

# How to Respond a Visitation From God

by Sandeep Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of listening to the present living word of Jesus and being fully surrendered to God in order to experience the true fire of God and fulfill God's purpose.*

**Duration:** 47:08

**Scripture:** Romans 12:1

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Holy Sacrifice"

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## Description

This sermon focuses on the importance of responding to a visitation from God by changing our way of thinking and fully surrendering our bodies as living sacrifices. It emphasizes the need to guard against three 'strange fires' that can hinder our spiritual growth: materialism, intellectualism/legalism, and emotionalism. The key message is to lay ourselves fully on the altar, change our way of thinking, and allow the Holy Spirit to transform us.

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## Transcript

I am doing something I've never done before. I am going to speak on something that I didn't plan to speak on. I spoke on a different message in the first two services, but I'm going to speak on something different.

So I don't have a whole lot of notes. I wrote down something here and there. We don't have a PowerPoint, but I trust that the Lord has something that he'd like to share with us.

If I were to title my sermon, I would say that this is responding to a visitation from God. Title, if I would make it, would be How Do We Respond to a Visitation from God? I want to share with you a couple of things as a header about myself. These are the things that allow me to stand up here and speak, young as I might be, as at least I think I am, and definitely broken, definitely knowing that I'm a man with many flaws.

But I'll tell you some things that give me confidence as I stand up here. Of course it is all about God, but as I search myself, I know as far as I can tell that there's no controversy in my heart with God. I love him.

I only want to love him. It's non-negotiable. That's one thing you ought to know about me.

I can't prove it to you with my words. I have to prove it to you with my life. Those closest to me have to attest to it or not.

Most of all, God has to attest to it. The other thing, I don't pick fights with anybody. I have strong words to say sometimes, but I have only one enemy, and that's the devil.

I hate the works of the devil, and the devil has come to steal, kill, and destroy, and he's a deceiver. So I want to pick a fight. If we're gonna pick a fight, it's through the power of the Holy Spirit to destroy the works of the evil one.

That's it. Also, I am a man under submission. I don't pretend to have great words from God.

I'm a man who understands that my position here is under the authority of the senior leadership here. So even before I said this, I came this morning and I told Pastor Wayne, I submit to you. We didn't go through all the details of what I wanted to share with you, but I said I am emotionless about this talk.

If you feel it is not of God for me to be wanting to be, or not this position for me to share it, I will not share it. But he trusts the Holy Spirit in me, and I appreciate that. I appreciate the confidence he has in me.

But I want you to know that I don't ever want to say anything outside my boundaries. I have a deep respect for the boundary God has placed over my life, and I know the very limited authority I have as I stand up here in terms of being able to speak to the people here. So with that as headers, I want to get right into how do we respond to a visitation from God, not only individually, but maybe as a people.

Either way, it's most applicable for me as I understand what I must respond to God when he visits me. God always visits his people with a purpose. God never visits just to visit.

He visits with a purpose, and my intention here is not to define the purpose. That's not my role, that's not my responsibility, but God has a purpose with every visitation, and it is important that we listen to God to find out what is the purpose behind that. I say that also about people who come forward at the end of a sermon for an altar call.

The response that we make when we come forward to say, God, I want to receive you into my heart, I want to reconcile my relationship with you once again, is for a purpose. This event is not the purpose. When we come forward to accept Christ, that's not the purpose.

That's coming to the start of the race. The purpose is God wants to take you somewhere. Most of you know that.

If you have come forward, you should know that if you don't already know that. You came forward with a purpose in mind. Don't make this the settling point and say, that's it, I don't have to worry about anything.

That's not the way of God. God has brought you forward. God asks you to respond to him so that he can fulfill his purpose in you.

God wants to take you somewhere. Whenever God visits us, whenever God draws near to us, he wants to fulfill a purpose. So I hope that my talk today will help give some kind of guidelines or some kind of truths as I have felt God has shown me.

