

Book of Acts Series - Part 4 | Signs of the Spirit

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon emphasizes the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in the early church and its relevance for today's believers.

Duration: 30:34

Scripture: Matthew 5:3

Topics: "Book Of Acts"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on Peter's first sermon and the impact it had on the listeners. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the pure gospel message and how it brings people into spiritual maturity. The speaker shares a story about a shepherd breaking a sheep's leg to protect it from wandering away and getting into danger. This story serves as a metaphor for the devotion and commitment that the early Christians had towards the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. The sermon also touches on the topic of baptism and the different beliefs surrounding the formula used, highlighting the significance of being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

Transcript

We're going to continue from the book of Acts. This is part four. We learned on Sunday Peter's first sermon.

Wasn't that interesting? All the things we learned from that sermon? What the gospel is. Somebody came up to me and said, I never heard that in my whole life. The gospel.

I heard join the church and a lot of other stuff, but just the pure gospel that Peter preached. Peter preached it because the Spirit had come down upon the early church. They were enabled by the Spirit to speak loudly, roaring, kind of, in an ecstasy in other languages as the Spirit enabled 120 of them who were meeting in upper room at the direction of Jesus, praying and waiting for the Spirit to come.

When the Spirit came, it came in a unique fashion there with the sound of a mighty rushing wind. Someone just pointed out to me in a book I was reading, it didn't say it came with the sound of a wind, that there was an actual wind. It came with the sound like a wind.

They might not have felt the wind, but there was the sound of the wind. That drew a crowd. Peter preached the gospel and we found out that the gospel, this good news of Jesus, which we analyzed for its

content, the people were so moved that they said, what should we do to be saved? They were pricked in their hearts, stirred in their heart.

And Peter said, repent and be baptized. Acts 2.38, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is an interesting place in the New Testament also, because in Matthew, the Lord says, go into all the world, make disciples of the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son.

And yet the first account of they baptized, they don't say Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, they baptize them in Jesus' name. And this is why some Christian churches baptize in Jesus' name. Other people say, no, we follow Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We baptize in a great way here. We baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in Jesus' name. And that way we've covered all the bases, right? So no one can argue, because I have no idea why the difference is.

But every baptism in the book of Acts, it mentions they baptize them in the name of Jesus. So 3,000 people responded and got baptized. That day, the next day, it doesn't tell us.

But 3,000 said, I believe in Jesus. I will follow Jesus. There's no classes given, no courses given.

They just baptize them. What was baptism? It was a sign to them there, I believe in Jesus publicly. My old life, I've repented.

That old life is gone. My new life has come in Christ. I go down in the water, I come up in a new person, even as Jesus was buried and was dead, and then came out with resurrection life.

So now we have the first snapshot of the early church. The book of Luke, written by the only Gentile writer of the New Testament. Luke was a doctor, as we know.

Very scientific mind. His Greek is on a very high level Greek, compared to some of the other stuff in the New Testament. And Luke doesn't give a chronological history like the Gospels.

It doesn't give you day by day with Jesus, and then he was five years old, then he was six years old. No, it's snapshots. And the book of Acts are just snapshots, but they're inspired by the Holy Spirit, so you got to stop and watch, and listen, and look.

Snapshots, boom, boom, boom, and it covers decades, the book of Acts, but it's just we're getting snapshots. And we don't know what happened to Thomas. Tradition says he went to India and preached the gospel and died there.

And we don't know what happened to the other James, and we don't know what happened to Bartholomew, and we don't know what happened to Matthew, one of the original 12. We just don't know. It's not telling us everything we want to know.

It tells us what we need to know. And now as these snapshots are taken, we have immediately following the first baptism of the first Christians after the first sermon of the first Christian moment in history. Jesus in the Gospels was not the New Testament church yet.

He hadn't died and resurrected. The Old Testament is the Old Testament. It's a covenant made with Israel.

