

(The Fire of God) the Fire and the Sword

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the fire of God and the cross in our lives, and warns against counterfeit Christianity that lacks these essential elements.

Duration: 59:55

Scripture: Genesis 3:24, Leviticus 9:24 - 10:1, Matthew 6:33, Luke 10:38

Topics: "Spiritual Humility", "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the danger of seeking knowledge without allowing it to transform one's life. He points out that there is a growing obsession with Bible knowledge, yet many Christians remain ignorant of God. The speaker highlights the importance of humility and the need to trust in God's provision, as demonstrated by Jesus' final miracle of filling a boat with fish. He warns against the danger of relying on one's own abilities and urges listeners to allow the Holy Spirit to control their tongues.

Transcript

I want to continue from what we were considering last Sunday about the baptism of fire. The very first time in the Bible where we read about fire is here in Genesis 3 in the last verse. It says here that God put a revolving sword of fire to guard the way to the tree of life.

And he stationed a number of angels known as cherubs also around it. The tree of life is a picture of Christ and Adam had the opportunity to receive Jesus. But instead he went for knowledge.

Now you'd think he's a fool, right? To go for knowledge instead of Christ. But a lot of people who think he's a fool are also going today for knowledge and not for Christ. There's a world of difference between the two.

And those who go for knowledge, Bible knowledge, become religious. And those who go to Christ become spiritual. The Pharisees were religious and Jesus was spiritual.

Paul was a spiritual man. But before he was filled with the Holy Spirit, he was a religious man. He was at the tree of knowledge.

But one day he moved to the tree of life. And what all of us need to ask ourselves is, which tree are we going to? It's very easy to mistake one for the other because you can hold the same Bible and go to the tree of knowledge. But the way to find out is this.

It's very easy to find out whether you've come to the tree of knowledge or the tree of life. In front of the tree of life, there is a sword and a fire. You've got to get past that.

Now if you happen to find a Christianity without a sword and a fire, it's almost certain that you're religious. And it's possible sometimes, in our early days of zeal when we are converted and accept Christ as our Savior, that we come willing to pay any price and come to the tree of life. We're willing to receive the fire of God in our life and allow the sword to slay our self-life.

But then after a period of time, due to many reasons, one of the reasons could be that you mingle too much with religious people or half-hearted people. You lose the fire and you get rid of the sword. And when that happens, immediately you move to the tree of knowledge.

Or it could be that you marry the wrong person. And then also you cool off. Or you may have got married and marriage became everything to you, even replaced Christ in your life.

Very often I tell young people, I won't say you're wholehearted until you get married and have a couple of children. Let me see how you progress in that movement from single life to married life and becoming a father of one or two children. Then I'll tell you whether you're wholehearted or not.

Because it's very easy to be very zealous and appear to be wholehearted when we are young. And it's activity, you know, even the communists are zealous and the Naxalites are zealous. There's something in human nature that makes us passionate about something.

I mean, the most zealous people on earth today are the suicide bombers. Whether it's in Sri Lanka or Palestine or anywhere. So zeal is no indication.

People are fanatics for so many things. People can be fanatics for Christianity. But I'm not impressed by it.

Not at all any more than I'm impressed by suicide bombers or Naxalites or zealous and willing to lay down their life. The mark of true Christianity, the mark that you've come to the tree of life, is that you have found Jesus and found total satisfaction in him and he is everything to you. You love him with all your heart.

And in your daily life, you will find as a result of that, that as you partake of the fruit of the tree of life, it will make you more and more Christ-like. That's the unmistakable mark of true Christianity. And we have a lot of counterfeit today.

We have a lot of preaching today which does not have a fire and does not have a sword. And wherever you hear preaching, whether it's from a preacher or from television or in a CD, or read a book in which you find there's no fire and no sword, you can be pretty sure you're sitting at the wrong tree. That's why a lot of Christian books I have no time to read because I don't find any fire in them and I don't fire a sword in them.

A lot of messages, by the time I listen to it for five minutes, I switch it on. I say, I don't have time to listen to that because there's no fire there. There's knowledge, plenty of knowledge, explanation of this and explanation of that.

And we love to have a lot of knowledge. There's a tremendous craze for knowledge. In fact, the Bible says that in the last days, Daniel 12, I think it's verse 4 or something, it says knowledge will increase, including Bible knowledge.

A tremendous craze for Bible knowledge. There's never been so many Bible schools and colleges in the history of Christianity as there are today. And there have never been so many carnal Christians in the history of Christianity as there are today.

And there have never been so many people who are ignorant of God as there are today among Christians. See, knowledge has replaced life. And it's very, very important for those of you sitting here because, you know, you can come and listen to a good message and be excited about it.

When John the Baptist preached Herod, it says, like to listen to him. Didn't change his life, but he was interested in listening to all this information about the Bible. I want to ask you, my brother, sister, you come here to get information about the Bible, information about this thing and that thing.

And you want to know more and more. And it doesn't change your life. You're in great danger.

