

A Shovelful of Fire

by Fred Tomlinson

This sermon emphasizes the transformative power of the Holy Spirit, symbolized by fire, in the lives of believers. It delves into the significance of receiving the Holy Spirit, who is a person and co-equal with God, for true spiritual change and empowerment. The sermon draws parallels between Old Testament references to fire as a symbol of God's presence and judgment and the New Testament fulfillment of the promise of the Holy Spirit. It highlights the need for a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit to experience true spiritual renewal and the fire of God's presence in one's life.

Scripture: Exodus 3:1, Luke 3:16, Acts 2:1, Romans 8:9, 1 Samuel 10:6, Isaiah 6:6, Joel 2:28, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:38, Romans 12:11

Topics: "Transformative Power of the Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

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Transcript

Peter was making comments about faithfulness and people being faithful. I'd like to just express my appreciation to Steve, Stephen Chen here, whose faithfulness is making so much that Peter was talking about possible, and we're very grateful. Can everyone hear me okay? I know my voice is not as powerful as it used to be.

Tell me if you can't hear me though, and you keep it up. All right. If you have your Bible with you, perhaps you'd turn with me.

I have two different passages of scripture to read, and then I want to use them as a launching pad for what I believe God has put on my heart. I'm looking into the book of Exodus, first of all. Exodus chapter 3. I'll just say this much.

I'm not speaking specifically from this passage, but I felt to read it, and you'll see the connection as perhaps as we move on. But chapter 3 in verse 1, now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro, his

father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush, and he looked and behold the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed.

So Moses said, I must turn aside now and see this marvellous sight why the bush is not burned up. When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, Moses, Moses, and he said, here I am. Then he said, do not come near here.

Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. He said also, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

And then the other passage is in the New Testament, in Luke's Gospel. This is why I don't sing very much, just before I speak. I'm looking into Luke chapter 3. The man who we know as John the Baptist was speaking to the people.

Verse 15, Now while the people were in a state of expectation, and all were wondering in their hearts about John as to whether he was the Christ, John answered and said to them all, As for me, I baptise you with water, but one is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. Amen.

As you all know very well, I'm sure, a metaphor is a figure of speech that equates or brings together two unrelated things using characteristics that they both share. And usually the purpose for using a metaphor is to establish a particular contrast or to highlight a symbolism that may be represented by that reference. The Bible is replete in metaphors.

And I was thinking as I was sitting here of Psalm 23, for example, and it seems to me that really the entire psalm is just a combination of metaphors. For example, the Lord is my shepherd, a metaphor. He leads me to green pastures, another metaphor, and beside still waters.

My cup runs over. And so it goes on. He will take me ultimately to the house of the Father, and I'll be there forever.

And so on. These are all metaphors. They're figures of speech being used.

When we think of Jesus himself in the light of the teaching of Scripture, again, we find that there are so many metaphors which are used to describe him. I've never tried to count how many, but just for example, they range from reading Jesus saying that he is the light. He's the light of the world.

He's the bread from heaven. He's the true vine. He's the bright and morning star, and so on, and so on, and so on.

There's always a purpose for a metaphor being used. Metaphors are not being used just because, I don't know, because they can't think of anything else to say or another way to say something. But almost always, and most certainly when we're thinking about the Scriptures, there's always a reality.

There's always a purpose to which they point. They're being used deliberately to illustrate something of great value and great importance. I want to just make a reference to a childhood memory at this point, which I'm using as an illustration for what I want to say.

But in this immediate company here, I almost have to make an apology because I've been talking to some of you for very many years now, and I've only lived one life. I've only got so many memories as well. Yes.

But anyway, I'm thinking of my childhood. I'm thinking of the home in which I was raised. And just in reference to the actual building itself, it was an old stone house or brick house.

Central heating was unknown. We didn't know what central heating was. We never even heard anyone talk about zone heating.

