

# Kindling Wood

by Vance Havner

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*The Church is failing to make progress because its members know so little about the cross and the fire, and are more concerned with being comfortable than with being faithful.*

**Duration:** 43:56

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Luke 12:49-51, Galatians 2:20

**Topics:** "Christian Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the need for a dedicated group of believers, like Gideon's band, to make a significant impact in the world. He criticizes the focus on numbers and statistics in measuring the effectiveness of preachers, instead urging for a focus on the quality of discipleship. The preacher encourages every Christian to recognize their potential to be used by God, regardless of their perceived weaknesses or limitations. He references Luke 12:49-53, where Jesus speaks about bringing fire and division to the earth, highlighting the need for a passionate commitment to the cause of Christ.

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## Transcript

I would like to direct your attention to the twelfth chapter of Luke, beginning with verse forty-nine. These are the words of our Lord. Luke 12, forty-nine.

I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I if it be already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straightened till it be accomplished? Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth, I tell you, nay, but rather division. For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father.

The mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother. The mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And he said also to the people, when ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say there cometh a shower, and so it is.

And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say there will be heat, and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it that ye do not discern this time? Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right? Our Lord says three things here. He says first that he has come to set the world on fire.

He says in the second place, before he starts that fire, he must go to the cross. Then he says in the third place that he has not come to send peace, but as Matthew puts it, the sword, dividing men according to their relationship to him. The cross, the fire, and the sword.

He endured the cross, he started the fire, and he wields the sword. When he said these things, he faced the baptism of blood on Calvary. And how am I straightened till it be accomplished? He was under the terrific urge to accomplish his mission in this world.

He didn't come just to live, or to teach, but to die, and to give his life a ransom for many. Now he's under the constraint of the cross. Our Lord could have set the world on fire, after a fashion, without the cross.

He could have divided men by the sword of loyalty to his cause, without going to Calvary. But he never could have provided redemption, for without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. I'm sure that those who wanted to crown him after he had fed the 5,000 with five loaves and two fishes, must have said, if he can do that, he ought to be able to break the yoke of Roman bondage and lead us into the promised land of peace and prosperity.

We ought to make a king of him. But the only crown he ever accepted was the crown of thorns. He had to baptism to be baptized with.

After the cross, there's a fire. Now the early Church Fathers thought this meant the Holy Spirit. Today they say it means persecution, as the verses that follow would seem to indicate.

And yet, the persecution and the division were consequences of the movement begun by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. So the early Fathers and later expositors, like McLaren, are probably right after all. Fire is often a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

He came at Pentecost with cloven tongues, like as a fire. The world was set on fire then, and all the devices of the devil have never been able to put out the conflagration. Then the sword.

Our Lord is the great divider. Several times in the Gospels we read there was a division of the people on account of him. There always is.

He divides family and society and humanity. He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. That disposes forever of an inactive Church member.

There is no such thing. Because if you are not gathering, you are scattering. And either is activity.

When a Church member says, don't get me wrong, I know I'm not doing anything for the Lord, but I'm not against him. Yes, but he is. Because if we are not drawing people to Christ, we are driving people away from Christ.

But we are active. Now, humanity splits to the right and the left because of my Lord. There is a lot of pleasant talk today about unity and peace and brotherhood that ignores him.

The only true unity is in him by whom all things consist. And the only true peace with God and of God is in him who is our peace. All believers are one brotherhood, blessed be the tide that binds.

And the only brotherhood of man that the Bible has anything to say about is the brotherhood of the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. And all who are not identified with him by the cross and the fire

and the sword are outside the fold. The Church today makes pitifully slow progress because her members know so little about the cross and about the fire and about the sword.

We put crosses on buildings and sang about the cross and worshiped. But most of our members know next to nothing about what the cross means, for a Christian at least. The cross is preached to unbelievers, but the average Christian seems never to have heard about identification with Christ in death and resurrection, although that's what baptism symbolizes.

And to most of them, Galatians 2.20 is only a Bible verse if it's that. We preach the cross to the world. We fail to preach it to the Church.