Jesus looked at the people who had knowledge in his day, the Pharisees, and said to them, how will you escape the damnation of hell? That's pretty strong words to people who believed in the Bible and people who came regularly to the meetings. Imagine telling people who believe in the Bible and come regularly to the meetings, how will you escape the damnation of hell? I would say that to anyone who does not seek to come to the tree of life, who tries to avoid the fire and the sword in their Christianity. So what does that fire and the sword mean? The sword speaks of the cross and the fire speaks of the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

It's Calvary and Pentecost. It's pictured there, right there at the beginning of Scripture. You come through to the tree of life, to Christ and the fullness of Christ, through the cross and through Pentecost.

And not just the Calvary where Jesus died, but the Calvary where I died with Christ. Everybody likes to accept the cross where Jesus died, but it's more than that. The way to the tree of life has been opened, but it's called the new and living way.

And in the Old Testament, there was a curtain in the most holy place of the tabernacle that blocked out the most holy place. And in that most holy place was the fire of God. Nobody could go there.

You couldn't get to the fire of God. You couldn't get to the tree of life. It's the same picture in the tabernacle too.

You could not get to that fire until one day when Jesus died on the cross. It says that curtain, that veil was rent from top to bottom. You know that renting of the veil is a picture of the cross, of death to the flesh, to self.

And that's called the new and living way. So there's the renting of the veil and the fire in the most holy place. It's the same thing, the sword and the fire, Calvary and Pentecost.

So many people have separated these two. I told you the other day how Christians have separated what God has joined together. It's not just in marriage.

Today we have multitudes of people who imagine themselves to be believers who divorce. I don't know how a believer can divorce. You must be having zero respect for the teaching of Jesus.

But today the sad, funny fact in Christendom is that there are people who are divorced to our pastors. And they speak in tongues. Have you ever heard of a deception like that? They claim to be filled with the Holy Spirit and they divorce their wives.

What God has joined together, they separate. The same way in the message of the gospel, repentance and faith were joined together. But man has separated.

And that's why there's so little of the fruit of Christlikeness. Repentance and faith are like husband and wife. A wife can't have a baby on her own.

A husband can't have a baby on his own. It's when they come together. It's the same way.

Repentance and faith is what produces the baby called the new birth. If you have only faith, sorry, you can't be born again. If you have only repentance, sorry, you can't be born again.

It's when the two are joined together. In the same way, the life of Christ, if we are to experience it, it's the sword and the fire. And also, man is separated.

It's denying self, being filled with the Holy Spirit. If you separate these two, or you have just one of them, you're not, you've probably got a counterfeit, what you think you have. And the proof of it will be that you are defeated by the same sin year after year after year after year.

Now, one of the amazing things to me, I'm really surprised at how some Christians can be defeated by the same sin year after year after year after year, five years, six years, ten years. Okay, that's understandable. But the sad thing is it doesn't even disturb them.

Except it is normal. They get angry. Ten years later, they're still angry.

They accept it as normal. They lust after women. Ten years later, they lust after women.

It's accepted as normal. They tell lies for little things. Ten years later, they still tell lies for little things.

They accept it as normal. I mean, that's like you're seeing your child fail in the first standard and fail a second time and a third time. And the child is 16 years old and still sitting in the first standard, and you accept it as normal.

Which of you would accept that as normal? Why not? Why don't you accept your 16-year-old child still sitting in first standard, failing, failing, failing, as normal? Why do you accept your defeat by sin year after year after year after year? It is ten years from normal. I'll tell you why, and please listen to me. It's because education is more important to you than God.

The day when God becomes more important to you than education, that day you'll take sin seriously. I tell you, you would be disturbed if your child failed once in the same class. Imagine if he failed twice.

Boy, that would really work you out. You'd be concerned about a dud of a child who's failing three, four times in the same class, who can't add five plus five. You know, I've come to see this.

God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. And we can pray for the fire of God in our life. We can pray, Lord, and can say so many things.

Lord, I want to walk the way of the cross. I want to follow and all that. But if God sees that we're not dead earnest about it, He'll just pass you by.

Somebody else will get blessed, and you get passed by, because He sees you're not dead earnest about it. You're not really serious. You'd like to have some information, but you're not serious about it.

So please remember these two things, dear brothers and sisters. I say this for your good so that you're not deceived by a lot of Christian preaching today, which is not according to Scripture. And the proof of it is it's not leading you to godliness.

The fire of God is always along the way of the cross. I remember when I was seeking for the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a young man of less than 23 years old or around 23 years old. God showed me so clearly at that time that there was a very close connection between choosing the way of death to self and the power of the Holy Spirit.

And I've never forgotten. And as I've grown as a Christian and I look around at Christianity, I see these have been separated. I see these have been counterfeited, just like a lot of other things have been counterfeited.

See, for example, we have counterfeit self-denial. Counterfeit self-denial is where our self-life is never crucified. But we deny ourselves in some external things.

