

# Purity and Fire - Part 1

by Leonard Ravenhill

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a holy life, being filled with the Holy Spirit, and being used by God for His purposes.*

**Duration:** 29:23

**Scripture:** Exodus 28:2, Malachi 4:5-6, Matthew 3:11, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 11:5, Luke 3:16, John 3:16

**Topics:** "Purity"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares stories of revival and the power of prayer. He talks about a meeting where there was no piano, but the presence of God was felt through the music and singing. He mentions a young boy who prayed for a long time and quoted Psalm 24, which became key to the revival. The speaker also discusses the importance of prayer and the need for spiritual revival in the church.

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## Transcript

This morning, may we become loved slaves of Jesus Christ. That we may be able to say with the Apostle Paul, I bear in my body the onus brands of Jesus. That Calvary love will mean like the one who went to Calvary, we have to die to personal ambitions and self-seeking.

To lay in dust life's glory dead, that from the ground there may blossom red life that shall endless be, so help us. Pack these immediate moments with eternity. Put your hand in this meeting, get out of it, Apostles, Prophets, Teachers.

We've talked of Russia and Bulgaria and other countries this morning. Maybe the Westleys and Finneys for those nations are here in this house. The material here is beyond our comprehension.

As the world would say, we pray for the highest stakes. We look for the greatest trophies. We look for thee to endure us with power from on high.

Kindle a flame of sacred love on the mean altar of our heart. And there let it for thy glory burn with inextinguishable braze and trembling to its source returning constant prayer and fervent praise. And we'll give the praise to him who alone is worthy, our Lord, our Saviour and our King, Jesus.

Amen. Thank you. Perhaps the best-known text in the Bible is John 3.16, which is not my subject this morning.

It is God's message to the world. I guess every one of us have memorized that verse, if we've memorized no other. So John 3.16 is God's message to the world and Luke 3.16 is God's message to the church.

I'll take the core out of that verse which is the same as Matthew chapter 3, I think verse 11. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Now I have a second text which I can't speak to you, but I'll show you it.

Here it is. It's this blank page between the Testaments. It's a white page.

It covers a period of 400 years of total darkness spiritually for the people of God. It has no message, there's no print on it. And yet it has an eloquent message because it testifies of the silence of God.

That 400 years of darkness between the Testaments was shattered by a man who was an incandescent production of the Holy Spirit. He was more radiant than Halley's Comet. And he had a very awesome task because in my judgment he was the only living person in the world who had the truth of God.

Can you imagine what it would be if you were the only person in America or some other country, you're the only person that had the real revelation of God. And the greatest character reader that the world ever had was the Lord Jesus. And he said concerning John Baptist, that he was the greatest man that had been born of woman.

That included Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, the great prophets of the Old Testament. And yet Jesus said he was the greatest man that was born of woman. Well I make a guess that there have been many prophets, pardon me, there have been many priests and others who had wailed at the wailing wall.

I think they'd borrowed the language of Isaiah 64, because remember that Christianity was not served up to the world on a silver platter. Christianity was born in a sophisticated world with a totalitarian system. Now some people say John Baptist was strained in his diet and his dress and his doctrine for the simple reason he wanted to be a sensationalist.

If he wanted to do that then surely he would have attacked slavery. There's a faithful record that there were more than six million slaves when John Baptist came on the scene. He could have blasted against the Roman conquest of the Holy Land.

But he never said a word about slavery, neither did Jesus. Neither did the Apostle Paul, except Paul said be a good slave to your master. That wouldn't go down too well with the unions these days, but at least that's what he said.

So I say John Baptist comes with a background of total solid darkness. He's a strange character, that's why I love him. I love strange people, that's why I love you.

John was very strange, strange again in his dress, strange in his diet, strange in his doctrine. If any man had a complaint against God, surely it was John Baptist. Do you remember in the Old Testament it says of the Old Testament priest his garments were garments of glory and of beauty.

