

A Powerless Church

by Anton Bosch

The church in the West is generally powerless compared to the church in the book of Acts, and the key to receiving the power of the Holy Spirit is obedience.

Duration: 47:50

Scripture: Acts 1:4

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Church Revival"

Description

This sermon delves into the concept of the powerless church, emphasizing the need for true power from the Holy Spirit. It contrasts the church's current state with the early church in Acts, highlighting the importance of obedience, repentance, and aligning with God's Word to receive His power. The speaker challenges the notion of settling for a powerless church or resorting to fake displays of power, urging a genuine thirst for God's presence and a willingness to be consumed by His fire.

Transcript

Please turn with me to the book of Acts chapter 1. Acts chapter 1. And I want to speak with you this afternoon about the powerless church, the powerless church. And I'm going to read Acts 1 from verse 4 through 14. Acts chapter 1 verses 4 through 14.

And being assembled together with them, he commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which he said, You have heard from me. For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit, not many days from now. Therefore, when they had come together, they asked him, saying, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel? And he said to them, It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has put in his own authority, but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

You shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. Now, when he had spoken these things, while they watched, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven.

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying, Peter,

James, John and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the woman and with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers." Interesting just in that verse that you notice that his brothers, who had before had not been believers, were now believers and gathering with the saints.

So, the idea that the church is powerless is maybe one that we don't like to face up to, we don't like to talk about. But the reality is that the church is powerless. And when I say the church, I mean the church in general.

I understand that there are exceptions, very few exceptions in the West. The exceptions really are in persecuted countries, but in the West where the church is free, it generally is powerless. And it is powerless by the measure or the standard of the book of Acts.

If we compare ourselves, and if you compare your own church with the book of Acts, you have to admit that it is just not the same. There is not the same power, and by power we're not necessarily meaning the miracles or the gifts, but the power to be witnesses to Him. And I'm going to come back to that idea in one moment.

But in order to deal with the fact that there is no power, we generally have two ways of dealing with that problem. The first is to say, well, it wasn't intended to be the same today as it was in the book of Acts. And from that, of course, we get the cessationist idea that the gifts and that the outpouring of the Spirit has ceased, that we live in a different dispensation.

But the reality is that that whole idea is really based on a form of experiential theology. Now, this may come as an interesting idea to you. I think you understand experiential theology as being people establishing their doctrine based on their experience.

This is an accusation that is brought against Pentecostal and charismatic churches, and so it is said that they build their doctrine based on their experience, because something happened to me, therefore it has to be right. Well, obviously, we cannot build our doctrine on experience. We have to build it on the Word of God.

But the problem is that the cessationists also build their doctrine, or do build their doctrine on experience. In fact, the foremost speaker for the cessationist teaching today, a man not very far from here, in his own testimony says that when he was a young man, people around him were receiving the Holy Spirit and receiving all sorts of experiences, and nothing happened to him. And as a result of this, he then began to think about this and concluded that really the Word of God is all that we need.

So where did he get his ideas from? Not from the Word of God, but from his negative experience. Because he did not have some kind of experience, he concluded, and has become an advocate for that notion, and has published and spoken worldwide, and influenced thousands and thousands of Christians across the world to believe that there is nothing like the book of Acts for us today. The fact is, there is no biblical basis for that whatsoever.

There is not a single scripture anywhere in the Bible that speaks about the fact that the gifts will cease, except in 1 Corinthians chapter 13. The only way you can take that verse is by abusing the verse, ripping it right out of its context, and making it mean something that it was not intended to say. I want to read for you

a little piece written by a very well-known one, well certainly well-known man in certain quarters, a man called Harry Ironside.

Harry Ironside wrote his commentary on the first epistle to the Corinthians in 1938, which was a little bit before most of us were born. Harry Ironside has always been respected as a very level-headed man of God, and he addresses this question of cessationism, and that's really not the point of my message, I'm just laying a foundation here. But here's what he said, and bear with me as I read his comments.