This was something that I felt that the Lord spoke to me yesterday. And yet I spoke a different sermon this evening. I waited before the Lord and I said, God, what do you want me to do with it? But this is something that God shared with me yesterday and I want to share it with you.

In submission, fully willing to say that if I say something today that is not of the Lord, I hope when I don't say it that the Holy Spirit will stop me from saying it. But if I do, I want to represent Christ and I want to represent the Spirit of God by saying the next time I speak, if I say something wrong, I'm willing to be publicly corrected and I'm willing to come back the next time and say I was wrong about what I said. I don't believe I'm wrong, but I'm willing to say that because I'm a man of the submission.

I submit to the Holy Spirit. This is not my agenda. I have no agenda to pick except to destroy the works of the evil one and to glorify God.

My first point I want to make is this. Again, I apologize we don't have a PowerPoint, but I wrote down a couple of points. God does not live and dwell in incredible experiences.

Let me repeat that. God does not live and dwell in incredible experiences. Now hear me right.

I'm all for emotion. I'm all for the experiences that God uses to draw us closer to him, but God does not dwell and God does not inhabit and live and make his home based on repeated emotional or whatever fantastic experiences. I want to do everything according to God's word.

I want to take you to Matthew chapter 17. I hope the audio video crew will be able to follow with me as I go through different scriptures, but this would be a good week to have brought your Bible to church. Matthew chapter 17.

Matthew chapter 17 is the story of Jesus when he was transfigured. That means he was on this earth, but he was transfigured and his face shone like the sun and his garments became as white as gold. That's what it says in verse two of Matthew chapter 17.

And in verse three of Matthew chapter 17, it says, Moses and Elijah appeared with him. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will make three tabernacles.

Tabernacle is another word for dwelling place. I'll make a dwelling place for you here. One for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.

While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, this is my beloved son with whom I'm well pleased. Listen to him. I don't know what experience anybody in this room has ever had in terms of supernatural experiences, but I don't believe in all of recorded history since Jesus was on this earth that anybody has had this kind of experience that Peter did.

I don't know any of us, I've never even heard a story of somebody seeing the transfigured Jesus Christ, seeing Jesus in all of his glory. Peter did before his time, so to speak. And if that was not good enough, he also saw Moses and Elijah.

I want to build this point to you that whatever experience any of us may have had, whatever experience anybody you've ever heard about has had, it doesn't top this one. The experience of Peter was bar none. It beats even seeing water turned into wine.

It beats Peter walking on water. It's to be able to see Jesus transfigured and to have been seen through the greatest men of the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah standing before him. And Peter's desire was earnest.

Peter's intentions were good. Peter said, let's make this your dwelling place, God. This is pretty good.

I can't top this. Surely you're gonna be happy with my request. Let's make this your dwelling place.

Let's make this the transfigured God with Moses and Elijah standing next to him. Let's make this mount of transfiguration your tabernacle. And God immediately overshadowed that thought and said, this is my beloved son.

Listen to him. And this is what I draw out of it. More important than any experience is to listen to the present living word of Jesus that constantly is proceeding from the mouth of God.

We must never make our life with Jesus about experiences and fantastic experiences where we feel a lot of things. We must make it about listening to him, listening to his word so that even if a word that is meant for yesterday may not be the one that we need to hear today. An experience we had last year may not be something that is applicable to us today.

In the Old Testament, we read about God sending Elijah to the brook. And he had another incredible experience where Elijah drank water from the brook and ravens fed him. I don't know if you've ever heard of ravens feeding people.

Elijah had it happen to him. But it says there in a couple of verses later that God dried up the brook. If Elijah had worshipped at the brook and said, God, you sent me to the brook, so this is where I'm gonna be, Elijah would have gotten it wrong.

God sent him to the brook and then God dried up the brook and said, go to another place, to a widow. You need to help them next. You need to help them next.

So let us never make tabernacles. Never let us make our dwelling places of God one perpetual feeding on that. God has a visitation that he allows certain experiences at times I'm all for, have feeling all, the whole breadth of emotions.

