

The Holy Spirit and Fire

by Erlo Stegen

The sermon explores the profound difference between water baptism and the transformative power of the Holy Spirit and fire in the life of a believer.

Duration: 1:08:30

Scripture: Malachi 3:1-2, Matthew 3:11, Matthew 24:51, Revelation 1:14-15, Revelation 1:17-18

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker recounts a shocking encounter with a fellow believer who confessed to having a sinful life, particularly involving sexual sins. The speaker references Matthew 24, where Jesus warns about the consequences of unfaithfulness and implores the congregation to cleanse their lives. The sermon then shifts to Matthew 3, where John the Baptist speaks of Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit and fire. The speaker emphasizes the need for believers to be prepared for the coming of the Lord, as described in Malachi and Revelation, and warns against complacency in sin.

Transcript

Before we read the Bible, let's bow and pray. Lord, you know each one of us here tonight. You know what we need.

Each one of us. For nothing is hidden from your eyes. Lord, reveal yourself in our midst by your grace.

Amen. Let's read from the Gospel according to Matthew chapter 3. From verse 11. Lord, you know each one of us here tonight.

For nothing is hidden from your eyes. For nothing is hidden from your eyes. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance.

But he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. We'll read thus far.

These are words spoken by John the Baptist. If you read in Matthew 11 verse 11. Jesus said, Of those born of women, none is greater than John.

Jesus said, Verily I say to you, In truth of those born from women. Now, there was no necessity for Jesus to have to say, Verily, or in truth, for everything he spoke was of course the truth. But knowing the hearts

of the Jews.

Knowing their history. He knew that they would reject him. And so, that is why he emphasized and said, Indeed, or truly I say to you.

Of those born of women, none is greater than John. Because he knew that they would object and say, But surely there is nobody greater than our father Abraham. He is our father of faith.

Some would have objected by saying, But there is none as great as our King David. Because even the Messiah would be called the son of David. Some would say, There is no one greater than Moses.

There were of course others, the prophets, Elijah and them. But Jesus said, Of all of them, none is greater than John. Even though they could refer to Moses as having delivered them from the land of slavery.

Through Abraham, the land of flowing with milk and honey. But Jesus said, None is greater than John. We ought therefore to ask the question, What makes John to have been so great? Because we don't know of any raising from the dead that John performed.

We don't know of him healing any leper. So where in lay his greatness? I believe it is the word he spoke, what came out of his mouth. With that life he lived.

He testified of Jesus. And Jesus testified of him. And John said, There is one who comes after me.

Who is greater than I am. I baptize you indeed with water unto repentance. But he who is coming after me, I am not even worthy of carrying his sandals.

For I baptize you with water unto repentance, but he will baptize you with fire and the Holy Spirit. So John said he works with what? With water and repentance. He highlighted these two very important things.

But he said the one who comes after me will use the Holy Spirit and fire. That is why he is so great. Let's just compare a little between water and fire.

I remember back in around about 1952 in Pretoria. I was studying at the time. A certain very wise preacher came from America.

He had I think around about 6 doctorates even though he was still quite young. We went to his service that night. Then he asked a Baptist preacher to come forward and stand next to him.

And then he asked a Dutch reform minister to come and stand with him. Then he said brothers, tell me if you baptize people, which one of you uses the most water? Now I was still pretty young at that time. And I considered this preacher in a critical light and with a critical eye and I thought this is really an inappropriate question.

I didn't know where he was headed for or what he was aiming at. And then the audience laughed. They laughed because it really was amusing to them.

And then he spoke astonishing words. Saying, you brothers from the Baptist church, you use lots of water. And here is the other who is from a church where they just use sprinkling of water.

But he said, the problem I have with both of you is it doesn't matter how much water you use, the tongue of the one getting baptized remains dry. He said, how I wish that the tongue could be baptized as well.

Now whether you, my Baptist brothers, use lots of water or you from the reformed denomination use just sprinkling, I know people from both your denominations who gossip.

Would that the tongue could be baptized. Now water we know. If we go to the river like we have the Tugela River or the Vow River up there.

We could dive into the deepest pool into one of these rivers and retrieve a rock that has been there for a thousand years. We can take that rock and then pound it with a sledgehammer and you will see as it breaks that dry dust comes out of it. Because the water has not been able to penetrate the rock.

It has only wet the surface. It has never gone into the very heart of the rock. And if you put that rock into a very deep pool, you will see as it breaks.

It is a very hot fire. After a short time you will find. And if you take your hammer and then hit it.