Therefore, I do not think it is correct to take the position that these signed gifts have necessarily disappeared from the church. I do, however, believe that many of the gifts are not often seen today, and I think there is a good reason for it. In 2 Corinthians 11 verse 2, the apostle wrote, I have espoused you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Paul was writing to a separated company, the bride of the Lamb, and it was the delight of the blessed risen Lord to lavish upon her gift after gift. The Corinthians came behind in no gift. However, it seems to me that we can see in the book of Acts that as time went on, and the church began to drift a little, and as dissension and other things that grieved the Lord arose, there was more reserve on his part in bestowing gifts.

That, I believe, explains the lack of many of these gifts today. The church has gotten so far away from what she should be, and there is so much strife, division, worldliness, and carnality that the Lord no longer delights in lavishing his gifts as freely as he did in the beginning. So what is he saying? He's saying, yes, there is a decline in the gifts and in the moving of God's spirit.

There definitely is. But here's the other thing, is you can't build your doctrine on history either. History doesn't prove anything.

And so, yes, there was a decline, there is a decline. But why is that decline there? Not like the cessationist says, because God has ceased to give his spirit. But the decline is there because God cannot give his gifts anymore, because he's not going to give his gifts to an unworthy people.

And I'm going to come back to that idea in one moment. So that's the one way in which we deal with a problem. We say, well, it's not for today.

And so if it's not for today, the fact that I'm powerless, well, then that's great, because that's to be expected. That's the way it is. The other way that we deal with it is to fake it.

And so we act as though we have power when we don't have power. And we say, well, you know, there's evidence of our power, because look at our buildings, look at our budgets, look at our staffing, look at our membership, look at our programs. And so these are evidence that God's with us, that God's doing something.

But the question is, is he doing something? A quote that I've never been able to find a real source for, and this may not be an actual event, but it does illustrate the truth, and that is of a man who came from a third-world country, possibly China or Africa, and was shown around the churches in America. And after a few weeks here, he was put on the plane back to wherever he came from, and the last thing they said to him is, what do you think? Everything that you've seen, what do you think? And he said, well, it's absolutely amazing what you've been able to achieve without the Lord. It's amazing what you've been able to achieve without the Lord.

You see, the fact that we achieve something doesn't mean that God's in it, doesn't mean that it's God's blessing or God's anointing. In the same way, the anointing of God cannot be measured in noise, in hype, in stirring up people, and in some kind of emotional experience. I'm not against emotional experiences, but if we're going to use our emotional experiences to manipulate one another and bring ourselves into some kind of euphoric state where we say, well, I'm feeling God.

Keep that thought in mind, because I'm going to come back to that in my conclusion in another two hours. But we cannot bring God's presence amongst us by human manipulation. And unfortunately, too many churches create the impression that God is here by manipulating human emotions through the music, and through the preaching, and through the way that things are staged, and things are done.

And so people go away and say, well, we felt the Lord. No, all you felt was your own emotions. The Lord wasn't in it.

Something that people find quite shocking, and I like to shock people because it makes you think, is that sometimes you say, well, you know, I felt the Lord in the meeting. How do you feel? Well, I had goosebumps. I felt the hair rise on my back, at the back of my neck.

I really felt the Lord. You know, when I go to a symphony concert, I get the same feelings. When I used to be in the Air Force, and I would stand on parade, and they would raise the flag, and the band would play the national anthem, I would get the same feelings.

So is God in the South African national anthem? We don't even sing that anthem anymore. We have a new one. Was God in that? No, He was not.

Yet it's the same feelings. We say, well, it's God. So you can see how easily we're fooled into believing it's God when it's not God.

And so there are so many Christians who are saying, well, it's not for today. There are others who are just sticking their heads in the sand and saying, well, you know, it doesn't really matter. I don't particularly care.

And then there are others who are saying, well, we have it, when in fact we don't. The fact is, folk, we really don't have it. Because if we did, then the church in the West would be very different to the way it is today.

And while I respect this church highly, and I think that it's a great church, and I think you have a great pastor, and you're doing a great job, if you really had it, Lancaster would be a different place, beyond any shadow of a doubt. In fact, not only Lancaster, but the Antelope Valley. Because remember, He said, you will receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

And how will that power be manifest? Well, the power is not necessarily manifest in gifts. While the gifts are valid, and I accept the gifts, the problem is that sometimes we want the gifts. But in fact, the essence and the fundamental that we are supposed to receive is power.