And now the New Testament, the church, is going to have both Jew and Gentile soon in it, as we're going to see. But here's the first snapshot of the church. Now before I put it up there, this is very challenging to all pastors and all churches, because as I go around to speak to pastors, especially in America, you have to remind pastors this is what God had intended His church to look like, not what maybe you grew up with your culture and your denomination.

You formed your own culture and what you think is, quote, church, and it might drift it away from the original picture that God gave it. God gave us a snapshot of what Jesus wants His church to look like. And as you're going to see, some of us have grown up in churches that didn't resemble this at all.

Not at all. But this is the way the church is supposed to look like. I don't care if it's 2,000 years later.

I don't care we have lights and microphones. This is the spiritual snapshot of the first Christian church. Look, they devoted the new disciples, the Christians, they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and a fellowship to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

That's it. That's the first picture. What was church life like then? Doesn't mention buildings.

They didn't go to buildings. They didn't have any public buildings. So what did the church look like? They devoted themselves, who's they? The Christians.

They devoted themselves. That means they gave themselves to it. You know, a lot of you here today, you've never given yourself to anything.

To grow, you know, I got Jeremy over there, concert pianist, classical, giant mammoth player. He was telling my wife and I some weeks ago, he used to get up and practice for 11 hours every day. Am I right, Jeremy? So why do you think he plays like that now? He's not playing chopsticks over there.

He's playing monster stuff. Why? If you practice 11 hours, you give yourself to something, then you get a result. For a lot of us, we think there's magic.

We think you can be shallow and doing 11 things at once, and then somehow you're just going to be spiritual. You're going to be blessed and all of that. Never has happened.

Never will happen. They devoted themselves. That means they had to back off other things because new things had come into their life.

What were these new practices? What were these new things? They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching. What was that? Now you got to remember, Old Testament existed then, but there were no printing presses, and nobody just copied these things. Nobody in their house said, let's pull out the old book of Isaiah and read it.

No one had a book Isaiah. The scriptures existed in the synagogues and the temple, and the rabbis were the only ones who could teach it or the priests. So there wasn't just Old Testament verses floating around or copies.

Now there were no New Testaments. None of the books had been written yet, including the book of Acts. There was no Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

So what was the teaching? Peter had preached the sermon. They got converted. Now what were they to believe? How were they to live? What life pleases the Lord? This was all verbal.

It came through the apostles because they had walked with Jesus, and now they were saying, and by the way, he said, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. It hadn't been written down yet anywhere, but they were telling him, yeah, he went up on a mountain, and the master said this, blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy. Blessed are the meek, they'll inherit the earth.

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, they shall be filled. This was all verbal. So notice how the enemy could have come in with false teaching because there's nothing to compare it to.

Think of that. We just assume that it's always the way it's been for us. It was not at all.

A lot of years would go by before there'd be any letters written, and then you'd have to pass around and get to you. So it all depended on verbal teaching. That's why the apostolic authority was so important.

So they continued in the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, that word means koinonia, that means more than like, hey, let's hang out after the meeting. It meant sharing of your life, of your heart, whoever was in need. It meant like this, like brother and sister, like glue.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread. That meant probably two things. They took the Lord's Supper together, and they aided each other's homes.

Why? Because of the koinonia, because they were family. There was one family. When they said brother and sister, they meant it.

Some folks, unfortunately, even here, it happens everywhere, but I feel bad for you. You call someone, hi, brother, hi, sister, and then you go, and you don't know anybody in the church. That's strange.

You've got brothers and sisters. You don't even know them, and you don't care about them, but you keep calling me brother and sister. They didn't know anything like that.

Theirs was like, hey, this is my family, because they were facing static from their old family, their biological family, a lot of them. When the word got out that you had become a follower of Yeshua, who was crucified recently in Jerusalem, your family said, get out of here. You're a turncoat on the Jewish religion.

Get out. Their family became the family of God. That was their family.

