

3 Characteristics of God's House

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of building on the rock, which is the Bible and obedience to God's Word, and the need to renovate relationships and reach out to others to build God's house.

Duration: 56:46

Scripture: Exodus 3:2-3, Leviticus 25:10, 2 Chronicles 24:8-12, Psalm 119:105, Isaiah 66:2, Haggai 1:5-7, Matthew 5:14-16, Luke 24:32, Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 14:24-25

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Gods Word"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of God's Word as the foundation of the church, the fire of the Holy Spirit burning in believers' lives, and the need to reach out to others with the light of God's truth. It highlights the significance of trembling at God's Word, experiencing the genuine fire of the Holy Spirit, and actively sharing the message of God's love and salvation with those around us.

Transcript

Well, praise the Lord for all that he's done for us through all these years. It was in October 1981 that we completed this, just this one hall. We didn't have anything else.

It was 25 years ago. In the Old Testament, we read that they used to celebrate their jubilee after 50 years. Well, I suppose those days, since they lived up to 175 and things like that, 50 years is okay.

But since now we live only about half that age, we could celebrate when we have finished 25 years. When we come to think of a physical building, the only church never had it. We ourselves never had it for the first six years of our meeting as a church.

And one of the things we see when people meet in homes is the sense of a family. And that's something which is easily lost when we get into a building. But it shouldn't be lost.

The disadvantage of meeting just in a home is, in the world and society in which we live, particularly with cities, it's impossible to reach out to more than a certain number of people. And if you meet in a number of different homes, then of course it's very difficult to find good leadership. So one of the necessities that has become, what has become a necessity nowadays, is meeting halls where we can get more people to listen to God's Word.

In a meeting hall, when we think of the Old Testament, think of the words of Jesus. He described the Christian life like a man building a house. And he said the most important thing was the foundation.

The foundation, he said, was His Word. The one who listens to my Word obeys Him. His house is built on the rock.

So that's one of the things we must remember. This church was started on the foundation of the Bible as God's Word, the words of Jesus, and we want to continue till the end holding that foundation. The second thing we see in the Old Testament was that the distinctive feature of God's house, the tabernacle in the Old Testament and the temple in the Old Testament, was the fire on top of the most holy place of the tabernacle and the temple, which was called the Shekinah Glory.

Shekinah is a Hebrew word. Glory, it was like a fire. You could build another building like that if you wanted.

You could build a temple like that even today, but you couldn't reproduce that fire from heaven. So that's the second thing that should distinguish us. The foundation of God's Word and the fire from heaven.

And the whole purpose of God bringing His people together in a meeting hall or in a house or anywhere is so that the light will shine for other people. So we can say those are the three things that we should always keep in mind when we think of this renovation that we've been able to do in this building to facilitate more people coming in and to make it easier for videotaping the messages so that the messages can go over the internet to every country in the world. What are the three? The first, the foundation, the Bible, obedience to God's Word, allowing God's Word to search us.

And second, the fire of the Holy Spirit in our lives all the time, burning. When that's gone, we can say God's gone. You can have singing, you can have music, plenty of money, but if the fire is gone, everything is gone.

And the third is that we must reach out, not be centered in ourselves and think of our own benefit, what we get, but think of other people who don't have what we have. That's how Jesus came down to earth. And the only reason Jesus came down to earth was because there were so many people on earth who didn't have what he had in heaven.

So I thought we could think about these things today. Before that, I just want to show you a couple of verses from Leviticus, first of all, in chapter 25. In Leviticus 25, we read, this is a great chapter about celebrating the jubilee.

And it says here in verse 10, Sanctify the fiftieth year and make it a holy year. Proclaim freedom all over the land to everyone who lives in it. A jubilee for you.

What are we called to proclaim when we celebrate any type of jubilee? Freedom. Freedom from sin. Freedom from legalism.

Freedom from an unforgiving spirit. In other words, we have to release people who owe us an apology or who have hurt us in some way. We can't forgive their sin.

That only God can do. But the horizontal aspect, that somebody hurt me, I can forgive him. If he repents before God, then God will also forgive him.

But that horizontal aspect of releasing them is very, very important. That's what the jubilee was all about. And I hope as we come together to celebrate that we will take that seriously.

I hope you're not catching anybody's throat this morning, that you've taken your hand off and released whatever people may have done to you or said about you or not done for you, and you're thinking about it. If we don't take that seriously, we don't take God's word seriously. And it says here that everybody must return to his property, and each of you shall return to his family, verse 10.