And it's power not to preach necessarily, not power to have gifts, but power to be witnesses. And notice, it's not to witness, but power to be witnesses. Now, I grew up in Pentecost, and as a little kid sitting playing around the organ while my mother played the organ, I saw people speaking tongues, but I also knew that their lives were suspect, to say the least.

You may have had the same experience. Oh, but I'm filled with the Spirit because I can speak in tongues. Now, where's the witness? Is your life witnessing to a radical, powerful, dramatic change that has come as a result of the gospel of Jesus Christ? If any man being Christ is a new creature, the old things are passed away, but all things have become new.

And when you look at the book of Acts, what is it about the book of Acts? You'll notice if you go through the book of Acts, tongues only appears three times in the book of Acts, but preaching appears 37 times, and praying appears 39 times. I think there's a message there. If tongues is there only three times, preaching is 37 times, praying 39 times, I think you get the picture.

But what was it that distinguished them? The fact was that they bore this powerful witness that wherever they went, people saw, not just heard, but people saw that they had been with Jesus. They saw lives that witnessed to the resurrected Christ. Whenever Paul hit a town, it didn't take long for an uproar to rise and for Paul to be kicked out of town.

That was how powerful his influence was. And we say, well, you know, if the church really has the power, you know, the world will flock to us. No, the world will eject us.

And that's one of the reasons we don't want the power, because we want the world to like us. But Paul wasn't very liked anywhere he went, except by those who received the message. And so, folks, the fact is that we can keep fooling ourselves.

You can keep fooling yourself personally and saying, well, I'm okay. But I really believe that there is a need for us to admit that we need more than what we have. Certainly I need much more than I have.

Certainly my church needs a lot more than it has. Now here's the problem. How and what do I need to do to receive more of God's power? And here we have a problem, because traditionally we say, well, you know, the power of God, the gift of God, the Holy Spirit is a gift.

And by definition, you can't earn a gift. And I agree with that idea. We understand from as far as our salvation is concerned, that it is a gift.

It is the gift of God. And there is nothing we can do to earn our salvation. There is no qualifications.

There's no standard that you need to sort of reach and then say, well, now Lord, I'm good enough to be saved. We understand that. And that's true as far as salvation is concerned.

But traditionally we say, well, that's also true concerning the Holy Spirit, that the Holy Spirit is a gift and that God will give it to us. Doesn't matter who we are and how we are, and doesn't matter what our standard of holiness or anything else is. But here's the problem.

It's not the truth. I want to take you to a few scriptures. And while we are in the book, if you still are in the book of Acts, let's go to Acts chapter five and verse 32.

This is Peter preaching on the day of Pentecost. People are saying, what is this? Peter preaches. They say, well, sorry, that's Acts chapter two, Acts chapter two, sorry, verse 38.

Then Peter said, repent in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Repent, be baptized, you'll receive the Holy Spirit. Are there conditions here? Two conditions, repentance, baptism.

Now, you say, well, what about the book of Acts where people got saved and they were filled with the Holy Spirit even before they were baptized in water? The point here is that baptism in itself is not a qualification for the baptism in the Holy Spirit, but baptism is a sign of obedience. And obedience is a requisite for the baptism or for receiving the Holy Spirit. And so when he says repent and be baptized, he's not saying, well, baptism is what does it.

Baptism is simply a symbol and an expression of obedience. Remember the Lord Jesus, why was Jesus baptized? That all righteousness might be fulfilled. In plain English, I need to be obedient.

So Jesus is not baptized because he's symbolizing that he has been cleansed or washed or that he was born again. He is being baptized simply as an act of obedience. And what happened when Jesus was baptized? Comes out of the water and there's a voice.

This is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased. What had Jesus done up to that point? Had he preached, performed miracles? No, he'd done nothing. This was the beginning of his ministry.

He had simply been baptized. And yet because he is baptized, because he is obedient, and the point here is not baptism, but obedience, because he is obedient, the father says I'm pleased. And what does the father do? The father sends him the Holy Spirit.

