

# Consuming Fire

by George Verwer

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*George Verwer emphasizes the transformative power of God as a consuming fire and the importance of being actively on fire for Christ in our lives.*

**Duration:** 58:34

**Scripture:** Exodus 3:2, Exodus 13:21, 1 Kings 18:38, Matthew 6:33, John 1:12, Acts 2:3, Hebrews 12:29

**Topics:** "Christian Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal journey of faith and the challenges he faced in his search for truth. He initially questioned the exclusivity of Christianity and explored various religions. However, his encounter with the evangelist Billy Graham and hearing the simple message of the gospel transformed his life. The speaker reflects on his struggles with sin, including lying, gambling, and hatred, and how these habits controlled him. Ultimately, he emphasizes the need for everyone to recognize their sinfulness and the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

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## Transcript

Well, we've been, some of us, especially me, have been praying about having these meetings for the last three years. Because I've been coming every year in order to meet some of my friends. Who come up from India and Pakistan and Bangladesh, and we meet together to discuss many things in connection with our work.

And it's always been very short visits. One time it was down in Butwal, and it just didn't seem to work out to have any meetings. So now, thanks to the Lord and the kindness of many of you, this door has opened.

Someone who lived in Kathmandu back in 1968, 69. It's such a joy to be back and just see so many of you here tonight. We have never ceased, in many, many parts of the world, wherever we meet, to pray for you here in Nepal.

We just are thrilled as we hear of people coming to know personally the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we've also put up a special book display, which we hope you will look at. Some of my own books are there, many, many different books in English, but also some very good books in Nepali.

And some scriptures. Maybe it's already been mentioned, but for many, many years we've been praying about getting this book, True Discipleship, into Nepali, and now it's finally here. So you can get those after

the meeting.

Let's just now once again pray. Father, we thank you that we are here and that we are your body. We thank you for forgiveness of our sins.

We thank you that in your Son, Jesus Christ, there is no East or West. We are one. We are your children.

We know of this great assurance of our salvation. And we just look to you to guide and lead us. In Jesus' name.

Amen. I've been ministering in Pakistan for the last, well before I came here, for about a month. And one of the most exciting meetings was among the Afghan refugees.

Two and a half million have fled for their lives over the border into Pakistan. And our teams are working there among those people. I had about 45 meetings in Pakistan.

So often, no Muslim would come into the meeting. So of course we had to go out into the streets to give them the word of God. But there, among the Afghans, about 15 or 20 Muslims sat in that meeting.

Generally speaking, they are the most difficult people to tell about Jesus Christ. And I thought, oh, what am I going to say to these people? And it was interpreted into one of the Afghan languages called Pushto. And I shared a message called, Why I am still a follower of Jesus Christ.

And to my amazement, many of them really listened and were so appreciative of this message all about Jesus Christ. See, I gave the message not thinking about the believers who were in the meeting, but I gave the message thinking about them. And of course I am aware that I am in a very different country now.

Tomorrow night I want to give that message Nepali style. And maybe if you know someone who is not a believer, but somewhat at least open, maybe you can bring that person. Because that is a special burden I have for tomorrow night.

Tonight I want to share from the book of Hebrews. And share my own testimony. Not how I found Christ, but how Christ found me.

We have a seeking God. He is seeking. He is looking for followers more than they are looking for Him.

And I trust that God will just bless everybody here. God wants to bless us from His Word. Now here is an amazing verse in Hebrews chapter 12.

How many of you have a Bible? Hold your Bible up. New Testament. That is very encouraging.

And I hope you read it and study it and memorize it every day. So Hebrews chapter 12 verse 29. Very short verse.

Which embodies my own testimony. For our God is a consuming fire. I wonder if you have ever heard a message on that verse.

Our God is a consuming fire. I have a big question that I want to ask you tonight. I know that most of you are believers.

You know Christ personally. You know that you are saved. So if you were to die tonight, you would go to heaven.

And what a privilege to know that. But here is another question. Are you personally on fire for Jesus Christ? Now I don't know how this sounds in Nepali.

But in English, when someone says are you on fire for Jesus Christ, you sort of step back about three feet. It's just a little bit too strong for the average Evangelist fish we have swimming around our churches. If you can get that into Nepali, you will get a bonus.

Yeah, okay. I'll give you a copy of the text. But you see, so often in our church, we, in our churches in the West, we like everything nice and calm.

Nice and calm. And when we start talking to people about being on fire for Christ, they're afraid they're going to be condemned. They become religious fanatics.

Now I don't know much about the Nepali churches. Maybe this is your problem. People just too enthusiastic for Jesus Christ.

People who are extreme in their love for God. People who just feel and sense the fire burning in their heart and they're just telling everybody about it all the time. So the pastor always has to keep preaching on calming down and being more balanced and take it easy.