Man he was spectacular when he went into the temple. I think sometimes we read the Bible as though when folk wanted to make a suit in the old days they went to Sears Roebuck and sent for a catalog and ordered the length of cloth. Do you know they put every thread in by hand, can you imagine that? Imagine all those curtains in the temple, every thread put in by hand, every thread put into the priest's garments.

And then that lovely mitre that he wore, and then that breastplate with 12 precious stones and each of them had the name of one of the tribes on them. When he came in everybody bowed before his dignity. He was a king and a priest.

And if you've been going down Main Street in Jerusalem one morning and seen him, and then in the afternoon you'd gone down the road and seen John the Baptist, you'd have been awfully shocked. Boy he looked like a super hippie. The prodigal's father said when my son comes home put sandals, put shoes on his feet.

Why? Because slaves never wore shoes. Remember the colored people used to sing those old spiritual, I got shoes, you got shoes, all God's children got. They don't sing that anymore.

You see it was a sign of dignity that you had a pair of shoes. John Baptist is down in the hardest spot in the world. How in the world did he manage? I remember Samuel Chadwick saying many things to me and amongst others was this, listen, you never have to advertise a fire.

You never advertise a fire. Whether it's a building on fire, particularly if it's midnight and some great building is burning, people come by the thousands. I remember saying to my wife once after I got home preaching at one o'clock in the morning I said, sweetheart there's a mill on fire in town, let's go see.

You know there won't be many people around at this hour. Everybody in town thought the same thing. There won't be anybody around at this hour, so the whole town turned up.

We couldn't get within about five blocks of the fire and it was warm enough even there. I was glad they didn't have a front pew anyhow. But you know the flames shooting to heaven and the black background, the fire was attractive.

And John Baptist was there and Jesus said of him, he is a burning and a shining light. I get disturbed about all these preachers taking folk to Israel. I wish they'd take them to Calvary.

People like to say I walked today where Jesus walked. You won't raise an eyelash if you do that, not even a false one. The problem is not I walked today where Jesus walked, but I'll tell you what, they'll curl their lips if you say I walked today as Jesus walked.

And that's the only reason you and I have to bear his holy name upon our lips. You know John the Baptist didn't do it right. He could have made millions selling souvenirs.

Sure, he could have gone up Mount Sinai and chopped little lumps of rock off and gave everybody a piece of the rock, you know. All right, not in insurance, that's all right. But he could have sold a piece of the rock for five dollars.

He could have taken a tour of people and said this is the very spot where Abraham offered Isaac. Isn't it amazing that a man could turn the world upside down in his day? He'd no agent to go ahead of him. He'd no bumper stickers.

You say well they'd no cars. Well they'd camels. He could have put them on the tail of the camel and every time they swished people could have said you know when they saw, you know, you know these bumper stickers are something.

We were in California, La Puente the other week. I saw signs, you know that old saying, I think it's a bad one. People have a sticker on their automobiles, I found it.

Well that doesn't mean a thing. If you put on I found him, I'd go along with it. But the Jews now have got the, you know, that star of David and you know what this sign is in California? We never lost it.

Smile, we love you. They've got that sign and in the middle of the, oh in the last, they've got a piece of marijuana painted on. Now John the Baptist had no gimmicks.

He didn't even have a revival party with him. Don't mention this out of this building, but you know he didn't even have a guitar. I get into trouble with singing people for the simple reason there's no ministry of singing in the New Testament.

There's no gift of singing. You may get offended. Well see me after, I'll pray with you.

But there's no ministry of singing in the New Testament. Singing is something fun. Look, I go down the road, we drive down the road, we drive thousands of miles over the country, they say, Martha, there's another one, the Bluebell Bible Busters will sing at your place tonight, you know.

Johnny Jones and his singing family. Singing family. Do you know what I'd like to see? I'd like to see somebody with a busload of people that says, this is a prayer group from Agape.

We'll come and pray revival down in your area. Now singing's all right, but you don't need the Holy Ghost necessarily to sing. I've never, never seen a revival born of singing.

Now I love singing. I've got a library of classics. I've got all kinds of wonderful records.