Interesting that Jesus, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, was always saved in the way that we use that word, and yet the Spirit descends upon him, separate from his salvation, if you will. And so baptism or obedience, what about repentance? Oh well, you know, we don't believe in repentance now because we're not saved by repentance, we're saved by faith. Repentance is works and we're not saved by works, we're saved by faith.

Is that true? Yeah, I know I've confused you. Yes, it is true. We are not saved by repentance, we're saved by faith.

Repentance does not save us. You can repent until the cows come home, you'll never get saved. Millions of Roman Catholics repented this morning when they went to confession.

Does it save them? No. Repentance doesn't save us. But remember, here's the thing.

Faith without works is dead. Faith is manifest, faith is proven in works. And what is the first thing that I do when I come to faith? What is the first work that flows, what is the first fruit that flows from faith? Repentance.

You see, I don't repent, then I believe, and then I get saved. Repentance is not a requirement for me to get saved. Faith is the requirement for me to get saved.

But if I really believe, I will and must repent. And that's the problem, is that there are so many Christians today who've got this cheap grace into the kingdom, they think, and they say, well, I believe in the Lord Jesus, I signed a decision card, I believe. But my question is, where's the fruit? You're still sinning, like you always did.

You're still a drunkard, you're still a liar, you still cheat, and you say, you're unborn again because I believe in the Lord Jesus. No, faith without works is dead. And so why does Paul and Peter then say repentance? Because repentance is proof of faith.

It's not the repentance again that's the issue, it's the same way as baptism is not the issue, it's obedience that's the issue. It's obedience that underlies baptism in the same way it is true faith that underlies repentance. So that if I believe, repentance must be the consequence or the result of that.

And so there are conditions. Clearly, it's not just for anyone. While we're in Acts, let's go across to chapter 5 and verse 32.

And we are His witnesses to these things. And so also is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him. Who did He give the Spirit to? Those who believed in Him.

No, those who obey Him. Now, I know that this may be a revolution and you say, well, you know, I never heard that before. Well, I'm not telling you something that's not in the Word.

I mean, you can't read that any other way. He gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him. In other words, is He going to give the Spirit to those who are disobedient? Clearly not.

So is the Holy Spirit a reward? No, it's not a reward, but there are certain conditions that need to be met before God's going to empower us. God's not going to empower our disobedience. God's not going to empower our laziness.

God's not going to empower our rebellion. He's not going to put His seal upon our waywardness. There are certain things that are required before He's going to entrust the power of His Spirit to us.

And the prime of these is obedience. In fact, here we immediately have a problem and you'll notice that I haven't got specific about what obedience means because you know what it is that you struggle with in your life. You know what the issues are that you are disobedient in.

And you say, well, you know, God's still, you know, I want the Holy Spirit. Well, get your life in order first. Be obedient.

Do what He's asked you to do and then come and ask Him for His Spirit. Ask Him for His blessing and for His anointing. Let's go back to John chapter 14.

And John chapter 14, of course, is in the upper room. Jesus is, this is the night before He is crucified and He's speaking to them about the Holy Spirit. Verse 15, if you love me, keep my commandments.

Remember we said that faith has fruit and one of the fruits of faith is obedience. But here He is saying love also has fruit. Love is also proven or manifest in what? Keeping His commandments.

Unfortunately, the Western church is full of people who say, I love the Lord. They sing all sorts of sappy songs about loving Him, but they don't believe His word. They don't follow His word.

They live in total disobedience. And they say, but I love the Lord. Rubbish.

If you love Him, you will keep His commandments. And if you're not keeping the Lord's commandments, and we don't mean the Old Testament commandments necessarily, but the New Testament, if you're not keeping the Lord's commandments, you just don't love the Lord. It's as simple as that.

Unfortunately, I do call a spade a shovel. We have to be clear about what we say. Otherwise you go away and say, well, you know, He said I was good when in fact you may not be good.

I trust you are good. But if you're not keeping His commandments, you don't love Him. It's really as simple as that.