There must be a coming together of family relationships in a year of jubilee. And that family means, first of all, your home, and then the church. We have two families today.

Every relationship in your home, husband, wife, father, parents, children, between the children must be resolved. Everybody must release the other. And in the church, we must make a new beginning and maintain that spirit of releasing one another, value that relationship.

Then I want to show you another chapter in 2 Chronicles. 2 Chronicles, in chapter 24, we read about a young man who was a king. He was actually not even a young man.

He was a boy. When he was seven years old, Joash became king of Judah. And it's amazing.

Can you think of a seven-year-old boy? But he had a God-fearing leader in a priest called Jehoiada who guided him, and he listened to him. It's wonderful when children and young people listen to godly older people. The result was, I wanted to see here in verse 4, that Joash determined to renovate the temple of God because he saw it was in a bad shape.

He decided to renovate it and make it proper. And we read here that verse 8, they placed a chest, a box, at the gate to the house of the Lord. And they didn't compel anybody to give any money, but they kept the box there.

And it says here, verse 11, whenever the box was full, there was so much money, they brought it in. And then they used that money to hire, verse 12, masons and carpenters, etc., to restore the house of the Lord, and further down to buy the video cameras and all that. Okay, that's a modern paraphrase anyway.

But we don't believe money is the most important thing in God's work. We believe it's a part of the Holy Spirit. But if you had to spread the word to other places, we need certain facilities and God has provided them.

Now I want to turn you to another passage in Haggai chapter 1. You see, Haggai was a prophet who came along with Zechariah to Jerusalem from Babylon and stirred up the people to build God's temple, which was in ruins. In those days, the physical building was God's temple. Today, it's not the physical building.

Today, it is the people. We are God's building. So if there's a broken relationship, that needs to be renovated.

So when I talk about renovation, please remember, we're not talking about a building. Jesus was born in a stable. That was the first house of God on earth for Jesus to live in.

And a lot of the early Christians met in caves in the underground in Rome because they were running for their lives. And even today, there are people who meet like that in different difficult situations. But where we have the facility, we use it.

But the point is this. The house of God, which is a physical building in the Old Testament, today is a church. It's our relationships that we're talking about.

The house of God was in ruins. And the Lord said, in verse 5, Consider your ways. How do you say that it is, verse 4, How do you say it's the right time for you to live in your fine new homes while God's house is in ruins? There are many who would criticize anything looking good in a physical meeting hall who would build the best possible home for themselves.

It's amazing. It's true even today. And that's what Haggai was saying.

You guys, you came back from Babylon and you didn't have any proper homes here, but you built fancy houses for yourselves. But look at the condition of God's temple. None of you were concerned about that.

It's something we see of the selfishness of our nature. We would spend any amount of money on ourselves and our homes, but very little for God. And that is the reason why we are spiritually poor and remain spiritually poor, not because of money, but because of that attitude where self is more important than God.

That's the point. It's not money. And the Lord says, further down, Take a good hard look at your life.

What a word. Take a good hard look at your life and think it over. Reading from the Message Bible in verse 5. You spend a lot of money.

You earned a lot of money in your life, but you don't have much to show for it. You keep filling up your plates, but you're never satisfied. Take a good hard look at your life.

Verse 7. Consider your ways. Go up to the mountains. Bring wood and rebuild the temple.

That means get along with God and set your house right. Honor me. You made great plans, but nothing has come of it.

And the little you brought, the Lord says, I blew it away, because self was the center of your life. See, if we want to build God's real house, I'll tell you one thing. We got to get self out of the center of our life and make God the center.

The Old Testament prayer of David was like this. Lord, if I forget Jerusalem, that was God's house in those days, today it's a church, let my right hand forget its cunning. That means, you know, if we lose our right hand, it's a major disaster.

It's easier to lose one eye than to lose the right hand. And David was saying, if I'm not concerned about your church, Lord, just like my losing my right hand. It was so important for him.

And that is one reason why David was a man after God's own heart. Today it's not the physical building, as I said, but God honors those who have a burden in their heart to build his church on earth. And there are two ways we build that church.

One is by reaching out to those who should belong here, but are not here yet. And the other is by restoring relationships of those who are here and who are not firmly built together. It's like bricks that have not been cemented together.

You know, if he had built this with bricks that are not cemented together, anybody could push it down. The bricks are there, but it's the cement that holds it together. It's like the limbs of the body, but there are joints that hold them together and enable them to work together.