Never mind central heating. But there we were. We didn't know what double glazing was or insulation.

But that's where we lived. And in the wintertime, and I know there are a few of you here who live in a Canadian house, not the same in many ways to the house I was raised in, but you would have some of these same elements, I'm sure. Perhaps this one in particular.

And that is that in the winter, it was not unusual for ice to form on the inside of the windows. The fact of the matter is, it was jolly cold. We had one source of heating and that was a coal fireplace in the little living room where everything happened in our family.

We even got bathed there right in front of it. That's another story altogether. But the fact is, when you went to bed, you went upstairs and it was cold.

And so one of my memories, and it wasn't just one occasion, it's something that happened quite a lot, as I recall. But I can visualize myself being in bed, cold, and the lights off, of course, and then being aware of a glow that was beginning to enter into my room. And what it was, was my mother who'd taken a shovel full of the burning coals in the fireplace downstairs.

And she was carefully coming up the stairs with the shovel full of burning coals. And she would come into my room. And in the bedrooms, my parents' bedroom and in my bedroom, there's a tiny little cast iron fireplace.

And she would bring the living coals and drop them into the fireplace and usually add something to that before too long as well, and so on. But the glow of it and then the warmth that that brought was very, very welcome, of course. But the grate, which was, as I've mentioned, cast iron, it was black.

In fact, my mother used to use something called blacko. Great on, you know, making up names in those days. We had silvo and blacko.

We didn't have much silver to use the silvo on, but blacko was what she would use on the cast iron fireplace. But it was black, it was dark, it was cold. But it lit up with the burning coals that my mother placed on the fireplace.

I had instant fire in my room. You know, I believe that that is very likely, in my opinion, most certainly, the greatest need in the churches today. And that is for, excuse me, a shovel full of coal.

I speak metaphorically. But there's the need. It may very well be that it's your greatest need, as I'm speaking to you today, the need for a shovel of living coal, a need for fire.

Again, I speak metaphorically, of course. And another feature of the illustration I'm using of my mother with the shovel of coals, is supposing that she had come up the stairs and she had the shovel, but it just

had black coal on the shovel. And it was the right material, it would be the right material, and it would be far less dangerous.

You will agree with that. But the fact is, the coal in that state is dead. And it provides no light, it provides no heat, it provides no power at all.

She needed the right material, but in order for it to fulfil its purpose, it needed to be burning, it needed to be lit on. And I believe that with that simple illustration, and I hope you've not forgotten the scriptures that we opened with, but I believe that there's a spiritual, very lightly, a very personal application from this illustration that we could take for ourselves this morning. The need for fire.

You know, to just move over to one side just for a moment or two, a person may be, you may be, well versed in doctrine. I think probably most of the people I'm speaking to today have been around the Bible for a long time and listened to many, many people speaking many, many more sermons and messages. And you've read a lot of books and you're aware of the doctrine.

We're aware of the right material, perhaps. I'm assuming that the doctrine you've exposed yourself to has been good doctrine. But the fact of the matter is that there's a world of difference between having black coal and a living fire.

There's a world of difference between merely having the right doctrines and the right information and being able to speak the right words at the appropriate times, and having the fire, which is being referred to now metaphorically. You know, let's just think for a moment of the way in which God used metaphors in reference to himself. When he used the metaphor of fire, there are several things that are being referred to, and I can't this morning try to deal with everything.

But let me emphasize this. He primarily is speaking of himself. We know we read in Deuteronomy, then again in the same statement in Hebrews chapter 12, that would be Deuteronomy 3 and verse 24 for someone who's writing down in Hebrews 12 and 29, where I read, your God is a consuming fire.

Now there's a metaphor. He's not literally fire as we know fire, but he's deliberately referring to himself symbolically with an element that we are all very familiar with. And then this happened in the reading that we had in Exodus chapter 3, where Moses, during that particular night, he sees a bush that is burning and yet it's not being consumed.

