

**The Fire of God
Within Your Church**

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Forward

Is your church on fire for God? The answer can only be within you as you compare your Christian service to the plan given in the word of God.

Jesus Christ came to us as the Son of God and bore the condemnation of all our sins. Just as the sacrificial offerings of the Old Testament had to accept all sins through the laying on of hands and shed their blood, He accepted all the sins of the world passed onto Him by being baptized by John, and bore the condemnation of these sins by shedding His blood on the Cross.

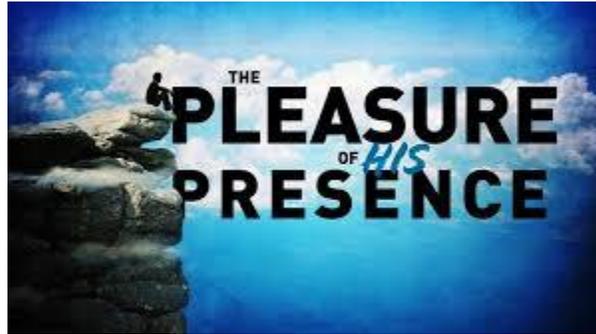
The way has to show his presence today is through the hearts of His people. We are to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The fire of the Holy Spirit is to burn in the hearts.”

When a church loses its fervor for Christ, it ceases to be an organism and becomes merely an organization.

Lacking the spiritual strength to operate as a true church for God, it will rely more and more upon mechanics and machinery.

“Our God is a consuming fire.” (Heb. 12:29) God desires to have, and will have a church that is “on fire” with His Divine Presence and Power.

Chapter 1



God's presence marked his manifestation

2 Chronicles 7:1-3

When Solomon finished praying, fire flashed down from heaven and burned up the burnt offerings and sacrifices, and the glorious presence of the Lord filled the Temple.

The priests could not even enter the Temple of the Lord because the glorious presence of the Lord filled it.

When all the people of Israel saw the fire coming down and the glorious presence of the Lord filling the Temple, they fell face down on the ground and worshiped and praised the Lord, saying,

God sent fire from heaven to consume the offering and to begin the fire that was to burn continuously under the altar of burnt offering (see Leviticus 6:8-13). This perpetual fire symbolized God's presence. God also sent fire when inaugurating the tabernacle (Leviticus 9:22-24).

This was the real dedication of the temple because only God's purifying power can make something holy.

God is good! His faithful love endures forever!"

Matthew 3:11 “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:”

John baptized people as a sign that they had asked God to forgive their sins and had decided to live as he wanted them to live.

Baptism was an *outward* sign of commitment. To be effective, it had to be accompanied by an *inward* change of attitude leading to a changed life—the work of the Holy Spirit.

John said that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire.

This looked ahead to Pentecost (Acts 2), when Jesus in the form of tongues of fire, empowering his followers to preach the gospel, would send the Holy Spirit.

John’s statement also symbolizes the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing God’s judgment on those who refuse to repent. Everyone will one day be baptized—either now by God’s Holy Spirit, or later by the fire of his judgment.

Chapter 2



God has always had a way to show his presence.

The burning bush:

Exodus 3:2

Suddenly, the angel of the Lord appeared to him as a blazing fire in a bush. Moses was amazed because the bush was engulfed in flames, but it didn't burn up.

God revealed Himself to Moses out of the burning bush. God reveals Himself as a fire in that it is an image of His holiness.

In the Bible, fire is used as a picture of the purifying and refining quality of God's holiness.

This is further evidenced when God commands Moses to remove his sandals "for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Here God was emphasizing to Moses the gap between the divine and the human.

God is transcendent in His holiness, so Moses was not allowed to come close to Him.

God spoke to Moses from an unexpected source: a burning bush. When Moses saw it, he went to investigate. God may use unexpected sources

when communicating to us too, whether people, thoughts, or experiences. Be willing to investigate, and be open to God's surprises.

Moses saw a burning bush and spoke with God. Many people in the Bible experienced God in visible (not necessarily human) form. Abraham saw the smoking firepot and blazing torch (Genesis 15:17); Jacob wrestled with a man (Genesis 32:24-29). When the slaves were freed from Egypt, God led them by pillars of cloud and fire (Exodus 13:17-22). God made such appearances to encourage his new nation, to guide them, and to prove the reliability of his verbal message.