Those relationships are very important. That's how we build God's house. So, the Lord gave them a wonderful promise.

And he said in verse 9, the glory of this latter house will be greater than that of the former. And I believe that applies to anyone who comes into the new covenant. That in the new covenant, the glory that we're going to experience is far greater than any fire or any glory that they saw in the old covenant.

It's going to be far greater. Many Christians today live under the old covenant, but we can experience the glory. It's far greater than anything that they have experienced.

So, let me just, having given you those thoughts from scripture, let me just share with you a few things about these three things I mentioned. First of all, about God's word. I want to do something now, which we probably haven't done before.

There's a song called The Best Book to Read is the Bible. If you read it every day, it will help you on your way. The best book to read is the Bible.

Do some of you know it? Okay, we're going to hold our Bibles up, because I'm sure we brought our Bibles with us. The best book to read is the Bible. The best book to read is the Bible.

If we read it every day, it will help us on our way. Oh, the best book to read is the Bible. Thank you.

I hope you'll remember that. Many a time you don't get help on your way, because you didn't read God's word. Not because you didn't read it that day, but because it is not a habit in your life.

When a day goes by in your life without eating food, when you have food, and you're not fasting, you become weak physically. And when a day goes by in your life without your having heard what God has to speak to you, something is missing. Something will be lost in that day which can never be replaced.

You can do it right the next day, but that day's what you could have gained is lost. It's like a businessman who kept his shop on Commercial Street shut for one day. He hasn't lost everything, but what he could have earned that day is gone forever.

I mean, tomorrow he can open his shop and go and earn some more. That's okay. And so the day in your life where you don't hear what God has to say to you is a day that you have permanently, please remember the word, permanently lost something which you will never be able to get back the next day.

It's impossible. How can God give that back to you? Can even Almighty God give you back the year 2005? Or the months of 2006 that are over? Can He give you back November 2006 now? Even Almighty God cannot do that. The thing you have lost is lost forever.

The measure in which you could have overcome temptation and partaking of God's nature and been a blessing to others in November 2006 is gone. You can be a blessing now to others this month and next month. You can allow God's word to come into your heart one day.

I mean, let me use an illustration. If you turn to Genesis 1, you know that every day God said something. That's God's word going out.

And the first day there was light. God said, let there be light. And there was light.

Okay. And supposing, let's say on the on the fourth day God said, let there be lights. And the sun and the moon came forth and the stars.

And let's say the universe did not respond to that. Can you imagine how things would have been? Just one day. First day, second day, third day, everything went okay.

Fourth day, the universe said, yeah, let's relax today. Let's just take it easy. There wouldn't have been any sun, moon or stars for all these thousands of years.

Just one day. And the fifth day again they started whales and we got whales and birds and animals and all the sun, moon and stars. Why? Because one day, just one day, they neglected the word of God.

Do you know how much you've missed in your life till today? Do you know how much you've missed? What a wealthy person you could have become today if you had developed the simple habit of listening to God every day. That's why life is so shaky. He who hears my word and does it builds on a rock.

No flood can come and shake him. I don't believe there's anything in this universe that can shake me. No circumstance, no demon, no human being, no threat, nothing.

Not because I'm better than you, I believe. I'm greater coward than all of you. But because I've got a solid foundation under my feet.

It's the foundation that determines whether I'll be shaken, not me. The foundation, God's word. Well, you can't do anything about the past, my brother, sister.

From today, develop the habit of listening. I say to people, even if you have only 5 minutes, read God's word for 5 minutes, God can speak to you. Less than 5 minutes, 1 minute.

Let there be light. How many seconds does that take? 5 seconds. One word.

And if you've gone to work one day and forgotten about the Bible, okay, forgot to read, never mind. Can you bring to your mind in the middle of your work one verse from your memory and say, Lord, I somehow missed reading the Bible today, but can you bring to my mind one verse that I can think of during this day? That is the Bible. In fact, for many hundreds of years, Christians didn't have a Bible.

You couldn't have a quiet time. If you had told the early Christians, have a quiet time, what do you mean by that? They didn't have a Bible, but they would meditate on what they heard. So that's the important thing, that you try and bring to your mind that which you have heard.

Let me show you Isaiah chapter 66. Isaiah 66, and verse 1 and 2. Thus says the Lord, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. The whole of planet earth is just a place where God keeps his feet.