But then He says, if you love me, keep my commandments. And you know, there are many words in the New Testament or in the Bible that are not in a concordance. If you look at an old-fashioned printed concordance, of course, nobody uses those anymore because we have them on our smartphones and our computers.

But if you had an old Young's or Strong's concordance, there are many words that aren't listed in there because they're just too many of them. Words like and, if, or. And so we say, well, those words aren't important.

In fact, those words are absolutely key. And here's the little word and, and it's short in Greek, Chi, made up of three letters. What does it say? It says that the first thought is connected to the second, this and that.

What is the first thought? If you love me, keep my commandments. What's the second thought? And I will pray the Father and He will give you another helper, the Holy Spirit. Can you see it? If you love me, keep my commandments.

If you do that, I will do my part, and that is to pray the Father for the Spirit. Again, you can see the connection between obedience, between living the life that He wants us to live, and Him giving us the Holy Spirit. So I think we've seen at least three scriptures, and there are many others, and I won't keep you with those this afternoon, but you can see that there are three very, very, very clear scriptures that connect obedience to the Spirit.

And immediately it answers a large part of the question as to why the church is powerless today. So what is it that I need to do in order to receive the Holy Spirit? Well, the first thing I need to do is I need to recognize my need. Remember maybe those who were here last time I was here, and I don't remember when it was, I think earlier this year, but I spoke on being bankrupt before God, on our spiritual poverty.

And the problem is not that some are poor and some are not. We are all poor. But the problem is we don't understand our poverty.

And the same is true concerning the power of God. It's not that some of us have power and some of us don't. Generally, we don't.

But we don't recognize our need. But blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who understand that they need the physician.

Remember when Jesus said that those who are well don't need the physician? Was he saying that the Pharisees were well and they didn't need the healer? Of course they weren't well. Of course they were more sick than anyone else. But what was the problem? The problem was they didn't have need for a physician because they thought they were okay.

And folks, as long as we think we're okay as far as the power of God is concerned, well, we're going to get nothing because we're not going to ask. Remember James says, I'll come back to James in a moment, you don't have because you don't ask. And why don't we ask? Because I don't think I need it.

But blessed are those poor in spirit. If I'm poor, I will mourn. Blessed are those who mourn.

What do we mourn about? We don't mourn about those who have died because they've gone to be with the Lord. We mourn about our poverty. We mourn about the state of the church.

We mourn about our own spiritual state. And then that leads to blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. And so when I recognize my need, it'll lead me to sorrow.

And that sorrow will create within me a thirst. In John chapter seven, Jesus said, if any man thirst, let him come to me and let him drink. And folks, here's the problem.

Most people just don't thirst. They don't thirst enough to come to Jesus. They'll come to the preacher, they'll come to the altar in front or the prayer team at the back and say, well, pray for me.

And while I appreciate the work of the prayer team, and I appreciate the place of the altar for those churches that have altars and for pastors who pray for their people, no pastor is a dispenser of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the dispenser of the Holy Spirit. He is the source.

And he says, if any man thirst, let him come to me. Oh, but Lord, that's hard work. And besides, he says, wait.

In Jerusalem, how long did they wait? Ten days. Ten days. I can say with very little fear of contradiction that there's probably no one in this audience today who has spent ten days waiting on the Lord, doing nothing else, just saying, Lord, I'm so desperate.

I'm so desperate for you, for more of you, for more of your power, for more of your spirit. I'm not leaving this place until you meet with me. In old-time Pentecostal churches, they used to have tarrying meetings or waiting meetings based on this idea, but you know, those meetings would last five hours or six hours, maybe a night at the very most.

And then everybody goes home. You remember Jacob as he wrestled with that angel, I will not let you go until you bless me. And folk, until we come to that point where we are so hungry and we are so thirsty for God and for his spirit and for his real power in our lives and in the life of the church, that we grab hold of him and we say, God, I'm not going to let you go until you meet with me and until you touch me and until you change things in my life and until you pour your power within me and make me that witness that will witness not just in Jerusalem, but Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

In Exodus chapter 40, we see the account of Moses building the tabernacle and Exodus 40 contains the summation of everything he had done. It comes to the end of the work and it says that he now finally puts everything in its place. But it's interesting that in that chapter, it says the same thing.

