

General Session 1 W/ Pastor Cymbala

by Jim Cymbala

Pastor Jim Cymbala emphasizes the importance of delivering God's true word with conviction and the dangers of false prophecies in the church today.

Duration: 38:54

Scripture: Jeremiah 1:7, Jeremiah 23:9, Jeremiah 23:11, Jeremiah 23:13-14, Matthew 3:11

Topics: "Conference"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of preaching the word of God and not personal opinions or dreams. He criticizes false prophets who are not inspired by God and are misleading people. The preacher also highlights the tendency of people to go to churches that cater to their preferences, rather than seeking the truth. He references Jeremiah 23, where the prophet expresses his distress over false prophets and their deceptive words.

Transcript

We're so happy and honored that you would come here to downtown Brooklyn in this amazing, Francis Chan's going to be here tomorrow, Ravi Zacharias, whose books have been such a blessing to my life. And we're all together, I'm meeting you from all over. Isn't God amazing that he would put us as a big family together? Can we thank God just for the family that he put us in? I want to, because it's choppy where I'm picking up to read in Jeremiah 23, I'd like you to turn to that or look up on the screen.

Let's just read from Jeremiah 23, but I'm skipping around a little bit because of what I want to say. So Jeremiah 23, 9 says, Concerning the prophets, my heart is broken within me and all my bones tremble. And I'm like a drunken man, like a man overcome by wine because of the Lord and his holy words.

The land is full of adulterers because of the curse. The land lies parched and the pastures in the desert are withered. The prophets follow an evil course and use their power unjustly.

Both prophet and priest are godless, they're not devoted to God. Even in my temple, God says, I find their wickedness, declares the Lord. Then jumping ahead to verse 13, Among the prophets of Samaria, the northern kingdom, I saw this repulsive thing.

They prophesied by Baal and led my people Israel astray. And among the prophets of Jerusalem, now the southern kingdom, I have seen something horrible. They commit adultery and live a lie.

They strengthen the hand of evildoers so that no one turns from his wickedness. They are all like Sodom to me. The people of Jerusalem are like Gomorrah, and these are God's covenant people he's talking about.

This is what the Lord Almighty says, verse 16. Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you. They fill you with false hopes.

They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. They keep saying to those who despise me, the Lord says, you will have peace. Everything is going to be fine.

And to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts, they say, no harm will come to you. But which of them has stood in the counsel of the Lord to see or to hear his word? Notice that, to see or hear his word. I could imagine hearing his word, but seeing his word? Who has listened and heard his word from the mouth of God? I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message.

I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds. Okay, now, let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, because they're just making stuff up.

But let the one who has my word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain, declares the Lord. Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces? And then, finally, from the book of Matthew, you know of all this verse, John the Baptist said, I baptize you with water for repentance, but after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry, and he will baptize you with the and with what? Fire, fire.

Everyone say fire. That's one of the great symbols of the Holy Spirit, isn't it, in the Bible. There's oil, there's water, there's wind, there's breath, but then there's fire.

Now, Jeremiah had a hard job as a prophet, didn't he? He was called the weeping prophet, and he was one of those people, I don't know, what kind of grace did he have from God? How do you start your ministry, and God tells you at the very beginning, go out and speak my word, be faithful, and don't be afraid of them, or you'll crumble. Be strong. Oh, and by the way, no one's ever going to listen to you.

Those prophets were made cut from some kind of cloth, weren't they? Imagine the boldness, the courage, and Jeremiah had all ups and downs, and his vicissitudes of life were something to behold, weren't they? When he's prophesying here, he's talking about the decline of the country, God is speaking to him, and God is saying, now the country is going to go into captivity, and the cause of it is the shepherds and the pastors. At the beginning of the, those who guide the people and those who speak in the name of the Lord, at the beginning of the chapter, the Lord says, it's my shepherds. They don't take care of the people.

They look to them all, their own selves. They only care about themselves, and they don't my flock. And then there's a beautiful messianic promise after that, where the Lord says, well, I'm going to raise up a shepherd.