I mean, God doesn't have a body, but he's using symbolic language. You know, you don't care for a stool on which you keep your feet. Ah, that's not like the throne, places where you keep your feet.

The whole of heaven is my throne, he says, the earth is just a place where I keep my feet. What type of house are you going to build me on this earth? What type of grand building are you going to build that's going to impress everybody? You really want to build my house? I'll tell you how to do it. I will look at this type of person, and if you get such people together, you can build my house.

The one who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at my word. The Message Bible says, this is something I'm looking for, a simple and plain person. Do you know that God is not looking for the clever, sophisticated person? Are you a simple and a plain person who reverently responds to everything I say? Oh, what a word.

A simple, plain brother, sister. Not very educated perhaps, not very clever, didn't come first in his class in school, but he was responsive with reverence to everything God said. Those are the type of people he's used through the centuries.

Peter. I don't believe Peter ever came first in his class. Not James, not John.

Maybe Judas Iscariot came first in his class, and that's why he was so clever. But Peter, James, and John, they were somewhere in the lower half of the class, I think. That's why they were fishermen.

I'm not saying God only uses them. There were chartered accountants like Matthew who were also selected to be apostles. But it doesn't make a difference in God's house what your education or your ability or your cleverness is.

But a simple, plain person, a man who trembles at God's word, that's the point. He reads some word and he trembles because he hasn't obeyed it. Trembles.

It's like a man who's not paid his income tax properly and he gets a call from the income tax office that they're gonna check up on his account and he goes trembling. Imagine how it'll be in the day of judgment when we stand before God and God audits all our accounts, audits our life. We can stand there with boldness if we tremble at God's word today.

I want to encourage you, my brother, sister, make this your foundation that I'm gonna base my life on obedience to the word of God. Jesus said, he who listens to my word and obeys it is the man who has built his house on a rock. The man who listens and does not obey is like the man who built on sand.

So, the man who built on sand was also one who came to all the meetings. Otherwise, how did he hear? He listened, but he didn't obey. He didn't tremble at God's word.

He sat there and said, oh yeah, that was a good message. And, they like to hear good messages. Even King Herod liked to hear good messages.

If you ask King Herod, who would you prefer to hear, the Pharisees in the synagogue or John the Baptist? Oh, he said, any day, John the Baptist. Did it make him spiritual? It won't make you spiritual. The fact that you listen to God's word.

No. It's a question of whether you tremble at God's word or not. He who trembles at my word, who is broken.

God's word breaks his spirit. He humbles himself. He's broken by the word of God.

God looks at such people. I want God to look at me. Because if God's looking at me all the time, all my problems are solved.

I don't have to be afraid of anything on the face of this earth. I don't have to live in a panic and a fear this thing may happen, that thing may happen. How shall I solve this problem? Well, someone looking at me will solve my problems for me.

It's amazing. Think that if you can claim this promise for yourself, God says, I will look at you because you tremble at my word. It's wonderful to be like that.

To have God himself looking at me. I have no more fear on this earth. And he never slumbers nor sleeps.

He's watching over me, not only to take care of my immediate problems, but I look at it like this. God is seeing, say, one month or one year from now, somebody scheming or planning to do something to hurt me. God's already seen it.

And he's looking at me. And he's going to do something wonderful to protect me there. You've heard that lovely story of that great man of God, John Wesley, who people were mad at him because he was converting so many people that drinking saloons had to close down in some places and they got mad at him because this guy's converting people.

Their business was going out of them. And things like that. And people were getting born again and living holy lives.

And even the Anglican church was upset with him. They wouldn't let him preach inside that church because he was saying, you must be born again. And people were leaving that church and going to, you know, little fellowships.

And there were people who wanted to kill him. And John Wesley used to ride on a horse early in the morning to go and preach God's word. And he'd come back late at night.

One day when he was coming back from somewhere, they knew the route he would take. And they tied in the darkness a rope between two trees at the level of his body on a horse. And knowing that he would come that way and as he would gallop along on the horse along that way at full speed, this rope would hit him and knock him off the horse.

And they hoped he'd fall down and break his head. And you know what happened? As he came near this rope, it was dark, he couldn't see anything, an ant bit him on his leg. What do you do when an ant bites you on your leg? You bend down and scratch.

And by the time he came up, he had passed the rope. You think God doesn't care for his servants? You think God would allow somebody to knock out his servants like that? Thank God for? Ants, right. I mean, if an ant can save the life of a servant of God like John Wesley, I say praise the Lord.