And when he draws near to it, he finds that the very presence of God was somehow there represented or signified symbolically, if you will, by actual fire, which drew his attention and drew him to go to the bush and then enter into that conversation which God graciously initiated with him. There are so many other scriptures we can think about, but we could think about Exodus again, chapter 19. So on the one hand in chapter 3, we've got God symbolizing his presence by fire with Moses.

But then as we get to chapter 19, we've got God again symbolizing his presence, not just to Moses, but to the whole nation as they're gathered around Mount Sinai. And the text reads, the mount was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended upon it in fire. And so this becomes increasingly plain and clear.

There are other scriptures I can think of. 2 Chronicles 7, where Solomon has just finished that outstanding prayer concerning the dedication of the temple, you'll remember. And when Solomon had finished praying, we read, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices that were upon it.

God utilizing this symbol or actual symbol and referring to himself metaphorically in this particular way. To the Jewish mind of old, there was another feature that was outstanding to them when they saw or were made aware of God's presence in terms of fire, and that was judgment. And so without delving into that or looking for other scriptures, what I'm learning as I read through the pages of scripture is that God himself has chosen to make himself known symbolically or metaphorically by fire and revealing or emphasizing his divine presence, reminding his people of his divine power and indeed of his divine judgment.

In other words, this element because of the very nature of it, that is fire, physical fire as we know it, is not limited to a little fire grace in an upstairs boy's bedroom. But of course, we've been exposed to varying degrees to forest fires and enormous fires and the power of fire and the drama of it and the fear of it in many cases. So the way in many cases, other cases it's utilized for very positive reasons and purposes.

But it's not surprising to us, is it, that God, who is this sovereign almighty God who is wanting to make himself known to us or make features of his person or of his activities known to us in terms of the greatness, the transcendence of who he is and what he is doing and wants to do, that he would use fire as an illustration in that particular way. He uses other illustrations for other purposes. But I want to concentrate here on this particular passage.

So we've got God revealing himself in the Old Testament in those particular ways. And then the other section of Scripture I read to you was from Luke chapter 3. So we've moved through a whole transition here of time and whatnot. And on this occasion, as we were reminded, we've got John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, sent very specially by God for this purpose, to be his forerunner.

And as you noted from the reading, the people who were listening to him, they're observing just how unusual this man John was for different reasons, not least his dress, not least the food he ate, and so on. But the things he said, the things that he was saying, and it caused them to wonder, and this is what we read in the 15th verse, they wondered to themselves, could it be that this John is the Christ? Could it be that he is the Messiah, which is quite a thought to consider. But then, in the light of the fact that the nation were not merely looking for some strange or unusual man with unusual dress or whatever, but they were really looking for a Messiah who would be a warrior, someone who would come in power and with drama and be able to bring to an end their over-rulers and allow them to come into the kind of blessings that were referred to by the prophets in the Old Testament, and so on.

And then here we are with John the Baptist speaking. But then we noted in verse 16 how he turns the attention away from himself, and he said, in his many words, he said, no, I am not the Christ. And he goes on to make a statement and introduce what I can only think of as being a shockingly new idea that he puts out to the crowd who were gathered around him and listening to him.

Essentially, he says, yes, the Messiah is coming. In fact, he's on the doorstep, as it were. He's about to appear.

And when he appears, whereas I am baptising you with water, he will baptise you in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God. And I can't tell you what those words meant to the people who were listening to him on that occasion. But I'm pretty sure I'm right to say that what he was now saying was not expected nor anticipated, nor did it seem particularly relevant, no matter how the words may have some sort of, I don't know, some transcendence in that he's referring to the Spirit of God, certainly.

But what did it mean? How could they understand it at that particular time? And I'm sure it was very perplexing. You know, you turn over a few pages in Luke's Gospel and you come to chapter 12. And in verse 49, we have Jesus now, Jesus himself speaking.