You will find that the pieces that break up are also red hot and the glowing red has penetrated right in. It has got right into the heart of it. Water does not succeed in that.

But fire causes it. You can take different materials, say dry wood or a green tree, a wet branch or wet wood. You can take a piece of coal from a deep pit.

The type that if you just touch your clothing with it leaves black marks. And put these materials into a fire. If the fire really burns, you will notice.

You will not be able to distinguish the different materials for the fire has penetrated whatever material. Even if it was rusty iron, it all glows with the heat and you can no longer say this is that material and this is another one. It all glows together.

That is how fire works. In the book of Hebrews, the letter to the Hebrews that says God is a consuming fire. Now before I continue with the subject of fire.

Like I said, it speaks, he highlighted two topics, water and repentance. Repentance is of the utmost importance. Jesus one day took a little child in the midst of an adult crowd and said, unless you repent and become like this little child, you will never inherit the kingdom of God.

John referred to this repentance. But he was saying, even though I preach repentance, the one who comes after me, I am not worthy to even take up his shoes. Because of the Holy Spirit and fire, there is such a thing as a person repenting.

There is the necessity of repentance, a person then accepting the Lord Jesus, where a person can say, I've become a child of God. However, John says, I am in that, but the one who comes after me comes with something even greater, even deeper than that. If you read the last book of the Old Testament, which is called Malachi, here in Matthew, this is the opening book of the New Testament.

These two are parallel, come one after the other. Malachi says, Behold, your king comes suddenly to his temple. Or the Lord, you can even say the Lord.

The Lord comes suddenly to his temple. Now if it speaks of a temple, it doesn't mean a church building. When Stephen was being martyred, being stoned to death, he was saying to them, you think that you can build a temple for God.

He is far too great for you to build a temple for him. For behold, the heavens are his chair, his throne. And the earth is just his footstool.

So how much greater isn't this God? How therefore can you build him a building, a temple? He be so great. Then he said, God does not dwell in a building built with hands, but we are his temple. He abides in us.

Do you not know that you are a temple of God, a holy temple, and that the Holy Spirit dwells in you? Your body is his temple. So if you clothe yourself, consider that you are decorating or you are clothing the temple of God. So remember that when you clothe yourself, you are not clothing one who sells her body.

You are not one who is a prostitute, but you are dressing the one who is the holy of holies. Elijah the prophet, a great preacher, we could call him the prince of preachers. In chapter one we find him saying, come let us reason together, even though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.

He brought people together in repentance, but in chapter six, when their king had died, he saw the king of kings in his temple, and his glory filled the temple. He saw the seraphim, each having six wings, with two wings covering the feet, with two the face, and flying with the other two. And the seraphim were shouting out, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

The seraphim filled the heavens as they shouted out, flying in different directions about the holiness of God. He speaks of it, the thrice holiness, it is something emphasized again and again and yet again. But he means it not just in a grammatical triple emphasis, but in holiness that is so true, so holy, said three times.

And as they shouted out about this holiness, even the foundations and the doors of the temple were shaken. And then we find that Isaiah the prophet cried out, Isaiah said, woe, woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. For as he beheld the thrice holy God, Remember in Babylon how the king had said, O sheep of these three young men that must be thrown into the fiery furnace, let the furnace burn seven times hotter.

Here the holiness of God is referred to as thrice holy. That figure of three depicting God, depicting the perfect holiness of God. The prophet cried, shouted out, woe, woe is me, I am a man of unclean lips.

For as he beheld the three young men that must be thrown into the fiery furnace, let the furnace burn seven times hotter. Whereupon the angel took a tongs and fetched a burning coal from the furnace and burnt his lips. And let me assure you that it is a painful experience, you would never forget being burnt by a red hot coal.

Now John said, I do it with water, he will do it with fire. You may repent confessing your sins, but tomorrow you do the same thing again. If you have been purified with that holy fire, what a difference it makes.

And even the angel could not touch the fire, he had to use tongs with which to carry that hot coal. And it would make such a difference, that prophet would, as I, would never have ever gossiped again. John was saying, my preaching of repentance is light in comparison to the one who comes after me, who will do something which is the crowning event, nothing can be greater.

It is like the difference between water and fire. Malachi says, behold the King whom you seek will come quickly, the Lord whom you seek will come quickly. But when he does come, who will be able to bear his

presence? Who will have the strength to bear his arrival? Don't we all say, come Jesus, come do your work.