Jesus Christ came to us as the Son of God and bore the condemnation of all our sins. Just as the sacrificial offerings of the Old Testament had to accept all sins through the laying on of hands and shed their blood, He accepted all the sins of the world passed onto Him by being baptized by John, and bore the condemnation of these sins by shedding His blood on the Cross.

Chapter 3



The brazen altar of the tabernacle

The Brazen-altar was the basis of the Levitical system. To it the sinner came with his Divinely-appointed victim.

There was a fire continually burning upon it (Lev. 6:13), and the daily sacrifice was renewed each morning.

There it stood: ever smoking, ever blood-stained, and ever open to any guilty Hebrew that might wish to approach it.

The altar of burnt offering was a shadow of Jesus Christ our Savior. As the unblemished animals were sacrificed with the laying on of hands and the shedding of its blood,

Jesus Christ came to us as the Son of God and bore the condemnation of all our sins. Just as the sacrificial offerings of the Old Testament had to accept all sins through the laying on of hands and shed their blood, He accepted all the sins of the world passed onto Him by being baptized by John, and bore the condemnation of these sins by shedding His blood on the Cross.



Fire at Mount Carmel

1 Kings 18

Elijah the prophet walked up to the altar and prayed, “O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prove today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant. Prove that I have done all this at your command. O LORD, answer me! Answer me so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God and that you have brought them back to yourself.”

Immediately the fire of the LORD flashed down from heaven and burned up the young bull, the wood, the stones, and the dust. It even licked up all the water in the trench!

God flashed fire from heaven for Elijah, and he will help us accomplish what he commands us to do. The proof may not be as dramatic in our lives as in Elijah’s, but God will make resources available to us in creative ways to accomplish his purposes.

He will give us the wisdom to raise a family, the courage to take a stand for truth, or the means to provide help for someone in need. Like Elijah, we can have faith that whatever God commands us to do, he will provide what we need to carry it through.

The fire of God is ever present through the power of the Holy Spirit



Fire on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 2:1-4

On the day of Pentecost, seven weeks after Jesus' resurrection, the believers were meeting together in one place.

Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm in the skies above them, and it filled the house where they were meeting.

Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability

The way God He has to show his presence today is through the hearts of His people. We are to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The fire of the Holy Spirit is to burn in the hearts.”

Held 50 days after Passover, Pentecost was also called the Feast of Weeks. It was one of three major annual feasts (Deut. 16:16), a festival of thanksgiving for the harvested crops. Jesus was crucified at Passover time, and he ascended 40 days after his resurrection.

The Holy Spirit came 50 days after the resurrection, ten days after the ascension. Jews of many nations gathered in Jerusalem for this festival.

Thus Peter's speech (Acts 2:14ff) was given to an international audience, and it resulted in a worldwide harvest of new believers—the first converts to Christianity.

This was a fulfillment of John the Baptist's words about the Holy Spirit's baptizing with fire (Luke 3:16), and of the Prophet Joel's words about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-29).

Why tongues of fire? Tongues symbolize speech and the communication of the gospel. Fire symbolizes God's purifying presence, which burns away the undesirable elements of our lives and sets our hearts aflame to ignite the lives of others.

On Mount Sinai, God confirmed the validity of the Old Testament law with fire from heaven (Exodus 19:16-18). At Pentecost, God confirmed the validity of the Holy Spirit's ministry by sending fire.

At Mount Sinai, fire had come down on one place; at Pentecost, fire came down on many believers, symbolizing that God's presence is now available to all who believe in him.

God made his presence known to this group of believers in a spectacular way—violent wind, fire, and his Holy Spirit.

Would you like God to reveal himself to you in such recognizable ways? He may do so, but be wary of forcing your expectations on God. In 1 Kings 19:10-13, Elijah also needed a message from God. There was a great wind, then an earthquake, and finally a fire.

Chapter 4



A drowsy and lethargic church

When a church loses its fervor for Christ, it ceases to be an organism and becomes merely an organization.