And he makes this statement, I have come. So don't forget, John said he's coming. And, of course, other prophets had said he's coming earlier before him, of course.

He's coming. Jesus says, I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled, but I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished. So this is Jesus.

And let's just note carefully, because I think it's very important, we've got this idea behind us now of metaphor, of fire being used metaphorically. And I sought to emphasize the fact that God does that because he's got a greater purpose. There's something great, there's something infinitely great behind his words.

Okay, so that's a fact we've got there on the table. Over here now, we're reminding ourselves that John said, and when he comes, he will baptize you in the Holy Ghost and fire. And we say, of all of the things that I could, even I could imagine that John could have said, on the basis of what I've learned from the rest of the Bible, of course, that he would do or he would accomplish or he would make possible when he comes, we believe that John, John the Baptist, was inspired by the Spirit of God to say, and when he comes, this is what he's going to do.

It's like right there, top of the list, capital letters highlighted, when he comes, he will baptize you in the Holy Ghost and fire. And now we've got Jesus himself speaking, and he said, I have come to send fire on the earth. And how I wish it were already kindled.

Now, I'm well aware, as some of you may be, that there are commentators who take this in different directions. But I can't help but feel, I'm reading the same gospel writer, Luke, I'm only nine chapters away, and I'm being referred to fire again. Why should I put a different meaning on this? Why should I take my thoughts in a different direction? John's saying, when he comes, fire.

Jesus is here, he said, I'm come, fire. There's a connection that in my mind is inevitable here. Now, Jesus goes on, I'll make just brief comment to this because it's a very important issue, but I can't make it my topic this morning now.

But Jesus did go on to say, and this is the New American translation I'm using, he says, how distressed rather I am until this, my longing, my purpose be accomplished. And then he goes on to say that he has a baptism to undergo. The words are graphic, aren't they, and full of meaning.

I have not the slightest doubt that he is referring to his suffering, to his redemptive death. He's referring to the cross. He's referring to Calvary.

He's referring to God's judgment upon sin in him, the sinless one upon the cross. And clearly there was, and this is highlighted later on in the unfolding story when we find Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, that what he was about to face was horrifying to him. In my own Christian background and where I used to go to church as a boy, there was, every Sunday morning was a breaking of bread service and every Sunday morning various men in the assembly would share something that was related to Calvary and the shedding of Christ's blood and so on.

And it seemed at that point that they sort of, and I was a boy, that the more powerful speakers were those who could more graphically present the physical features of his suffering. And I am not diminishing them at all, but I've told you before about a book that my father had with old pictures in it. It was Fox's Book of Martyrs, and that was the scariest book on the shelf.

At one point he said, maybe you shouldn't be looking at it. These are drawings, of course, but of men and women who suffered the most dreadful, most horrific deaths because of their testimony and their devoted hearts to God. But the fact is, so many of those stories, which I was able to read later, portrayed men and women who were courageous, who were filled with faith, and they almost, I'm exaggerating somewhat, but there's a sense in which they almost volunteered themselves for martyrdom as a kind of badge of honour, signifying their love for God.

I must never make Jesus less than any of them. Jesus was not a coward. He wasn't cowering just from the physical suffering, no matter how great that was.

But Paul puts it so succinctly, doesn't he, when he refers back to that event, and he says that he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. There was a depth, there was a dimension to Christ's suffering on the cross as the sin bearer before his Holy Father in his substitutionary death. Vicariously he died for me and for you.

There was a price involved in that that cannot be calculated or measured. And I believe it was that, and perhaps it's highlighted in those words that all of us are familiar with, when Jesus, upon the cross, in the darkness, suffering these very things, said, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? So there was a, there was a, he was distressed because he longed for his purpose to come to fruition in the hearts and lives of men and women, that they may discover and experience what John the Baptist said he had come to do. But Jesus anticipated the fact that before that could become a reality, he would need to go through his, or undergo his baptism that he refers to there in that fiftieth verse and so on.

