

Warrington "Spiritual Warmth" *Copy*

Scripture Lesson: - Acts 2: 38 - 43 *AW*

Text: - Acts 2: 39. *TU 1958*

Introduction: - A certain man lived near a church for many years, but never attended. One day the church caught fire. As the flames leaped over the building, racing with each other, the man who had never been to church was discovered to be present. A member of the church said to him: "This is the first time we have ever seen you at our church." The man replied: "Yes, your statement is true; but please bear in mind that this is the first time your church has ever been on fire!"

We find three significant symbols of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. They are water, a rushing mighty wind, and fire. Water purifies, a rushing mighty wind moved as an irresistible force, and fire produces warmth, light is attractive, and spreads rapidly.

There is an insurance company which carried a very familiar ad in many church papers - the picture of a church in flames. Beneath the picture of the burning church are the words: "Burning Shame". The title "A Burning Shame" could be written beneath the picture of many churches whose physical plant have never gone up in flames. Beneath every church that is not aglow with a spiritual fire could very properly be written the words, "A Burning Shame".

I.

Our times call for a church on fire. Evil days have fallen upon large areas of the world. Something must be done to stem the tides of paganism and of war. A church on the pattern of the ordinary run of churches that have lost the divine flame, can never cope with the gigantic evils of this age. It is not enough to merely demonstrate Christianity in its social aspects. The hundred and twenty disciples who tarried in the upper room had a demonstration of Christianity in its social aspects, as

exemplified in Jesus Christ. They had heard the sermon on the mount fall from the Master's lips. They had witnessed the multitudes who came to Jesus for his healing touch for broken bodies. His disciples had participated with the Master in his demonstration of Christianity in all of its social aspects. The ~~social~~ demonstration of Christianity in its social aspects is a part of Christianity, but not all of it. It was to the disciples who had participated in the social demonstration of the Christian faith that Jesus gave command to tarry and wait for an upper room for something which they needed in addition to a social demonstration.

II.

Fire has warmth and creates an atmosphere. The spiritual fires enkindled by the Holy Spirit also create warmth and atmosphere. Such atmosphere is readily detected. The warmth of the Gulf Stream may be felt for thousands of miles. It reaches clear across the Atlantic ocean, touching the English Isles, and making them splendid in climate for a large population. Without the warmth of the Gulf Stream England would not be one of the most thickly settled spots on the face of the earth. The spiritual warmth of the church comes through honoring the Holy Spirit. When he is honored there is spiritual warmth in the church.

Spiritual warmth in a church is readily detected on the part of both the Christian and the non-Christian. Spiritual warmth registers in the hearts of others. Such an atmosphere creates a sense of the presence of God. In such an atmosphere men say, "Truly God is in this place!"

The warmth of a fire may be attractive, but it may also become painful under certain conditions. Those who have frozen feet or frozen fingers know something of the pain which warmth brings when the thawing out process begins. Spiritual thawing may become very painful. The fires of God in the church may cut across the currents of everyday living, until it becomes painful. Haven't you

seen folks squirm & become very uncomfortable in a good, spiritual service?

III.

Fire is also attractive. People will always go to a fire. They will drop the ordinary routine of business and give attention when the fire trucks go by. A minister once wrote Mr. Moody asking how to attract crowds to his church. Mr. Moody replied, "Build a fire in the church". The most attractive thing in the world is a church on fire for God.

How can a church be on fire unless each member is on fire?
Fire not only gives warmth but it gives light. The more intense the fire the greater the illumination. When the fires of God burn low in human hearts, or are extinguished, darkness settles over the earth. Behold the darkness of the pagan lands where Christ is not known, or where he has been rejected. In whatever land these fires have been kindled in response to the messages of the Spirit-filled and Spirit-guided missionaries, the light begins to shine. The missionaries have been the trail blazers for modern commerce, education and scientific development. We have had a great and memorable company of light bearers in the dark places of the earth during the past hundred years, yes during the past hundred and fifty years. *Where the fires burn low in our country sin is rampant & people forget God.*

IV.

Look at our community. People living in sin.
Fire is also destructive as well as illuminative. Fire refines, purifies, and separates the dross from the pure metal. We need the fires of God, born of the Holy Spirit, in the church, to purify and cleanse it, and make it such a church as Christ would have it be. We need the purifying flame of the living God to burn through us and cleanse us, and set us free from the things contrary to his will. *How is it in your own heart, has it grown cold & as result indifferent. We can't be of use if we*

Conclusion:- Yes we need the purifying flame of God. We need to highly resolve that we shall do all in our power to make our own church, *North* *London* *Evangelical United Brethren church* a church that it cannot be said of "she is alive in many ways, but dead spiritually."

To have a church on fire spiritually, each member must be alive spiritually. Is your heart cold today or is it on fire for God? Do you want our church to be alive & on fire?

We need a revival of vital praying, perhaps fasting and prayer. There is so much yet to be done, and the time seems to be running out. We too need a revival of missionary zeal and enthusiasm. We need a revival of personal evangelism, a witnessing one by one to the power of the gospel. We need a revival of hope, of Christian faith, and a holy optimism. We need a revival of consecration and the dedication both of ourselves and our possessions that the work of the kingdom may go forward unhindered by any spiritual poverty. We need a revival of self-denial for Christ.

That is your business and mine, the business of the church, the purpose of Pentecost, to get that spirit going and keep it going for Christ, for the redemption of humanity, for the justification of mankind.

Are we fulfilling Christ's prediction and expectation when he said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me?"