Breaking of bread, so that was eating meals together, and taking communion, the Lord's Supper, and to prayer. They prayed together. Now, that word prayer is the big word for prayer, which means all communion with God.

That can be petition. It can be worship. It can be thanksgiving.

There are words specifically for just petition. There's word for intercession. When you intercede for another person, petition, you bring your request to God.

There's several words for prayer in the Greek language in the New Testament. This is the word to use of all intercourse with your soul and God. They continued worshiping, praising, praying, praying for one

another, praying for the ministers, praying, praying, praying, praying for the sick, praying.

They continued praying. They continued in the apostle's doctrine. Now, the problem that has happened in the church is we read that verse, and we try to teach that.

What a colossal waste of time that is. We think that because we see it in the Bible, we're supposed to teach people that, but they weren't taught that. That was a result of them being filled with the Holy Spirit.

If you take out the supernatural element out of the book of Acts, you make it into just a new set of teachings. Everyone's trying to teach everybody. You try to teach racial reconciliation.

You let someone be filled with the Holy Spirit, and they will have racial reconciliation. You get a white person who's not filled with the Holy Spirit, and they're going to be a white person without the Holy Spirit with all of their prejudices. You get a black person who's angry at white people and all that other stuff, and they're not controlled by the Holy Spirit.

They're going to have an edge till they die. Till they die, they'll have an edge. They might even have some edge against black people, even though they're black, if they come from a different place where they came from.

We won't go there, but you know what I'm talking about, right? What we try to do is make everything teaching, but Christianity is not a teaching religion. Christianity is a supernatural religion. It's based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

If the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He will quicken your mortal body, and things will happen in you. What I want to point out here is, yes, these are right things to do, but they didn't do it because Peter gave them a six-month course on let's give ourselves to apostolic teaching and how important that is. No.

When you and I are controlled by the Holy Spirit, we love the Word of God. We can't do without the Word of God because the Spirit inside of us craves the food. Come on.

Can we all put our hands together and say amen to that? I've had times of dryness in my soul, in my life, where the Word of God, I lost my appetite for it. You think you could talk to me until you're blue in the face and tell me how important the Word of God is? My mind would say, yeah, I know that. I'm a pastor.

What, you don't think I don't know that? Ah, but let the Spirit of God come upon me afresh. Let there be a reviving of the Spirit. I've had times in my life where God has woken me up at three o'clock in the morning, and I woke up, and I was hungry, and I said, wait a minute.

I'm hungry. I'm not going down the kitchen. I'm not hungry.

No, I ain't. And I slipped into another room and opened the Word of God. My spirit was so hungry for the Word of God, it woke me up.

And I'd be reading at three o'clock in the morning. When the Spirit of God controls us, you will be hungry for the Word of God. All through history that's happened.

When the early church formed and they were all Spirit-controlled, they got hungry for the Word of God. They didn't even have a Bible. They had to just hang out with the apostles.

Tell us more, Peter, James, John. Tell us more. Matthew, talk to us.

What else did he say? When people don't want to come to church and study their Bibles, when they don't want to read, there's something wrong in their spirit. You can't teach them out of it. God's life has to work in them.

That's why Chadwick, the great Methodist preacher said, Christianity is hopeless without the Holy Ghost. Without the Holy Spirit working in me, I won't even pick up this book. I'll be more interested in something else.

The natural man takes over and the fleshly interests take over. But when the Spirit of God comes upon you, you get so hungry for the Word of God. How many have ever just been so hungry for the Word of God? When you read it, it's like a meal, right? Come on.

How many? Or you hear someone teach and you hang like Dr. Stanley speaking. Just, you know, I will guide you in the way you should go. I will lead you.

Don't be like the horse and the mule. He kept saying that it was just like food for our soul. But to another person who's not hungry for the Word of God, it's like, what is the guy talking about? I got to get the American Idols on.

