

Zeal - Love Ablaze!

by Leonard Ravenhill

The sermon emphasizes the need for zeal and holy indignation in the Church, highlighting the consequences of a lacking zeal and the importance of a broken heart.

Scripture: Joel 2:17, John 2:17, John 7:24, Ephesians 4:26, 2 Timothy 3:5

Topics: "Spiritual Revival", "Zeal for God"

Description

Leonard Ravenhill passionately addresses the need for zeal in the Church, emphasizing that true zeal is love ablaze, which drives believers to confront sin and pollution within their communities. He contrasts the weeping Christ with the whipping Christ, highlighting Jesus' deep sorrow over the defilement of the temple and the need for modern preachers to weep over the state of the Church. Ravenhill warns against counterfeit zeal and calls for a return to genuine, Spirit-filled passion that prioritizes God's glory over personal gain. He laments the current state of the Church, which has become complacent and distracted by worldly concerns, urging believers to rekindle their fervor for God. Ultimately, he challenges the congregation to embody the zeal of Christ, which should consume them in their pursuit of holiness and righteousness.

Transcript

Enoch had prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones." If Jesus had entered history like that, or had come on a dark night over Jerusalem in a blazing chariot of fire (like Elijah went up to heaven), then the clamoring crowds would have accepted and adored Him. But as the poet once said, "They were looking for a king, to bring salvation nigh, He came a little infant thing, that made a woman cry."

CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

The local folk knew Jesus well. He was the best carpenter in the nation. But now He had stepped out of bounds. He accepted the nomination of that wild preacher John the Baptist as the Lamb of God. He had agreed to let the people mount Him on an ass and enter the city amid cries of "Hosanna." Now He had stirred the city by routing the moneychangers and cattle dealers from the temple. For almost thirty years He had watched men desecrate the place. He was outraged at their insolence and greed. He was disgusted that they had carpeted the temple courts with animal excrement and polluted the place with the stench of urine.

Each of the Gospels tells of the whipping Christ. But Luke makes a very valuable difference as he records the events in the life of Jesus. He says that before Jesus had entered the temple, while He was still entering Jerusalem, He had stopped to weep over the great city. So we have the weeping Christ before we had the whipping Christ. Since He was about His Father's business at twelve years of age, Jesus had trod the temple courts and had always been grieved and outraged that they were defiled not just with animal dung, but with red-eyed extortioners, cheating moneychangers, and cattle dealers. For thirty years He had been growing in grace and in the knowledge of His Father -- now He knew His mission! And His explanation for this one-man attack on the sacrilege and defilement of the house of God is summed up in these words: "Zeal for thy house will consume me."

Zeal! What a baptism of this same zeal the weak and wilting Church of this day needs. Zeal in this context is love ablaze. Zeal without reason becomes fanaticism. Jesus was not a fanatic. Yes, His love was blind to all the possible dangers of His mission. This love ignores personal safety, disregards the odds against it, drops "sacrifice" from its vocabulary, requires no crutches, ignores all danger, is intolerant of sin, but not fanatical.

His was no sudden burst of anger; He had contemplated it all His life, but now the hour had come and men fled before His whip and holy anger.

SPIRITUAL ECOLOGY

"Pollution! Pollution!" cry the ecologists about our food, air, waters, and our auto emissions. But where, O where are the preachers crying out against the pollution in the churches? The heart of Jesus was broken over a nation that had the elect prophets of the Lord as its advisors. But who had heeded these prophets? They had not dined at kings' tables; they, like their Master, were despised and rejected of men. Some were men with scorching tongues; but they were also men with weeping eyes. Ah! but tell me if you can, where are the weeping preachers today?

The cattle dealers in the temple were more interested in selling sacrifices than in offering them. And so today there are Christians at this very hour fighting feverishly for some political cause, and yet they are never heated over the wretched filth in their own church.

Will we crusade against uncleanness in the "Church"? If not, better tell the sleepy saints again to eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we shall be raptured. But Jesus will not rapture a ruptured Church!

THE WORST THING IN THE WORLD

There are some frightful tragedies in the world at this moment. When "wise" men swept aside the Bible, they told us that we would move into a new freedom for men. These wise men have proved that they are otherwise. Other smart men put their brains together to make a bomb so that we can turn a living city crisp in seconds. Then think of the implication of Afghanistan and Iran, the daily bleeding of millions in Kampuchea, and the masses waiting to leave Cuba. These are horrible things to contemplate, and yet I think there is one thing infinitely worse. It is a sick Church in a dying world.

Never has the great U.S. ever been more broken than today. Broken marriages, leaving millions of broken homes. Thousands and thousands of teenagers whose minds are broken with drugs. The people's confidence and trust in the government is broken. The economy is broken -- the once-mighty dollar is broken. All is broken except the hearts of the believers.