Well, I can tell you, this is not the problem in our churches. So many of our people are very sleepy in their Christian faith. They only go to church once a week.

Television, ten times a week. Favorite hamburger stand, ten times a week. Church, once a week.

Some have been doing that for years. Only thing they ever do as a result of that, they shake hands with the pastor at the door, say, God bless you pastor, that was a good message this morning. Many never witness for Christ.

Never give out a piece of literature for Christ. You can't tell any difference between the Christian and the non-Christian until next Sunday, when the Christian gets up and goes to church again. Now I want to ask you, please, here in Nepal, would you pray for our churches? So really, this isn't a message just for you tonight, it's a message I preached in about so many countries all over the world.

You remember Moses, when he was in the wilderness, running away from God? And God met him in a bush. A burning bush. And as you study through the Old Testament, again and again God met people in fire.

This bush burned, but was not destroyed. And when God's fire is in our hearts, it burns, but we're never destroyed. We go on and on until He takes us.

You remember when Elijah was on the mountain? The false prophets were praying for fire, the false prophets were praying for fire. Nothing happened. Then Elijah decided to pray.

He even put water on the wood, not the best way to light a fire. And when he prayed, God met them in fire. And when God led the children of Israel out of Egypt, He led them by a pillar of fire.

And when the Holy Spirit first came, first came in that historic way upon the church, there were cloven tongues of fire. So Hebrews 12.29 isn't anything really new. It's a reaffirmation that our God is a consuming fire.

Of course, we must understand, he's speaking spiritually, he's speaking about spiritual fire, not fire that you put in your oven to cook your rice. And conversion takes place when the fire of the Holy Spirit and the fire of God comes into the heart of a man. When you study the Bible, you will be greatly helped if you understand that God expresses often the same truth in different ways.

Look at another verse. Gospel of John chapter 1. This was the book, John's Gospel, God used to bring me to salvation. I'll tell you how that happened in a minute, but before that, let me tell you about my mother-in-law.

Let's look at the Gospel of John chapter 1, verse 12. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God, even to them that believed on his name. God comes into our hearts in power.

This is what happened to me 29 years ago. Now, I don't look that old, do I? But in fact, my son is 23. He is so proud that he went to school in Nepal when he was a little boy.

Very close to here. And he decided he did not like school. He also went to school in Bombay.

And he went to school on the ship Lagos. As you know, some of God's people prayed many years ago, especially here in Nepal, and God answered that prayer and gave an ocean-going ship for world evangelism. Just a few days ago was my spiritual birthday, March 5th.

What does that mean, spiritual birthday? Now, some people are not exactly sure of the date they were converted. That's not a great problem. As long as they know in their heart they have been born again, they have crossed from death to life, that is important.

Some people have more emotional conversion experiences than other people who have maybe more quiet experiences. We are all so different. God is working in different people in different ways.

Let me share how this happened to me. See, my grandfather was from a country called Holland. He didn't believe in God.

You see, some people in rebelling against foolish ideas about many different gods have gone to extremes and don't believe in any God at all. And that was my grandfather. And he believed a lot in the bottle, drinking very much.

And a very difficult situation, my father's family. So my own father did not know hardly anything about Jesus or God. Now, my other grandfather, he was from Scotland.

He was a complete drunk. One thing I noticed when I come here to Nepal is that it seems in every shop they are selling this jungle juice. And so many people that I met all over the world had their lives just destroyed by this form of drinking.

Well, that family, they ended up being divorced. My grandfather just left after beating up my grandmother many times. So my spiritual background was not overwhelmingly positive.

And already by the age of 16 I was very selfish, very materialistic. I had a number of problems. I don't know if you have these same problems in Nepal.

Ever since I was just a little boy I was always fighting with these people. And I was very small. So I had to learn to fight.

And I don't want to go into detail about my problems. But I discovered at 16 I was a slave to sin. That's what the Bible says.

He who commits sin, even if he be a young boy, he who commits sin becomes a slave of sin. I had the difficulty of not telling lies. It was so easy just to tell a lie, even to my mother.

She always wanted me to clean my teeth. Always, son, clean your teeth. I wanted to go outside immediately and play.

Play many different sports. So my mother asked me if I brush my teeth. I just told a little lie, so simple.

Yes, mommy, I brush my teeth. Just a small thing. But it grew.

And it was hard sometimes to tell the truth. So when I was little, I also learned to gamble with cards. So I learned how to cheat by keeping one card up my sleeve and shooting it out.

And I won quite a lot of money in this little game. I knew these things were wrong, but I didn't know how I could change my life. I seemed to be controlled by these habits.

Then I had this one other thing I'd just share with you. I often hated people. And that was, of course, linked up with fighting with them.

Remember this one young boy about my age, he lived down just a few houses down from my house. He had a big white house. I did not like him.