I got to get home and see who's winning. That's why ministers, we're going to pray with you now because if you all just are filled in control by the Holy Spirit, oh, you will grow in God. You will read the Word.

But do you think I can teach you to read the Word? I have to mention it. I have to tell you it's important. But can I make you read it? What am I going to convince you to read it? No, it's not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit sayeth the Lord.

All these people just hung on every word of the apostles because the Spirit makes you hungry for God's Word. Everyone who's had that experience in your own life, just lift your hand and say amen. All right.

We all know that, right? That's the way it works. So if you're here tonight and you're trying to like, Pastor, I don't know, I just can't get disciplined to read the Word of God. Well, the Holy Spirit will give you discipline.

But just ask the Holy Spirit, God, give me a hunger because I noticed that when people wake up in the morning, they eat their breakfast. I saw someone this morning eating three eggs, hash browns, pancakes, the whole thing right here on the corner, over here on the corner. And no one taught them to do that.

You didn't have to wake them up in the morning and say, you should have eggs and bacon. Their belly is telling them get the eggs and the bacon. And that's how it is when God's Spirit comes in us.

We got to have this food every day. Come on. Let's say amen to that.

Let's say amen to that. This is why in the book of Acts, names are downplayed and the Spirit is upplayed because Christianity is about the Holy Spirit, not about teachers, preachers. Oh, I don't like that.

The cult of the great Bible teacher. Oh, that's scary. It's about Jesus.

It's about the power of the Holy Spirit, not who are you a disciple of, whose book did you read. Some of the greatest saints are in the mountains of Peru. They don't even know any of the things you're talking about.

And they're more like Jesus than you and I put together. Well, who taught them to be so godly? The Holy Spirit. Here's another thing the Spirit does.

They continued in the fellowship. When the Holy Spirit is controlling you, you love God's people and you want to be with them. When the Holy Spirit is not controlling you, you could care less.

End of story. End of story. You can't teach people to want to go to church.

Let me tell you why church is in decline in America in my judgment. And now the average church has gone from 91 down to 78, I think it is. The actual people going to an average American church now.

It's because a lot of people just go, they went nominally. They just went because you were supposed to. But now society is disintegrated.

It's gotten very secular. From the White House to the Congress to the media to everything. Very, very secular, anti-biblical.

So now the people who just went because you were supposed to, they're like, get out of here. I'm not going to church. The only ones going to church now are the people, hopefully, that are really more and more serious about the things of God.

There's a sorting out. Judgment must begin in the house of God. Everything that can be shaken will be shaken.

So the things that can't be shaken will remain. And when God's Spirit gets in you, you start caring about brothers and sisters. And if the Spirit doesn't give you that, you can no more teach it than you could do brain surgery.

You can't teach somebody to love someone. How are you going to do that? And that tells you a lot about where you all are at, where I'm at. If you have no delight in the people of God, if you'd rather be hanging out with your friends who aren't even Christians than being with God's people, you need a revival.

You need an invasion of the Holy Spirit. I'm not going to try to argue with you and teach you. I just tell you the instincts.

Look, you put somebody on that chair there in the doctor's office. He puts you on that high thing. I had my physical a few years ago.

My leg goes like that. You don't say, now, leg, when he hits, you go. No, you hit it and bang, it goes up.

Why? Because when the Spirit comes, you love. You want to be with. Pastors, this is why pastors are trying to teach koinonia.

How are you going to teach people to be sacrificial and love others more and honor them more than themselves? You can't teach that. That's what the Holy Spirit puts in you. That's the Spirit of Jesus.

You start caring. Listen, you're looking at the most selfish man in the world. Without the Spirit of God, I wouldn't care about any of you, any of you.

Ask my mom and my dad's dad, ask them when I was growing up if I cared about anyone. Nobody. One person, me.

You might say, that's terrible. That's very disgraceful. You're right, but that's who I was.