And we fail likewise with the fire. We're not setting the world on fire today for all our Bible conferences and our Bible teaching ministries and our radio preaching and all the rest of it. Communism is doing it with fire, satanic fire.

We have stage fire, strange fire in the religious world, not much spirit fire. No wonder somebody has said the Church has become a field for evangelism instead of a force for evangelism. We say that we're depending on the Holy Spirit, but actually we're so wired up with our own devices that if the fire does not fall from heaven, we can turn on a switch and produce some fire of our own.

And if there's not the sound of a mighty rushing wind, we have the furnace all set to blow hot air instead. God save us from a synthetic Pentecost. And since we know so little about the cross and the fire, naturally we have little experience with the sword.

Oh, we have divisions aplenty. I said a while ago that several times in the Gospels it says there was a division of the people on account of him. But there's another verse that says, mark them which cause divisions among you and avoid them.

Now, if you were from a church tonight where there's division and trouble, murmurings and swellings and disputes and all that category that the Holy Spirit lists of the sins of the Spirit, you might ask, what caused the division in our church? Is it on account of him or is it on account of them? Now, if it's on account of him, it's all right. If it's on account of them, it's all wrong. Mark them which cause divisions and avoid them.

There never has been a time when fundamental Christianity has been plagued and scandalized by so much bickering and feuds. I heard of a new organization the other day. You know all these alphabetical get-togethers that have exhausted the ABCs.

Well, there's another one. They call it the ICGAWA. You know what that means? That means I can't get along with anybody.

I know some very eligible candidates for that organization. Now, in a day when we're crying peace when there is no peace, as the Old Testament puts it, or peace and safety, as the New Testament puts it, trying to unify everybody, it seems, instead of calling men to a loyalty to Christ that divides even families, our Lord came not to send peace with a sword, and he called men to a cross-bearing discipleship that separates them from the world. The world is becoming a little more churchy and the church is becoming a little more worldly, and the lines are down in this new togetherness.

I don't know of any word that I've gotten tired of quicker than this word togetherness. I'm just worn out with it. And the thing shows no signs of dying.

Of course, there is a true togetherness, thank God. Here it is tonight at Ben Lippin. We represent different churches and fellowships, but we love the Lord.

And that kind of togetherness I like. We have it every time we gather in the name of the Lord. One of our great Southern preachers used to use a very homely illustration, but a good one, about this matter.

He said if you take a bundle of crooked sticks and spread them out, you know how they point all directions. But he said if you tie them in a bundle, they have a way of straightening each other out, and they don't look so crooked after all when you tie all of them in a bundle. Now when you get the saints together in the unity of the Spirit, we sort of have a way of straightening each other out.

And it helps, I thought, when you were singing. I've thought it many times when congregations were singing. Now if I had to listen to them one at a time, my, I'd hate to hear that.

But you know, when we get to singing together, we have a way of sort of ironing out all these slurs and these slaps and these misses and near misses that we make getting along through the song. You didn't sound too badly tonight. And it's because we were all working at it.

Now that's the kind of togetherness that I'm in favor of. When we live and pray and sing in unison. The Church upset the world in these early centuries when she was separate and distinct.

But she lost her power when Constantine came along and the Church was married. That is, the professing Church to the world. And today, while the professing Church, for the most part, fails to travel the way of the cross and the fire and the sword, all kinds of modern movements are using the very terminology and technique, even of the Church, to advance their causes.

They've stolen our tactics. They talk about a cross, and they talk about a fire, and they talk about a sword. And they emphasize vicarious suffering, and they're aflame with a zeal that defies persecution and prison and death.

When Mr. Khrushchev was over here the first time on his speech-making tour, as much as I regretted that he was ever invited, and as much as I begrudged the time that he spent over here preaching communism, and as glad as I was when he left, I couldn't help saying as I watched him on television, there is a man, say what you will, there's a man on fire for something. There's a man utterly consumed with a zeal for the thing he represents. He never missed a chance to preach communism.