It uses the same phrase seven times. And obviously if it's there seven times, it must be very, very, very, very important. Because even if God says something once, it's important.

But seven times it says that Moses did this as the Lord commanded Moses, as the Lord commanded Moses, as the Lord commanded Moses. He did every detail of the building of that tabernacle. Remember the tabernacle is primarily a picture of Jesus, but it's also a picture of the church and it's also a picture of our lives.

But Moses does everything as God had commanded him. Seven times it says he did it exactly as God had told him. Is this not obedience? Can you say that you have done everything in your life exactly as God has

told you? Whether it's through his spirit, through the still small voice of the spirit, or whether it's through his word.

And as Moses does everything according to the word of the Lord, it says in verse 33 of Exodus 40, so Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting. There's that word then.

Same power as the word and that we saw earlier. Moses finishes the work and it says, then the cloud covered the tabernacle meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Not before he had finished the work, but when he had finished the work, then the spirit came, the power came, the glory and the Shekinah of the Lord was manifest in that place.

What if Moses said, well, you know, I think I'm going to change things up a little bit. This altar where all this blood and this gore and these animals are being killed and all this right in the front here, you know, really it's makes the place unattractive. We need to put this smelly business in the back there somewhere.

Let's make it easier for people and more attractive for people to come to church. Let's take the cross and put it out. Let's not put the cross front and center in our preaching.

Imagine Moses doing that. You think the power and the glory of God would have descended on that place? No ways. But Moses does everything exactly as God told him.

And then the glory of God descends upon that place. I want to take you to 1 Kings chapter 18, and that's the basis of the article that you have with you. And I know you say, well, what does this have to do with all of this? I think that there are some very important principles here.

And in 1 Kings chapter 18, of course, it's the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. You know the story well. Elijah says, you know, the people of Israel all following the prophets of Baal.

Elijah says, well, if Baal is God, you know, you call on your God that will build altars here and you call on your God. And if he sends the fire, he's God. And if my God sends the fire, well, then he's God.

And it's very interesting how that they then build the altar and they continue from morning through to the afternoon. And what are they doing? Well, the scary thing is what they're doing is not very different to what many churches do today. They're shouting up and down.

They're making a lot of noise. They're dancing. They're singing.

They're doing all this stuff. And basically they're working themselves up into a trance to such an extent that they can cut themselves and not even feel the pain because they're hypnotized. But this is exactly what happens in many churches.

And they say, we've got the power. But it's interesting that the text says, but there was no fire. There was no fire.

Clearly, this is not the way to go. And it's so interesting the difference between these men and Elijah. Elijah's there on his own.

There's no crowd. There's no song and dance. It's just Elijah.

The first thing that he does is he repairs the altar. In other words, the altar had been broken down. He repairs the altar.

The altar always represents or speaks about prayer and sacrifice. Until you repair the altar of prayer and of sacrifice in your life, no fire will fall. And this is really just summing up everything that we've said this far.

And I know that we've covered a lot of ground this evening, and I pray that you'd go home and just digest all of that. So he repairs the altar. He then takes the wood, and it's interesting that the text says that he lays the wood in order.

So if you've been a boy scout, you know that the wood needs to be laid in a particular way if you really want the fire to start well. But the point is that he doesn't just throw the wood on the altar, but he lays it in an orderly way. The wood is always representative of humanity.

In the Old Testament, in the tabernacle, in fact, you see that most of the tabernacle is made up of two things, made of wood and gold, wood overlaid with gold. The wood represents the humanity of Jesus, and the gold represents his deity, so Jesus the God-man. You see that in most of the articles in the tabernacle.

Some were made of brass, and others made of solid gold, but most of them were wood and gold, Jesus the God-man. And so the wood, the humanity, but he lays it in order. And really the modern way of expressing that, the way I would translate that in modern English, if I were to translate it in modern English, I don't think it's a good idea, but if I were, he set his life in order.

He set his life in order. He got the wood all sorted out. Folks, we need to get our lives in order.

