

# Catching Fire

by Richard E. Bieber

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*The sermon emphasizes the necessity of catching divine zeal to overcome spiritual lukewarmness and fulfill God's purpose in our lives.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 3:1, Isaiah 6:1, John 10:2, Romans 12:1, Revelation 3:14

**Topics:** "Divine Zeal", "Spiritual Revival"

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## Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches on the transformative power of divine zeal, emphasizing that many problems believers face would vanish if they were ablaze with God's passion. Drawing from Revelation 3:14-16, he highlights the danger of being lukewarm in faith and the need to catch fire with zeal for God. Using the example of Moses encountering the burning bush in Exodus 3:1-6, he illustrates how encountering God's fire can ignite a lasting zeal within us, leading to a life of purpose and sacrifice.

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## Transcript

Half the problems we experience as believers would disappear in an instant, if we were to catch fire with divine zeal. We spend so much of our time nursing wounds that wouldn't even be there if we were on fire.

So, I'd like to begin with a passage which is always fun to apply to the hypocrites around us, but which is unsettling when we apply it to ourselves.

"And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot!

So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth."

Revelation 3:14-16

These words are unsettling because few of us, if any, can rest in the assurance that we are HOT. There may be moments when we feel we're hot with the zeal of the Lord of Hosts, but there are days, months, years, when the best that we can come up with is something maybe a few degrees above lukewarm.

- So, how do you get hot?

It's easy enough to hoot and holler or turn on a little bluster for the Lord and sustain it for a short while.

But where do you get that inner blaze, that steady fire which burns

within the soul and drives us with a passion to do the Father's will? Where do you get that zeal which never fades?

How many times we've tried turning over a new leaf, making a decision that "from now on my life is going to be all for God" ...how long did it last?

Not that there isn't a need for decision.

- The prodigal son had to decide to come home to his father's house.

- The young ruler had to decide whether he was going to leave his riches and go with

Jesus or leave Jesus and go with his riches.

But there are certain things which are beyond our power to decide.

- I cannot decide to catch fire with the fire of God.

- I cannot, by an act of the will, suddenly come alive with zeal for God.

But suppose the fire comes to me. Suppose the fire of zeal I've longed for all my life is now suddenly before my face. And from within the fire God calls to me and invites me to open my heart. Now if I will dare to expose myself to the God who has come to me in that flame, I will catch fire. And to open my heart to that flame is a decision I can make.

Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian; and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and lo, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here am I." Then he said, "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is

holy ground." And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Issac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Exodus 3:1-6

Up until this time Moses was no doubt a religious man, a man of principle. He had the guts to do what he thought was right even if it put his life in danger.

He was willing to pay the price of exile for sticking his neck out for his fellow Jews.

But one thing Moses did not have. He did not have a burning zeal for the God of Israel. When it came to God, Moses was obviously lukewarm. Now he sees this strange bush where flames are shooting up. Heat is coming from it, but its leaves are still green.

The burning bush was not only a sign of God, it was a sign of what Moses was now to become by the presence of God in his life.

Moses was now to become a burning bush to Israel ...a living sacrifice ... a human being enflamed with the zeal of the Lord of Hosts.

What is zeal?

- Zeal is divine fire enflaming the heart until our self-consciousness is swallowed up in God-consciousness.

As long as God-consciousness is mixed with self-consciousness it is not zeal ... it's ambition for self

riding on some promise of God. But when we catch  
fire with zeal for God so that our self-consciousness  
is consumed and body and mind and spirit are alive to  
God ... when we become a burning bush,  
a living sacrifice,  
a life that is able to keep  
pouring itself out yet always remaining fresh.

Truthfully, for all our religious experiences, most  
of us are still like Moses before he came to the  
burning bush. We may have done a few heroic things  
in the past but we're still wandering around the  
wilderness of Midian.