He took advantage of every moment to peddle his bill of goods, and he got it over in his own way, I'm afraid, to an awful lot of people, because you'd be surprised how many there are in America now who are falling for the better-read-than-dead philosophy in this atomic age. And in such a time as this, we ought to take a lesson or two from the children of this world. Have you read the biography of Ho Chi Minh, the communist boss of Indochina? Why, by all ordinary reasoning, he should be dead by now, a consumptive, just a little wisp of a man, but kept going by the fires of an utter, absolute devotion to the cause of communism.

Nothing else will explain the survival of that character. Then we think of Lenin saying what we want fewer but better disciples. He said, we do not want people who will give us their spare evenings, we want people who will give us the whole of their lives.

No wonder it sweeps the world. He said, we will not accept anyone who has any reservations whatever. And Mr. Malik, the Lebanese delegate at one time to the UN, said, I know the communist leaders, they are utterly devoted to their cause, and that's not true, he said, of most Americans I know.

Why do you not press the battle to victory with the weapon God gave you to win, the heritage of the Christian faith? One reason why we don't press the battle to win is that as Dr. Phillips has said, the Church is so prosperous that it's fattened out of breath and so organized that it's muscle-bound. And in a time like this, we're not prosecuting, we're not carrying forth the battle to a good finish because of this sad paralysis that has fallen over us. We've lost our Christian identity because we've lost our Christian identification.

The word Christian is found only three times in the New Testament, and each time it's a mark of identification. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. They were identified with a person.

And then Agrippa said to Paul, and so you think with a little more persuasion. You'll make a Christian out of me? Almost thou persuades me to be a Christian. A Christian is a persuader because he's been persuaded.

He's persuaded that nothing can separate him from the love of God in Christ. He's persuaded that God will keep that which he has committed unto him against that day. And knowing the terror of the Lord, he persuades men.

If you're a Christian, you're identified with a person and a persuasion. And then we read, if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf. You're identified with a persecution.

How much of that have you known? Do you know anything about this? Some time ago, the church of which I'm a member, the First Baptist of Greensboro, celebrated its 100th anniversary. And our former pastor, Dr. Clyde Turner, who was pastor for 38 years, wrote a history of the church. And Dr. Turner said less than 100 years ago, the members of this church were despised and their pastor was hit on the streets.

Well, we're not despised now. Not in a million and a quarter dollar building with 3600 members. And it's a typical prosperous church today, but I don't find many churches despised anywhere I go.

I don't find the pastors being hissed on the street. Somebody has said that if this world is moved for God today, it will be by a persecuted minority storning the values of this world and living under stringent discipline. I like that.

The course of every religious movement runs from a cave to a cathedral. It starts in a cave of a dolem with a little David's band and it usually winds up in a cathedral and then God's through with it and starts over in a cave again with somebody else. Now in Europe, the cathedrals are nice to look at these days.

And from the standpoint of history and architecture, they're interesting, but you wouldn't go there to have your soul revived in a good old-fashioned spiritual meeting. It seems that the greatest days of the church were not the days of the cathedrals, but the days of the catacombs, when Christians were fed to lions in Roman amphitheaters. But we've traveled a long way, you know, since the days of the cross and the days of the fire and the days of the sword.

We've lost our identity because we've lost our identification. Teddy Roosevelt, during the First World War, used to talk about hyphenated Americans. He was talking about German-Americans who had a divided allegiance and he said, if you're an American and something else, you're not an American.

And by the same token, I can say tonight, if you're a Christian and something else, you're not a Christian. A man who is 85% faithful to his wife is not faithful at all. There isn't any such thing as part-time devotion to Jesus Christ.

You're in it all out or you aren't in it. We have a sort of a Christian-plus church member today, but the church is not a polyglot boarding house. Teddy Roosevelt said, America's not that.

Neither is the church. It's not a catch-all for everybody. I read the other day a little squib in one of our papers.

A certain religious group said, oh, we've got room for everybody in our church. As liberal as this and as fundamental as that, and on down the line they went. And after I'd read it all, I said, that's too much room.

That's more room than the New Testament church ever had. We have too many today who think you get to heaven by being religious instead of by being righteous. And they don't seem to understand that the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, and righteousness must come before the peace and the joy.

Everybody wants the peace and the joy. The bookstores are loaded with books on serenity and tranquility and peace and all the rest of it. But you don't have many people coming to church to ask, how can I get right and live right and be right and stay right? I want to get right.