John the Baptist spoke of the Holy Spirit, remember. You shall be baptised in the Holy Spirit. I pause here because, you know, I believe that here is, here's something we need to consider in a fresh way, something that's incredibly important.

It's so easy for the words which are familiar to us, Holy Spirit, to just roll off our lips. Or some, not all Christians, but some certainly would use the phrase baptism in the Spirit, sort of, such a matter of fact, sort of, almost casual way and so on. But I think it's important that we remind ourselves this morning who the Holy Spirit is.

The Holy Spirit is not some impersonal force. He is a person. In the old King James, there is, to my mind, a most unfortunate translation in the Book of Romans where it makes a reference to the Holy Spirit and it says the Spirit, the Spirit, which refers to the Holy Spirit, itself.

Surely it should be himself. Itself. And I'm not saying that people build their, sort of, doctrine on that one word.

But it comes to my mind as I think about a sort of a superficial, easy-come reference to the Holy Spirit. He's not it. He is, first of all, he is a person.

My Bible teaches me that he, the Holy Spirit, is, he's co-equal with God. He is the third member of the Godhead, as we refer to the gods. He's co-equal with God the Father.

The Holy Spirit is co-equal with God the Father. He is co-equal with God the Son. He is, we're taught, not by word but by the references to him that we find, he is of the very same essence as God the Father and the same essence as God the Son.

And yet, and here lies the mystery, he is separate from them. And I can't explain. I've had all these little illustrations to try and help us understand.

But at the end of it all, we don't know. There's a separateness and yet a unity within the Godhead that is outside of the realm of our understanding. But woe be to any one of us who fail to recognize that God the Father is a person, that God the Son is a person, and that God the Holy Spirit is a person.

I believe that together, together, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, they share together omniscience. That means all-knowing. There is nothing that they do not know.

They together share omnipresence. That means that in a way that, again, boggles our understanding, that they are everywhere. They're not limited to time and to space.

I believe that together they share omnipotence. That means all-powerfulness. They are all-powerful.

And together they share eternity. That is, that they are without beginning and without ending. Under the new covenant that God has established through the redemptive work of Christ, the major role of God the Holy Spirit, who we have met already in the Old Testament on various occasions, but under the new covenant, his major role is the application of the salvation which Christ wrought upon the cross to and within individual men and women.

And John the Baptist said, when this Messiah comes, he will baptise you in the Holy Spirit. In fact, from reading the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 8, I can say this with the authority of the Bible, that apart from him, apart from God the Holy Spirit, a man or a woman is not a Christian. Paul says that.

Apart from the Holy Spirit, he who doesn't have the Spirit is none of his. It's just another way of saying the same thing. So then, where does that bring us? It brings us here.

To be indwelt by the Holy Spirit is to be indwelt by God. That's where we're coming. And you may agree with me that in a time of shallowness within the Christian community, everything is so superficial and so self-centred, our attention is distracted from the reality of who God is, him with whom we have to do.

I have a note here which, before the meeting, I scribbled out because I thought, no, I won't talk about that. But I will make a reference to it. This is one I had written there.

Conversely, on the other hand, having said that to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be filled with God, the tragedy is that within so many quarters of the Christian church, so many activities are credited to him when, in fact, to make the suggestion is blasphemous. He's the Holy Spirit. I might as well tell you, and I know I'm on record here, I'm exercised in my heart about certain of the gifts of the Spirit.

I've become frightened of prophecy. I'm frightened of it. That a mere man can say, thus saith the Lord, is a terrifying thought to me.

Jesus said, when he comes, this is now Jesus speaking, not John the Baptist, you will receive power from on high. You remember this, of course, from Acts chapter 2. Let me just read it to you. You say, you know,

this is what ancient prophets were prophesying.

It's what John the Baptist was talking about. It's what Jesus was talking about in many more references than anything I've quoted this morning. But then it happened.

