

# The Form or the Fire

by Brian Long

---

*Brian Long's sermon challenges believers to choose between a superficial form of godliness and the genuine fire of God's Spirit for true revival.*

**Duration:** 43:33

**Scripture:** Exodus 20:25, 1 Kings 18:22, Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 4:19

**Topics:** "Christian Life"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses the issue of wavering and being undecided in one's faith. He highlights how many people in the world see the church as having form and programs, but lacking the fire of God. The preacher emphasizes the importance of unity among believers, using Psalm 133 as an example of the blessings that come when people come together as one. He also warns against choosing religious form over the fire of God, and encourages listeners to examine their own hearts to see if they have both the form and the fire in their lives.

---

## Transcript

Well, this morning as we continue to talk about preparing the way for the Lord, we're going to specifically talk about preparing for the fire of God, and more specifically, to see the difference between the form and the fire. So I want you to look at two passages of Scripture with me in the beginning here, and compare, actually contrast the two. Acts chapter 2 and 2 Timothy chapter 3. Acts chapter 2 and 2 Timothy chapter 3. I keep forgetting we have it right here on the wall, it doesn't take long to turn there.

In Acts chapter 2, I want you to notice this, that there are two groups of people we're going to look at that God says there will be in the last days, okay? In Acts chapter 2 and verse 17, it says, And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants, I will pour out My Spirit in those days, and they shall prophesy.

I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath, blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

So according to that Scripture, in the last days of which I believe we are in, there will be a group of people who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit of God. They'll be characterized by the fire of God. They will be prophesying.

The young men will see visions, the old men dream dreams. People will be coming to the Lord because it says, Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. I want to be a part of that group in the last days.

Here's another group also described in the last days. 2 Timothy chapter 3. But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come, for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying its power, and from such people turn away. Now, it's not hard to see that that is a description of the very days in which we live, brothers and sisters.

These spoken of here are those who profess the name of Christ and who claim to know Him, but while they profess to know Him, their very lives deny that they know Him at all. They will have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof. They will be religious, but not at all spiritual.

They will have form, but no fire. They'll be like clouds without rain, like barren fruit trees with no fruit. They're presenting an impression of saying, Hey, we belong to Christ.

We have a form of godliness, but it's empty on the inside. They have the form. They do not have the fire.

Why? The Word of God says because they love and live only for themselves. They are lovers of money. They're seeking honor and praise from men.

They are proud, disobedient to parents, unforgiving, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, and yet at the same time, they will come religiously to church. They have form, but they have no fire. And we could go on and on about them, but the Lord would not have us go on and on about them.

The Lord would have us to hold up the mirror of His Holy Word and look into it and ask ourselves the question, I'm asking myself, I ask you to ask yourself, Could this be me? Do I have the form, or do I have the fire? Only a form of godliness, or the power thereof. Our God is a God who is a consuming fire, the Scripture says. He's the one who manifested Himself and called on the backside of the desert to Moses in a bush that was characterized not by form, but by fire.

That bush on the backside of the desert, what made it different than any other bush? Not that it was bigger, not that it was more beautiful, but that it was on fire. It was on fire with the presence of God. What is it that made that early church any different from any other religious gathering in the day in the book of Acts? It was one thing.

They had been baptized with the fire of God's Holy Spirit. They did not have the form of godliness. They had the fire of God upon their lives.

No wonder 3,000 would be saved in one day. No wonder the sick were healed. No wonder they were accused of turning the world upside down.

They were on fire with the presence of God. Do you have the form or the fire? A form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, or the fire of God's Spirit in your life? Listen to me. The day that the fire of God leaves you, you become a religious man.

You become dead and barren like a cloud without rain, a tree without fruit. We need the fire of God. And to receive the fire of God, we've got to prepare the way.

So I want you to turn now to our other text, our second text, and that is 1 Kings 18, please. 1 Kings 18, where again, we're going to look at the difference between the form and the fire. In 1 Kings 18, beginning in verse 17, it says, Then it happened when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, Is that you, O troubler of Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, and that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and have followed the Baals.

Now therefore send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the 450 prophets of Baal, and the 400 prophets of Asherah who'd eat at Jezebel's table. Now, once again, during this time, the Israelites had drifted away from the Lord. They had become so compromising and complacent that many of them were even involved in the worship of Baal.