It's like a man with a broken arm saying to the doctor, no, don't set the arm, just give me a shot. I want to feel better, but don't set the arm. And a lot of dear people on Sunday mornings say, I don't want to be set, I don't want to be put right, give me a shot.

And that's what they get sometimes. And they go out feeling pretty good. And then it wears off.

And the trouble has never been adjusted. Now, all of this sits on our own doorstep, individually. Churches are made out of people.

Here we are tonight, and let me ask you, and let me ask myself, what do we know about the cross in our experience? Now, people who come to Ben Lippin have heard all of these familiar things that I can say tonight, that Christ died for, that we're dead in sin, and Christ died for sin, and we're dead to sin. You've been brought up on that, and that a cross is an eye crossed out, and all those other things that have been in our messages through the years. But do we accept it, and do we agree to it, and do we reckon ourselves dead to sin, alive to God, and do we consent to death to the old self-life with all its ambitions and interests? We've heard it so much, we can rattle it off.

It has become an easy language with us. But how far have we gone in the experience of it? Alas, too many are just what they've always been, baptized sinners, religious but not righteous, and the cross is only a symbol. I've watched comfortable Sunday morning congregations sing, I take all cross thy shadow for my abiding place, I ask no other sunshine than the sunshine of his face, content to let the world go by to know no pain, no gain or loss, my sinful self, my only shame, my glory on the cross.

And I've wondered what would happen if that song could leap out of the book and get hold of that crowd just once, and live itself out in their experience for the rest of the week. Now what do we know about the fire? Our Lord didn't stay on the cross, he didn't stay in the tomb. He arose from the dead and the Spirit of God raised him.

We're not only dead to sin, we're alive to the Spirit. At Pentecost the Spirit came with cloven tongues and the disciples were set aflame with a zeal that nothing could intimidate or cool. The average Christian is not only ignorant of the meaning of the cross, never been set on fire.

Consequently we're not setting the home and the church and the community and the nation and the world on fire. Because we're not on fire ourselves. And of course if we don't experience the cross and the fire we know nothing of the sword.

We're developing a generation of Christian diplomats instead of soldiers, specializing in how to get along with everything and everybody, including the devil if necessary. It's an era of conformity and regimentation and it's almost the unpardonable sin to be different or to oppose anything. They tell me that in our colleges now that debating societies are becoming more and more unpopular because our young people, they don't like to take sides on issues.

They don't like to debate in a debating society. They don't like to take a firm stand. Public relations is the major item.

And the road to success is full of glad handers, experts in double talk. We are a neither nor crowd in a universe that is either or. Lost or saved, heaven or hell, Christ or Belial, you can't be neither nor in God's universe that's either or.

And yet, I want to give credit where credit is due. I think that I rarely speak anywhere that I don't have in my crowd somebody who has seen the flash of the Master's sword. That little woman who slips into church unobserved, who has left her godless family at home and was ridiculed before she started the church and will get some more of it when she gets back, she knows what that verse means, that a man's foes shall be there of his own household.

She has seen the flash of the Master's sword. And that student on a pagan campus whose prayer has been, Lord, make my life a challenge and not a compromise, and who will not lower the flag of faith under pressure nor join the wild debauchery to be popular, that student has seen the flash of the Master's sword. And that good man who works all day long in a fog of profanity and blasphemy and who turns down the cocktail glass at the boss's party, he knows he has seen the flash of the Master's sword.

And such people don't believe in peace at any price. They follow a Lord who said, I came not to send peace, but a sword. I tell you, beloved, no man can be true to Jesus Christ and be one of the crowd.

He's an odd number in the very nature of the case. And he will not be brainwashed into conformity. Now, of course, there are such minor adjustments and adaptations as any sensible person makes for the sake of the truth as we become all things to all men that we might win, not please some, but win some.

And there is a reasonable flexibility. If your backbone stayed rigid all the time, you'd be pretty uncomfortable. And yet, I must remind you that on the other hand, the most perfectly adjusted people in the world are all in cemeteries.