Most of them are given to me, but it doesn't alter the fact that I like them. Singing is great. Now if you want to hear hymns really, if you want to hear the Psalms sung, go to some Presbyterian Bible store and get one of the old-fashioned hundred-year-old hymns are still produced in, pardon me, Psalms, they're still sung in Scotland like nobody on earth can sing them.

If you've never heard anybody sing Crimmond, you haven't heard anybody sing. Or the 23rd Psalm to a tune called Brother James is There. I'd sing it to you, but I'm a bit hoarse, and you'd all leave anyhow.

But, uh, but singing's very beautiful. I'm not knocking it. But you see, if you put a concert on and don't read the Word of God, you've cheated God.

I don't care how well you sing. Faith cometh by hearing. The choir, no.

Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing the Word of God. There is no substitute for the Word of God. There is no substitute for prayer.

There is no substitute for anointing. I thank God many times when I pray. I pray and seek, and I pray and I weep, and I thank God for the incorruptible Holy Ghost, that you could write a check for a million dollars, and he won't anoint you with the Spirit because you give a million dollars to missions.

Let's keep this very clear. The Holy Ghost and the gifts of the Spirit cannot be bought at any market in the world. They're bought by humiliation.

They're bought by my constant consciousness of my own bankruptcy outside of Him. Let's get back to John Baptist. He was a marvelous man.

He was a dropout. His father was a priest of the Cross of Abbia. Read the story.

The priest did one thing once in his lifetime. It was a kind of graduation. And in that great temple, and remember it was so great, that once there was a riot in the temple, and 6,000 people were killed in the precincts of the temple.

It was so large. And the priest came down that center aisle, just once in his life, to minister holy things in this way. Outside of the temple there was the, what was called Herod's Porch, because King Herod financed it.

And at nine o'clock in the morning, three trumpeters with long silver trumpets gave a blast over the city. And at the same time that the blast was made, the doors were open and people came in, but they followed the priest. He came down that aisle nervous, wearing his heavy garments.

It was unrehearsed. He'd never done it before. And there were thousands of people to come in and see what he was going to do.

He wore a long garment, he might have fallen over it. But as he came down this time, Zachariah came down that aisle. And as he came down the aisle, behold, it says that there was a, an angel.

And it's very specific there in Luke chapter 1. It says that as he came down the aisle, that there was standing before him, there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zachariah saw him, he was troubled. Good night, he'd enough trouble going through this business without rehearsing.

And now he's troubled, and on his trouble he has fear, it says. Fear fell upon him, and the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zachariah, thy prayer is heard. Thy wife Elizabeth shall bear a son, and many shall rejoice at his birth.

This great person was none other than Gabriel himself. When Zachariah saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. The angel said, Fear not, Zachariah, thy prayer is heard.

Thy wife Elizabeth shall bear a son, and thou shalt call his name John, and he shall be great in the sight of God. Now, will you notice some other wonderful things here? It says in the 41st verse, it came to pass when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, because Elizabeth had gone to see her cousin Mary. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.

It says in verse 67, his father was filled with the Holy Ghost. It says in verse 25 of the next chapter, Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. The same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation.

And the Holy Ghost was upon him, and the Holy Ghost revealed unto him that he should not see death. And he came by the Spirit into the temple. Man, that's better than saying Rockefeller is your father.

His father was filled with the Holy Ghost. His mother was filled with the Holy Ghost. His pastor was filled with the Holy Ghost.

Now, I'm not facetious here, but I'm just saying this, if John Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost, the day he was born, could he speak in tongues? He couldn't speak in anybody's language. I believe there is a genuine gift of the Spirit. I do not believe everybody filled with the Holy Ghost has to speak in tongues.

Now, I'm making myself clear here. You're going to tell me a towering figure of a man who changed history, a man who was used of God to abolish slavery before ever he was abolished in America, that Wesley wasn't filled with the Holy Ghost? That those men who were with him were not equal to him intellectually, they were equal to him spiritually. You have some books here that my friend Shmuel reprinted, Daniel Steele's and Samuel Chadwick's.