And Baal was a false god that they considered to be the god of personal increase and prosperity. Baal worship allowed the people to exalt themselves and love the pleasures of the flesh, to indulge in all kinds of immorality, and yet at the same time have a form of religion and religious practices. And it was because of this ungodliness and complacency of God's people that the Lord had sent a drought upon the land.

And also it was because of their sin that God was allowing His people to be ruled by an ungodly king named Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel. And underneath Queen Jezebel were 850 prophets. 450 prophets of Baal, 400 prophets of Asherah who were deceiving and leading the people of God astray.

But even in the midst of all of that, God raises up a voice of truth. He raises up a man who has the fire of God upon his life, and his name is Elijah. Elijah issues a challenge to King Ahab.

Call the whole nation together to come to Mount Carmel. Bring your 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah and meet me up on Mount Carmel. And we continue reading in verse 20.

Ahab sent for all the children of Israel and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. And Elijah came to all the people and said, How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him. But if Baal, then follow him.

But the people answered him not a word. I want you to see this morning that gathered here on Mount Carmel are three different groups of people. You have Elijah, who is obviously the minority in number, but he has the fire of God upon his life.

The Spirit of God is resting upon him. He's the man of God. He's burning with the passion for the glory of God on the inside of him.

You also have on Mount Carmel these prophets of Baal and Asherah. These are ministers who have joined the devil. They have no fear of God, and they're leading the people of God astray.

But also on Mount Carmel, you have the vast majority of the undecided. Those who were not yet fully determined to worship the Most High God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or to follow Baal,

the God of Jezebel. They were divided.

So follow me in this. On Mount Carmel, you have the hot, you have the cold, and you have the lukewarm. Elijah, who's on fire.

The prophets of Baal, who are stone cold, dead in sin, agents of the devil. And you have the vast majority, which are the lukewarm. Still somewhere in the middle, undecided.

Why? Because they've not yet seen the fire of God. They've seen the form. They've yet seen the fire.

Is it not true that most likely we have the same three groups in here? Surely there are some in here that you have decided to go all the way with Jesus. You love Him with all of your heart. You've been filled with the Holy Spirit.

There's a fire burning in your heart, and you want nothing more than to glorify God. You're hot. Jesus said, oh, how I wish that you were hot.

There's some here. Maybe there's someone here that is cold. You're stone cold.

Your heart is hard. You are dead in sin because you've never been born again. But usually, the vast majority is in between the lukewarm.

You're not yet decided. You love the world and the ways of the world, but you also want to go to heaven. You want to follow Christ, and you're straddling the fence.

You have your feet in two different boats. Listen to the Word of the Lord to you. Verse 21, how long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him.

But if Baal, then follow him. How long till you stop wavering, as he's saying? How long will you absolutely surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ? You remember Jesus said to the church in Laodicea, I would that you were either hot or cold, but because you're lukewarm, I'm about to vomit you, spew you out of my mouth. Wish you were one or the other.

Jesus said, no man can serve two masters. He will love the one and hate the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other, but you cannot serve God and mammon. Cannot do it.

James said, you adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whosoever shall be a friend of the world is an enemy of God. You cannot love both. John the Apostle said in 1 John 2, Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.

If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is of the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world. And all that is of the world is passing away, but he that does the will of God will abide forever.

You cannot serve two masters, brothers and sisters. It's all of Jesus or none of Him. Is He the captain of your soul? Is He your master? If He is, then follow Him with all of your heart.

But if there is another lover, if you're in love with the world, then go love the world. But please stop pretending that you're a Christian. That's what He's saying.

How long will you waver? How long will you falter between two opinions? Well, verse 21 tells us that the people answered Him not a word. They were undecided. They were still not convinced because they have yet to see the fire of God.

Oh, they say we've seen lots of form, but we've not yet seen the fire. And I think there's a world out there saying the same thing. They look into much of the church and they say, we see your form, we see your programs, we see you going through all the motions, but we're not sure we see any fire.

Where is the power of God? And therefore the vast majority is undecided. Well, Elijah issues the challenge and he says in verse 22 to the people, I alone am left a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are 450 men. Therefore let them give us two bulls and let them choose one bull for themselves.

Cut it into pieces and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. And I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord.

And the God who answers by fire, he is God. So all the people answered and said, it is well spoken. They say that's a good idea.