Gods, I imagine if God can look at you like that. Brother, sister, it's better than having all these commandos and others that these politicians have to look after them. All this secret service staff looking after these great presidents and primes.

I've got somebody better than all of them. God looking at you, it's only one condition. You've got to tremble at his word.

Tremble at his word. I want to do that. All the time.

The second thing is the power of the Holy Spirit. You know, in the Old Testament there was one mark when God was happy with his people that glory was on the temple. And one of the sad things you see in the book of Ezekiel is how Ezekiel sees that glory slowly departing See Ezekiel in chapter 10.

Ezekiel chapter 10. Here, if you read, I don't have time to read through the whole chapter but you can read it, you see how the glory which was over the most holy place didn't suddenly depart one day. Didn't they woke up one morning and found it was gone.

You see a very wonderful picture of how the Holy Spirit leaves a person. Here, that fire was a picture of the Holy Spirit. When John the Baptist said behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world everybody in Israel knew because they were killing lambs every year at the Passover.

And when he pointed to Jesus and said that's the real Lamb of God they understood it. In the same way when the same John the Baptist said he will baptize you, immerse you in the Holy Spirit and fire they knew what that meant because their entire history in the Old Testament was always God manifesting Himself by fire. On the tabernacle there was a fire from heaven.

When they put a sacrifice in Leviticus the fire would come and burn it up. When Solomon offered a sacrifice at the dedication of the temple the fire fell from heaven. And when people backslid and Elijah brought them back to God the fire fell from heaven.

And John the Baptist comes and says now you're gonna get the real fire. The same Lamb of God will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire. And they looked forward to it.

At least 120. They were not the only ones who heard it. There were thousands who heard.

But 120 sought earnestly. It's the same today. All of you here you hear about the baptism of fire.

Some of you will seek it earnestly like the 120. Cleanse their hearts. Get rid of every wrong attitude.

Humble themselves. Acknowledge their faults. Stop blaming other people.

Stop justifying themselves. And the fire of God will fall upon them. The fire of God is not a lot of zeal and excitement.

Even communists have that. Religious fundamentalists of every religion have that. There are people who go and commit suicide in the name of their religion.

Suicide bombers who blow up other people. You read about it regularly in the papers. For the sake of their religion.

That's zeal. A human zeal. I'm not talking about that type of foolishness and stupidity and hurting others.

I'm talking about a zeal that makes us burn with a passion for the glory of God. You can't produce it. In fact, there were warnings in the Old Testament.

Don't try and produce this fire. Let me show you a passage in the Old Testament in the book of Leviticus. We read like this.

Leviticus in chapter 9. Verse 22. Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them and stepped down and made after putting the bond offering and Moses and Aaron went into the tent of the meeting and it says here in verse Leviticus 9.23. The glory of the Lord appeared and fire came from the Lord and burnt up the offering. You see, the burnt offering was a picture of a person dedicating his whole life to God.

You know, they took a bullock, cut it up into pieces and laid it on the altar. That's the burnt offering. The fire came.

And when a man today takes his body and says, Lord, here's my mind, here's my eyes, here's my tongue, here's my thoughts, here's my mind, here's my emotions, here's my ambitions, here's my plans, here's my legs, here's everything. It's all for you. The fire will fall even today.

But if one part of that ox was missing from that altar, the fire wouldn't fall. Supposing one fellow decided to keep one leg for himself and give the rest of the ox to the altar. You wonder why the fire never fell.

You know, when Cain and Abel offered sacrifices, the fire fell on Abel's offering, but no fire fell on Cain's offering. And do you wonder sometimes whether there's a fire in some people's lives and you sort of, you're up and down and up and down and up and down. I'll tell you, you're holding something back for yourself and that other brother or sister did not hold anything back.

That's the only difference. There's no use Cain criticizing Abel or feeling jealous of him. Cain can have the same fire too and you can have it too.

It all depends on you. When every part of the animal was put on the altar, the fire always fell. And here were two people, the next verse.

When the people saw it, they fell down and bowed in reverence. And then it says in the next verse, chapter 10, verse 1. There were two sons of Aaron. They were not totally surrendered to the Lord.

They put hot coals and offered a strange fire to God, which God had not commanded them. We see that today. You know, people are so eager that people in their church should be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

So they have what they call tarrying meetings. And they whip everybody up with emotions, emotions, and beat the drum louder and make everybody bounce together. And then the pastor will keep on saying, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, repeat himself or mutter a few syllables, which he thinks are tongues.