I'm going to bring the people back, and I'm going to give them, raise up shepherds who will really care for the people, instead of just manipulating the people and using them. And then the focus changes to, turns to the prophets, and Jeremiah begins to shudder as the word of the Lord comes to him, and he begins to consider what God shows him about those who are speaking in the name of the Lord. Well, it wasn't exactly like that in the Northern Kingdom.

Up in Samaria, the Lord says through Jeremiah, I've seen a horrible thing in the Northern Kingdom. They prophesied by Baal. In other words, they speak in the name of Baal.

What was Baal? Baal was one of the Canaanite gods, along with Molech and some of the others. And they prophesy in the name of the Northern Kingdom idol, Baal, that was so prevalent up there. They don't even speak in my name.

I've often thought, isn't that counter-parted in our society today by the invasion of idols of America into the church, so that people who are clever get up and prophesy or speak in the name of those idols and promise people exactly what their spirit and heart wants to hear, because they're linked to these idols. So one of the gods of America is prosperity. So you have a whole line of false prophets who are prophesying in the name of prosperity, because they know that's what the people want to hear.

Very clever, and it makes a lot of money. But it ends up, what are you going to do in the end? But in the Southern Kingdom in Jerusalem, you remember in the Northern Kingdom after Solomon died, the kingdom was divided into ten tribes and two tribes. The Northern tribe never had a good king.

The Southern tribe had Judea and Benjamin with the capital in Jerusalem and the temple there. They had some good kings. Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat, of course David, but that was before it was divided.

King Asa, there were some good kings. The North had no good kings. But there were some bad kings in the Southern part of that kingdom.

And the Bible tells us that Jeremiah sees something terrible there, because the prophets, instead of speaking the true word of the Lord, they're making up stuff. And this just kills Jeremiah. It breaks him down.

He said, they're making up their own stuff. They don't stand in my counsel. They don't wait in my presence to apply the covenant, blessings and cursings.

They just make up stuff that people want to hear. And to people who are not serving me, they say, everything's going to be fine with you. You go, girl.

Everything's going to be good for you. But God said, I never told them that. And to people who have enmity against me, they promise peace.

They're telling people not what I'm saying and what people need to hear. They're telling people what they want to hear. These are false prophets.

He said, they're prophesying. I never spoke to them. They're running, but I never sent them.

This was a real dilemma in Israel. This is how they all went into captivity, Judah and Israel. The prophets, instead of standing and speaking, most of the prophets were false prophets.

And you got to remember, brothers and sisters, as our gifted speaker just mentioned to us, said, popularity is not a measure of anything, because Jeremiah would have never drawn the crowd that the false prophets would have drawn, because they were telling the people what they wanted to hear. And to people who are not living right, who are heading down a road to destruction, and God wanted to save them and turn them, the prophets were not turning them from their evil. This is a real dilemma now in our country, isn't it? All the statistics and surveys are showing from George Barner and others focused on the

family that the lifestyle of people who go to evangelical churches is no different than the lifestyles of the people who don't even go to church in so many categories.

And this brings us to what I want to talk about, which is a very, very delicate matter. Now, God says, if they would have only stood in my counsel, what does that mean? They would only got alone with me and waited on me for my word. Now, we live in a new covenant, but let's just analyze what this old covenant prophet was like.

You know that all the prophets from Isaiah, Jeremiah, and all the rest, when they spoke the word of the Lord, it was only an inspired local application of the covenant God made in the books of the law in Deuteronomy. In other words, the covenant was this, if you obey God, here's what he will do. If you turn your back on God, this is what's going to happen.

It is what it is. What you sow, you'll reap. If you serve God and turn to him, there will be blessing.

If not, there will be actual cursings and judgment on. But how was that applied in a local situation, in a given year, in a given place? Well, that's what the prophet did. The prophet got alone with God and got the application.

They could say, oh, I see a mighty army coming from the north. They prophesied Assyria coming and wiping out the 10 tribes. They saw the Babylonian captivity.