The God who answers by fire, not form, let him be God. Well, Elijah says to the prophets of Baal, you go first. So verse 25, Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, choose one bull for yourselves and prepare it first.

For you are many. And call on the name of your God, but put no fire under it. So they took the bull which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning till noon saying, O Baal, hear us.

But there was no voice. No one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made.

And so it was at noon that Elijah mocked them and said, Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he's meditating or he's busy or he's on a journey or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened. He's making fun of these prophets.

Go wake up your God. Why isn't he answered? Why is there no fire? We deserve to be mocked when there's no fire. So they cried aloud and cut themselves, as was their custom with knives and lances until the blood gushed out on them.

And when midday was passed, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, but there was no voice. No one answered. No one paid attention.

You know why? Because all you have there is form. It looks like prayer. They're calling out to somebody, but they're not praying to the Most High God.

It looks like worship. They're going through all these motions. They even jump on the altar.

They must have been dancing. And I can see one of them saying, This is the way we do it. And the other one, Okay, I'll try that.

I remember when I first started preaching, a pastor pulled me aside and said, Brother Brian, let me give you some pointers. When you preach and you say something like this, move your hand this way. Lower your voice.

I said, What? I don't want that. You know what the fruit of his ministry was? No fire. He'd gone through some theatrical motion training.

I don't want that. Not the form, but the fire. They're jumping on the altar.

They're screaming. They even say, Hey, we sacrifice for our gods. They start cutting themselves so that they're bleeding now.

It's all form. I remember thinking that as a Catholic boy, I've got to do penance. I've got to pay for my sins.

Folks, that's blasphemy. It's heresy. Thinking that you have to help Christ.

It's Christ alone. He finished. He finished the work.

He died for our sins on the cross. And he alone could do it. But they're trying to impress God.

Look at what we're doing. Cutting ourselves. Shouting.

Rolling on the floor. Acting crazy. What is it? That's not fire of God.

That's form. Or false fire. No one answers.

Paul the Apostle says it this way. 1 Corinthians 4, verse 19. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills.

And I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but power. It's not about empty puffed up speech with no life, all form of dead religion, nothing on the inside.

The proof that someone has been filled and is walking in the Holy Spirit is that there will be a fire of God upon his life. No answer. So now it's Elijah's turn.

This is where we're going to see what touches the heart of God. This is where we're going to see what prepares the way for personal revival. This is where we're going to see what prepares the way for the true fire of God's presence.

Verse 30. Then Elijah said to all the people, Come near to me. So all the people came near to him, and he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down.

And Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, Israel shall be your name. Then with the stones, he built an altar in the name of the Lord. He built an altar in the name of the Lord.

Watch this. The first thing that Elijah did to prepare for the fire was repair the broken down altar of the Lord. Now what does that mean? At this time, Israel was divided into two kingdoms.

Israel in the north and Judah in the south. There was division among God's chosen people. Both were God's chosen people, but Israel is in the north.

Judah in the south. There is a division. How many stones were there here that Elijah had to bring back together? Twelve stones.

Those twelve stones represent the twelve tribes of Israel, and they're all scattered and divided. God is saying, before I will send the fire of My Holy Spirit, there must be unity. We must come together in one accord, not agreeing on every little thing, but I'm saying we must agree on the essentials.

We must come under the banner of Christ. And so Elijah gathers the twelve stones and he brings them back together to repair the altar of the Lord. God's saying, if I'm going to send the fire of revival, I want unity in My house.

I want no division here. That means there can be no separation of race, no separation of color, no separation of man's agendas or denominations, until the church comes together in one accord. Jesus said a house divided against itself will what? Fall.

It will not stand. It will fall. Psalm 133.

Listen to the heart of God. Psalm 133. Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

It is like the precious oil upon the head running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon descending upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, life forevermore. Where did He command the blessing? Where there was unity.

Where the people of God came together as one. Where the altar of the Lord was repaired. Those twelve stones were scattered.

Elijah brings them together as one. There's about nothing that grieves me worse in my house than when my children are fighting. When they're not loving one another or being kind to one another.

Three things I never want to allow or tolerate in my house. Dishonesty, disrespect, and discord among my children. I hate it.