A lot of heathen religions teach that type of thing. They teach fasting. Now, I believe in fasting.

I believe fasting is one form of self-denial. But it's not a substitute. You can have a fruit without the tree.

You know that. You can have a fruit without the tree. Fasting is good, but if it doesn't come out of a tree of death to self, it's pretty worthless.

That fruit will just rot after some time. But if it's part of the tree, it's always fresh. It's like that.

You know, there are people who, even some denominations in Christianity, who say we shouldn't get married if we want to serve the Lord full time. Do you know that the Bible calls that a doctrine of a demon? Pretty strong, no? That any group that preaches that you shouldn't get married in order to serve the Lord, and there are groups like that in Christendom. Let me read to you a verse just to show you counterfeit forms of self-denial so that we don't fool ourselves.

1 Timothy chapter 4. I want to read in the Message Bible. The Holy Spirit makes it clear. 1 Timothy 4, verse 1. As time goes on, there are some who are going to give up on the faith and chase after demonic, demonic illusions put forth by professional liars.

Now you think these people are con men out in the world. No, they are Christian priests and pastors who will teach you demonic illusions. Now when you think of demonic illusions, you expect them to teach that Jesus Christ is not God and go around killing people, go around committing adultery.

No, no, no. There wouldn't be any illusion there. The devil is not a fool.

He comes as an angel of light. He doesn't come with horns and hooves and with a hideous face. You'll run away from him.

No, he comes as an angel of light, teaching things that look like holiness. These liars have lied so well for so long, they've lost their capacity for truth. They will tell you not to get married.

That's the way to be holy. They will tell you not to eat this or that food. Or, you know, you must be a vegetarian to be holy or something like that.

Now you need to see the place where this comes. Real holiness is mentioned in the previous verse. Chapter 3, verse 16.

Real holiness, real godliness is a secret. And that secret is seen in Jesus who came in the flesh. When we see that Jesus came in a flesh like ours, but without sin.

But it was a flesh just like ours, with a will. And he lived such a holy life. And we see his holiness was not in the type of dress he wore.

No. Many people think holiness is in the dress people wear. No, it was in an inner life which is manifest in the flesh.

In contrast to that, the Holy Spirit says in the next verse, people will go and teach you some other way of becoming holy. So this is the false type of self-denial. You give up this, give up that, give up the other thing and you're holy.

It's a deception. Holiness is an inner thing. Self-denial is an inner thing.

My self, my sense of reputation and my dignity and my name, I don't live for that anymore. I live for the dignity of Christ and his name. My prayer is hallowed be thy name, Father, not hallowed be my name.

So that's a counterfeit cross. There's a counterfeit fire also. You know, I mentioned the other day how in Leviticus chapter 9 and chapter 10, you see the contrast between the true fire and the false one.

In Leviticus 9, we read about verse 24, the fire came down from heaven when the offering was put there. And then Nadab and Abihu, our next verse, chapter 10, verse 1, produced a strange fire. So today there's a counterfeit self-denial and there's a counterfeit cross.

There's a counterfeit fire as well. And even where there is, where people understand the real way of the cross, they ignore the baptism of fire. And many people who believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit don't teach the way of the cross.

And when these are separated, you don't get to the tree of life. In front of the tree of life, remember, there's a fire and a sword. There's a sword of fire.

Please remember that and you won't go astray. The trouble with lots and lots of people who are preaching the baptism of the Holy Spirit in all their churches is you'll never hear teaching on death to self in those churches. You'll never hear about the way of the cross, the way of self-denial, the way of being crucified with Christ.

And then you have other churches which talk about self-denial and the real self-denial and being crucified with Christ but never believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They say it's all counterfeit. What a work the devil has done, separating what God has joined together so that you don't get to the real life of Christ.

So I want to encourage you not to allow the devil to deceive you. Come to the scriptures and see what the Lord offers to you, the genuine power of the Holy Spirit, the fire of God burning inside. See that fire of God, I said the other day, burns up our self-life first of all.

It reduces me and my sense of importance to ashes. And then I can never, one mark of it is that such a man can never be offended. If you hear that somebody spoke evil about you behind your back, you won't

have any grudge against him because you're dying.

That's one way to know whether you're dead or not. What was your reaction when you heard somebody spoke evil about you? Did it disturb you? Well, then you're only playing dead. You're not really dead.

You know the difference between playing dead and real dead. If there's a real dead man here, you can say what you like about him. Even his expression won't change.

But when children play games and they play dead, you find out pretty soon whether they're dead or not. And that's how it is. Many Christians are just playing dead.

Somebody says something about them or to them or hurts them and they're not dead at all. The Bible says in Romans 6.11, consider yourself to be dead. That's one of the wonderful things Jesus accomplished on the cross.

And many people are trying to bypass that and get to the life of Christ some other way. I just want to tell you there is no other way. Jesus said, Where I am, there shall also my servant be.

Do you know where that verse comes? Let me show it to you. John's Gospel, Chapter 12. Where I am, there shall also my servant be.