Lacking the spiritual strength to operate as a true church for God, it will rely more and more upon mechanics and machinery.

“Our God is a consuming fire.” (Heb. 12:29) God desires to have, and will have a church that is “on fire” with His Divine Presence and Power.

Fire consumes -- burns out the sinful and unnecessary “stuff” in our lives. Fire purifies -- makes us clean and holy before God.

Fire makes us tasteful and pleasant to each other. The Holy Spirit brings unity to the people of God. Fire empowers -- “Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.” (Acts 1:8). I. A Church On Fire Will Fast And Pray.

Eventually the world will crumble, and only God's kingdom will last. Those who follow Christ are part of this unshakable kingdom, and they will withstand the shaking, sifting, and burning.

When we feel unsure about the future, we can take confidence from these verses.

No matter what happens here, our future is built on a solid foundation that cannot be destroyed. Don't put your confidence in what will be destroyed; instead, build your life on Christ and his unshakable kingdom. (See Matthew 7:24-29 for the importance of building on a solid foundation.)

There is a big difference between the flame of a candle and the roaring blast of a forest fire. We cannot even stand near a raging fire.

Even with sophisticated fire-fighting equipment, a consuming fire is often beyond human control. God is not within our control either. We cannot force him to do anything for us through our prayers. He cannot be contained.

Yet, he is a God of compassion. He has saved us from sin, and he will save us from death. But the fire of his wrath will consume everything that is worthless and sinful. Only what is good, dedicated to God, and righteous will remain.

It will see the need and the value of earnestly seeking God with the whole heart.

Chapter 5



A time to fast and pray

Matthew 6:17-18

But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will suspect you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in secret. And your Father, who knows all secrets, will reward you.

When we are on fire for God, we will respond to the needs of our day with prayer and fasting. **A Church On Fire Will Be Uncomfortable In The World.**

Love not the world

1 John 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Some people think that worldliness is limited to external behavior—the people we associate with, the places we go, the activities we enjoy.

Worldliness is also internal because it begins in the heart and is characterized by three attitudes:

- (1) *The cravings of sinful man*—preoccupation with gratifying physical desires;
- (2) *The lust of his eyes*—craving and accumulating things, bowing to the god of materialism; and
- (3) *Boasting of what he has and does*—obsession with one's status or importance.

When the serpent tempted Eve (Genesis 3:6), he tempted her in these areas. Also, when the devil tempted Jesus in the desert, these were his three areas of attack (see Matthew 4:1-11).

By contrast, God values self-control, a spirit of generosity, and a commitment to humble service. It is possible to give the impression of avoiding worldly pleasures while still harboring worldly attitudes in one's heart.

It is also possible, like Jesus, to love sinners and spend time with them while maintaining a commitment to the values of God's kingdom. What values are most important to you? Do your actions reflect the world's values or God's values?

God fire will burn away worldly desires

The fire of God burning in the heart will burn away our desire for the things of this world.

2 Tim. 2:4 And as Christ's soldier, do not let yourself become tied up in the affairs of this life, for then you cannot satisfy the one who has enlisted you in his army.

As Timothy preached and taught, he would face suffering, but he should be able to endure. Paul used a comparison with soldiers, athletes, and farmers who must discipline themselves and be willing to sacrifice to achieve the results they want.

Like soldiers, we have to give up worldly security and endure rigorous discipline. Like athletes, we must train hard and follow the rules. Like farmers, we must work extremely hard and be patient.

But we keep going despite suffering because of the thought of victory, the vision of winning, and the hope of harvest. We will see that our suffering is worthwhile when we achieve our goal of glorifying God, winning people to Christ, and one day living eternally with him.

Paul told Timothy to reflect on his words, and God would give him insight. God speaks through the Bible, his Word, but we need to be open and receptive to him.

As you read the Bible, ask God to show you his timeless truths and the application to your life. Then consider what you have read by thinking it through and meditating on it. God will give you understanding.

A Church On Fire Will Care For Souls.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem because He cared for their souls.

Psalms 142:4 ...no man cared for my soul.

Have you ever felt that no one cared what happened to you? David had good reason to feel that way, and he wrote, “I cry to you, O LORD.”