You know how it grieves you as a parent when you see that your children are not loving one another, that they're fighting. Brothers and sisters, how much more must it grieve the heart of God when brother and brother are at odds with one another? How must it grieve the heart of God when husband and wife have a wall between each other? You want to prepare the way? You want to prepare the way for personal revival? Here it is, the first step. I've got to reconcile with my brother.

I've got to reconcile with my wife. I've got to reconcile with my sister. There's got to be unity.

But we're not talking about they. We've got to talk about me. I. Make it personal for personal revival.

So I want to ask you, is there anyone in your life right now that you need to forgive? Is there anyone in your life right now that you need to reconcile with? Is there anyone in your life right now that you need to go to and apologize or you need to write a letter of apology to and ask them to forgive you from your heart? Is there anyone in your life that you need to forgive? Forgiveness is so serious in the sight of God that He says in that prayer, Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. You know the prayer at the end of it. If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses.

That is the Word of God. How serious is it, this issue of forgiveness? Absolutely essential. There's no way around it.

And there is no option for a Christian. Forgive or you will not be forgiven. Forgive and you will be forgiven.

Do not forgive and you will not be forgiven. The altar of the Lord must be repaired. Unity in the house of God.

We'll never know personal revival until we get right with God. You cannot get right with God until you get right with your brother, or your sister, or your spouse. We cannot love God unless we're willing to love one another.

It's so tragic that so often, so many, won't soften their heart and reconcile and forgive until that other person is in the grave. It's too late. You can forgive then, but you miss the opportunity to reconcile.

Do it quickly. Humble yourself before God. And unity is the result of humility.

We must humble ourselves before the Lord. So I say to you again, if there is anybody in your life that you need to reconcile with, brother or sister, do not put that off. That is essential.

That is serious in the sight of God. Ask forgiveness. As far as it be possible with you, the Scripture says, live at peace with all men.

So the altar was repaired. But notice what happens next. He repaired the altar of the Lord.

And verse 33 says, He put the wood in order. He put the wood in order. If the fire of God is going to fall, we've got to prepare the way.

We've got to repair the altar. There's unity. We've got to set the wood in order.

What is that? The wood set in order is the cross. The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Without the cross and without putting the wood in order, I will never know the God who answers by fire, nor will there ever be genuine revival where this wood is not put in order.

The cross of Jesus. The cross where our precious Lord and Savior died in agony to pay for our sins once and for all. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 5:21 that God made Him who knew no sin to be made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

God took our sins off of Himself, put them upon His Son, took the righteousness of His Son, put it upon us. That's the exchange at the cross. And apart from the cross of Jesus Christ, we cannot know the fire of God.

Jessie Penn Lewis, who was a missionary and evangelist used by God during the 1904 Welsh revival, said this. She said, In the revival in Wales in 1904, the outstanding theme was the message of Calvary. It is only when we see the cross as the center of the basis of all the working of the Holy Spirit that revival becomes possible.

What did the Apostle Paul say? He said, I determine not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Why? Because the preaching of the cross are to us who are saved the power of God. There is no power of God apart from the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

At the cross we see the power of God's love demonstrated. The cross is pointing in every direction. It's pointing up, which says that God's love for you is higher than heaven.

It's pointing down, which says that God's love is deeper than the depths of the ocean. It's pointing east and west, which says that God's love for us is farther and wider than the east is from the west. More than any other place, God is saying to us, I love you! And He didn't just tell us so, He showed us so at the cross of Jesus Christ.

For God demonstrated His love for us and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. The Scripture says, The wood must be put in order. This is where revival begins.

We cannot stray from the cross. But this is also where it continues because the message of the cross is Jesus Christ laying down His life and dying for my sins. But it is also where Jesus calls me to come and lay down my life with Him so that I can be raised with Him.

Luke 9, verse 23. Jesus said, If any man will come after Me and be My disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. What does that mean? Every day I die to Myself.

Every day die to my rights, die to my ambitions, die to my agendas and say, Lord Jesus, not as I will, but Thy will be done. Then you can have a personal revival. Taking up the cross, getting on the cross, dying to Myself so that I can truly live before God sends the fire.

But before God sends the fire, not only must the altar be repaired, there's unity, the wood be set in order, that's the cross, but also the Lord has to have a sacrifice upon which His fire can fall. And look at what He says here in the Scripture. Verse 33 again.