He's also reprinted those lives of the early Methodist preachers, and they're fascinating. And when men tell you they were pulled down from a chair in the street, and they were kicked until their ribs were broken, and they got up and sang the doxology, well, I think a man like that can take all that surely is filled with the Holy Ghost. And the mighty works of God were demonstrated in and through those amazing men.

But John was filled with the Holy Ghost, right from his mother's womb. And I don't care how you measure this man, you can measure him socially, you can measure... If you measure him theologically, and you do a little homework, you'll discover that in his own right, John the Baptist was a theologian because he preached 29 different points of doctrine. To him was given the greatest honor of any man that ever lived.

I tried to preach the other day, since there's such a big interest these days in being born again. Jimmy Carter says he's born again, but he says also he prays for the dead, and I don't understand that, that's not in my reckoning. But I noticed this, that when Jesus comes, when we come to that third chapter in John, and Jesus deals with a beautiful character, a man of impeccable morality, a scholar, a gentleman.

He never did a dirty deed in his life, he's respected as a towering figure in Jerusalem, and yet Jesus says to him, you must be born again. Do you notice he omits one word, he does not say anything about repentance? Do you know why? Because, you see, John did something that was totally unacceptable. He came at the wrong time, in the wrong place, and said the wrong things, and you can't be much more off-center than that, can you? The trouble with him, he didn't belong out of our denomination.

I nearly said abomination, it's the same thing. But he didn't happen to belong our denomination, and so, do you know what they did? They said, he's not genuine. He's not genuine.

Do you see, people have gone to church, and they've heard all the shibboleths. Do you know one thing that angers me? The Holy Spirit is neglected in a charismatic generation. The Spirit, the baptism, slang phrases.

But you put the accent on holiness, you won't get too much acceptance. Now, if you're not a holy people friend, you've missed it. Yeah, if God tells me to come and live here, I'd be happy to come and live down the road there.

But I'll tell you what, if I came, my accent would be holiness. Because God is holy. There used to be an old preacher in this country, and every time he opened his Bible, he preached on holiness.

And one day, he started, and somebody jumped up and said, every time you open the Bible, it's holiness. He said, brother, I don't have to open it. Said, on the back, it's the Holy Bible.

And if you're not holy, I don't know where you're going, but you won't get to heaven. And since you could die on the next beat of your heart, the grave won't sanctify you. There's no sanctification in the sepulchre.

People say, well, I may die this way or the other, but you know, I shall wake up all right in heaven. Well, who's going to change you, the worms that eat you? They get indigestion of some of you anyhow, but apart from that. No, sirree, the emphasis needs to be put there on the Holy Spirit.

When Saul, the king of Israel, had an evil spirit, he did evil things. Jesus says, when a man has an unclean spirit, he does unclean things. Therefore, logically and biblically, the man who has the Holy Spirit will have holy fruits in his life, holy desires in his life, holy aspirations in his life, holy fruit in his life.

Oh, I don't hear too much. I hear a bit about the fruits of the Spirit, but most people are overboard on the gifts, and they shouldn't be. As I've told you before, the Spirit came as a dove, and a dove has nine feathers on one wing and a nine on the other.

And there are nine gifts of the Spirit, and there are nine fruits of the Spirit. And even in an energy crisis, doves don't try and get off the ground with one wing. Have you noticed that? They still use two.

But you go to some meeting, it's gifts, gifts, gifts, gifts, gifts, gifts. You go to another, it's fruits, fruits, fruits. And they're all going round in circles.

Now, if they used both wings, they'd get off the ground and get somewhere. But you see, we're so lopsided. We're more devoted to doctrine than we are to the word of God.

Now, another thing about John Baptist, I like this. John did no miracle. Isn't that something? Nobody ran after John and said, have mercy on my son, he's a lunatic.

Nobody ran after John and said, listen, my child is blind. Nobody ran after John. He never cured a withered arm.

He never touched anybody's blind eyes. He never spoke deliverance to anybody. He never raised the dead.

He did infinitely more than raise a dead man. He raised a dead nation. They flocked to him from Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria.