See, when I was very small, has this stopped? This one. Sorry about that. I went to his house with a big black bucket of black paint.

And I thought of one of the worst swear words in the English language. And I painted that word in black paint on the side of his white house. Now my father was not very appreciative of this kind of artwork.

And, of course, we had many difficulties together. By 16, I had three little businesses because, among other things, I had a passion to get money at any cost. I wanted to get money.

And in the mercy of God, a woman of prayer started to pray for me. That's really why I'm here 29 years later. She had been praying for the school that I was attending for 15 years.

And she was not only praying for people to be converted to Christ. She prayed, literally prayed, that many of them would go to other countries as missionaries for Jesus Christ. This wasn't a Bible school.

This was an ungodly, secular grammar school. Just a public school. And then she sent me a Gospel of John through the post, through the mail.

And I began to read this, God's Word. And I read John 1, 12. Many, many other verses there in the Gospel of John.

And she kept praying for me. She also put some Gospel tracts in the railway station near the school, in a little holder that these tracts could fit in. You see, she didn't just pray.

She acted. She was just an ordinary woman. Most of her work was just in the kitchen and with the children and making food all day long.

The flame of God was in her heart. And so she knew the reality of worship. And we talked about this morning.

She knew the reality of love and faith. God had changed her life. And now she was committed through prayer and love to see other lives change.

Well, over a couple of years, nothing happened in my life. I was too caught up with my money and my business and my foolish things. Then a man named Billy Graham came to the city near my home.

My father had immigrated to near New York City. Billy Graham is an evangelist. That means the main thing that he does is just continue day after day, everywhere, preaching the Gospel.

Preaching the Gospel. He speaks a very simple message that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And that the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ.

And this fellow, actually a young man who I didn't like very well, another young man, invited me to go and hear Billy Graham. Such a little thing. Ask someone to go to a meeting.

Such a little thing. Yet that completely changed my whole life. I went to that meeting.

I heard the Gospel. And God loved me. That God would forgive me of all these sins and all this evil.

And at the end of the message, he didn't just tell people to go home. He told them to repent of their sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And he told people to come out of their seats.

This is a very big, big place. And I knew God was speaking to me. How did I see? And I went up to the front.

In tears, I asked Jesus Christ to forgive me of my sin to come into my heart. And I know as sure as I'm standing here tonight that I met the living God, the God of fire. At that moment, at that place, I've never been the same.

I went away from that meeting. And I started studying the Word of God. I took a Bible correspondence course.

I listened to the Bible on the radio. There was a little program on the radio. I started to memorize the Scriptures, spending time getting these words in my mind and in my heart.

And it was feeding me and I was becoming stronger and stronger every day. Of course, I was still in this school. Sometimes one third of all the students were completely drunk on the weekend.

Very few followers of Christ. And myself, I was scared. What are my friends going to think? They're going to think I'm crazy.

But there was a fire burning in my heart. So I began to tell others about Jesus Christ in that school. Some, of course, they just laughed.

We know this fellow, George Brewer, he will be back in the nightclubs next week. This is just nonsense. Well, I hope they're not waiting for me because 29 years is a long wait.

By God's grace, I never turned back. By God's grace, though I was a very struggling, weak Christian, that fire that began to burn 29 years ago, the same fire is still burning tonight right here in Nepal. Not always at the same degree.

Because many times the enemy of my soul, Satan, and the enemy of your soul has tried to put cold water on my heart and on that fire. The cold water of pride. The cold water of lust.

The cold water of selfishness. The cold water of fear. Many times, as the Bible says, grieved the Holy Spirit.

So the fire became very, very small. But the conviction was wrong, was there, that this was wrong. And then I learned how to repent.

As a young Christian, I learned how to repent and deal with sin. The moment it tried to get into my heart, deal with it, and the fire leaked again into a blaze. And some of us began to pray together in that school.

Remember, the lady had been praying 15 years. And I can testify that the fire of God fell on my school. First there were about 15 who were born again in God's Spirit.

We prayed very hard. For over a year, we distributed Gospels of John to everybody in the school. And we had even a night of prayer.

We called a big meeting. And five or six hundred students came to that meeting. I was very young and very scared when I stood before those students.

And I saw the fire of God in that meeting. No, I didn't literally see fire. But 125 students professed their faith in Jesus Christ in that one meeting.

And that became in a sense the first birthplace of a spiritual movement that spread all over the world, working with the churches in spreading the fire of God through the Word of God to every nation and every people. Three of us went to the land of Mexico. Just three of us.

I was 19 years old. That became really the second birthplace. As we saw that God could use us even though we were very young and we made mistakes.

We didn't even speak the language properly. And we went into the prisons. And people got saved in the prisons.

We went into the streets. And people were saved in the streets. And a work of God was born.

That has now spread to many, many nations. Well, that's my story. This is the beginning of it.