But it was all part of the covenant. But the prophet was the one not to make up a new word, but to apply the word of God to the local situation. And it came like fire.

But the people unfortunately resisted it. And we know the sad history of Israel. So God says through Jeremiah, what a mess.

I got a few true prophets, but for the most part, I've got people who are prophesying their dreams. They say, I had a dream. What in the world? How will your dream or my dream help the people? They need a word from the Lord.

Paul tells Timothy, preach the word, not your dream, not your opinion. We got to preach the word of God. Amen? Amen.

So now these other prophets were running. No one sent them. They were prophesying and no one inspired them.

And they were messing up things because the very people who needed to hear the true word of the Lord were the people who were not getting it. You know, it's an interesting thing about people go to church, isn't it? And a growing thing now in America. People go to church to hear what they want to hear.

And if not, they'll go to another church until they can hear what they want to hear. But isn't that strange? We don't do that in any other field that I can think of. I went to the largest high school in America right here in Brooklyn, Erasmus Hall High School, same high school Barbara Streisand went to.

7,800 students. My graduating class was 2,000. And I played basketball there.

Well, when the coach had a practice, he didn't ask you to do what you felt like and express yourself. You know, I want to shoot my foul shots like this. No, no, you got to tuck your elbow in.

And you can't have your legs stiff. You can't shoot like that. This is the way to do it.

And everybody knew that's what you do. When you go to a doctor, you don't go in and tell the doctor, all right, examine me. And now the doctor says, sit down.

I got to give you some medicine. I got to talk to you, your cholesterol. Nobody says to the doctor, yo, doctor, I paid good money to hear this negative stuff from you.

I wouldn't have come here if I knew this was going to happen. Why would I pay, change my diet? What are you kidding? I'm never coming back to you. And the any doctor would say, what do you think? I'm going to tell you what you want to hear.

I did an examination of you. And I care about you. I want to see you get healthy.

And we accept that in every field, except when it comes to sometimes Christianity. We want to pick and choose our verses. And we got false prophets who will let us run along those lines.

But I know you're not like that. And we want to give the people the good food. Amen? So let's cut to the chase of this.

The Lord says, okay, here's the summary of it. Those who make up their own dreams and are talking, as we would say here, just talking smack, let them talk smack. And let them prophesy their dreams.

Not going to help the people, and it's a shame. But let them just talk their nonsense. But the one who has the word of the Lord, let him speak it faithfully.

For what has straw to do with grain? See, the false word of the false preacher, or the person who's diluting the word of God, or not preaching the whole counsel of God, it's like straw. What is straw good for? Nothing. And straw is light.

There's no weight to it. It just flies with the wind. See, the word of the false preacher, the false prophet, the person who's not being faithful to God, it's like straw.

They can lift their voices and scream. They can be quiet. They can put a tear in their voice.

But it doesn't matter. It's straw. But he says, the one who speaks my word, it's like grain.

Grain is heavier than straw. Grain can make bread which feeds the soul. Don't you want to have a word? Don't you want to have sermons that are like grain, so that the people can eat and it has weight? Did we not just see a witness of that in this last hour? Did those words not have weight? Not by dramatic presentation, but by weight.

The one who speaks the word of the Lord, anointed by the Holy Spirit, he automatically, she automatically has weight, and it's going to feed someone. And then God says through Jeremiah, for is not my word like fire? I would like to humbly submit to everybody here, and I all recognize you as fellow ministers of the gospel. I admire the work you do.

I'm so happy you're here. I'm rooting for you. I hope you root for me, because if your church is doing good, my church is doing good.

I'm rooting for you, because we're all in one body. There's no denominations. There's no assembly of God, no Baptist, no missionary alliance.

God doesn't know any Nazarenes, or Calvinists, or Armenians. Aren't you happy that all of it? Come on, can we just thank God for the body of Christ? One church, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and we're in it. Is not my word like fire? I'd like to submit to you that one of the great missing elements in the Christian church today is the prophetic word of fire coming from the pulpit.