Through prayer we can pull out of our tailspin and be reminded that God cares for us deeply.

The Early church was on fire for God.

Mark 16:20 And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.

Mark's Gospel emphasizes Christ's power as well as his servanthood. Jesus' life and teaching turn the world upside down. The world sees power as a way to gain control over others.

But Jesus, with all authority and power in heaven and earth, chose to serve others. He held children in his arms, healed the sick, washed the disciples' feet, and died for the sins of the world.

Following Jesus means receiving this same power to serve. As believers, we are called to be servants of Christ. As Christ served, so we are to serve.

A Church On Fire Accomplishes Great Things For God. A. The power of God is manifested in many ways to His glory.

1. People will become believer and get saved
2. People Getting Right with God and with Each other.
3. Prayers will be answered.

Christian who allows the fire of God to enter the very recesses of their lives will see His fire in a totally different light.

Rather than being destroyed by the fire, they are purified, corrected, and cleansed.

God's fire from within brings forth a love that desires to bring healing and restoration to everyone.

When a believer becomes spiritually minded, he is desirous to be changed, and willing to be conformed to the image of Christ.

Chapter 6



The promise of the Holy Spirit

John 7:37-38

On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, "If you are thirsty, come to me!

If you believe in me, come and drink! For the Scriptures declare that rivers of living water will flow out from within."

Jesus' words, "come to me and drink," alluded to the theme of many Bible passages that talk about the Messiah's life-giving blessings (Isaiah 12:2-3; Isaiah 44:3-4; Isaiah 58:11). In promising to give the Holy Spirit to all who believed, Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah, for that was something only the Messiah could do.

Jesus used the term *living water* in John 4:10 to indicate eternal life. Here he uses the term to refer to the Holy Spirit. The two go together: wherever the Holy Spirit is accepted, he brings eternal life. Jesus teaches more about the Holy Spirit in John 14-16. The Holy Spirit empowered

Jesus' followers at Pentecost (Acts 2) and has since been available to all who believe in Jesus as Savior.

Jeremiah 20:9

But if I say, "I will not remember Him Or speak anymore in His name,"
Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire Shut up in my bones;
And I am weary of holding it in, And I cannot endure it.

Jeremiah cried out in despair mixed with praise, unburdening his heart to God. He had faithfully proclaimed God's word and had received nothing in return but persecution and sorrow.

Yet when he withheld God's word for a while, it became fire in his bones until he could hold it back no longer. When God's living message of forgiveness becomes fire in your bones, you also will feel compelled to share it with others, regardless of the results.

Jeremiah 23:29

Does not my word burn like fire?" asks the Lord. "Is it not like a mighty hammer that smashes rock to pieces?"

True prophets and false prophets are as different as straw and grain. Straw is useless for food and cannot compare to nourishing grain. To share the gospel is a great responsibility because the way we present it and live it will encourage people either to accept it or reject it.

Whether we speak from a pulpit, teach in a class, or share with friends, we are entrusted with accurately communicating and living out God's Word. As you share God's Word with friends and neighbors, they will

look for its effectiveness in your life. Unless it has changed you, why should they let it change them? If you preach it, make sure you live it!

Matthew 3:11

"I baptize with water those who turn from their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is far greater than I am—so much greater that I am not even worthy to be his slave. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

John baptized people as a sign that they had asked God to forgive their sins and had decided to live as he wanted them to live. Baptism was an *outward* sign of commitment. To be effective, it had to be accompanied by an *inward* change of attitude leading to a changed life—the work of the Holy Spirit.

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John's statement also symbolizes the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing God's judgment on those who refuse to repent. Everyone will one day be baptized—either now by God's Holy Spirit, or later by the fire of his judgment.

Chapter 7



An Inspirational Story

The story of Pastor Jeremiah Steepok has been shared on the Internet before

Pastor Jeremiah Steepok (pictured) transformed himself into a homeless person and went to the 10,000-member church that he was to be introduced as the head pastor at that morning.

He walked around his soon to be church for 30 minutes while it was filling with people for service.... only 3 people out of the 7-10,000 people said hello to him.