So I know who, now that I care about someone having a job, you think that's me? That's the Holy Spirit in me. I could care less about that. Come on, let's put our hands together.

That's what God does in our life. So when the Spirit takes control, you have a hunger for God's Word. And if you don't have a hunger for God's Word and you're struggling with that, just what the man is playing, come Holy Spirit, oh how I need you.

Get inside of me and make me the man, woman of God you want me to be because I got time for everything else except for the Bible. Isn't that funny? Someone says I'm too busy, but you got time for everything else. But when the Spirit gets a hold of you, you got your priorities right.

When pastors backslide, they stop reading the Bible, and they're still pastoring, but they've lost out with God. When the Spirit of God is controlling us, we want to be with other people, other Christians. We want to hear their problems.

Am I right, pastor? Am I right, pastor? Am I not right? I met a pastor in a conference lately. He said, you know, I love studying and preaching the Word of God. I just can't take people.

He's a pastor. I don't want to be around people. I don't like people.

But when God's Spirit controls you, that's why it's so available for all of us. Do we have to teach? Yeah, they continue in the apostles' teaching, but they don't have to. Whatever God teaches, He has to give you the grace to do.

Otherwise, you just have a new mosaic law with commandments that you're trying to obey. That is so frustrating, so burdensome. Oh, I got rid of the 10 commandments.

Oh, now I'm under the law of Christ. That's even harder. No, it's living in the Spirit.

Walk in the Spirit. Be filled with the Spirit. Lastly, they continued in prayers, not because they were taught to pray.

Yeah, they teach them to pray. The disciples said that Jesus teaches to pray, but the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of prayer. When the Holy Spirit comes on you and begins to control you, you start praying for things you never even thought about.

You start praying for people you didn't even notice before. Do I get an amen? Do I get a witness? For we know not how we ought to pray, but who helps us? The Spirit helps us. With groans too deep to be uttered.

When the Spirit helps you pray, tears flow. You get groans. You don't have to say words.

You don't have to say sentences. If they come to you, praise God. You can speak in other languages.

You can just groan. You can sigh. The Spirit is producing prayers that you can't get when the Spirit's not helping you pray.

I want to see the Brooklyn Tabernacle be a church that God is happy with. How many are with me? Say amen. How are we going to be that church? How are we going to be that people? How are we going to

continue in the Apostles' Doctrine? How are we going to live in the Bible? By being filled with the Spirit who wrote the Bible.

How are we going to love people and care more about the body of Christ? By being filled with the Spirit of love. How are we going to pray more and more powerfully? By being filled with the Spirit of prayer. Does it sound mystical to you? Does it sound impractical to you? Look, I'm teaching right now.

There's a place for teaching, but Christianity is not a teaching religion. Mormonism is a teaching religion. Jehovah Witness is a teaching religion.

Hinduism is a teaching religion. Christianity is a supernatural religion because Jesus Christ is alive. If anyone be in Christ Jesus, what? Come on, let's clap our hands.

If anyone be in Christ Jesus, they are a new creation. Why are they a new creation? Old things have passed away, all things become new. There's a place for teaching, but you don't teach people into maturity.

The Spirit brings people into maturity. So I want to just say something to you. For someone today, I've said it yesterday.

I said it today to a pastor. A man about a hundred years ago went to the Middle East. He saw an actual shepherd with sheep.

As he was looking at the flock of the sheep, he saw that one of the sheep had a broken leg and a splint had been put on the leg. Poor creature. So he went, he thought it fell on a rock, you know, something happened.

So he went to the shepherd and he said, what happened to that sheep? The shepherd said, oh that one? I broke his leg. He said, what? He said, I told you I broke his leg. I thought you're the shepherd.

Why would you break his leg? He said, ah, see that sheep? Sheep are dumb, but that one is super dumb. He would wander away and go away from the flock, away from me, from my eye and go out where the predators are. And he'd get in the worst spots where he could just easily get killed.