It's just a repetition of two or three syllables backward and forward 10 or 15 times. It doesn't sound like a language at all. And then it gets everybody excited, and some people mumble something and say, Ah, you got it, strange fire, which God had not commanded.

I even saw one person who taught people how to speak in tongues. Say this after me. It's like saying C.A.T. cat in a kindergarten school.

Say this after me, made them all say it. He said, No, we all spoke in tongues. This is a strange fire, the deception that is going on in Christendom today, which God has not commanded.

You know what God did? Again, fire came from heaven, we read in the next verse, verse 2. But this time, it didn't come as a blessing. It came as a judgment and killed these two people. This is how spiritual death has come into a lot of Christendom today.

There is a genuine fire, as you read in Leviticus 9, 24. And there is this false fire that people produce. You make sure you get the real fire.

Any experience that you got in a highly emotionally tense meeting, where you got worked up with the music and worked up with the drums, put a big question mark over that and say, Suspect. It's not the real thing. They didn't have any drums or music or anybody whipping them up in the upper room when the Holy Spirit fell upon them.

In Cornelius' house when Peter was preaching, they didn't have any soft music or any loud music or anybody trying to whip Cornelius up when the Spirit of God fell upon them. You never see it anywhere in the Acts of the Apostles. It was a genuine fire from heaven.

When people don't have that, they have to produce all these things. I tell you this, I don't care if only one person out of 200 or 300 get baptized in the Holy Spirit. That's fine.

Maybe that's the only person who's put every part of the ox on the altar. But we feel bad that the others are sort of get disappointed. So even though they're keeping back so much for themselves, Come on, brother, come on, just say something and you'll be all right.

And the fellow gets some counterfeit and goes around imagining he's baptized in the Holy Spirit. He's powerless, he lives for the world, his ambitions are here. He's a disgrace to the name of Jesus Christ.

That's not God's will. So we're not talking about a false fire. We're talking about that genuine fire.

Think of this example. I always think of this in relation to myself when I seek to be a witness for the Lord. Exodus in chapter 3. You know, Moses was a shepherd for 40 years after he left Egypt in the desert of Midian.

And one day as he was taking the sheep along, we read in verse 2 that he saw a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. And the bush was burning with fire but not consumed. Now he had seen so many bushes.

That's a regular thing. He was going out every day. There are bushes everywhere there.

Why did he suddenly look at one bush? Because it was on fire. It is on fire. Not it was a better appearance or more branches.

No, no, no. It's not a question of number of people sitting in a church. You know, today people are impressed by, Oh, 20,000 people in this church.

Boy. It's like, Oh, this bush is so big. I couldn't care less if the bush is bigger than the biggest skyscraper.

I'd rather see a small bush which is on fire. What are you looking for? A big bush or a bush which is on fire? Today people are looking for a big bush and they're impressed. Oh, God must be there.

Because there are 5,000 people there, 10,000 people there. It's like, Boy, you should count the number of branches in that bush. It's fantastic.

Put all these artificial fertilizers and make a bush grow like that. It doesn't impress me. When God was in that bush, it was on fire.

And I'll tell you, when a bush is on fire, no fungus or bacteria or germs, anything can live there. And that's the type of fire we want in the church. Where nothing like that can live in the church.

No sin. Sin is judged immediately. Because of the fire of God.

People get hurt, they get hurt. If they get offended, they get offended. If they leave, they leave.

But we're gonna keep the fire burning. We're not bothered if people get offended. We're not bothered if people leave.

But we're gonna keep the fire burning. And Moses stopped and looked. That's the thing we need to ask ourselves.

Is our church on fire? You heard me tell the story the other day of this church building that caught fire. I don't know where I said it. And all the neighbors came rushing to pour water on this, put out the fire.

And one of the church members saw one of the atheists pouring water also. And he told the atheist, Well, it's the first time I'm seeing you at church. The atheist said, Well, it's the first time I saw the church on fire.

Sad, isn't it? What do the other people see around us? A big church? A church with good singing? I'll tell you honestly, I couldn't care less if the music is good or bad. If it can make it better, fine. But if we are more concerned about the music, are more concerned about the building and not the fire of the Holy Spirit, then something is seriously wrong with us.

Those other things have their place when the fire is there. The God who answers by fire, let him be God. That's what Elijah said.