But I'm not gonna base my life on emotions. I'm gonna base my life on listening to Jesus. And I wanna back that up with 2 Peter chapter one.

Turn with me to 2 Peter chapter one. Remember, Peter is the one who said those words, Lord, let's build a tabernacle. And God overshadowed that comment and said, no, no, no, you're gonna listen to Jesus.

Now, Peter, many years later, he's an apostle. He's been filled with the Holy Spirit and he's been walking with God for many years. We read in 2 Peter chapter one, verse 16 onwards.

Onwards, 2 Peter chapter one, verses 16 onwards. For we do not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance, this was made to him by the majestic glory, this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased. And we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain. He's talking about that experience we just read about.

Then it says in verse 19, and we have, and it's King James Version says, but we have the prophetic word made all the more sure to which you would do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your heart. Peter was making an unmistakable

statement. I was there when I saw the best of all experiences that could happen to man.

But I'm telling you, the word of God is much more important than all of your experiences. That is what it means to live by faith, where you are willing to set aside all of your experiences for the word of God, that you don't limit God to the five senses, that you don't limit God to the things that you experience, but you say, God, we are going to live our lives based on your word. So that even if 600,000 people say you cannot conquer the giants, your word said we will conquer the giants.

And so the dependence on the word of God and the truths of God's word is what will sustain us and what God wants to use as a dwelling place for our hearts. Let that be a witness for all of us who live in a day and age where there's a lot of Christian religion which is about many things but the word of God and about living to the word of God. And I say that specifically even for people in their personal lives.

If you want to prove that God has visited with you, if you want to prove that God is inhabiting you, attest to the word of God that is written in scripture that says don't get angry in your heart. Don't lust with your eyes. Things like that.

That is the attestation to the fact that God has truly visited us. Visited us is that the prophetic words, the word of God has been made sure, has been confirmed in you. I hope that is crystal clear.

Let us not make a dwelling place. Let us fight against the desire to make a dwelling place or an altar or our church services or our personal lives to be continuous experiences. Let it be based on the word of God which is life and I hope you separate our life lived out versus certain fantastical experiences.

It's a constant life no matter how you feel. The life of Jesus and the prophetic word will be made sure all the time. That's point number one.

The visitation of God is often described with fire and it's a very appropriate analogy. And I think when we experience the visitation of God, there's a, it's a time of great rejoicing. It is a time to really bow down low before God and really rejoice that the creator of the universe has decided to visit with us.

It's something that we must rejoice over. If we feel that God has visited with us at any time, we must worship and say, God, thank you. But it is also an awesome thing.

Something that requires great reverence because this God who's drawing close is a holy God and we must treat with reverence this intimacy that this holy God wants to have with us. And that is why I believe the analogy of fire is appropriate. Fire is an incredible thing.

Fire is a beautiful thing. I have a feeling most of us will not be sitting here today right now if it wasn't for fire. What do I mean by that? Fire is what ignites, that's ignition.

Ignite is connected with fire. It's the ignition that most of you probably took a car to come here. You needed that little spark of fire to drive your car, to ignite the fuel.

That drove your car and brought it here. It's that ignition. Fire is a beautiful thing.

Fire brings warmth. Fire can bring light. But we all know the dangers of fire.

You can't treat fire disrespectfully. You can't let fire run along and not be able to have a reverence for it. And whenever we see, we know that the Lord has chosen the analogy of fire to talk about how he comes

upon us.

And I wanted you to turn with me to Leviticus chapter nine. And I'll come back to this more later on. But in Leviticus chapter one and also in chapter nine, it talks about how the Israelites sacrificed and made a sacrifice for the Lord.

And it talks about how they took the bull or different animals and cut it up piece by piece. Cut up the leg and put it on the altar. Cut up the head and put it on the altar.

Cut up different parts of the animal. I don't know if I'm getting all the facts right, but definitely cut up all the different parts and put it on the altar. And that's Leviticus one.