Jesus had said only verses earlier in chapter 1 that this that John talked about was going to take place, not many days hence, and now, look, it happened. What are we thinking about? We're thinking about fire this morning as a metaphor. When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place, and suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves as they rested on each one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Amen. Then it happened.

The fire, the real, the actual, the fire from heaven, the reality behind the metaphor, the fire came from heaven, and it was not a shovel full of fire. But as we learned from just turning a few more pages, it was the promise of the Father, Jesus had said that, and it was an act of Jesus. It would appear, if we're understanding this, it is as though in heaven after the resurrection and the ascension, the time down on earth had come, the day of Pentecost had fully come.

And this is the imagery I've got in my mind, that the Father excuse me for saying something that is completely inappropriate, but it's as though the Father nodded to Jesus. The moment here, and then Peter says, he, referring to Jesus, he has shed forth this which you do now see and hear. Amen.

Jesus is the baptizer in the Holy Spirit, and this is where it all began. Having been promised and promised and re-promised, this is where it happened. Amen.

And Peter, in the course of preaching, you know, because there's all the questions, what does all this mean? Are they drunk? What's going on here? He said, just these three words have lodged in my mind, this is that. This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. Joel 2 verse 28 and on from there.

This was what Joel had preached about. This was what John the Baptist had preached about and declared. This was what Jesus had promised and quoted his Father as being behind it all, and so on.

And on that occasion that is recorded in these verses I've read to you, everyone that was in that room on that occasion heard the mighty wind from heaven, or a sound that was like a mighty wind. I didn't say all the windows blew out or anything, but they heard a sound like a rushing mighty wind coming, and they saw fire. The fire was falling.

The fire was there. It wasn't a forest fire, but the fire, still, yes, a physical element speaking of something which was invisible, which was taking place behind the reality behind it. They saw the fire as it rested upon each and every one of them, and everyone in the room experienced that fiery baptism in the Holy Spirit of God.

And just to be clear, we're not thinking here this morning or talking about what, for the want of a better definition, might be charismatic extravagances. We're talking about the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit of God who comes equipped with fire-like power, the fire-like power of the victorious Saviour, fire-like power of the redemptive work that was accomplished through the enthroned Redeemer himself, now at

this point in time.

Amen. I'm emphasising, put it in capital letters and highlight it as well, I'm emphasising here in this that God has put in my heart, that Jesus came for this purpose. He experienced his own transcendent baptism in order for this to be accomplished and to become a reality.

It's what the suffering of the cross was all about, and this is only the down payment to it, I should add, certainly. But it was not to start a new religion. He didn't do all this to start a new religion called Christianity.

The word Christianity never appears in the Bible, of course. He didn't undergo all of this in order to, I don't know, leave some accurate information. In other words, if you've still got this earlier thought in your mind, you probably still do.

He didn't do this so that there would be black coal, the right material. The information is the right material. Good doctrine, which is based entirely on the Scriptures, is good doctrine.

It's the right material. We need it. We cherish the book that we have and the words that God has inspired and included here in the book, and we bless God for that.

But just having the information doesn't accomplish what God actually came to make possible in us. Amen. He chose to symbolize this baptism, this experience feature, that which touches our lives, not merely just information in our minds of good doctrine and good teaching, but that which touches our lives and is transformative to us is God.

It's not clever preaching. It's not a good exposition of texts. We're not ruling out the benefits of such things, but that's not it.

It's God the Holy Spirit, the living God who is the Holy Spirit coming in Jesus' name and being received. One of the words which I associate with the Holy Spirit as I read in the New Testament is the word receive. It's something we receive.

We believe. Yes, we believe, but it's a believism which is unto reception. Amen.

And this that we're talking about that's very difficult to sort of—how do we get hold of it? This that's referred to as a baptism, this which is referred to as fire by God, using symbols we can relate to, is something greater, something that is outside the scope of human ability to accomplish. In other words, God is in a position today to accomplish something in my life, in your life, whoever you are, that is so much greater than anything you could ever accomplish or any change that you could ever hope to make in your own person. You can't do it.