He preached in the power of the Holy Ghost. Oh, I agree, there are some meetings that an hour and 45 minutes is enough. For me, some of them, for me, five minutes is enough.

I'm worn out after five minutes in some meetings. But I'll tell you what, when revival comes, you don't get two hour meetings or three or four or five. You get five and six hour meetings.

I spent years on and off preaching with Duncan Campbell. You'll tell his books here. You'll hear that man talk about revival.

Man, they went in churches, they won't even have a piano. They just had somebody present the music, sing a song, and they sang those amazing songs. And yet God came down.

I told you before about the young boy that was asked to pray in one meeting where Duncan couldn't get going. He preached always in Gaelic, Scottish Gaelic, which differs from Irish Gaelic, which differs from

Welsh Gaelic. But he preached always in Gaelic.

One night he preached 15 minutes, the heavens were like brass, and that's a scriptural phrase, remember, it talks about the heavens being like brass. And he stopped and he called to a boy to pray. A 16-year-old high school boy.

And the boy prayed 20 minutes, 30 minutes, 40 minutes, 45 minutes. But before he prayed, he quoted Psalm 24, which became the key to revival. Who shall ascend in the hill of the Lord? You know, we make prayer the simplest thing.

Just fall on your knees and tell God a problem. Forget it. If your lips are stained with gossip and slander, you may as well pray to this.

Because God will not hear when there's sin between us and him. He says, cleanse your hands. Psalm 24 says, who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.

And a little later, he that backbites us not with his tongue. Prayer is the most demanding thing this side of eternity, that's why we do so little of it. And I'm convinced of this, that if you really get filled with the Holy Ghost, one of the first signs that you're filled with the Holy Ghost is, your prayer life will be revolutionized.

I have an old friend, he wrote to me recently, maybe I mentioned this before, I don't know. He's 95 years of age. And in his last letter he said, Brother Ravenhill, no, not next to the last either.

But he said, Ravenhill, you know, I find it most difficult to pray between midnight and five in the morning. I wrote back and said, everybody in America has the same problem. Praying between midnight and five in the morning.

Oh God, I met a little man just two weeks ago in La Puente there. He's in his 90th year. He spends about six hours a day in intercession.

He's a massive man, weighs about 90 pounds. He was in China in the days when they had revival, when God just came on cities. You see, the tragedy of our day is, we've no revivalists.

We've so many evangelists, we could ship a thousand, ten thousand of them out of the country, never miss them. If they go, I'd sing the doxology all day. But anyhow, there it is.

But oh, I'll tell you what, if God said to me, Ravenhill, you can pray one prayer and after that you die five minutes after you prayed. You know, I pray, I pray God give every city in America to John the Baptist. Now you're Quakers.

Well, that's all right. They love silence too, but that's all right. John did no miracle.

People say, if all the miracles were restored, we'd shake this country. Listen, there's no country on earth in history had more miracles than America has had in the last 50 years and we're nowhere near revival. I spent a lot of time with Miss Kuhlman and Dave Wilkerson too.

Preached for her in auditoriums, took her Bible classes in the Carnegie Hall in Pittsburgh for weeks. And I thank God for her ministry. But now it's gone, I don't see any trail of revival.

You see, what excites me about young people is this, that the promise is to you, not to us. We old boys missed it. We've had it for 50 years.

Graham, Ordon Roberts, all the rest, sure. They've had millions of dollars, but no revival has come. There's been some blessing.

There's been no city-wide transform. To use the phrase of Dr. Tozer, revival changes the moral climate of a community. Do you know that happened in Finney's day? Do you know that happened in the days of the man through whom Billy Graham was converted, Mordecai Ham? Do you know when he went to a city with a tent about this size? That after three days there, one of his friends told me, that three days after Mordecai Ham started preaching, he needed a police escort to get in his own tent.

And he needed a police escort to get out. Nobody blasts the brewers any longer. Nobody talks about sin in the White House, none of the places anymore.

I think one of the tragic revelations of Nixon's fall, I believe at the judgment day you'll discover it wasn't economic or political, it was spiritual. Do you know why?

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