works. Do whatever you want.

Have whatever lighting, do support, build, whatever. Only God works, and He deserves all the glory and all the praise. Can we say amen to that? Otherwise, you end up burning, sacrificing to your nets and burning incense to your drag net.

Sure, it brought the fish in, but whatever God gives you, He's the source of the thing. And if you mention anything else, a pastor's name, any kind of anything, if you mention anything else, you grieve the Holy Spirit. You think after God gave His Son, Jesus Christ, He's going to share glory with some method or some denomination or some Brooklyn tabernacle or Wesley? Oh, come on, that's silly.

So now they went to yet a different thing, a new vision, a new church methodology. And that church had just come out four or five years ago and said what we were selling and all the videos, we just found out it really doesn't work and make a lot of disciples. But we got new stuff coming down the pike for you.

Why would I need new stuff coming down the pike if I have the Bible, which is the Word of God? Can we all say amen by clapping our hands? We have the Word of God. For example, to quote my esteemed colleague, Pastor Petri, what methodology were they using in Gojo? What PowerPoint? What lights? Could you tell me? What were they using? Whenever I hear somebody say, oh, Pastor Simba, you should do that. Pastor Jim, it works.

I automatically react and I stop them now because becoming less polite, I guess, or whatever. And I say, don't you say that. Don't ever say that works.

Only God works. Otherwise you sacrifice to your nets and you burn incense to your drag nets. So here's what God's given us.

He's given us the gospel of Jesus Christ. By the way, the country, the nation right now, the continent that has the most Christians in the world is communist China. They have the most Christians.

Rabbi Zechariah confirmed that with me last time we were talking. And half of their church is a meeting in secret. So tell me what they're using.

And if someone says, I have the vision. You have nothing. Just let God lead you.

But don't sell it to us as... Otherwise you end up worshiping your net and you burn incense to your drag net. But now let's apply that to our lives. Some of us burn incense to our intelligence.

And we sacrifice to our jobs. And we give glory to things that are not the source of our blessing. God is the source of our blessing.

Now listen, I'm all for people sharing how they do things. And if you can be encouraged by something, praise God. But don't tell me anything works except God.

Otherwise you grieve the Holy Spirit, the angels must just start flying around in a frenzy. Or maybe the angels in heaven start going like that, like stop it. Because only God can do whatever has to be done.

Come on, isn't God awesome? Isn't God deserving of all the praise and honor and glory? How about some of you who instead of giving God glory for all that he's done for you, what are you crediting? Your net? Your drag net? What do you have, a degree? What do you have, a law degree? What are you, a lawyer? You think you're smart? Think you're a pastor? You think you're smart? Wrote a book? Where does God get all the glory? You know, the world still has not yet seen what God can do through someone who will give God all the glory. Because our egos are so worked into us that we want to be able to boast in something. You know, I'm doing something.

You know, I'm not like a dodo here. I'm doing something. Instead of just saying, like Paul said, God forbid that I should glory in anything but the cross of Jesus Christ.

Does he not deserve all the glory? And I figure the Lord laid this on my heart because maybe he wants to correct. And correction is a hard word. But he wants to correct some of us because what we're doing is we're leaning on... What are you leaning on? Could you please tell me what we're leaning on? Leaning on a shadow.

Leaning on a stick. This is how God judged Israel. Because they would get clever and instead of trusting God, some of the kings would make treaties with Egypt.

Then they would make a treaty with the Ammonites. And they would get geopolitical strength and get an alliance. So that if anyone attacked them, they had people to defend them.

And God rebuked them through the prophets and said, What? You're not going to trust in me anymore? You're trusting in Egypt? And a couple of places in Jeremiah, Isaiah, especially Jeremiah, God says when you lean on it, it'll cut you. You're leaning on a stick. And the stick will cut you when you lean on it.

What are you leaning on today? Is it anything else but God? Then we're in trouble. That's the hard part about preaching and being a pastor for a while. Is you get up there and you're tempted to think, Oh, I can do this because I've done it before.

You can't do it because you've done it before. You need God every time you get up behind the pulpit. Do I get an amen? We need God every time we do it.

A BT Kids class. A missions trip. Pastor Park can say, Well, I've done a few of these.

I know how to do this. We know it. We got this down.

You got nothing down. This is what the Bible means, that His strength is made perfect in our what? In our weakness. He has to get all the glory.

So the Lord really spoke to me. Maybe it's not just for me. Maybe it's just for you too.

Don't lean on your net. Don't worship your net. Whatever that net might be.

Burn incense to your drag net. Your college degree. This is why a lot of pastors are failing who go to seminary.