I think we are being invaded and destroyed by clever communicators. Everywhere I go, I wince now when I see people hardly touch on the word of God. They have no more anointing on them than a ham sandwich, and yet they have learned the art of relating to the people and telling a clever joke.

And when people go home, they've been seduced into thinking they've heard the word of the Lord. None of God's preachers are described in the Old and New Testament as clever communicators, not one, never. Jesus was not a clever communicator.

Is not my word like fire? You know what fire does? It penetrates. The hardest thing when you preach is to, by the help of the Holy Spirit as you preach God's word, is to have it penetrate the people's hearts. Their hearts are sometimes hard.

Their hearts are clogged. They've got all media and and texting and iPhones and TV and movies and everything all cluttered there, and they can hardly hear what God wants to say to them. But it comes like a word, like fire.

Is my word not like fire? Remember when Jesus was walking on the road to Emmaus, and he met the two men, and they finally got to the home, and then he finally revealed himself in the breaking of bread. He somehow had hid who he was from them, and when he disappeared and they realized who it was, did they say to each other, wasn't that funny the way he talked to us on the road? Or wasn't that clever? What an orator. Have you ever heard anyone speak like that in your life? No.

What did they say? Did our hearts not burn with fire? And I'm not talking now about sensational emotionalism, cultural jump and shout Christianity. I'm not talking about that. I abhor all affecting of anything.

I don't want that. But I'm talking not about loud screaming or quiet talking. I'm talking about the words came like fire on the day of Pentecost.

They were all pricked in their heart. And the man was a fisherman. Never went to a seminary.

Reanalyzed his sermon. A first-year seminary student could do better than what Peter preached. Quoted a bunch of verses, put it all together, and yet the effect on the people was not in the oratorical skills of the message.

It was fire. It was fire. It went into their hearts.

They were pricked in their hearts. I mean, my ultimate dread is that people will just sit here in our three services on Sunday or on Tuesday night, or they just sit here and never change, but just sit here. I'd rather have them leave.

I'd rather have them walk out or change and come to God, but just don't sit there unmoved, unchanged. Oh God, help me to speak. Now, I'm not talking about hammering people.

I'm not talking about taking a bludgeoning people to death. A lot of people think a word of fire is to just yell at people and preach legalistically and hammer them to death. That's not fire.

That's not fire. That's a bludgeoning someone to death. And I've been in meetings like that, where the minister thinks he's holier than thou, and he's doing nothing.

He's not exalting Christ. He's just hammering people. You're not what you should be.

Yeah, well, you're not what you should be. How about that too? That's not going to change anybody. Are you with me on that? That's not going to change us all.

And that brings something that I just read in the book of Acts, where it says they were pricked in their hearts, and they said, what must we do to be saved? Remember Acts? And then it says, after Peter said, repent to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and you too will receive the Holy Spirit. It says there, and then with many words, he warned and pleaded with the people. See, you need the Holy Spirit to do that.

Some of us are just warners. We just warn, and we come down hard and strict and harsh. No, he also not only warned them, he pleaded.

It's like when my girl was away from God all those years ago, when I would say, Chrissy, I would warn her, Chrissy, you're going down the wrong road, but then I would plead with her because I loved her. See, that note of warning and pleading, that was the note of Jeremiah. There was a warning, but a pleading is my word, not like fire that penetrates, that gets into the people's hearts.

I'm a believer that every sermon should be an arrow to the throne of grace because where the action is, is at the throne of grace. Mercy is not given during the sermon. It's given when people's hearts go to the throne of grace.

Where is grace imparted? At the throne of grace. The Bible never says, therefore, let us come boldly to church, or therefore, let us come boldly to the sermon. It says, therefore, let us come boldly to the throne of grace.

I feel my own need of this as I'm preaching. So when he comes, he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. It's not my word like fire.

The hardest part of preaching is application. When he touched on that cut, that was an application that had fire in it. Brothers and sisters, am I correct or not? Right? Where did he get that? He didn't get that from his head.