The sum of the whole matter is this. Our Lord came down here to set the world on fire. And it's on fire, but not with pedophiles.

It's on fire with world religions. It's on fire with nationalism and communism and the kind of Christianity most church members have today wouldn't set anything on fire. This led to see an age living at a comfortable 72 degrees.

I heard of an actress who came over here and she was very finicky about the temperature. And back in the days before air conditioning, she insisted that the room must always be 72 degrees. That was pretty hard to handle in those days until somebody had a bright idea.

They took a thermometer and emptied out all the mercury and put red ink in it up to 72 and hung it in her room and she was just as happy as could be. She said no matter whether it's snow or whether it's several outside, always it is 72 in my room. She had a little trouble trying to figure out, though, why there was such a difference in 72 between New York and Los Angeles in the winter and in the summer, respectively.

But my Lord is saying to the led to see in church, lukewarm now mind you, be boiling, be zealous, be boiling, that's what it means, be boiling and repent. The church needs to come to a boil. I don't expect the total membership of any church to catch on fire.

I've never seen it happen. I doubt if it ever will. Most of the world is under communism but all these millions are not devoted commons.

The world was set on fire for communism by a little band and a hard core completely sold out to Karl Marx and the devil. And less than one half of one percent of the Japanese people kept President Eisenhower out of Japan. Now, something like that could happen if we could have a corresponding dedication on the part of a Gideon's band among all the people.

Somebody has said we've taken great pride in counting numbers. The time has come to make numbers count. We measure creatures today by how they draw the net.

And if they know how they draw the net, they're good. We need somebody who knows how to sort the fish. We've got all kinds of curious creatures in this net.

Oh, I know the angels will do it ultimately but we could do a little separating here in advance if we used our sanctified intelligence. Now, God doesn't move the world with statistics. He moves it with saints.

A little Gideon's band who know something about the cause and the fire and the soul. Dr. Torrey used to say in order to have a revival in a church, let a few members of that church get thoroughly right with God themselves. That's the first move.

Billy Graham has said that if he were a pastor he thinks he'd take eight or ten or twelve men and start with them in a prayer meeting. Billy says our Lord was not very successful with big crowds. Said he did his greatest work with a handful.

That's true. You remember that the Revolutionary War started out with minute men like those heroes who stood there in New England and fired the shot heard around the world. Well, I'm engaged these days in trying to rally a few last-minute men.

And when God gave me a little more time, I resolved by his grace to engage in trying to gather, as never before, not a crowd because you won't in this sort of thing, but a corporal's guard everywhere I go who will mean business and be consumed with the zeal for God and his cause and his house. When Mr. Moody went to Scotland, the meetings didn't start off so well. The crowds built up slowly.

Some of the preachers got nervous. They said Moody will have to do better than this. Mr. Moody asked them a simple question.

How do you start a fire? And anybody who grew up in the country and made fires on a winter morning knows the technique. I grew up 100 miles down the road, Catawba County, up on top of a hill, old-fashioned country house. We had air conditioning.

It didn't cost a nickel. Our Lord just blew it right through the place. And I was delegated quite early by my father to be the official firemaker.

He said, those cold winter mornings seemed like 2 o'clock was a little later. Get up and make a fire. I learned early in life that it paid to rise on first call.

If I waited for second call, that was unfortunate. Third call, that was a calamity. So I rose and made my way into the kitchen.

And there I raked off the ashes that had accumulated during the night and hoped that there would be some coals underneath, live coals. If there were, that helped a lot. I brought in my wood the day before.

I had my backlog, and I had my middle-sized wood, and I had my kindling. I put my kindling on those live coals and blew. I was blue.

And the flame came up, and then I put on my middle-sized wood, and I had a fire. Now listen, if I had tried to set that backlog on fire first, I'd still be down there in Catawba County trying to start a fire. You don't start a fire that way.

And any preacher who is trying first to set on fire that unconverted and undedicated backlog of the majority of the members is wasting time. You don't start a fire that way, and God doesn't start His fires that way. God starts with kindling.

Years ago I went to what is now Gardner-Webb College over in Cleveland County, Borrowing Springs High School. They put me on a quartet. First and last time I ever was on a quartet.