It talks about that and gives all kinds of different rules around all the different animals that need to be put on the altar. And then in verse 22, Leviticus chapter nine, verse 22, it says this, then Aaron lifted up his hands towards the people and blessed them. And he stepped down after making the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings.

That's all the offerings that were happening. And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of the meeting. And when they came out and blessed the people, the glory of the Lord appeared to the people.

Then fire came down from the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the portions of fattened on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces. This is what we can respond to God when the fire of God falls.

It's an unbelievable thing. It's an incredible thing. And we fall on our faces and we shout and say, God, you were here.

God, you are here. I worship you. The analogy of sacrificing our entire beings on the altar is correlated to Romans chapter 12.

Some of you may know it. In view of the mercies of God, let us offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. This is your spiritual act of worship.

There's a correlation. In the Old Testament, in the Old Covenant, the Israelites cut up the animal piece by piece and put it on the altar. What do you have to do in the New Covenant? You have to take every member of your body and put it on the altar.

Not just the ones that you prefer to give over to God, all of them. And usually, most Christians want to give 98% of their body to God. But I have a couple of things that say, God, that's for me.

Or maybe a couple of hours on Friday night. God, that's my time, not your time. I'm gonna please myself.

God's fire always falls when people are fully surrendered, not mostly surrendered, not somewhat surrendered, fully surrendered. It's very simple. When Moses and Aaron finished putting all of the animals on the altar and they went before the Lord, the fire of God came.

It remains true today, too, that the true fire of God falls on us when we are fully surrendered. I'll talk more about that later on. But I wanna talk more about when we experience the fire of God, when we witness the fire of God happening in our own lives or people around us, there is a great human tendency to manufacture something and to replicate it where God wants nothing to do with it.

I read with you Leviticus chapter nine, verse 24. Starting with the next verse, Leviticus chapter 10, the very next verse, verse one, it says, now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.

Then Moses said to Aaron, it is what the Lord spoke, saying, by those who come near me, I will be treated as holy, and before all the people, I will be honored. Let me be sure about one thing. Leviticus chapter nine was the true fire of God coming.

But Leviticus 10 is where we and humans tried to replicate the fire of God and ended up producing a strange fire. And throughout history, that continues to be the case. And there's a huge human tendency in us to try and replicate the true fire of God with manufactured fires of God.

And that was my second point. Beware of manufacturing moves of the Holy Spirit with strange fires. And I wanna talk about three strange fires that can inhabit Christendom.

I'm not talking about the world, I'm talking about three strange fires through which humans try to replicate the true fire of God. I'll get back to the true fire of God later on, but I wanna talk about three strange fires. One is the strange fire that God is attesting to a work of materialism.

What do I mean by that? The strange fire of materialism is the one, is a gospel or a message or beliefs that says God is present because I've enriched myself in material things. That because I got a bonus, that means God is happy with me. Because God healed my son of a sickness, God is happy with me and my family.

We may rail against the prosperity preachers and as they flaunt their Bentleys or whatever it is, but let us guard our own hearts from that spirit that can come within it. The strange fire of materialism, the truth that connects the fire of God, the presence of God, the authority of God with material things. For some it's, man, I just got a miraculous bonus.

That means God's happy with me. That may have been from God, but that means nothing about whether God is happy with you or not. Just because you had health when you had sickness, does that mean God is happy with you? Maybe not.

God may not approve of your lifestyle, but God may give his blessings to the righteous and the unrighteous. God lets the sun shine on both the good and the evil. But there's a strange fire that is within me, that is within all of us, that wants to connect the authority and the presence and the visitation of God with material things.

So let us guard against it. And I cannot speak against it enough because it is so deep within us and it is so subtle, the lie, that we want our flesh loves to believe it and we hear it from so many circles in Christendom that we must guard against it in our heart, not in our theology, in our Facebook, religion posts, all of that. It's in your heart that you have to ask yourself, God, am I giving into the spirit of materialism as the evidence of the presence of God? So what shall we do when we get a bonus? What shall we do when our child gets healed of cancer? We will bow down low and worship and we will say, God, I want to live fully surrendered for you the rest of my life.