But the prophet says, when he does come, who will have the strength to bear his arrival? For what reason? You find that in chapter 3 verse 1. For the Lord whom you seek will come suddenly to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming? And who can stand when he appears? And then it says, for, and this is the answer, for he is like a refiner's fire, purifying silver and gold, purging them, you see. Jesus doesn't come with just something as light as water, but with purging fire, which is able to purge even gold and silver.

You who are from up north, I trust that you know something of the refining fire which refines gold up there. In the mines, when they purify gold there, even the gold, everything turns red. Or even the rock in which the gold is, even the ore is in a molten red mess.

The gold is there in very minute quantities. What is there in great quantities is the dross, the rock, the mineral around the gold. The greater percentage by far is just the dross, the gold is a minute little bit.

And Jesus is that refining fire. When he comes, he purges, he cleanses. And he doesn't want the dross and the gold to remain together, because any dross with the gold spoils it.

And if you continue reading in Malachi, you'll see that the sons of Levi will be purged in order that they may offer to the Lord offerings in righteousness. Because some offerings are not acceptable. Cain brought his offering, but God didn't accept it.

Abel brought his and it was accepted. Then there was a great battle. A great battle raged because Cain was jealous of his brother for his offering was accepted and Cain's not until he resorted to murdering his brother.

The first blood spilt on earth was not spilt in shebeens, in bars. Neither was the first blood shed by politicians. Neither was it a battle among nations.

But it was found in a service. For the Lord does not just accept any service. The Lord doesn't accept just any offering or prayer.

Jesus referred to the fact that a person comes to the altar and then he remembers that his brother has ought against him. And then he remembers my brother. And then he remembers that my brother has ought against him.

He has a grudge against me. Then it doesn't help to bring an offering. He doesn't want your five rand.

No offering is acceptable to him. Firstly go and be reconciled to that brother who has got something against you, who has been hurt by you and then come and make your offering. Now at this altar of Jesus Christ we are purified and purged as gold and silver.

I remember in 1966 when the Lord poured out his spirit there at Mapumulo. We were together with some brethren and we went into a shop. It is there where there is a spa shop today.

I could take you there today and show you the exact spot where we knelt. We knelt and said, Lord Jesus Christ, I have a grudge against you. I have a grudge against you.

I have a grudge against you. I have a grudge against you. As we knelt in prayer beseeching God to pour out his spirit of revival, we said, Lord, we remember John.

We remember what he said, that you Lord Jesus would come and pour out your Holy Spirit and fire. We were whites and blacks together for one had forgotten any differentiation. Like I said, if you are in the fire, it doesn't matter what materials are there, you all burn brightly with the heat of the fire.

If you still discriminate, you still don't know yet the fire of the Holy Spirit. As we knelt there in prayer, we called out to the Lord saying, Lord, come and set our hearts afire. We recalled Luke 12 where Jesus said, behold, I'm straightened till I do what I've come to do and that is to baptize with the Holy Spirit.

And we cried out saying, pour out your Holy Spirit, set us aflame. And then suddenly, unexpectedly, unexpectedly, one cried out and said, oh God, oh God, my eyes are burning as if though they are in the fire. Lord, help me.

He said, for Lord, I have looked at things that I should not have looked at and I've watched and followed things that with my eyes that I should never have done. He said, oh God, please forgive me. And then another one cried out and said, oh my ears, my God, my lips are unclean.

My lips are unclean, I've spoken many things that I should have never spoken. I've spoken so many things I should never have uttered. It was the end of play, I can assure you.

I recalled what the prophet had said about the refiner's fire and I recognized that this is the fire that is a purging fire and that some would be upset and say, no, no, this is going too far. This is something that is just too much. I'd rather just go.

I can't be a believer like this. Let me just join another church because some churches don't mind even if you're busy with sin. But who will have the strength to stand when the Lord comes? Read in Revelation in chapter one Where John describes seeing Jesus walking among the seven candlesticks of the seven churches, John fell down as one who is dead.

It was a deadly shock. But he's the one who could recall that when he was young, he would lean on the Lord's bosom for he was one who could say, beloved of the Lord or most loved of the Lord. He was one who could say, beloved of the Lord or most loved of the Lord.

But now, as he beheld the same Jesus, he fell down like one who was dead because he saw him with his face radiant like the sun, brighter than the sun, with eyes glowing like fire, with the garment as that of a judge. With feet glowing like it has come out of a furnace, fire coming out of the sand. So when John saw him, he fell down like one who's dead.

Malachi asks, when he does come, who will have the strength to bear it? Who will be able to endure the day of his coming? That shop at Mapumulu was bigger than this hall. We were praying there in the middle. I heard one then saying, Lord, oh, my feet, my feet.