It's in John 12, verse 26. John 12, verse 26. If anyone serves me, he must follow me.

And where I am, there my servant will be also. Where is he today? He's at the right hand of the Father. I want to be there.

Don't you want to be there one day? Now the question is, how did he go there? What was the route Jesus took to the right hand of the Father? It was the way of the cross. If I bypass that way of the cross, I'm not going to get there. Look at verse 24.

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone. I'm speaking about death. That grain of wheat is Jesus, first of all.

He was the grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died. And from it has come hundredfold, thousandfold fruit. And he's saying, where I am, in the ground, dead, buried, there my servant will be also.

We must read it in its context. And then verse 25 also refers to the same thing. If you love your life, you lose it.

You try to preserve your self-life, I mean. You try to preserve your dignity, your reputation, your name, your this and that. You don't want anybody to hurt you.

You want to take care of yourself. You lose it. I tell you, you lose it.

But if you're willing to lose it, for my sake, the Lord says, your life in this world, if you hate it, you'll have life eternal. Again, it's speaking of the way of the cross. And then he says in verse 26, where I am, there my servant will be also.

So Jesus went that way. And when we say we want to follow him, that is the way to go. It's not an unhappy way.

A lot of people think that the way of the cross is a gloomy, miserable, unhappy way. It is, if you don't get the fire. People who preach self-denial without the baptism of the Holy Spirit, yeah, they're pretty gloomy, I'll tell you that.

But if you combine the two, you're not gloomy, because the fruit of the Spirit is joy. I'll tell you this. I found this in my life.

I've never had so much joy in my life as when I knew what it is to be filled with the Spirit and walk in the Spirit. Bad moods disappear 100%. Discouragement disappears 100%.

You get up every morning in a good mood. You never have a dirty dream. Is that a bad life or a good one? You never have a scary, fearful dream.

Never! Because the fire burns everything up. And you've chosen the way of self-denial. Where I am, there will my servant be also.

My brothers and sisters, please listen to me. The devil is robbing you of your inheritance in Christ. There's something Jesus purchased for you on the cross.

And you're living with something substandard. That's why I have this burden to share with you. Because I don't want the devil to rob you of your inheritance.

I don't want you to get to heaven and discover there was so much the Lord had for you on this earth. And you missed it. And the tragedy is if you miss it, your life will be so miserable that you won't be able to witness effectively to others.

Or even if you bring somebody to Christ, you'll bring him to this third-rate, substandard life that you yourself have. You know, we can never lift ourselves any higher than we are ourselves. If I'm standing on a one-foot stool, how high can I lift another man from the ground? One foot.

One foot. That's all. But if I'm standing on a three-foot table, I can lift another man to a three-foot table.

If I'm standing on a six-foot ladder, I can lift another man to a six-foot ladder. You cannot lift a person higher than you are yourself. And a lot of people are going around witnessing.

It's good, but they shouldn't forget they're not going to lift people higher than they are themselves. And it's a pretty pathetic witness very often. I've often thought of it like this.

Supposing I'm a defeated Christian who only believes in forgiveness of sins. Jesus can forgive all my sins, but of course he can't give me victory over my anger. He can't give me victory over my lust.

He can't give me victory over my covetousness and my fighting habits. And he can't bring peace in my home between me and my wife. Okay, but I believe that Jesus died for my sins and I forgive him.

And I go and witness to a heathen person, a non-Christian. I say, I want you to receive Christ. He's our Savior.

And that chap says, I'd really like to. Can he forgive all my sins? Yeah, I say, he can forgive all your sins. But he says, I have another problem.

I keep fighting with my wife. Can Jesus deliver me from that? No, he can't deliver you from that, but he'll forgive all your sins. You'll keep fighting with your wife because I keep fighting with my wife, you say, as your testimony.

And so he'll do that. He hasn't helped me in that area. And that chap says, I have another problem.

I keep lusting with my eyes. I go to the internet and watch pornography. Can Jesus deliver me from that? No, no, no, he can't deliver you from that.

I still keep doing those things. What sort of witness is that? A powerless Jesus who just forgives sins but can't deliver you from one single thing. That was the sin of the Israelites when they went to Canaan.

Oh, these giants are so big. God can't overcome them. God said he was so angry with them.

He was angry because they dishonored him by saying that those earthly giants were more powerful than Almighty God. And when you allow sin to rule over you, I want to put it straight to you. If you allow sin to rule over you, any sin, you are saying you're glorifying the devil and saying the devil is more powerful than Christ.

You're saying the opposite of what the Bible says. Greater is he who is in the world than he who is in me. It's not true.

Acknowledge that Christ is more powerful than the devil. But you've tied Christ's hands by your unbelief and your unwillingness to follow him when he calls you. You want to go your own selfish way and you want to live an overcoming life.

It is impossible. And I'll tell you something. Your children will see it and they'll follow you along that way of selfishness.