You didn't heal my son of cancer so that he could become a millionaire. You healed my son of cancer so that me and my son can live for you, fully surrender all of our lives for you. And even if you don't heal my son of cancer, you are still God, you are still my father, you still died for me, you've still defeated the evil one, I will rejoice.

Of course I will mourn that my son has cancer and going through certain things, but I will not lose a bit of my faith in you. I will fully surrender and have no issue with you as God because I do not believe in the strange fire of materialism. There's another strange fire.

Some people, I think maybe it's based on personality, maybe it's based on emotional makeup, maybe it's based on left brain, right brain, I don't know. But different of us have different problems with which seem to get us easier than others. I know so many of us and I think we're all susceptible to all of them, but some may struggle with one more than the other.

So there's a strange fire of materialism. There's also the strange fire of intellectualism and legalism. They're sometimes connected, often connected, maybe not all the time, but I'm gonna connect the two of them.

The proof of God being with me is that I'm able to study and find all kinds of cool truths out of Scripture. In the last sermon I talked about Ruth, and I, sorry, about Rahab, and I drew about something about from the genealogy of Jesus from Rahab. And I'm sure some folks were like, wow, that was a pretty cool insight.

It means nothing if it doesn't draw me closer to Jesus. It's just intellectual hot air. I mean that.

What makes a sermon anointed is if I go out and live it. I've said this to many people who've come up to me and thanked me for a good sermon. I said the proof of a good sermon is a changed life.

I mean that. The proof of a good sermon is a changed life. It's not more intellectual ideas.

It's not like, oh, I never realized that about Rahab. Now I know Rahab. I can lead a Bible study on Rahab now.

Thank you for that insight. Not at all. The reason to speak on Rahab is so that we can become more like Jesus, and we can see the faith of Rahab and how the faith of Rahab draws us closer to Jesus.

So go and study Leviticus. Go and study the Hebrew. Go and study the Greek, but become more like Jesus.

But I've realized even studying the Bible in English is hard enough for me in terms of my desire to become like Jesus. That is why I don't waste as much time on it. And I encourage you to say, study the Bible in English.

And in every translation, whether it's the Hebrew, the Greek, or the Hindi, or the Indonesian, or the Chinese, it still says you must take up your cross daily and delight yourself and follow me. I'm still waiting to find an easier translation to that. But as long as it's gonna be that, the truth is gonna remain the same.

I've gotta love Jesus more than anything else in this world, more than my family, more than my possessions, more than myself. I've gotta love him so much more. That truth's never gonna change.

So once I solve that problem, then I'll study the Bible in other languages. But beware of intellectualism, and with intellectualism can come legalism. Those of us who study God, and I'm one of those who study God's word and try to understand doctrine as accurately as possible, because that's my role, the bottom of my role here.

Don't wanna have to teach, so I don't wanna teach incorrect things. But there can be a great spirit of legalism that can come on, that God can only work in a particular way. That God must work in this way, as long as we dot all the I's and cross all our T's.

And we can get legalistic about things, and we become like the Pharisees who tithe the mint and the cumin, like it says in Matthew chapter 23. We tithe all these little plants, because Jesus said tithe. But Jesus said you miss the weightier aspects of the law, which is justice and mercy.

And that's the problem with intellectualism. We can get so caught up with the minutia of Scripture that we miss the weight of Scripture, which is love and compassion and holiness. And we miss all of that because we're so worried about what exactly Matthew 1's genealogy has got to do with something in Leviticus.

And we miss out on love. We strain at gnats and swallow camels, as Jesus said. We strain at little flies.

We try to pick apart little flies in God's word, and we swallow camels of doctrine and error. We are not loving towards our neighbors. We're not loving towards God.

We don't have a passionate, zealous love for God. And God says I don't want you to study all these other intellectual details. Just love me.