He told the prophets of Baal, he said, No, no, no, it's not a question of how big an altar you build and I build a small altar. Elijah's altar was pretty small. Baal, 450 of them.

Can you imagine one man building something and 450 people building something? Where is the comparison? Those fellows would build something grand. But Elijah said, That's all great. Your altar looks better than mine.

But the God who answers by fire, that's the real God. And I'll tell you something. Those altars are a picture of many churches today.

Some are grand, some have got huge buildings, many people. But I say, I want to hear, I want to go to a church where not where there are many people, but where there's a fire burning in the pulpit, where God's word makes my heart burn when I listen to it. And I'd rather go to a church where there are 10 people where I can hear a word like that than go to a church with 10,000 people and I hear some dead old sermon that puts everybody to sleep or that tickles people's ears or tells them everything is okay with them and everything is not okay with them.

Does it set our heart on fire? Let me show you a verse in Luke chapter 24. We must pray this will be like that in our church always. Trembling at God's word and having the fire of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

We read in Luke's gospel chapter 24. There were two disciples who were walking to Emmaus looking very sad. Verse 13 onwards.

And Jesus, they didn't recognize Jesus. Jesus came to them and said, Why are you looking so sad? Verse 17. What are these words? They stood still looking sad.

And Jesus doesn't like people looking sad. The distance from Jerusalem to Emmaus, if you look at a map at the back of the Bible, it's seven miles. It takes a person a good two hours to walk seven miles.

Even though they walk fast. Two hours they walked with Jesus. And Jesus, it says here, beginning with Moses, verse 27, and with all the prophets from Genesis to Malachi.

He explained. He had a Bible study for two hours. Quoting from Genesis and the Psalms and the prophets.

Explained how all these things concerned him. He told them, do you remember how Moses wrote of God told, said that the seed of the woman will bruise the serpent's head. That's Jesus.

Or the serpent lifted up in the wilderness. That's Jesus. That's Christ.

Or the rock smitten in the wilderness. That's Christ. Right through all the way in Malachi.

The son of righteousness. It's Christ. He opened up the scriptures.

And it says here, afterwards when they were thinking of, when they realized it was Christ and they, Jesus disappeared from their midst. They said to him, they said to one another, verse 32, Weren't our hearts burning within us while he was explaining the word to us? I want to be in a church like that. Where you can have a two hour Bible study.

And for every second of those two hours, my heart burns. You know who can do it? The prophets of Baal can't do it. They can just build a big building.

The big altar. It's the fire of the Holy Spirit. And this false fire of manipulating people with emotions and music won't do it.

It's the fire of the Holy Spirit that makes our hearts burn. Burn with conviction of sin. That's how it's supposed to be.

Let me show you another verse. In 1 Corinthians chapter 14, where we read about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which we must always have in the church. The gifts of the Holy Spirit.

We read in 1 Corinthians 14. What happens when the spirit of prophecy is in a church? And prophecy means God speaking to men. Prayer is man speaking to God.

Prophecy is God speaking to men through human beings. And it says here, It's no use, he says in verse 23, if all the whole church comes together and everybody starts speaking in tongues. They'll come in there and say there's a bunch of mad people.

Yeah, you see that sometimes. You go there and I wonder what the heathen think of this. They think it's a bunch of mad people making all these crazy sounds.

It's written in the Bible. But, on the other hand, if people there prophesy, verse 24, in other words, instead of everybody babbling away in tongues in the meeting, let them speak in tongues in private to God. In secret.

That's how I do it. That's how I've done it for 31 years. But in the meeting, if we prophesy, speak God's word in the anointing of the Holy Spirit, what will happen? Verse 25, if somebody comes in and he's convicted, the secrets of his heart are disclosed.

What does that mean? It doesn't mean that the prophet stands up there and says, you, calling out somebody's name, you got a bitterness in your heart. No, no, no, no, no, no. That would be humiliating him.

God doesn't humiliate people. He doesn't call out people by name and say, you never find Jesus doing that. No.

You never find Jesus calling people by name and say, you got this, you got that. No. You hear yourself while you're sitting there.

To yourself, the secrets of your heart are disclosed. You discover some wrong attitude in your heart. You discover something sinful.

And you have an opportunity to cleanse yourself. God speaks to you in such a way that your wife sitting next to you can't hear what he said to you. The brother or sister sitting next to you can't hear.