We need broken hearts to face this colossal mess. Weeping is not only in order in the pulpit; it is commanded! "Let the priests weep between the porch and the altar...let them howl" (Joel 2:17; 1:13). Jeremiah wept over the sin of Israel. David wept. Paul wept. John wept. Shall we remain dry-eyed in the most crucial chapter in world history and in our own?

COUNTERFEIT ZEAL

The present lethargy in the Church is almost unpardonable. The Jehovah's Witnesses have zeal. The Mormons claim they are gaining more people from the evangelicals than we are gaining from them. The cultists zealously persist in getting a hearing in the streets.

Saul of Tarsus had fanatical zeal. He threw men and women in prison and broke up their families, persecuting them from city to city. Miraculously God cleansed him, baptized him with fire, and made him a model zealot for His Kingdom.

It is not enough in these days of such vast worldliness in the Church to say that we are fundamental or uncompromising in "doctrine." We must be ablaze with Holy Spirit-born anger. ("Be angry, and yet do not sin" (Eph. 4:26). We must feel the hurt of God over the devil's domination of this age. We must apologize to the Almighty that we have turned to our own way, and have been more loyal to a man-made theology than to the exceedingly sober words of our Master. Like Paul, we must be able to say in His holy presence, "This one thing I do...." I bear a broken heart over the coldness in the Church (including my own!). True, the zealous man of God lives for one thing only: to please God. He is impervious to the opinions of others about his zeal. He cares not what it costs him to burn out for God. In sickness or in health, in poverty or in wealth, whether he is esteemed or despised, flattered or flattened, considered a fool or a philosopher, through evil report or good report, kisses or curses, he is set to do the will of God!

This man sees the Church today fouled with showmanship, bingo and bake sales, dances, tinsel and trivia, "holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power" (2 Tim. 3:5). He sees the ministers condoning divorce in high places. Maybe his minister is divorced and remarried himself.

Jesus today sees His Church unclean with disobedience by a watered-down gospel. We do not obey His commandments to "love one another," or rejoice to act out Matthew 23:11 - "But the greatest among you shall be your servant." If there comes a man into the assembly with a gold ring, we do give him honor (James 2:2). If he has great wealth but little spirituality, he is still welcomed as a member of the board. We do not insist that our young preacher boys tarry (until they get a seminary diploma? No!) until they are endowed with power from on high!

THE PHARISEE'S PRAYER

The Pharisee who prayed in the temple said, "God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers." There are many so-called Spirit-filled men today, who cannot even pray that prayer! Unjust they are for sure; they pay low wages and tell their workers that they are "doing this sacrifice for Jesus." Adulterers - there are famous preachers in this awful category. They, of course, have an explanation for their infidelity, yet many are accepted at conferences as keynote speakers. Extortioners - the radio preachers almost have this as a monopoly. A \$25 Bible (God's Holy Word) is offered for a \$100 gift! Other books are offered at five times their cost. "You are judging!" someone will say. Correct, I am told to judge (John 7:24). Jesus says, "Judge with righteous judgment." Also I, along with other true preachers of the Gospel, am a watchman and so have to warn others. Also, "judgment must begin at the house of

the Lord." This bait to get money is an abomination. Preachers whine for money over the radio and television. "For this ministry" they say, and yet much of it is to sustain their extravagant lifestyle, costly airplanes, and fixing up luxury Bible conference grounds. And now they have joined the Pharisees who "rob widows' houses." After emptying your pockets while you live, they ask for your house and estate after you die. What next?

STEALING THE GLORY

This is a day of the personality cult. Men on T V. gospel shows are presented as having given up so much for the Lord. All they gave up with their retirement from stardom was hell and eternal punishment. Let it be shouted from the housetops that no man does God a favor. Elegant living, etc. for the rich evangelists proves nothing except that they have not left all to follow Him. The Spirit-filled need no status symbols.

The flattering introduction for gospel preachers is another great piece of blockage to revival. John 5:41 and 44 need soul-searching consideration. My heart is burdened and burning. God's house is polluted. The sinners scoff and say of the rich preachers, "Their creed is greed and their god is gold." We need a baptism of holy zeal to get us back to holy indignation that the money grabbers are back in the temple, and that God's heart is hurting.

The Church began in the Spirit; now She is operating in the flesh. There is no pillar of fire over the sanctuary. There are no preachers who can hold the hell-bound spell-bound. I am not sure that it can be proved that Nero fiddled while Rome burned. It can be proved that the Church is fiddling while the world is burning! The one reason that we do not have revival today is that we are content to live without it.

O for a generation of believers who can honestly say,

"The Zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up."

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