Fundamentally, that's a change in our relationship with God. You can't change that. He had to make that a possibility.

And we can modify ourselves. They call it behavioral modification. And we can stop doing certain things that we've decided are inappropriate.

But the fact is there's that about our inner man before a holy God that we cannot change apart from his own act, an act of his power and his ability. You know, there's a verse of Scripture in the Old Testament, so this comes out of the Old Covenant. Okay, I've got that in mind.

But nevertheless, this one statement, I'm going to read it to you in a moment, in a sense it quite succinctly just points out what is actualized on a whole different scale under the New Covenant. It's from 1 Samuel 10 and verse 6 where I read, and it references Saul, all right, who is going to become King Saul. But it serves us well here this morning.

It says, The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you mightily, and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man. And you shall be changed into another man. That's what we need.

If you like, it's the shovel full of fire, but it's an outpouring, it's an infilling, it's a reception of, it's an experience of, it's the enjoyment of God, the Holy Spirit in our lives, which alone can produce in us what God is attempting to produce. And nothing less than this is the authentic gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And you know, and I think you do know this, maybe you find it in your own heart, but there's an ancient yearning or historic yearning that we can read about in the lives and in the hearts of men and women down through the ages.

Once again, praise to God it might be in your heart this morning, but they long, they long for this very thing that we're looking at here. And thank God there have been people through the ages, most of them have gone now who did it really well, poets, if you like, people who wrote hymns for us, who sort of expressed this historic longing, this deep heart longing so well. Who can forget William Booth who said, send the fire, send the fire, let the fire fall, because this is a personal cry to God.

This is not merely something that you pray in a meeting like this, you may do, but it's something you do when you're alone with God and the Holy Spirit is working upon you and you're made aware of your own personal deep need of God to accomplish this great fiery baptism in your heart. Let the fire fall, and of course Wesley's wonderful poetry, he would put it this way, and he caught this metaphor reality feature that we've been thinking about this morning so, so clearly. He said, O thou who camest from above the pure celestial fire to impart.

Well then again he said, come Holy Ghost, life-giving fire. Or again, refining fire, go through my heart and sanctify the whole. Or again, O that in me the sacred fire may then begin to glow.

Amen. Or another hymn writer put it this way, that until this earthly part of me glows with thy fire divine. My question beloved is this, is the fire in your great, do you understand me now? Is the fire burning in your great, in the great of your heart, the fire of divine life, the fire of divine presence, there is a price to pay.

And the question is who is willing to pay it? There's a sense in which we have to be willing to do violence with ourselves. We can't make this happen, but we can make ourselves available. And part of our response to his prompting that is required is a willingness to sort of rip out the door, the airtight door, the door that keeps on nice, neat, little, well-ordered life as it is, to allow it all to be completely interrupted and so on.

Or for others it's not so much the airtight door, it's something that's caught my attention. I've not read the book. I don't know what the book is, but I believe it's one of Billy Graham's daughters, not the one who writes most frequently, who made a statement.

It's something to this effect that clearly what I took from this one line, it's all I have to work on, was that as a preacher, keep in mind that virtually everyone in every seat in your congregation have a broken heart about something. There's broken hearts, there's bound up hearts, there's longing hearts, and so on. But

whatever it is, if we'll open ourselves up to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ and allow this holy fire to burst in upon the horizon of my heart or your heart, and this, I remind you as I close, is not some poetical phrase or word or idea.

This is the reality behind the symbolism, behind the metaphor, and to allow God to fulfil his purpose, you can rest assured that there will be no area, no area in your life, no area at all that he will not impact, and given the opportunity, he will transform to his own praise and glory. And with that I close. Let's pray.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/5PJsAMFJuss.mp4>
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