And they're not married yet, so they don't have anybody to shout at. But there are other forms of worldliness. They'll go for rock music.

That's what they want. It's just another form of self. You've got one form of self.

They've got another. And you try to get rid of their form of self, but you haven't got rid of your form of self. What does it mean? What difference does it make? Have you seen that the evil you see in your children is just another form of self which you have yourself? It's not the same shape.

It's not the same manifestation. Yours is one manifestation. Theirs is another.

What's the use trying to get rid of theirs? Get rid of what is in you first. Let the sword fall upon you. Do you believe that Jesus is worth it? Supposing you see Jesus there as the tree of life.

And you see this fiery sword around. And you realize there's no way of getting through to him. Except the sword falls on me and the fire burns me up.

What will you say? Will you say, well, I'll think about it, Lauren Cup. Get back. I don't want to pay all that price to come to you.

This is exactly the reason why I find so many Christians who are so dissatisfied, unhappy, miserable and gloomy. That's not true Christianity. And unfortunately, I'm sorry to say, I've seen it in a lot of missionaries

who've come from other countries.

I think of wonderful godly missionaries I met in my life. They're probably about two percent. Two out of a hundred.

Really godly people who I praise God that such men crossed the oceans and came to this country to manifest Christ. But more than 90 percent of the missionaries I met, I find they were grumpy and sour and defeated by sin. And after many, many years in this land.

They're sour. That shows they didn't serve God. I was telling somebody the other day.

Talking a lot about ministry. I said, I want to tell you something about ministry. How do you know you're really serving God? Let me show you a verse in Romans 6, verse 22.

In Romans 6, verse 22, it tells us one way by which we know whether we are really serving God and not serving ourselves. Do you know that suicide bombers believe that they are serving God? They are told by their mullahs that you're serving God. And you go straight to heaven as soon as you die.

And I think lots of them really believe it. What about you? Is it possible that you think you're serving God too? Maybe not as a suicide bomber. But by coming to the meetings and you don't go to some dead church.

You come to this church and you think you're serving God. I don't want you to be deceived. That's the only reason I'm telling you straight.

Romans 6, verse 22 says this. Now you have become free from sin. And you have become a servant of God.

You're serving God. And you derive some fruit from it. And that fruit is sanctification.

And it ultimately ends in eternal life. Now many Christians know only Romans 6, verse 23, the next verse. The gift of God is eternal life.

It's amazing how people go for the easy verses. And they don't realize the context in which it is written. Eternal life is a gift of God.

I believe that with all my heart. But it also tells me the path to it. I seek to be free from sin.

I seek to serve God. And the fruit of it is sanctification. Which leads to eternal life.

That's verse 22. I'm not reading anything out of context. It's verse 22.

That means I've discovered this in my life. When I'm really serving God. It makes me holier.

If it doesn't make me holier, then I'm not really serving God. I'll give you an example. You remember the story where Jesus went to the house of Mary and Martha.

And Mary was just sitting at Jesus' feet listening. Do you know that listening to God is also a form of service? It really is. I'll tell you that.

And Martha had no time to listen. She was busy in the kitchen making all the curry and rice or whatever they make those days. Working hard, sweating away in that kitchen.

And 13 people, 12 disciples and Jesus and her family slogging away. And she secretly congratulating herself. Oh, I'm sacrificing so much for the Lord.

I'm doing this for the Lord. And inwardly criticizing her sister who was not doing as much as she was doing. I found Christians like that.

Who do something for the Lord. And inwardly congratulate themselves for what they're doing. And inwardly compare themselves with others.

Thank God. Lord, I thank you. I'm not like those people.

I'm not doing anything for you. And then she comes and stands before the Lord. And that's a picture of the way you and I will stand before the Lord one day.

When He comes again. And Martha comes and stands before the Lord expecting to get a reward. An award.

A commendation. And instead of that she gets a rebuke. She says, Martha, you're not serving me.

You thought you were. But you were not serving me at all. And the proof of it is there's so much grumbling in your heart against somebody else.

There's so much criticism. There was so much finding fault. You're not serving me.

If you grumble and criticize your husband or your wife. You're not serving God. You're not holy.

You're a million miles away from holiness. That's what Jesus told Martha. Those who serve me will become holy.

They won't have any criticism of other people. Look at Mary sitting here. She doesn't have any criticism of you.

She doesn't say, why doesn't Martha come here and consider the seriousness of listening to you? No. That's her business. If she doesn't want to come, that's fine.

I want to hear. Look at Mary. That one thing is needful, he said.

Luke 10.42. And Mary has chosen that good part. Let me tell you this, my brothers and sisters. So that you'll never forget it.

If you're really serving God. You will not have any inward criticism of somebody else. Who's not doing what you think they should be doing.

Like Martha. There are a lot of people who come to our church and say. Why don't you fellas engage in evangelism? Why don't you fellas send people to North India? I've heard those stories for years.

I don't judge them. I'm sitting at Jesus' feet listening to what he tells me. I'll do what he tells me.