He got it in his mind, his heart somehow, but that came from God. The hardest part of preaching is not three points and a conclusion, and it's not what the Word says. You've got to give him that, but it's the application.

Now what does that truth mean in 2011 here? What does it mean? How do you and I give it to the people's hearts and ears that you minister in front of every week? How do we relay it from God so that it's like fire, but a good fire? It's like a good cutting away. It's like a surgery on a cancer. That fire cuts and burns up

stuff that's cheap and garbage-like, the wood, hay, and stubble.

Without that word of fire, you're going to have people increasing in sin, even as they increase in attendance. Without that fire, what else is going to stop people from sinning in this city? Except the word of fire, something that will cut. I'm convinced with the biggest challenge I'm facing right now in our church is to reach youth now ages 9 through, well, 9 through 17, but especially now, yeah, all of those ages.

You know, when Ravi and I were young men, the policy was you got to reach people when they're teens. You can't wait till they're adults. It's too late now for teens here.

You can't wait for anybody to be a teen. We got time bombs at 9, 10, 11, 12 years old. There's a 12-year-old girl named Nadifa that I'm trying to reach and help who comes to this church, who was full of anger and was introduced to me by my daughter, Susan.

And in her school, she just turned 13, I didn't know what to say to her, and she was so full of anger that I was just nonplussed. I had nothing to say to her, because when I said to her, oh, come and talk with me, you know, trying to be the pastor and all of that, and Susan had introduced her to me. So I said, so Nadifa, so what are you so angry about? Who are you angry at? Oh, you want to know who I'm angry at? And she talks just like that with her hands and gets right up in my grill and goes, I'll tell you who I'm angry with.

I'm angry at my mother. I'm angry with my father. I'm angry with the school.

I'm angry at the cops. I'm angry at God. I'm angry at Jesus.

She lives in the bad projects here in Brooklyn where I used to play basketball a lot of years ago. And she lives in there where the cops don't want to go. The junior crips are making a move on her, and she has just the street.

She's immersed in the street. Vanessa, a spiritual daughter of mine here, is trying to help her, too. I hired the girl.

I didn't know what to say to her, so I hired her to work on Sundays for a while as a junior secretary. I had to get close to her. I had to find out what makes this girl tick.

God, how do I reach her? How do I get a word of fire that will penetrate her heart? What will cut out all that stuff? She says, yeah, we're talking about school the other day, and she told me, yeah, I got 13-year-old friends who prostitute in the school, and the pimp is 15. How about that? The prostitute said 13, the pimp is 15. And you think I'm going to give three points in conclusion and change any of that? Some glib little word with a little poem at the end? No, no, that's not going to happen.

I need a word of fire. Can we put our hands together and ask God, come on, let's all put our hands together and affirm it. So I leave you with this.

I leave you with this before we pray, and then you go on a search because I have not come to an answer on this. I have not come to an answer on this. I've been pondering one verse for now almost a year.

I'd like to suggest to you that the models of preaching that we have might not be what God intended preaching to be at all. I'm suggesting to some of us that maybe we've never heard preaching. That's outside the box.

Well, but we got to think outside the box because things are rough out there. And obviously what we've accepted as the same old, same old, it's not changing people, not changing society. What do I mean by that? Before you got saved, before you went in the ministry, you were born into a certain religious circle.

Ravi Zacharias, before he was converted, living in India, he never asked God, when I become a Christian, I want to be missionary alliance or I want to be whatever. You never did. I never did.

Just like babies are born in hospitals and they're half Ukrainian, half Polish like me or whatever you are. People get born again and they grow up in a family or maybe you're a minister's kid. And that's it.

But all the sociological studies have shown that environment is so phenomenally controlling that the definitions that kids develop, they get in their environment. Racists aren't born. People learn racism from their mother's milk and the kitchen table.

They learn all that stuff, values, money, everything. It's all in the environment. I would like to suggest to you, we're captive to our spiritual environments.

I didn't ask to be Polish Ukrainian. He didn't ask to be born in India. You didn't ask to be born where you were.