Just embrace all of my love for you. Why are you holding back? That's the weight of Scripture. We can meditate on that for the rest of our lives and still not get our arms closely around the love of God.

That's what we ought to make the own thing. And that's the strange fire of intellectualism that we can become Christians who know more about the Bible, who know how to connect Habakkuk with Malachi, with John, with Genesis, and all of those things, but we don't have the life. And maybe some of us see that in ourselves and we say we don't like the way we are.

Or maybe we see it in some other people and we say we definitely don't want to be like them. But whatever it is, there's a strange fire that some of us can puff ourselves up thinking we're spiritual because we know more. Guard against it.

Guard against it. Guard your small groups against it. Guard your friends against it.

Guard your family against it. Guard yourself against it. I know God is constantly telling me, you're going to practice what you're writing down? You're going to practice what you're preaching? I sure hope so.

I sure hope so too, to be honest. God's always checking my spirit. I hope you're going to follow what you're saying up on stage.

I hope you're going to follow what you told somebody over coffee. If not, maybe cancel that coffee the next time you're going to do it. And follow me.

Then talk about it. I talked about the strange fire of materialism. I talked about the strange fire of legalism and intellectualism.

And I also want to talk about the strange fire of emotionalism. I don't know if, I don't know whether 95% of Christians can distinguish between the move of the Holy Spirit and a set of emotions. I don't, I'm going to repeat that.

I don't know how many Christians can separate between the authentic move of the Holy Spirit and some emotion. I'm, as I said before, I'm not against emotion. God uses emotion.

Jesus wept. Peter wept bitterly, and I believe that was the start of his repentance. I'm not against emotion.

But weeping doesn't mean that the Holy Spirit is necessarily there. Laughing doesn't mean that the Spirit is necessarily there. Feeling happy and good of yourself doesn't mean the Holy Spirit is there.

Feeling a tingle on your spine doesn't necessarily mean the Holy Spirit was there. The Holy Spirit can use emotions, but can you distinguish between the two? Do you know when that was just emotions or that was the Holy Spirit working through your emotions? Have you asked yourself that question? Have we asked ourselves that question? Lord, was that just an emotion? But there's a great spirit of emotionalism that can also be present in us and become a strange fire. And music can be one of the examples that I've spoken before about.

Music can become an entertainment. And music can draw us in and tug on our heartstrings and can play on our emotions so that we start and feel like weeping. And we can think that's the Holy Spirit.

Can the Holy Spirit use music? Absolutely. But then we should be able to discern the difference. We must be able to tell, no, that's just the music.

Some people think if the music is loud, then the Holy Spirit is there. There are many Eastern religions who do that. They whip up people into a trance because it's a human effect because of the loudness of music.

But there's a flip side to that where people think everything's very soft and the candles are playing and the lights are soft and the violins are playing softly and the piano's playing softly, then the Holy Spirit's present because I'm speaking so softly. That's not the Holy Spirit either. That's New Ageism too.

We must, it's not about the loudness, it's not about the softness. We must be able to distinguish between these two. It's not about the lights.

It's not about the eloquence of the person standing up and speaking on stage like me. I've told you, I've said this two weeks ago. I have asked the Lord, I've repented for the parts of idols in my heart that I have found that made me believe that eloquence can raise dead people.

I don't think it's just not a good idea. I just don't think it's an illogical idea. I think it's a sin, so that's why I repent of it.

Because I say, God, I'm a fool for thinking that I can stand up here and by parsing words and by stitching the right kind of stories together and getting people all in the middle of my palm that I can raise them to life. I've forgotten what it's all about. That's salesmanship.

That's not resurrection. That's not resurrection. And I repent.

I ask God after every time I speak, God, was that salesmanship or was I really searching for dead people through the power of the Holy Spirit? And I don't want people to come forward at the end of my talk

because of salesmanship. It won't last. Resurrection, we've got hope for.