Not what these fellows tell me. They're not my master. They're not my lord.

I'm not their servant. If they want to be agitated and agitated and upset that I'm not doing what they think I should do. Let them be agitated.

Let Martha, all the Marthas in the world continue to be agitated. I still will not do what they tell me to do. Because they are not my master.

People who don't hear God. Who don't know God. They'll get upset.

Oh this fellow says I should be doing this. Oh I better do something of that. If you are moved by the pressure of these strong personalities in Christendom.

You will never serve God in your whole life. So that's an example. I'm just telling you how the fruit of our service is holiness.

If you're not becoming holier. You're not really serving God. Whatever you think you're doing.

You think you can think you're serving God by coming to the meeting. Well it should make you holier. It should completely change your home life.

It changed mine. I used to get angry with my wife when I was first married. I didn't know victory over sin.

I didn't come out of my mother's womb a holy child. No. I was a sinner like every other child of Adam.

And when I got married I knew nothing about victory over sin. I knew forgiveness. I didn't have victory over sin.

But it's changed. Boy has it changed. It's like heaven now.

I know what I'm talking about. You know the way? The sword and the fire. The baptism of fire.

And the sword that destroys your self-love. Choose it. And you'll come to a wonderful life.

I'll tell you that. You'll come to a wonderful personal life. You'll come to a wonderful family life.

You will not be disturbed. If you don't get that promotion in your job. You won't be disturbed.

If you get sacked from your job. Because you're the apple of God's eye. How can he let you go? It's impossible.

My brothers and sisters. Don't let the devil cheat you of your inheritance. Please.

Don't let the devil make a fool of you. Please let the light of God shine into your heart. It's the fire of God that will make us pure inside.

Do you know that no man can make himself holy? Very often people come here and think that what we are preaching is a self-improvement program. You come here and say, okay, I better get rid of this thing and that thing. No.

It's only God who can make you holy. And you got to humble yourself. That's the last lesson that Jesus taught his disciples.

The last miracle that Jesus did. Jesus did one miracle after his resurrection. Only one as far as I know.

And that was filling a boat with fish. John 21. And that last miracle he did for his disciples was to teach them one lesson.

And he had tried to teach them that for three and a half years. He says, let me emphasize that. You try as much as you like.

You won't make it. Got it, Peter? Thomas? John? Andrew? Got it? I've tried to tell you for three and a half years. When the wine runs out, you can't make it.

Trust me, I'll make it. When there's not enough food to feed 5,200 pennies. Even if you collect it, it won't be enough.

Trust me, I'll make five loaves, feed them. And you guys who think you're expert fishermen. You go fishing.

You won't catch fish. Have you learned it? Have you got it? But trust me. Come in brokenness to me.

Stop criticizing others like Mary sitting at my feet. Forget it. Worry about yourself.

And come to me in brokenness and say, Lord, I can't make it. And I'll do a miracle in you. Only the fire of God can make us holy.

Only the fire of God can purify your eyes and your tongue. To me, that was the message on the day of Pentecost. When they were filled with the Holy Spirit, his tongues of fire rested on them.

You know that the Bible says that the most uncontrollable member of our body is the tongue. There's a verse in Proverbs that says that in all labor there is profit. Except when the tongue starts working.

Any amount of labor is no profit. Any other type of work we do, we get tired. Go to a talkative person and you see, he never gets tired.

That's how the tongue is. It never gets tired. Have you noticed that in yourself? No matter how much you talk, you don't get tired.

I mean, if you were running that much time, you'd be tired. You're working with your hands, you'd get tired. But you talk and talk and talk and talk.

You never get tired. It's the one instrument. It's one part of the human body.

James says in chapter 3 that men have been able to tame lions and snakes and all types of animals. Every animal you find in the zoo, man has been able to tame it, control it, keep it under control, but the tongue, it says no man can control. And then on the day of Pentecost, they were baptized in fire.

The Holy Spirit said, now I'll control your tongue. There was that tongue of fire. And they began to speak in other tongues.

Now, to me, this is the test. A lot of people say today that they speak in unknown tongues. How to know whether it's of the Holy Spirit or produced by themselves or an evil spirit? My guess is, among all the tongues spoken in the world today that I've heard, about 10% is from the Holy Spirit, 80% is produced by themselves, and 10% is from the devil.

How to distinguish? If the Holy Spirit gives you the gift of other tongues, he will also control your mother tongue. That's the way to find out. If he's not been able to control your mother tongue, the chances are 90% that you got it from some other source, probably yourself.

The tongue of fire means the Holy Spirit was saying, I'm going to control this uncontrollable member of your body. Isn't it worth it? There's a verse in Proverbs that says that a soothing tongue is a tree of life. That's an amazing verse.

That I can have this tree of life right inside me. And James chapter 3 says the alternative is this tongue can be set on fire with the fire of hell. And we've seen and known that too.

This is our greatest need. The sword and the fire. A fire that makes us genuinely holy inside.

