

On the Burning Bush

by Thomas Reade

The sermon emphasizes the significance of the burning bush as a symbol of the church of God, weak and worthless, yet preserved by God's power and faithfulness.

Scripture: Exodus 3:2, Psalm 2:6, Isaiah 43:2, Romans 11:5, 1 Corinthians 1:26, Revelation 12:11, Revelation 22:5

Topics: "God's Sovereignty", "Church Perseverance"

Description

Thomas Reade preaches on the valuable lessons from Moses' vision of the burning bush, symbolizing the church of God as weak yet preserved by Jesus' grace and power amidst trials and afflictions. The vision teaches humility, emphasizing salvation by grace and the need to acknowledge God's sovereignty. It also highlights the perpetuity of the church, sustained by Christ, and the wisdom of God in using persecution to refine His people and expand His kingdom. Reade encourages confidence in Jesus' faithfulness and power, pointing to the church's glorious future in the millennial reign and eternal kingdom.

Transcript

59. ON THE BURNING BUSH

Much valuable instruction and consolation may be derived from the consideration of the vision with which Moses was favored in the desert of Midian. "The angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. And he looked and behold the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." (Ex. iii, 2.) Like Moses, I would now turn aside, and contemplate "this great sight;" at once so instructive and consoling. This bush, which in the original signifies a thorny bush is a fit emblem of the church of God.

Considered in itself, it is weak and worthless; a bramble bush, the lowest among the shrubs. "You see your calling, brethren," writes the apostle to the church at Corinth, "how, that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence."

"The bush burned with fire;" which justly represents the state of the church in this evil world. The malice of Satan--the persecutions of the ungodly--the corruptions of the heart--the trials and afflictions which come immediately from God for the purification of his people, may well be compared to fire. The bush, though on

fire, "was not consumed." This is a wonderful sight indeed. Here the grace and power of Jesus are eminently displayed. The church has always been in a furnace, and yet never consumed; yes, rather purified and brightened in proportion to the intensity of the flame.

The cause of the church's preservation is revealed to us. The Lord was in the bush. "God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be moved." "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her." "Fear not, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God." "No weapon formed against you shall prosper." "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." This remarkable vision should teach us humility. The church is not compared to a stately cedar, but to a bramble-bush.

We must have low thoughts of ourselves. Man is naturally proud. This inbred evil, even after conversion, rebels against the motions of the Spirit. Hence arises spiritual pride. When the Lord graciously imparts his gifts for the edification of the church, how prone we are to take the praise of these endowments to ourselves. This made the lowly-minded apostle expostulate with the Corinthian converts; "Who makes you to differ from another, and what have you that you did not receive?"

Now if you did receive it, why do you glory, as if you had not received it?" "Knowledge puffs up, but charity edifies." Moses equally cautioned the ancient people of God against this subtle poison. "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people, for you were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers." "It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the Lord your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the Lord your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people." Deut. 9:5-6. How slow are we to learn this humbling, yet precious truth; that salvation is all of grace, rich grace abounding to the chief of sinners. The beauty and glory of the church are derived from Christ. He is the glory, as well as the glorifier of his people Israel. Filled with his Spirit, and bearing his image, the church "looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and majestic as an army with banners."

Jesus beautifies the meek with salvation. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." "By the grace of God, I am what I am." "In the Lord shall the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." From this vision we are taught to expect trials while journeying through this desert world.

Sometimes the storm rages violently, and the flame burns with awful intenseness; yet nothing of the church shall be consumed, but its dross. Thus the malice of Satan and the world is overruled for good. Persecution tends only to refine the saints of God. It quickens their graces, and puts new life into their prayers. They run to the strong-hold, and are safe under the fostering care of an Almighty Savior. At such trying seasons, the chaff and the withered branches are consumed.

Mere nominal professors cannot endure those persecutions, which are designed in God's providence to separate the precious from the vile. "It must be that offences come;" "That those who are approved, may be made manifest." The consideration of "this great sight" should teach us confidence in the faithfulness and power of Jesus. He is in the bush. He never leaves nor forsakes his people. "When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not

drown!

When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you."--is the gracious sustaining promise. This vision of a bush burning, yet unconsumed, affords a striking view of the perpetuity of the church of Christ. Nothing shall be allowed to destroy this treasure of Jehovah. It may be reduced, and often has been reduced to the lowest ebb; but in the most degenerate times God never left himself without a church, however few in number, to show forth his praise.

From Abel down to the present hour, there has ever been "a remnant according to the election of grace." When the whole earth was filled with violence, and all flesh had corrupted its way before God, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. He was a just man, and perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God." The desolating flood at length descended, and everything wherein was the breath of life perished, except the little church of God, which was preserved in the ark on the bosom of the tempestuous waters!