Because that only the Holy Spirit can do. And I wanna be more and more in the business of being in the business of raising people from the dead through the power of the Holy Spirit. I wanna speak words that somehow may be just the most bland, boring sermon, but the Holy Spirit speaks to you through some sentence, gets you to come forward, not to validate my sermon, but to get you to draw closer to Jesus.

So I'm very hard on myself too as I stand up on stage saying, yeah, this doesn't mean that just because I'm speaking the right truths in the Bible, that means it's the Holy Spirit moving. The Holy Spirit will move when there are dead people who want to live. And he can use broken vessels.

He can use all kinds of means. He can use a donkey. We don't need to limit God, but let us not fool ourselves that emotionalism through the music, through the lights, through the videos, through the YouTube videos, through my speaking, through eloquence, that that's what the Holy Spirit is validated by.

Those are all strange fires that can inhabit the church. Where some churches make it about, we're gonna validate God's presence because we're gonna be materialistic. And God's gonna bless you.

God's gonna make you a millionaire. And God's gonna heal you of all of these things. And God's gonna bring you all kinds of generational blessings.

That's one strange fire. There's a strange fire of intellectualism. And there's a strange fire of emotionalism.

We have to guard ourselves against all three, but also realizing the way we personally have been made up with. Some of us are left brain, so we may fall over the intellectual cliff more easier than some people who are right brain. They may fall over the emotionalism cliff.

But we have to answer before God. And God takes strange fires in his house very seriously. He wants fire, though.

He wants the true fire. And as I think about what the Lord has in terms of my mind or what validates the next move of the Holy Spirit, five words come to my mind. You want to validate that the Holy Spirit is moving in you, that is present in you? Listen to me, what I believe.

I have the mind of Christ as I say this. Change your way of thinking. Not change your way of doing.

Not even that. Change your way of thinking. We were in 2 Peter chapter two.

We were at 2 Peter chapter one, I'm sorry, at the end of 2 Peter chapter one, where Peter is talking about how the mount of transfiguration means nothing compared to the prophetic word and the word of God. And 2 Peter chapter two, which I spoke about a month ago, talked about false prophets, people who come and have a lot of nice-sounding things but are greedy and lust with their eyes and on and on that I shared about it. But I want to take you to the end of 2 Peter chapter two.

2 Peter chapter two, verses 20. 2 Peter chapter two, verse 20 through 22. For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than having known it to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them. It has happened to them, according to the true

proverb, a dog returns to its own vomit and a sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire. After having escaped the defilements of the world, after having received a knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, after having known the ways of righteousness, after having a visitation from God, after God met with you, after God visited with you, if you then turn away from the holy commandments, the word of God, and what God tells you to turn away from sin and turn with you, the latter days are worse than the former.

And I believe that God's intention is that the latter days will be better. That's Haggai 2, verse nine. That God's desire is that the latter days be better than the former days.

But here's the corollary to it. And it says that clearly in verse 20, that your last state will be worse than your first state. When? When you, after having said that was a move of God, I really felt God on Tuesday night when I was in my Bible study.

I really felt the presence of God and God communed with me. Here's the next step. Your response is critical.

Don't get entangled again by the world. Hate sin even more. That's the proof that your latter days will be better than your former days.

And it's throughout the scriptures that we hear this, that we must take it seriously. And fundamental to that is changing your way of thinking, not even changing your way of doing. If you have been thinking that God doesn't love you, you have to change your way of thinking.

Because God visited you and that's what you're saying. If you think that God doesn't care for you, based on the authority of scripture, God is telling you now change your way of thinking and don't think that again that God doesn't care for you. If you have been thinking that it's okay to live with your living girlfriend, change your way of thinking.

Stop it. If you think that you can persist with those videophiles of pornography, yet you say God visited with you, change your way of thinking. Change the way you view those files.

If you have an inappropriate body image, thinking you're all that because of the assets God gave you or because the way you work it out, change your way of thinking. Listen to my message that I gave on Rahab. Change your way of thinking.