It says, He put the wood in order and He cut the bull in pieces and laid it on the wood. Now what part of that bull had the fire of God fall upon it? Every piece that was laid on the altar. If you took one piece of that bull and didn't set it on the altar, it wouldn't have the fire of God upon it.

There's something here, brothers and sisters. Paul said it this way. Romans 12, verse 1. He said, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice.

This is your reasonable service. Now what does that mean? One glimpse at the cross of Jesus Christ and when I see my Savior's love for me, it demands something of me. It demands a response.

I love the hymn, When I survey the wondrous cross. There's a verse in there that says, love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, and my all. But what is this? Every piece of the bull cut up and put on the altar.

That is absolute surrender. It's one thing for you to say, Lord, I surrender all. But we've got to get specific and we've got to get personal.

Have you surrendered to God your mind? Every piece on the altar. Have you surrendered to God your eyes? All they see. Your mind and all its thoughts.

Your ears and all you listen to. Your tongue and all you say. Your hands, all your service.

Your feet, wherever you go. Your heart, that deepest, most intimate part of you. Have you surrendered every part to Jesus? That's what He's calling for.

Absolute surrender. Every key to your heart. Every piece on the altar.

Presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice. And it's not just a one-time thing. It's daily.

Every day. Did you know that our God has no shortage of fire? But He's got a tremendous shortage of living sacrifices upon which His fire can fall. We need the fire of God, not form.

God's saying I need living sacrifices. If I can find living sacrifices, you will see the fire of God fall. One more thing though here before God would send His fire.

One more requirement. What is it? It is the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man or woman. Follow me, if you will, in verse 36.

It says, It came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice that Elijah the prophet came near and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O Lord. Hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.

Then the fire of the Lord fell. Not form, but fire. When did it fall? When God heard the prayer.

The effectual, fervent, and can I add, faith-filled prayer because Elijah had them pour water all over that sacrifice. That's faith. The challenge was that God who answers by fire is God and He's pouring water all over the sacrifice.

Water puts out fire. But he's saying not the fire of God. And I know when I call upon God in prayer, He's going to send His fire and the fire of God is going to burn up every piece of this offering and lick up the water, burn up the rocks and everything else.

It's faith-filled prayer. It's expectant prayer. It's the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man.

We'll turn there in just a minute. James 5.16 says that. But first, I want you to see when the altar is repaired, that's unity.

When the wood is put in order, that's the cross. When the sacrifice was offered up, that's you and me, absolute surrender. When Elijah prays, the fire falls.

It happened also with Solomon in 2 Chronicles 7. If we could turn there please. 2 Chronicles 7. Verse 1. When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. When did the fire of God fall? When did the glory of the Lord fill the temple? When Solomon made an end of praying.

This is why I say, brothers and sisters, there is no meeting more important than the prayer meeting. Nothing more important than prayer. It was when God's people prayed that the fire of God fell.

James 5.16 I want you to see this in closing because oftentimes we read something like this and we don't believe, we don't have the faith to believe that God will hear my prayer for personal revival. God will hear me. God will use me.

God will answer me. Why don't we believe? Look at this verse. James 5.16 Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed.

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Next verse. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours.

In other words, Elijah was a man just like us and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain and it did not rain. These are not supermen in the Bible. They are not supermen and superwomen.

They are men just like us. Women just like us. But they were men and women who were willing to absolutely surrender themselves to God, believe God, and call upon God in prayer.

And what happened? God answered. And He will answer you. The fire of God can fall upon your life.

One person. You've got to have the faith to believe it. Have the faith and courage to believe.

God will hear me. God will answer me. He will use me because I belong to Him.

If I've met these requirements, reconciled, I've forgiven, offered my body as a living sacrifice, every part of it, I'm praying, God will answer. I'm going to close with this. It's a true story and probably some of you already know it.

The greatest awakening and the greatest revival that this nation has ever known began with one man who gave himself to prayer. The year was 1857 when America was prospering unlike any other nation in the world at that time. People were making money hand over fist.

The country was divided politically over the issue of slavery. America was drifting away from God because the church had fallen fast asleep. Churches in New York City were almost completely empty and many of them considered shutting their doors.

The Fulton Street Dutch Reformed Church in Manhattan, New York City appointed one man to be their designated visitor. His name, Jeremiah C. Lamphere. Jeremiah Lamphere began to knock on doors inviting everyone he could to come to church.