And I didn't ask to be born into the spiritual circle that I was in. I didn't ask that. But where do we get our definitions? Just like sociologically it's proven, we get our definitions of key words, not from the Bible, we get it from the environment that we were accidentally born into.

And we worship those environments. And most of us, as Charles Finney said, don't move two percent away from what we first believed a year as a Christian. Ten years later, we don't believe anything different.

We just look for verses to back up what we've already been taught. We're not changing anything. We don't come to the Bible like a child.

We don't say teach me. Very few do that. It's Lord, you know, I got to get more ammunition for my doctrinal positions, my Calvinism, Arminianism, whatever, Evangelicalism, whatever.

So words like prayer, maybe we've never seen prayer. You know, like, I travail like a mother giving birth till Christ be formed in you. That's what Paul thought prayer was.

Pray for me. You know, Epiphra labors for you, praying for you all the time. We know not how we ought to pray, but the Spirit helps us with groans too deep to be uttered.

You groan in some churches, they'll bring you to the men's room within five minutes. They'll lift you right out of there. Why? Because we don't do that.

Yeah, but how about the Bible? Oh, listen, it must be different in the Greek. There must be something else, because that's not what we saw. I was born a Baptist, gonna die a Baptist.

Pastor, I was born an assembly of God, gonna die assembly of God. But brothers and sisters, doesn't it behoove us with some humility to say, God, we gotta rethink everything. Gotta rethink everything.

Christendom's in decline in America. So maybe it's that way with preaching. Here's the verse.

For when I came to you, 1 Corinthians 2, verse 4, look at it when you get a chance. Paul says, when I came to you, I didn't come with wise and persuasive words. My preaching was not with wise and persuasive words.

With all due respect, every seminary in America is trying to get people to have wise and persuasive words. Why? Be unwise? Be unpersuasive? Does that make any sense? We're trying to make converts. We're gonna be unwise, unpersuasive? Paul boasts, I did not come to you with wise and persuasive words, but my preaching was with a demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit, so that your faith would not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Now, what did that look like as I close? Now, nowhere does it indicate every three minutes Paul could stop and say, bring me a lame person, I'll heal him. All right, let me go back to my message. All right, bring me that blind person.

See the demonstration? No, there's no hint of that. No one in the New Testament could do miracles on order like that. No.

So what did his preaching look like? Maybe that's why with no New Testaments and no public buildings for 300 years, they turned the world upside down. And what are we complaining about? The Democrats, the Republicans, no prayer in schools. Is that not ludicrous? Come on, brothers and sisters, let's be real, as they say in the street, real talk.

Is that not ludicrous? No prayer in schools? There's no prayer in the church. That's where the problem would be. Come on, can we say amen to that in most churches? If there's no prayer in the church, if there's no prayer meeting, if there's no priority of prayer in the church, aren't we embarrassed to talk about prayer in schools? Did Caligula have prayer in his schools? Did Nero? And Jesus said, render unto Caesar, give Caligula what's due Caligula, but give God what's due God.

The excuses that we make embarrass me because it's a lack of fire. I'm not talking about emotionalism. Do not dismiss me and say, oh, he's talking about some wild and woolly, praise God and all that.

No, I detest that. And I've been around those people who had that Pentecostal culture style. They don't baptize 10 people in two years.

So I say to them, come on, let's be realistic. God must have something better for us. My preaching was not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit.

What did that look like? Was it some sense of God? Was it some arrow? Was it something like what we just felt before when Ravi was speaking that just, oh man, God is talking to me. I know the guys up there with the speaking, but no, God's talking to me. I don't know what that was, but I want that.

Come on, brothers and sisters, wouldn't you rather live six months more and then die, but have six months of fire than live out a long life? We're going to live for eternity anyway. What's the big thing about living a long life? What's the purpose of living a long life and saying, wow, he made it to my mother next Monday, a week from today, going to be 97. But the Bible says that's a vapor.

She's gone. It's a vapor, 97 years. We're going to live forever, but you know what? I'd love six months of fire.