And then I saw his shoes fly into the opposite corner. And then he threw his other shoe into the other corner. It was the first time I can tell you, the first time I'd been in such a prayer meeting.

It was like he was trying to put out flames of fire which we could not see. He said, Lord, forgive me for these feet of mine have walked ways that I should have never walked. No Christian, young or old, should

ever walk in those wrong ways.

Who will have the strength to stand when he comes? Who will have the strength to stand when he appears with that fire, with that Holy Spirit? When we went out and locked the shop, another preacher who had been with us in that prayer meeting on our knees came to us and said, oh, say to me, oh, brother, I couldn't pray. I'd wanted to open my mouth, I just couldn't. I'd wanted to express something, but I couldn't.

He said, I felt like it was a sword that had cut me asunder in two, from the head to the feet. It shocked me and I said, brother, how can you say such a thing? He said, I felt like it was a sword that had cut me asunder in two, from the head to the feet. In Matthew 24, we remember how the Lord spoke of that unworthy servant who, when his master did not appear as he had expected him to, began to beat his fellow servants.

And then the Lord, the master suddenly appeared and then he said, take him, bind him hands and feet, cast him out, and let him burn with the sinners. After that, he said to me that the Lord had shown him that he needs to cleanse his life, which had things that were displeasing to the Lord, especially regarding sins of a sexual nature. He tried, but he just somehow couldn't do it, and in a few days he died an awful death.

The one who saw his corpse came to me and said, you know, as I looked at that corpse, I was reminded of how flies, when you approach rotting meat, they just suddenly swarm off, so too it was like demons were swarming around him. That was my own father who told me and related to me what he had seen. He said, my son, these are shocking things I've seen.

He said, I can never forget such an event and seeing such a sight. For he had not been a temple fit for the Holy Spirit, but rather for demons. Nevertheless, he had been preaching, and people had even made decisions for the Lord.

But his death was awful. I wouldn't wish it upon anybody, teenager, anybody. Now my friends, I'm closing.

John, greater than anyone before him, he marveled at the greatness of the one who was coming after him. He was the one who didn't play around. When he preached, he would say, you brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Nevertheless, it was as if though he was saying, what I have been proclaiming is frivolous in comparison to the one who is coming after me and what he would proclaim and what he would do.

Another gospel let. I wonder whether you've ever cried out to the Lord and said, oh, baptize me with your Holy Spirit, your spirit of holiness and fire. I wonder whether you've ever cried out to the Lord and said, oh, baptize me with your Holy Spirit, your spirit of holiness and fire.

One lady who had been in that prayer meeting, she was, she had been sitting down on the floor. She jumped up as if though there was a fire being stoked under her. She asked if she could leave.

I said, she could leave. I need to go out and make right and make restitution. She left that meeting, went to her children, apologized, begging them for forgiveness for not having been a godly mother, for having been irritated with them, for having got upset and handled them in an ungodly rough way.

She said, forgive me, my husband, for not having treated you with the respect that I ought to have treated you with. She went to her neighbors and said, neighbors, please forgive me. I mistreated you.

She said, I used to gossip about you. I would say, here is the same old person coming again, begging for salt yet again. Why doesn't she go and buy her own things? She said, please forgive me.

She went to the white owner of that farm, apologizing, saying, I used to just pinch things. She said, forgive me. We were on our knees still praying while she was busy going into homes.

She said, Lord, thank you that I didn't die. I would have gone straight to hell. She was a believer, living with sin, keeping quiet about them.

John said, great is the one who comes after me. I come with the water of repentance. He will come with the fire of the Holy Spirit.

And I'm not worthy to carry his sandals. You young person, have you received that baptism? Are you full of the Holy Spirit? Young people and old, cry out to God. Call out to Him if you haven't before.

You call out to Him and say, Lord, cleanse me from these things. Being a Christian does not imply comic-ing around as if you're in a circus, but you're serving the one who is holy, the one who has seraphim calling out His holiness. Let's bow our heads.

Listen closely. Let's bow our heads. We thank you, Lord, that we could hear your word.

Lord, we ask you that in hearing, we would hear properly. Not needing to say like Job, Lord, I'd heard of you by the hearing of the ears, but now my eyes have seen you. But that each one in our midst would understand who you are and why you came to this earth.

Continue with working in our hearts. For Lord, we know that the day comes which will burn as a furnace. That day which will be, even if it's one day, like a thousand years.

Lord, work and cleanse us for better, Lord, to be cleansed and purged now than to be condemned on that day. Amen.

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