After the deluge, iniquity began to spread with awful rapidity. Idolatry reared its rebellious tower in the plain of Shinar; and the knowledge of the true God became gradually shrouded in ignorance and superstition, until the Almighty called Abraham by his grace, and caused genuine piety to flourish once more in himself and family. When planted in the land of Canaan, the Israelites soon forsook the God of their fathers. In the midst of abounding idolatry, the Lord raised up a prophet in whom seemed to center all the religion of the land.

In the grief of his heart he said, "It is enough. Now, Oh Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." "I, even I, only' am left; and they seek my life to take it away." But what was the answer of the Lord to Elijah? "I have left seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal." When our blessed Lord came in the flesh, darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people; yet even then there were a chosen few, who in faith "waited for redemption in Israel."

During the dark period of 1260 years, foretold in the Revelation, wherein the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet would wage continual war with the church of Christ; the Lord appointed two witnesses (a constant succession of faithful men) who should testify to the power and grace of Jesus, even though they prophesy in sackcloth. In this period we now live, and can only attest to the truth of this remarkable prophecy. All this is in virtue of the everlasting covenant. How extensive the promise of the Father to his eternal Son!

"He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." "His name shall endure forever; his name shall be continued as long as sun, and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed." From this manifestation of the Almighty to Moses, we are led to adore the sovereignty of God. He ordinarily chooses; not the great ones of the earth, but the poor and the despised. Some, indeed, but not many, noble are called. Worldly riches and elevated stations have a tendency to beget self-sufficiency and vain-confidence.

"Poor in spirit, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom," is the genuine character of the church of Christ. Divine grace, however, can as easily bring the proudest monarch, as the lowest beggar, in the lowly attitude of contrition to the foot of the cross. Happy will be that period, when the kings of the earth and its nobles shall esteem it their highest glory to become the subjects of the Prince of Peace; and their chief joy to promote the extension of his kingdom of righteousness throughout the world.

We are hereby led to admire also the wisdom and power of God. He can promote the enlargement of his church by those very means which its enemies employ to destroy it. The children of Israel grew and multiplied, in spite of Pharaoh's efforts to prevent it. The Gospel spread with wonderful rapidity, notwithstanding all the threatenings of the Jews and Romans to check its progress. Those persecutions which scattered the disciples abroad, tended only to widen their field of labor; for they went everywhere, preaching the word.

The sacred fire, thus dispersed by the rude hand of violence, multiplied itself in proportion to its dispersion. Hence it became proverbial, that the blood of tike martyrs is the seed of the church. "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." Even its enemies wondered whereunto all this would grow. While the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord and against his Christ; the Almighty Sovereign of the universe proclaimed; "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion."

Jesus by his resurrection was declared to be the Son of God with power; and "of the increase of his kingdom and government, there shall be no end." "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Two blessed periods are, therefore, fast approaching, the anticipation of which filled the ancient prophets and apostles with holy transport. The one, when the church shall arise and shine in her millennial glory; when she shall put on her beautiful garments, and become the joy and praise of the whole earth.

The other, when, in the perfection of beauty, she shall be presented as a chaste virgin to Christ the heavenly bridegroom, and, being clothed with his righteousness, shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of glory forever and ever. Oh, my soul, rejoice in this great salvation. Lord, grant unto your unworthy servant a portion of this felicity. Make me even now a living member of your mystical body, poor in spirit, and pure in heart, patiently enduring every trial, daily exercising faith in your truth and mercy; adoring your sovereignty; admiring your power; and rejoicing in the perpetuity of the grace which lives in all your faithful people, and preserves them unto your eternal kingdom and glory.

Let my whole heart praise you, you God of my salvation. Let my whole life be consecrated unto you. The work, Oh Lord, is yours. You alone can new-create the soul. Perform this act of grace, this miracle of mercy, for your own glory and to your everlasting praise. Amen and amen. Oh! come you servants of the Lord, Whose will is your delight; His boundless love and grace record, While heart and tongue unite. Strike up your harps, and sweetly sing Of Jesus' lovely name; To him your grateful tribute bring, His endless praise proclaim.

Declare what wonders he has done, Make all his glories known; Adore the Father's equal Son; The priest upon the throne. Sing of his rich and sovereign grace, Transcendent and divine; Sing how he died to save our race From misery and sin. He died for us--he made our peace; He pleads our cause on high; Oh! may our praises never cease, Hosannahs never die! May each revolving year inflame Our zeal, delight, and love; Until round the throne we chant his name In purer strains above. Oh! come, you servants of the Lord, His endless praise proclaim; In gladsome notes his love record, For, "worthy is the Lamb."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/thomas-reade/on-the-burning-bush/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net