Just six months of fire to see God use me, the staff here, and we see that, ooh, that good fire burning out dross and junk. So people can be saved. Don't you get it? They're heading to destruction.

People in your neighborhood are heading to destruction and the responsibility is on us, but you can't just preach the word in some mental, intellectual way, and not an emotional, screaming way. It's got to be truth inspired by fire. It'll change people.

Maybe that's why I keep singing this song. Jason, he knows when in doubt, just start playing Come Holy Spirit. Miss Pastor Cymbala is going to want to sing that.

Why? That's my own need, my own need. I want to preach better. How about you? And since hearing my friend, I'm really inspired now.

I want to preach better. How about you? How many here want to preach better, teach better? Wave your hand at me. Come on.

In other words, I'm not satisfied with what is. I'm not satisfied. I'm not satisfied with this building, this church.

I'm not satisfied. We have people visiting who think it's something good, and I thank God for his blessings, but I didn't come with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the power of God. Of the Holy Spirit, so that your faith would not stand in the wisdom of men, the cleverness of communicators.

They're ruining the church. They're wrecking the church. They're wrecking the church because they're getting people directed at them, not at God.

The sign of a good meeting back in the old camp meeting days was, here's the way they described it. If you have a meeting in the camp meeting days, I'm talking 1890, 1900, in the holiness, baptists, missionary, whatever movement back there, the sign of a good meeting was when people went home at the end of the night talking about the minister, everyone who had depth knew the meeting was bad. Meeting was a failure.

Why? You're talking about the preacher. But when they went home saying, I don't remember who spoke, but oh, God is awesome. God talked to me today.

God ministered to me. I heard the word of the Lord addressed to my situation, applied to my situation with love, with perception, with insight, with fire, not bludgeoning, but not I'm okay, you're okay. The word of the Lord.

Let's close our eyes. But if they would have stood in my counsel, you said, Lord, if they would have waited in my counsel, would I have not spoken to them? I would have given them a word of fire. But the false prophets, Lord, just ran without you sending them and they spoke without you inspiring them.

And we have your word today, Lord. But we know if we know anything that just the dry preaching of biblical principles, it's not cutting at God. If I know anything about New York City, it takes the word and the spirit and love and wisdom.

And God, I'm preaching about something I can't totally get my arms around, but you know the longing in my heart, Lord, that I might preach not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit. And a giant intellect said that. A brilliant man said that.

It wasn't glorifying ignorance. He was longing for his source, the spirit of the living God. If you're here today, you're a pastor and you are just desperate.

You're desperate like, Pastor, I can't believe what you spoke on. That is my heart cry. I am dissatisfied with my preaching as you are.

I have to have something more from God. I know it's going to involve study. It's going to involve all those things, but I need a baptism of fire.

For when he comes, he will not just baptize you with water. I do that. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Those fishermen will have fire in their ministries, burning, penetrating, purging. If you're here, you want to come up and pray at the altar, just get out of your seat and come. We're all going to pray, but if you feel like a special tug, a special pull, just get out of your seat.

Father, we thank you for your word from Daniel, from Jeremiah, from Acts, from Matthew, from First Corinthians. Your word is pure. Your word is good, Lord.

Sometimes it cuts us, it breaks us. We feel uncomfortable, but it's all for our good. We thank you for your word today.

Grant unto your people the desires of their heart. Grant your servants who labor so hard for you, Lord. Grant us all more grace, fresh wind, fresh fire, indeed, Lord.

Blow in our churches. Change our preaching. Change the atmosphere of our mission, Lord.

Help us to see many, many, many, many souls come to Jesus Christ and be baptized so that your name would be glorified and the angels in heaven might rejoice. Save us from the same old, same old. Give us a radical new hunger for something new and wonderful from you, Lord.

Also bind us together so that we root for each other. I pray all of this so that your body would be strengthened, your body connected to the head, which is the church of Christ. Thank you, Lord, for putting us in it, and thank you for the unspeakable privilege of being leaders in the work of the Lord.

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