They learned early that I did not belong. We had a little song. I won't forget that first and last musical venture.

I joined them. I was the bass, and it was bass singing, I can assure you. My name is Johnny Johnson, and I come from Kalamazoo, and I'm selling kindling wood to get along.

Now if you want to help me, just buy my kindling wood, for I'm selling kindling wood to get along. Not a classic, exactly. But, you know, I got to thinking about that thing the other day, and I said, I'm not selling kindling wood, but I'm gathering kindling wood.

And that's my business in these days, wherever I go, to try to gather a few young people and older men and women who under God are willing to be available and inflammable and extendable, who are willing to

be torches for the truth and faggots for the faith and fuel for the flame of God. And I know the excuses that some of you will offer tonight. You say, but I'm too weak, and I don't have much money, and I don't have gifts, and I don't amount to much.

Haven't you read again and again of forest fires that burn thousands of acres that started with a spark? There's not a soul in here tonight who can't be God's kindling wood when you leave this mountaintop to go back to your home and your church and your community. Every Christian in here is usable material, and we're not going to set this world on fire by condemnation of it. We're not going to set it on fire certainly by conformity to it.

We're going to set it on fire by the combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God. And if it ever catches fire again, that's the way it'll happen. And when God graciously granted me a little more extension of time in January, I resolved to preach this everywhere I go, this message, because God starts His fire with kindling wood and nothing greater could happen than that right here on this mountaintop He could gather together, even tonight, out of this crowd, and I know some of you are veterans in Christian work, yes, but oh, I ask you, and this sermon hits in all directions, are you sure that you are available to be God's kindling wood at any cost? And of course it will consume you.

Are you dead certain and sure that you are available and expendable? It's one thing to come up here and revel in gospel truth. You go back down the mountain to that home where a man, or that bickering or trouble-beset church, and that sinful community, or back out in suburbia, maybe where you live. Are you sure that you're willing to be God's kindling wood? You said, well, the preacher.

Why pass the book all the time to the preacher? I know he ought to do it, and sometimes he doesn't, but maybe you ought to start it. And it doesn't say anywhere in the Bible that you're exempt. Why don't the deacons, why don't you? Have you taken this challenge? Or will you take it tonight? You say, but I don't count for much where I am.

You can set the place on fire. You can furnish a spark. You're going back soon, you young folks, to that pagan school.

And you say, but oh, you don't mean to lie. Yes. You can be a spark.

You can be God's kindling wood in that fellowship. Nobody exempt. The only thing God asks of you is to bring yourself to Him and say, Lord, may Thy rich grace impart strength to my fainting heart, my zeal inspire.

Thou hast died for me. Oh, may my love to Thee, pure, warm, and changeless, be a living fire. God, I'm tired of stage fire and strange fire, and we're all beset with satanic fire.

Great God, kindle a flame of sacred love on this cold heart of mine with holy fire. And God will do it. He'll catch you up on it.

He's shorthanded now. Harvest is plenteous. The labors are few.

And the eyes of the Lord run to and fro, waiting to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him. And it's all the same thing. You're willing to be as Kinman would.

I'm going to ask you tonight. I ask this everywhere else. I know that we're supposed to have the cream of the crop up here.

But oh, beloved folks at Ben Lippin need to do this too. How many of you have never done this? Or you have done it, and tonight the flame has died low. And you'd be man enough and woman enough to acknowledge it.

And at the rate you're going, you're not going to set anything on fire. And you'd be honest enough tonight. You've got Bible information.

You've had enough Bible teaching to set the whole state on fire. But you're not doing it. And you'd be willing tonight to say, I'm tired of that.

It dishonors God, and I confess it, and I claim the cleansing blood, and I want to be filled with the Spirit. Somehow all our Bible conferences are not doing it. Thank God for them.

But somehow all our church activity is not doing it today. Something's wrong. And I'm going to quit judging the preacher and judging the deacons and judging the denominations and judging everybody else.

I'm going to judge myself for a change. And I'm willing to be God's kin than would with a dedication, a brand new dedication if I've never made one before. And if I have, I want to reaffirm that dedication tonight.