He had little to no success. But Jeremiah Lamphere's life was consumed with prayer. So he decided to start a prayer meeting.

He made up some flyers inviting anyone who would join him to pray at noon on Wednesday in the upper room of the Dutch Reformed Church on Fulton Street. The first Wednesday at noon he was the only one who showed up for prayer. But he prayed anyway.

And then about 12.35 in the afternoon he heard footsteps coming up the stairs. Five businessmen joined him in prayer for the next 20 minutes. Nothing special happened.

Just simple prayer. But there was such a sweet presence of the Lord that they decided to meet again on the next Wednesday at noon. That next Wednesday at noon 20 men showed up to pray through the lunch hour.

They were businessmen. The next Wednesday 40 men came to pray at noon on Wednesday. One week later, October 14, 1857 while these men were praying and they were praying God do anything.

God do whatever it takes. Turn your people back to you again. Send revival.

While they were praying God shook this nation to the core. The government announced the worst financial crash in history up to that point. Within days banks closed their doors.

Millions lost their jobs. The next Wednesday 3,000 men gathered in and around the church to pray. Within 6 months, 10,000 men every day were now praying across Manhattan.

It was a prayer revival. Soon nearly every single church was full. Preachers began to open their churches and preach every night.

Thousands were being saved every day. The revival spread from state to state. It spread up into Canada.

It spread to Ireland. It spread to India. The fire of God spread to South Africa.

That's something about the fire of God. Form doesn't spread. It's dead.

Fire spreads. And the fire of revival spread to all these countries. It is estimated that in just 2 years approximately 2 million people were saved in America who at that time only had a population of about 30 million.

A revival of that magnitude today in America would mean that 25 to 35 million Americans would be saved in a matter of 3 years time. God did that, brothers and sisters. And God is able to do that again.

He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or imagine. But when did He do it? Where did it start? One man! One man! Jeremiah Lamphere who said, I'm sure he didn't have a grudge against anybody. He repaired the altar.

No unforgiveness in my heart. Reconciled with my brothers and sisters. I'm sure his eyes were on Calvary.

The wood was set in order. I'm sure that he offered himself a living sacrifice to God. Every part of him was devoted to Christ.

Surrendered to Christ. And this we know. He prayed.

And he persevered in prayer. And he prayed in faith. And the fire of God fell.

It is a tragic day when professing Christians settle for less than the fire of God. When they settle for form and they say we're satisfied with form. Can I tell you something? One of the churches that I left, a deacon came up to me and tears were coming down his face.

I'd been in that church for 5 years. He had resisted me the whole time. Mostly his wife, but him also.

He came up to me when I was leaving with tears running down his face. And he said, Brother Brian, even though I've not agreed with you, I've come against you, I have to say this. I've been in this church all my life.

He was probably around 70 years old. I've been in this church all my life and I will tell you this, I have never seen God move like He has in the last 5 years. But, this is not who we are as Southern Baptists.

It is a tragic day when a man chooses form over fire. I shared that story with Matt on the way from the airport. He said, that's like saying, I see heaven and I choose hell.

That's exactly it. It hit it on the head. It is a tragic day when you get satisfied with religious form and reject the fire of God.

It doesn't begin out there, it begins right here in my heart. And I want to ask you, brothers and sisters, do you have the form in your life? Do you have the fire? And if you want the fire, there's no secret. It's very simple.

You've heard it today. And I ask you to respond if God is speaking to you. Would you bow with me in prayer? Heavenly Father, I thank You, Lord God, that there is no shortage of fire.

There is no shortage, Lord, when it comes to the power of Your Holy Spirit, when it comes to the overwhelming abundance of the ocean of Your grace, the abundance of Your mercy, all available to Your children, but only available to those who will choose fire over form. God forbid that in these last days we only have a form of godliness. We desire for You, Lord God, to ignite a fire in our hearts.

And Holy Spirit, I trust that You're speaking to someone here this morning. And I ask You, Lord, to give the grace to respond, to absolute surrender, to forgive anyone in their life that they need to forgive or reconcile with. And Lord God, to devote themselves to prayer.

And I pray the same for myself, Lord. And I thank You for it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/24/SID24622.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/brian-long/the-form-or-the-fire/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**