It's how God views it that's important. If you have your validation in anything else, the word of God, because you say he visited with you, because you say he met with you, because you claim on your Facebook status that you're a Christian, the word of God is this, change your way of thinking. Think differently, not do differently.

That'll come later on. So many of us do the right things, but think in the same old broken ways. And the word of God is crystal clear throughout change the way you think about me.

Change the way you think about your past. Change the way you think about the world. Change the way you think about your enemies.

Change the way you think about Jesus. There's a war that's gonna have to happen in your mind that I've spoken about before. And it goes back to Romans chapter 12 verse two.

I want to end with that. Worship, I believe, has very little or nothing to do with music. That has been spoken from this pulpit before.

But I'll reiterate that. Worship has little or nothing to do with music. Why do I say that? Because God's words tells me that.

That worship in the new covenant has got to do with my body and offering my body as a sacrifice. You want to say you worship God? Offer your body as a living sacrifice for God tomorrow. Then you can say every day of your life you worship God.

Even if you never sing another song, you can have a song singing in your spirit saying Jesus, I'm fully surrendered. Romans chapter 12 verse one and two. I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God which is your spiritual service of worship and do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Change your way of thinking. This is how you will slowly become like Jesus. This is how you will validate the move of Jesus in your life is by changing the way of thinking.

I spoke to a group of Christians recently and I didn't know what I was supposed to share as I was waiting there to speak. And the last song they sang was send the fire, Lord, send the fire, rain down on us like rain. Send it down, Lord Jesus, we want your fire to rain down on us.

And I asked them afterwards, I got up, I said, how many of you have ever experienced what you have been singing 50 times in that chorus for? Two or three brave souls raised their hands. I said, look, I'm not trying to criticize anybody. Explain to me what that felt like.

And they said they felt like it was a beautiful experience and God met with them and they were worshipping God and they were singing some songs and they felt God's presence on them. I said, how many times has it happened? Once. Yet we keep singing the song, send the fire, send the fire, Lord, please send your fire.

I'll tell you something, I am absolutely convinced of this. I feel we make God out to be a masochistic God by we keep singing the song, God, send the fire, send the fire, send the fire. He will send the fire if you put your whole body on the altar.

He always sends the fire, 100 times out of 100, when I lay myself out and lay everything on the altar. I don't even have to sing the song, the fire comes. This is a truth that must sink in deep into our hearts.

You don't even need to ask God to send the Holy Spirit on your life. You just have to lay out your body as a fully surrendered vessel and the Holy Spirit will fall. I know the verse says ask God for the Holy Spirit but really the key is laying out your body.

And when people say they've interacted with God but continue to sin since they interacted with God last and are flippant about the way they interact with this and that's the clearest proof that the whole visitation of God has been messed up. He came to visit you, he came to visit us, he comes to visit us for a purpose to make us reflect Jesus in the overall sense. What is he trying to do in your life personally? I don't know.

What is he trying to do through this church? I don't know but I will tell you something. I believe God says change your way of thinking. Offer your body fully on the altar and say God, no longer my agenda.

I'm done with all those areas of sin. I'm gonna fight it from this day onwards. I'm gonna think exactly as you tell me to think.

Let's pray. Lord, my issue is not with anybody. Lord, I have a deep desire to snatch sheep that the devil would love to seduce, that the devil would love to spoil from a good work that you started.

Lord, I claim as my inheritance from my life with you, I claim dead people. Lord, I don't know here who's dead, who's given up all hope of life, who's members of their body or some area of their life is absolutely dead. Lord, may you open their eyes to see the power of the Holy Spirit that can quicken them to life today, that you can birth a brand new way of thinking in their life starting today, even if they've accepted you into their heart 100 times but are continuing to live in sin.

May the power of the Holy Spirit come upon people today, Lord Jesus, that you may quicken them to life, that they by the power of the Holy Spirit may put to death the deeds of the body so that they may live. Father, I long to see a witness in this generation, individual people, groups of people who will stand for the pure fire of God and fight against every strange fire that comes up against them. We ask all of these things in your name, amen.

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