It's private. Haven't you experienced that? You probably experienced it today. It was God showing you the secret things in your heart.

God wants to deliver you. Send the fire upon your life. The third thing, God gives us his word.

He gives us his fire. And the whole purpose is that we might bless other people. Jesus spoke about the Holy Spirit as rivers of living water that flow to other people.

If you study about the ancient civilizations, you know, the ancient civilizations, if you study about them in a world map, you'll find they all congregated in certain places. You read in India about the Indus Valley Civilization. Why the Indus Valley Civilization? Why not the Rajasthan Tar Desert Civilization? Because in the Indus Valley, there were rivers.

In the Tar Desert, nobody gathered there because there's a desert. Wherever there was a river, people gathered. Everywhere in the world, it was like that.

That's how God draws people. Those who really want his word, one of the things we have prayed here from the beginning is, Lord, if there's anybody seeking a godly life, please bring him to us. Or bring us in touch with him.

And if you don't do either of these, tell us what's wrong with us, that we can cleanse ourselves, so that such people can come and hear the word of God. We don't want every Tom, Dick, and Harry. We don't want every person who's just interested in some fun on Sunday morning or listening to some good music.

We don't want anybody. I mean, there are other concepts and all they have in the palace grounds for those who are interested in music. We're not interested in that.

We're interested in those who are seeking after a godly life, who want a better family life, who want to please God, who want to put the devil under their feet, who want to overcome sin in their life. Lord, bring them to us. And God's shown us what was wrong with us.

He's shown us how we were legalistic, how we were cold towards visitors who came. Nobody would go and greet them. I remember the old days when some visitor would come and he'd stand all alone.

Not a single person would go and say hello to them. But things have changed. Praise the Lord.

We've stopped being so self-centered and selfish and always going to meet our buddies. And we've seen God has placed us here to be a witness to other people. God has given us literature so that we can give literature to other people, not just buy books for ourselves.

Have you ever thought of buying a book and giving it as a gift to somebody? I mean, the books are so cheap. Think of praying a little prayer and giving it as a New Year gift instead of spending 25 rupees on a New Year card or a birthday card. Why not spend less than that on a book? It should have more lasting effect.

To reach out to people. Give somebody a CD or a tape. Ask them to listen to it, even if you lend it.

To reach out. All of us must seek to do it. Otherwise, we'll stagnate.

If we just receive, receive, receive, receive. In Israel, God put two seas. The Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea.

The difference is the Sea of Galilee is always fresh because it gets water, passes it out in the River Jordan. The Dead Sea just receives water and stagnates. You can't drink that water at all.

When you keep on receiving, it's like these lakes and ponds. You can't go and drink water from a pond because it's just receiving rain, rain, rain, rain and stagnant. But you'll drink water from a river because it's always flowing.

That's God's will. That we reach out to others. And I want to say to every single person here, God has not given you His word for you to keep to yourself.

He's not given us facilities, better facilities just to think, Ah, it's more comfortable to us, it looks nice. I couldn't care less if it looks nice. It's to reach out to other people.

It's to reach out to other people across the world with the internet, with television programs, and every possible means that God has allowed man to invent to spread the word because there's a famine of the word of God nowadays, a famine of the true word of the Lord in these days. People's ears are being tickled by things which give them a false sense of security. They're being patted on the back and sent to hell.

They're being taught how they can live a comfortable life on earth and make a lot of money on earth, but haven't partaken of God's nature, haven't overcome the love of money, haven't overcome anger, haven't overcome sexual lust. Once you're getting a better house, better car and all that, the most important things in life we haven't got. That's the type of deception that's going on today and that's why we need the light to shine brightly to go forth from not just one or two.

When that bush was on fire, it was not just one twig that was on fire. Every single twig was on fire and that's how a church should be. And when it is like that, Moses stopped.

And when people see a church like that, they'll stop and listen. And God spoke to Moses from the midst of that bush. I pray that this church will be like that.

Where the fire of God burns and we've got to preserve it, preserve it. And where God can speak and others will hear. Let's pray.

Let's bow our heads before God for a few moments to respond to his word. Lord, you know, we're sincerely seeking you today for that spirit of trembling at your word, for the fire of God upon our lives, and with this purpose, that thereby you'll equip us to reach all whom we are supposed to reach in our lifetime, in this generation, to do the will of God. In this town, in this country, and to the outermost parts of the earth, fill us with the Holy Spirit, we pray to this end.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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