That includes your marriage, your kids, your kids and their relationship with their parents, your job, your relationship with the government, your relationship with authority, the list goes on and on. Get your life in order. God's not going to bless your chaos.

God's not going to bless your mess. Get your life sorted out. Get the altar rebuilt.

Then he lays the sacrifice on the altar, the bull, he cuts it in pieces, lays it on the altar. Remember, the sacrifice was always a substitutionary sacrifice. The sacrifice wasn't there for the sacrifice's sake.

The bull or the doves or whatever you laid on the altar, it was there in your place. So in laying the bull on the altar, really he's saying, here is me. And until we're willing to lay ourselves on the altar and say, Lord, here I am, I'm willing to be consumed, that's the part we don't like.

Lord, I want your power, but I want to stay intact. I want me to be me. And the Lord says, no, when my fire falls, I'm going to consume everything.

And so the bull is laid on the altar, the willingness to make that ultimate sacrifice. And then of course he does the most crazy thing of all, and he pours lighter fluid over the whole thing, because he has a zippo in his back pocket. Right? Well, that's how the story goes with most churches, unfortunately, and with most Christians.

No, he pours water over everything. And we say, well, this is counterintuitive, pouring water over everything, that's really going to prevent things from happening. How's the fire going to happen if everything is soaking and everything is wet? And folks, here's the thing, as we say, well, we can't expect God's power and hold to the doctrine of the word of God, because the word of God requires that we do

things orderly and decently.

And if we do things this way, that the letter kills. And so we have to throw the word of God out if we really want to have some kind of experience with God. That's the message that is being preached over and over and over today.

And so yes, the word of God is a water. Remember John 17, cleanse them by the washing of the water of your word. But you see, Elijah understood that no amount of water was going to prevent God's fire from falling, and was going to prevent the fire from doing its work of consuming whatever there was.

But we're so afraid of not helping God along that we'll put gasoline or lighter fluid on it, but we'll never put water on it. And so we'll compromise on the word of God. We'll do whatever we need to do humanly in order that I might somehow have some kind of experience with God.

And I'm saying to you, I won't go that way. And I will, by the grace of God, never give my church a counterfeit experience so that they can go away and say, we've got something from God, when in fact we've got nothing. And I'm not going to do the same for myself.

I want to be honest with myself before the Lord and say, Lord, I don't have it yet. I don't have what I should have. And I'm not willing to compromise, and I'm not willing to have a counterfeit, and I'm not willing to fool myself by doing something that is man-made.

What we need is God's fire to fall. We need that in this church. We need that in my church.

We need it in America. We need the fire of God to fall, and it needs to be the real thing, the real deal. And no amount of order, no amount of doctrine, no amount of the word of God is going to prevent that fire from falling.

But we're scared to go there because we think that somehow that's going to prevent God's blessing. When God's blessing comes, nothing is going to stop it. And of course, you know the end of the story, that He doesn't jump up and down.

He doesn't even shout. He doesn't raise His voice. He just says, Lord, send the fire.

And the fire of the Lord fell, consumed everything, consumed the sacrifice, consumed the altar, consumed the water. Everything was gone. It was such a consuming thing.

I'd better not preach another message here, but remember that John the Baptist said that he was baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire. And we think the fire is a nice thing. No, the fire is always a consuming thing.

And when the Spirit of God falls, it consumes the flesh. It consumes carnality. It consumes whatever is not of God.

And the fire fell that day, and it consumed everything. But notice the testimony. Now remember that we began speaking about the book of Acts, and the people around them said we take note that these men had been with Jesus.

It speaks about them in another place, and it says these men have turned the world upside down. And we use that in a positive sense. They meant it in a negative sense.

In other words, wherever these people go, they turn everything upside down with their gospel. The world had taken note of Paul, and of Peter, and of the apostles. And here in the book of Kings, the people, remember, they had all followed the prophets of Baal, and were worshiping Baal.

But verse 38 says, Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, The Lord, He is God. The Lord, He is God.

And folk, it is my prayer that that would be the testimony. How will we know that the fire of God has fallen in West Side? When the unbelievers out there begin to say, The Lord is God. Amen.

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