And I'm sure most of you have a similar story of how God found you. How you put your faith in Jesus Christ. And how His Holy Spirit entered your heart.

And how you receive forgiveness of sin and assurance of your salvation. I want to ask you these two questions again. Have you had this experience? Have you been born again of God's Spirit? Do you have assurance of that salvation? Not because you have worked hard.

Not because you're special. But because Jesus Christ has died on the cross for your sins. If you've not had that experience.

If you don't have that assurance. Tonight could be your moment of decision. Tonight could be that moment when you turn from death unto life.

And I pray that you will do that. And then my second question. Are you on fire for Christ? That means, are you going on in growth and in reality in the Lord? You see, because after we become followers of Christ.

Satan tries to stop us. Get us side road into some secondary problem or into some sin. We're told in Corinthians, don't be ignorant.

Don't be ignorant of Satan's methods. You know, one of the main things Satan tries to do. Satan tries to get us discouraged.

As a young Christian, I had many struggles. Sometimes I was tempted to get discouraged. Christian life is a warfare.

Sometimes I looked at other Christians. And I got disappointed. They didn't live up to all my expectations.

Other times I looked at some of the circumstances and the problems. I started to get discouraged. Sometimes I looked too much into myself.

Looked too much at myself. Then I started to get depressed. During those early days as a Christian, somehow I got some of these great Christian books.

Then I started to read those books. After all, a book is just a sermon. It's a message like I'm giving tonight in print.

See, we're making a tape recorder. We're making a tape recorder. So you can listen to it tomorrow.

Those of you who are English, you can learn Nepali from this tape. But some people, they take my tapes and they take the words down on a typewriter and then they publish a book. A book is just a message in print and we can read and feed on these messages every day.

That's one of the ways we maintain this fire in our hearts. Tomorrow night I'm going to share why I've kept on this same path for 29 years, though many, many times I've been tempted to completely leave the Christian way. Tomorrow night I'm going to share why I've kept on this same path for 29 years, though many, many times I've been tempted to leave the Christian way.

I did not find the road easy. When I went to university, I had many intellectual questions. I thought, why should everybody have to go through Jesus? All religions are good enough.

And as I had to study so many books and study so many religions, many, many questions came to my mind. Maybe if you know any students, you can bring them tomorrow night. Because I'm going to give the intellectual reasons why I've kept on this path by His grace every day these 29 years.

Our God is a consuming fire. He wants to burn in your heart. He wants to fill you with grace and love and power.

He wants to put a joy in your step and greater victory over sin in your life. I believe there may be some people tonight who need to recommit their life to Jesus. If you're really honest, you have to admit you've drifted away and you've become cold in the things of God.

I would invite you to come back to the cross. Fill the fresh with the Holy Spirit. And let that flame, that spiritual flame of God again fill your heart and your life and your whole being for His service and for His glory.

I once burned myself in a fire. Have you ever had that experience? You feel it. That's reality.

You pour boiling water over your hand. You're not going to stand there smiling. What we're talking about tonight is reality.

And when it happens in you, you will know it. And other people will know. Because when there's a fire, it spreads.

It warms those around and it spreads from place to place. I remember I met some missionaries when I first went to Europe. They taught me a hymn that I wrote in the front of my Bible.

It says, Thou Christ of burning, cleansing flame, send the fire. God of Elijah, hear our cry, send the fire. I hope that will be your prayer.

Send the fire. Let us pray. Lord, You know each one of us.

You know our hearts. You know our minds. We thank You for being here with us tonight.

We thank You for this great gift of salvation. I'd like everyone to just be praying for a moment. I believe God has spoken to some of you.

But there are some who do not know the Lord Jesus personally. And yet tonight, you want to know Him. You want to be born again.

You want to have this assurance of your salvation. I would ask you right now, in simple faith, ask Jesus to come into your heart. He loves you.

He wants to save you. And if you will pray that prayer, asking Christ into your heart, I would like to pray for you. Right now.

I'd ask you just to raise your hand. If you want to make this decision, to be a true follower of Jesus Christ, have that fire of God in your heart and the forgiveness of sin. You are sincere praying that prayer.

I'd like you just quietly to raise your hand. I'll pray for you. God bless you.

You, you, you. In the back. Over there.

Women. Praise the Lord. Anyone else? Yes.

God bless you. This one in the front. Lord.

Lord. Jesus. Father, I pray for these who have raised their hands.

In one sense, Lord, I don't have to pray because I believe you will hear their prayers. And I pray that they may be strengthened in their new faith. To be a true disciple and a true follower of you.

Lord, fill each one with your Holy Spirit. May they know that their sins are forgiven and that they're on the way to heaven because of what you did for us. We trust you, Lord, because this is written in your word.

Jesus' wonderful name. Amen.

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