I always hesitate about propositions these days. I've made a good many in my life, and I make fewer now than I did because I want them to count for more than a lot of them do. Really, I'm not trying to whip up a mass response here tonight.

And honestly, I'd be a little bit uncertain if everybody got up and wanted to do this. I don't know. I'd be afraid maybe you misunderstood me.

The easiest thing in the world is to say, well, I ought to. I don't want to sit here and claim to be a Christian. Look, I teach a class in my church.

I ought to do that. So here you come. But no, don't.

Please, really. Unless deep down in your soul, in a way that's going to mean something, you do it tonight. Don't come to make me feel good.

Unless the Holy Spirit has spoken to you soberly tonight and deep down in your soul, you're willing in a way that perhaps you never have been before, although you may be a veteran in Christian service. This is not for amateurs alone tonight. I'm going to ask you to do one thing without any singing.

I'm going to ask you without even bowing our heads because I don't think that's necessary. I want everyone who are in a serious and a new way. And I'd rather have a dozen down here who mean it the way I mean it when I say it and the way I believe God means it than to get a careless mass response that isn't going to make a bitter difference when you get down the mountain.

It's not going to make any difference anyhow by your resolving, but it's going to make a difference if you invite the Holy Spirit to take you over lock, stock and barrel and make it real. Our Father, Thou knowest the hearts of these people who stand up here. We believe they came sincerely and honestly.

Our Lord, take this human kindling wood. We offer it to Thee. We offer it ourselves.

O dear Lord, do kindle the flame of sacred love in our cold hearts and do Thou burn out all that is displeasing and help us not to excuse ourselves and say there isn't much we can do. We can pray, we can testify, we can serve God to the limit of our ability. O take us as we are and make us what we ought to be.

Help these dear people tonight to remember they've done business with God as they go out of here and back home presently help them to remember that they don't go alone. Lord, start something this week at Ben Lippin that will carry fire all around over the state and the adjoining states and wherever it pleases Thee. Lord, it's not enough to get up here and just go to so many meetings and enjoy a good time together.

Thank God for all that, but this is an awful hour, Lord. Thou knowest what runs across the headlines of our papers. Thou knowest this hour of extremity.

Thou knowest how lightly we, God's people, have taken this time when it would seem the churches would be crowded with people while yet there is time, beseeching God. O forgive us, Lord, that we have gotten into such a paralysis and help us to stir up the gift of God that's within us and help us, as Thy prophet said long ago, to stir up ourselves to take hold of God. Forgive us that Thou had to say it then and would say it today.

There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of God. We realize, oh well, Lord, this does not mean merely the arousing of our own feelings and abilities, but it does mean that we employ the means of grace to arouse ourselves to holy endeavor instead of telling our souls to take it easy. Help us to say, Wake my soul, stretch every nerve, and press with vigor on.

Oh, help us not to go by our feelings. Some of us don't feel much like doing a lot of things these days, but the time is short. And if ever we're going to count for God, we'd better be at it.

So help us to take ourselves severely in hand, if necessary. Take ourselves as one of Thy great servants to sit by the back of the neck and march ourselves to the place of duty, trustee, for the sealing in Thy good time. But be faithful unto God when we feel like it and when we don't.

We feel like there are others in here tonight, Lord, who have gotten into a sad state of apathy. Lord, help us not to confuse complacency with peace. Don't let us get mixed up, Lord, and think that because things don't bother us anymore that we have reached Christian serenity.

Oh, holy disturber, how we do need not only the comfort of the Holy Ghost, but the disturbance of the Holy Spirit in these days. So do Thou arouse and disturb people around here, and may there be those who, if they did not do business with Thee tonight, will not rest this night till they do settle things, and the work will get around later. They'll say, I have come to God in a secret place and offered myself and He accepted me, and I'm in His hands and a co-laborer with Him.

Thank you, Lord, for this kindling wood tonight set it on fire by the Holy Spirit, and may this week, as we move along through, may the fire burn brighter and brighter, and we won't need to publicize it because Pentecost was its own publicity, and the work will get around where we live. That these have walked with the Lord. We thank Thee for Thy presence with us.

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