And it's not just holiness of the tongue, it's holiness of the eyes. We don't really lust with our eyes, I'll tell you that. We lust with our heart and mind.

The eyes are only a channel. You think blind people, supposing you became blind today, totally blind, you think you'd stop lusting? You'd lust just as much, probably more. That proves that it's not your eyes that lust.

Lust is inside, it's in your heart and mind. You think if you cut out your tongue you won't get angry? Boy, it's not that easy. Your anger is not in your tongue, it's in your heart and your mind.

You can be dumb and angry like anything. The fire of God deals with the heart. That's the mark of real fire.

Another mark of real fire is the Bible speaks about the love of God like a fire. That's the other thing I've discovered. When we are baptized in fire, the Holy Spirit fills our heart, every corner of it, with love.

Love for Jesus and love for other people. Love for our enemies. We can forgive people.

We can forgive people who cheated us. Think of Jesus who was dealing with a crook called Judas Iscariot who was stealing his money every day. And he loved him.

Can you look at somebody who stole your money for three and a half years and call him a friend at the end of it? That's what he told him, friend. What have you come for, to betray me? Yeah. You see, the Holy Spirit can do in us what he did in Jesus.

He can give us this fervent love. I cannot do it myself. Left to myself, there may be people I can never forgive because of what they did to me.

But when the Holy Spirit fills me, there's not in any area in my heart where there'll be an unforgiving spirit. I want to tell you something that many, many Christians, many born-again Christians, many husbands and wives have got a little bit of hell. A little bit of hell inside their heart.

What do I mean by that? There is only one place in the universe where there is no mercy. And that's hell. The earth is full of God's mercy.

Heaven, of course, is full of it. But in hell, there is no mercy at all. And if there is one little corner of your heart in your attitude to somebody where there's no mercy, where you're hard on someone without being merciful, forgetting how merciful God has been to you, forgetting the stupid, foolish things you have done

yourself, and you're hard on somebody else who makes a mistake, it could be very often a member of your family, very often your husband or wife, or a relative who's been very hard on you.

And you've got a little corner in your heart, which is a very unmerciful, unhard, demanding attitude towards that person. You've got a little bit of hell in that corner. Have you got it? I want to ask you a straight question.

Have you got a little bit of hell in some little corner of your heart that you want to protect that little hell in your heart, that unmerciful attitude? Ask God to burn it away with the fire of His Holy Spirit. I don't want a little bit of hell in any part of my life. I don't want a little bit of hell in any part of my home.

I want heaven in my heart. And heaven is full of love and forgiveness. Why does God allow us to face these difficulties on earth? Please listen.

God is preparing us. That's why He allowed you to know the truth about Jesus years ago when you accepted Him. God wants to prepare you and me for a kingdom in the future, which is going to be governed by one law.

Only one law. Not ten commandments. By one law.

It's the law of love. And He's training us for it now. He's training me to be one day a ruler in a kingdom where everything is governed by love.

And He's testing me now to see whether He can train me for that. And you can't be trained to love when people are good to you. No.

You're trained to love when people are bad to you. When people forget to do what they promised to do. And you don't get upset with them.

When your wife forgot to pass on to you a very important message that you were supposed to get. Haven't you forgotten things in your life? Or vice versa? And you're hard on that person, your husband or wife, as though you are such a perfect person. God is merciful, but you're hard.

Because you've got a little bit of hell in your heart. But this little bit of hell is coated with a lot of religious talk and religious conversation. And the Pharisees were always full of religious conversation.

I'm a bit scary about the people who are always talking religious stuff. I'm not fooled by that. I used to be fooled by that in my younger days.

But I'm not fooled by religious stuff now. You can make out in a person's spirit. Dear brothers and sisters, this is the mark of the true fire of God.

It makes me holy and fills my heart with love. There's no more hell, corners for hell in my heart anymore. Now, instead of that, the devil has produced a lot of counterfeits in Christendom.

And one of the counterfeits is emotionalism. And the music that helps emotionalism. If you are more interested in good Christian music, more than the fire of God, the chances are you're a religious person.

What would you rather hear? Some good CD of music or a fiery message that convicts you? Tell me honestly. Which would you rather listen to the whole day? You think all those people who listen to

Christian music are spiritual? First of all, many of those people who produce those songs are not spiritual. And I'll tell you why.

A spiritual man never, never does any of his service for money. Let me ask you. Supposing there were two preachers.

And you know one was only interested in making money. And the other was not at all interested in money but really helping you. Which of the two do you think is more likely to have a message from God? And you decide that yourself.

I decided that long ago. I cannot believe that a man who's preaching and interested in making money can have a message from God. Impossible.

Do you agree with me or not? One person does. I think you do. Our Indian culture is very shy but I think you do agree with me.

Now I'm moving on to my second point. What about a person who produces music CDs to make money? Do you think he's likely to have a song from God? I don't think so. Show me all these wonderful CDs produced in America where the singer is not making money.