Because they come out of seminary and Bible school. And they've been taught how to do it. They've been taught to worship their net.

That's a good truth. We worship our nets. We burn incense to our drag nets instead of giving God all the glory.

We concentrate on the means instead of the techniques. The tools instead of the God who gives us everything. And down through church history, those of you who are interested in the Lord's work, if you study church history, God's done it a million ways in a million different places.

There's no way to do it. Someone says, I have a vision to reach New York. Just do your business, would you please? And win a few people to the Lord.

I have a vision to take the world. Please, just do your work for the Lord. We rejoice with you.

You rejoice with someone who does it different. Do I get a witness here? Now, I don't know how all of you that are Methodist leaders here, pastors, come on up here and stand facing me. Come on up here.

We're going to lay hands on you and send you off with a blessing. Wait until you see the blessing God is going to give you. Just stretch right across here.

Pastors, wives, deacons, leaders, would you come and stand behind these people and lay your hands on them? There's some women here who need a woman to lay their hands on. Every eye closed in the auditorium. If you could lift that, please.

If you're here tonight and you say, Pastor, I got convicted. I'm not giving God glory for everything I have like I should. I'm kind of sharing it with like I'm a good person.

I'm educated and I was raised in a good school system there in Trinidad or Jamaica or Poland or Puerto Rico, wherever you're from. And I got my degree and that's why I'm doing something. I'm a gifted

keyboardist or I'm whatever.

Are you burning incense to your dragnet? Are you worshiping your net instead of the God who gave you everything you have? Oh, repent of that today. Repent of that today and say to God today, God, forgive me for looking at anything else but you. You deserve all the glory.

Unto him who is able to keep us from falling, be all the glory and honor and praise. Not some of it, all of it. To put anything else in a sentence with Jesus Christ is horrible.

He deserves all the praise. He's the source. If it wasn't for God, some of us would be dead tonight.

We wouldn't even be alive. How can we point to anything in us when he... If it wasn't for God, we wouldn't even be here. If you want to give extra glory to God, if you're kind of in arrears for praising God, you got some IOU slips here that you want to cash in, just come out of your seat and stand behind my friends here and say, I'm going to give God praise.

Anybody else want to come up and say, For past blessings that I never thanked him for, I'm going to give him praise tonight. I will not worship my net. I will not sacrifice to my dragnet.

I'm going to give God all the glory. I'll wait for you down here from the balcony. Lay your hands on these pastors.

Lord, I thank you for these beautiful people who have come to visit us from all over the South and Midwest. And they face challenges on their campuses that we can't imagine here, Lord. And they have secret battles and attacks of the enemy, Lord.

But we pray that the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon them. Come Holy Spirit, oh, how I need you. We pray in the name of Jesus tonight, that you are going to anoint them as never before.

They're going to receive a new anointing from you, Lord. They will have power and boldness and wisdom to do your work, Lord. Lord, you're the one who's given us our nets and our dragnets.

You're the one who's given us our jobs. You're the one who put them in these campuses. You're the one who's given us our education.

You're the one who gives us strength every day. We dare not give anybody the praise and honor and glory but you, Lord. You're the one who gave us our education.

You're the one who gave us a brain that works in our head, Lord. So use this word to remind us that you will not share your glory with anyone. That's what your word says.

For you are a jealous God. And any time somebody lifts up anything, any method, any person, any church, any denomination, any anything, it's grieving to you because you are Jehovah Jireh, our provider. You're the one who gives us everything we have, Lord.

As these people go back to their campuses at the end of the week, I pray, God, that you will help them preach like they've never preached before. That there will be an outpouring of grace and supplication in their campus churches. There will be a new spirit of prayer, of love, of cooperation, involvement, sacrifice.

We know a lot of college-age students, Lord, they don't want to sacrifice and commit to very much. They want to dabble. We pray that the word of God will go deep in their hearts, we pray.

And you're going to build strong soldiers like what we heard about over in Ethiopia, Lord, in Malawi. We thank you that we could pray for them, that we're brothers and sisters with them. Holy Spirit, come and let that light be bright.

Give us boldness to open our mouths and talk about Jesus with people and not be afraid or ashamed or embarrassed. So everybody turn right now. Every man find a man and just pray for each other.

God, fill us with the Holy Spirit and let our light shine. That's all. Come on, every woman, find another woman.

Lord, in the world that you've placed me in, fill me with your spirit so that my light might shine. Our prayer is that you have been blessed and encouraged by this sermon. To download full sermons, go to our website, [www.SermonIndex.com](http://www.SermonIndex.com). You can contact us through the website.

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