He just had like a roaming spirit. So I broke his leg and now I'm going to feed him and I keep him close to me and he can't go anywhere. And when his leg heals, he won't go anywhere because he'll so be so used to being with next to me that even though he's a sheep, he'll learn that lesson.

So if you're here today, maybe God has broken your leg because God does do that. Because he wants you so dependent on him. You're going through such pain, such suffering, you wonder why? Even in your marriage, even in your family, whatever, he broke your leg on purpose so that you have nobody but him.

Now you can't depend on anybody. Now it's got to be the Holy Spirit. He's going to wean you away from things you used to depend on because he wants us to grow up and be strong and true.

Let's close our eyes together. God, we want the spirit of the living God to possess us and to fill us. And we know this is your will for us so that we can desire the word of God more than our daily food.

So that spirit things would come before physical things. But God, without your spirit, you know what we are. You know who I am.

We want your spirit so that we'll love people and see them the way you see them. Nobody can teach me to do that. Your spirit has to do that.

We want to be men and women of prayer. We want to be a praying church, stronger than we've been in the past. But we need your spirit to do it.

For your word says it's not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord. Now, Lord, you said that this promise is for all of us, even those that are far off. You said it's not only for us, but for our children and our children's children.

So as a church today, we just open up to you and we ask you, Lord, to fill us with the Holy Spirit. To do something new and fresh within us, Lord. We need something fresh and new and alive from you so that we'll have new instincts.

For does not your word say that it is God who works in us, both to will and to do? Aren't you the only one that can give us new willing, new desiring? And then even after we have that, you have to give us the power to do the thing we want to do. Because, God, how many times have we wanted to do something, but we don't do it? The desire is godly, but we can't carry it out. We come to you, Holy Spirit.

We ask you to help us. Some of us are more hungry than others and have challenges before us. See, what I'm talking about here are the vital signs that a baby has.

No one taught the baby to cry. No one taught the baby to be hungry. The baby's hungry because the baby is alive.

The baby's crying because the baby is alive. The baby moves because the baby is alive. Now, you can cultivate that and train that, but the instincts, the life force comes from biological life.

So it is with the Spirit. The vital signs of the Spirit are the vital signs of the Spirit. And if you're here now struggling to try to change your life, I'm telling you, only God can change your life.

If you want to be more like Jesus and you're struggling, only the Spirit can make you more like Jesus. Just say, Jesus, fill me with your Spirit. You promised you would.

You gave your life for me. Now, give me the Spirit I need too. You shed your blood for me.

Now, send the promise of the Father in a new measure upon my life. I know he's in me, but I want to be possessed by the Spirit of God. Lord, we pray not only from the rain that comes from heaven, the wind that comes from heaven.

We pray for the anointing oil that comes from heaven, all of the Spirit. But we pray for the Spirit to come like dew upon the grass, refreshing, quiet, gentle. Refresh my brothers and sisters who are tired, who have been hurt, who struggle with burdens right now that are breaking their heart.

Come like dew upon the grass. You said in your Word you would be like dew upon the grass to your people. When we lay in our beds tonight, be like dew upon the grass.

Be gentle and be the Spirit of comfort that comforts us in all of our trouble so we can comfort others with the same comfort we've been comforted with. Keep us close to you, Lord. We thank you for this prayer meeting, for the time of worship, prayer for others, prayer for ourselves.

We are so happy to belong to Jesus tonight, Lord. Can we all put our hands together? We belong to Jesus. Come on, we're Jesus people.

We're Christians. Bless every pastor that's visiting with us, every congregation, all the brothers and sisters. And now, Lord, because you put it in our heart, we're going to love one another.

We know that makes you happy, and you're the one who put it in our heart. Thank you for the body of Christ. Get us all home safely, we pray in Jesus' name.

And everyone said amen. Come on, everyone turn around, hug somebody, say something good to someone.

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