Most of them have become millionaires. I would rather listen to a fiery message from God that stirs me. I don't want to be religious.

I'm not against music. But I say there's a false fire there. There's a false fire in being excited about music.

That's why in most Christian churches they are more interested in the choir practice than in prayer meetings. Yeah, tell me. I mean you can ask yourself.

Which do you prefer? Would you like a sing-song session or a prayer meeting? You find out yourself and you know. We are far more religious than we think. And we are far less spiritual than we think.

I'm just trying to give you a scam. So that we don't fool ourselves. There's this false fire of psychology.

There's a lot of preaching today in Christendom which is pure psychology. Make people feel nice. Make people feel secure.

See, psychology says there are three things that men want. Security, significance, and success. Make people feel secure.

Use a few biblical words to make them feel secure. Make them feel significant. Use words like you are the apple of God's eye.

Now that's in Scripture. But a lot of other things in Scripture too. That God's a consuming fire.

And make them feel that they'll be successful. God will prosper you. This is the message of Christendom.

It's the message of psychology. Just with a few Bible verses. Just a whitewash of some Bible verses.

And people are fooled that this is a message from God. It's not. It's a false fire.

And the proof of it? You don't get victory over your anger or your lust. Or your bitterness. Or your unforgiving spirit.

All that Christian music you've listened to for years. How holy did it make you? Tell me honestly. How much did it make your home a little more like heaven? This music which you sound so heavenly.

Has it made your home a little more heavenly? It's a false fire. Psychology. There's another false fire.

It's the fire of legalism. External. Where the emphasis is on clothes.

Now I believe clothes are important. I mean if a sister in our church. Member of our church.

Came to this church. Immodestly dressed. I would speak to her father.

Or her husband. Or if she's coming alone. I'd speak to her directly.

And I'd say sister. I'm saying this straight to you. That's not the way you should be dressing anytime.

Anywhere. But definitely not when you come to church. To the meeting.

Because you're destroying yourself. And you're destroying some of the young men here. Who struggle six days with all those.

Immodestly dressed women in the world. They come here one day for some peace from it. And you come dressed like that over here.

Please not in this church. I believe in. Being modestly dressed.

But I don't believe. In 18th century fashions. Saying that you're holy.

Only if you wear those Victorian dresses. Have you seen these Victorian women. How they used to dress with huge skirts.

I don't know what they have underneath it. Some type of umbrella. We'd have to space the chairs a little further apart.

If you had them all dressed like that. No. I mean.

If you were living in the 19th century. I suppose that's what you got to wear. Otherwise you'd look odd.

How did Jesus dress? And what would you think if I wore a robe. And came here with a. Belt around. You'd think something's gone wrong with me.

But. That's how Jesus dressed. And if Jesus wore a shirt and a pant in his day.

He'd have looked funny too. What we learned from Jesus was. He dressed according to the fashion of his time.

Not fashionable. That's different. But according to the style of his time.

Because he wanted to be. Inconspicuous. That means he didn't want to stand out in the crowd.

He didn't want to stand out in any way. So. He dressed normally.

I mean if people wore shirts and pants in his time. He'd have worn a shirt and a pant. So I don't believe in holiness.

That this is this type of dress. That type of dress. I believe in modesty.

There's a holiness that comes out of these external rituals. You know. I must come for the breaking of bread.

I'm quite happy to be. 10 years in a prison for the faith. Never break bread.

I can walk with the Lord. Breaking of bread is not the most important thing for me. The Bible doesn't say.

In John 4. Jesus didn't tell the Samaritan woman. The Father is seeking for those who will break bread once a month. He's seeking for worshippers.

Who will worship him every day. I want to be a worshipper. He doesn't disturb me so much.

If I happen to miss the breaking of bread. Even for 10 years. But I want to be a worshipper every day.

I want to walk in the light every day. See these are marks of religious people. The breaking of bread is more important.

How they live at home. And how they talk to other people is not important. These are religious people.

The cross is missing in their life. Fire is missing in their life. Dear brothers and sisters.

There's a tree of life. That we could be missing. Because the devil told you.

The way of the cross is painful. It's not. It's liberating.

The fire only purifies. And takes away the things that are destroying you. Let me encourage you.

To seek with all your heart. To Jesus. To baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire.

Don't give up. Pray. Fast if necessary.

Show God that you mean it. And say Lord. I will not be satisfied with a chief substitute.

And say Lord. Give me the power. To go the way of the cross.

All the days of my life. Not to waste my time complaining about. Other people are not doing what I am doing.

But to be occupied with you. Let's bow our heads before God. God speaks to you tenderly.

In love. Because he's got your best interest at heart. He wants to.

Give you that inheritance. That Christ purchased on the cross. In your life.

In your home. Don't miss it. Say Lord.

I want to open my life to you. I want. To be filled with the fire of God.

In my life. And I want to walk the way of the cross. I pray the sword and the fire.

Will always be found in my life. Every day. Help me Lord.

In Jesus name. Amen.

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