He asked people for change to buy food....NO ONE in the church gave him change. He went into the sanctuary to sit down in the front of the church and was asked by the ushers if he would please sit in the back.

He greeted people to be greeted back with stares and dirty looks, with people looking down on him and judging him.

As he sat in the back of the church, he listened to the church announcements and such. When all that was done, the elders went up and were excited to introduce the new pastor of the church to the congregation.” We would like to introduce to you Pastor Jeremiah Steepok”

The congregation looked around clapping with joy and anticipation...The homeless man sitting in the back stood up...and started walking down the aisle...the clapping stopped with ALL eyes on him.... he walked up the altar and took the microphone from the elders (who were in on this) and paused for a moment.... then he recited:

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?

When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

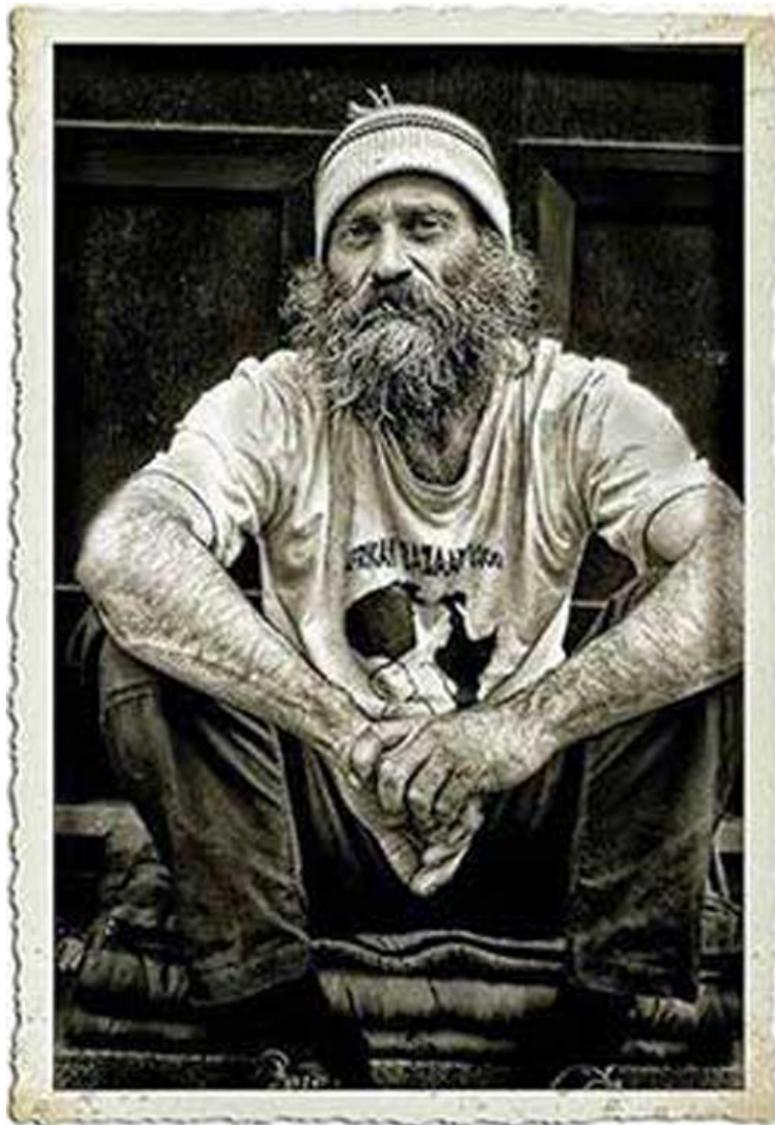
“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

After he recited this, he looked towards the congregation and told them all what he had experienced that morning...many began to cry and many heads were bowed in shame.... he then said.... Today I see a gathering of people...not a church of Jesus Christ.

The world has enough people, but not enough disciples...when will YOU decide to become disciples? He then dismissed service until next week.

Being a church on fire for God is something to live by and share with others.

Many people have shared this story on Face book and social media



Is your church on fire for God? The answer can only be within you as you compare your Christian service to the plan given in the word of God.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: New Living Bible translation. Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print