Up ahead lies a work to be accomplished by us that  
will require of us a zeal,  
a vision,  
a passion for God,  
a freedom from the fear of man  
we simply do not have. In our hearts is a strange  
feeling of dislocation, uselessness. But now suddenly  
comes a moment when the God who has chosen  
us in Jesus Christ from before the foundation of  
the world breaks through and calls us by name. We  
may not see a literal burning bush, but we do see  
in some way, as God gives us eyes to see it, the  
fire of heaven.

And we understand that from now on that fire wants  
to rest upon our lives.

- We will be the burning bush ... we will  
burn but we will not be consumed.

- We will be a living sacrifice driven by a  
zeal to fulfill God's purpose.

But how does the fire in the bush get from the bush  
to us so that we're on fire?

God is calling to us from within the flame. Now he  
waits for us to do three things:

' To answer his call.

' To take off our shoes.

' To offer ourselves to him.

If we will do these three things we'll catch fire.

1. We need to answer his call.

"Moses, Moses."

.... " Here am I."

"Samuel, Samuel."

...."Speak, Lord, for your servant hears."

"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

...."Who are you, Lord?"

"I am Jesus whom you are persecuting."

...."Lord, what will you have me to do?"

They answered when their name was called.

...but he who enters by the door is the  
shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper  
opens; the sheep hear his voice, and he calls  
his own sheep by name and leads them out."

John 10:2-3

When he calls us by name we have to answer.

We're not volunteers. Who can say,

"I'm only a volunteer. God can't expect me  
to knock myself out. I'm not getting paid..."

We're called by the God of the burning bush, by the  
Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes.

Something happens when we open our mouths and say,

"Yes, Lord, here I am!"

"Speak Lord, I'm listening to you."

"Lord, what will you have me do?"

There is no relationship with the living God, or  
with his Son, until we answer his call. When we  
answer with our mouth and with our heart the fire  
of zeal begins to fall.

2. Then we need to take off our shoes.

"Take off your shoe's; you're standing on holy ground."

Our first act of service to God is,

- to honor God's holiness,

- to worship him,

- to minister to him,

by hallowing his name.

"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be  
thy name..."

Before Isaiah could say, "Here am I, send me," he  
first had to confess his unworthiness and worship  
the only worthy one in the universe.

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the

Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted  
up.... And I said: "Woe is me! For I am  
lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and  
I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean  
lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the  
Lord of Hosts!"

Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having  
in his hand a burning coal which he had  
taken with tongs from the altar. And he  
touched my mouth, and said: "Behold, this  
has touched your lips; your guilt is taken  
away, and your sin forgiven."

Isaiah 6:1, 5-7

...and with that burning coal touching his tongue  
Isaiah was set on fire with zeal.

- God help us to take off our shoes, humble  
ourselves before him and worship him.

Don't worship your worship,

Don't worship your feelings,

- Worship God,

- Worship the Lamb.

3. Finally, we need to offer ourselves to the Lord  
as a living sacrifice.

But Moses said to the Lord, "Oh, my Lord,  
I am not eloquent, either heretofore or  
since thou hast spoken to thy servant; but  
I am slow of speech and of tongue." Then

the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?"

Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak."

Exodus 4:10-12

Moses was still fighting it, but God was helping him understand that his body, just as it was, even with his stammering tongue, was what God wanted.

"Give it to me without reservations ... and your mind along with it ... and you will be my burning bush to Israel."

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:1-2

God won't seize our bodies against our wills.

God won't seize our minds against our wills.

We have to offer them to him ... present our bodies to God.

"Here I am, send me."

We have to open our minds to God's Spirit with an act

of the will.

"Lord, enter and dwell in my thinking and willing."

"I'm yours Lord. I'm yours Lord."

And we have to keep doing this over and over until every fiber of our being knows that it belongs, not to us, but to God.

From within the fire of divine zeal God calls us by name, and urges us to enter into a life with him such as we have never known. His fire will fall on us and drive us forth to accomplish things in Jesus' name we never dreamed we'd ever see.... much less do ... if we will open our hearts and expose ourselves to that fire.

If we will answer the call,  
take off our shoes,  
offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to him,  
the fire of God will fall on us. The zeal of God will enter us and move us to accomplish things in God's purpose beyond anything we could ask or think.

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