

Warrington
24 30 1/2 hrs "Spirit of Burning" Barley Chapel
6/9/58
A.M.

Scripture Lesson:-

Text:- Isaiah 4: 4. "And by the spirit of burning".

Introduction:- "The Spirit of burning". It is a glowing and powerful phrase, is it not? It may be thought of as one of the many titles which the Bible gives to the Holy Spirit. He is called "the Spirit of God", "the Spirit of the Lord", "the Spirit of truth", "the Spirit of holiness", "the Spirit of life", and here, in our text-phrase, he is called "the Spirit of fire"

It was of this that Charles Wesley must have been thinking when he wrote that hymn, entitled, "Jesus, thine All-Victorious Love". In the second and third stanzas the cry of the Christian is heard:

"O that in me the sacred fire
Might now begin to glow;
Burn up the dross of base desire,
And make the mountains flow.

"O that it now from heaven might fall,
And all my sins consume!
Come, Holy Spirit, for the I call,
Spirit of burning, come!"

There is a day in the Christian calendar that the church calls Pentecost Sunday. We make too little of it. Let the inquiring reporter go up to the first person he meets coming out of the average Protestant church today, and ask them one by one, "What does Pentecost mean?", and he will get a variety of answers..

What does it mean? Well, this among other things: that on that first Christian Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, Christians who were faltering, feeble, and fearful, passed so completely under the control of the Holy Spirit that their faltering was turned into firmness, their febleness into force, and their fearfulness into flaming faith.

Listen to this: "When the day of Pentecost had now come, they were all meeting in one mind, when suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a terrific blast of wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And they saw tongues like flames of fire separating and resting on their heads, one to each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in foreign languages as the Spirit gave to them to utter divine things." (Acts 2:1-4)

We must not be unduly fascinated or unduly frightened by the startling outer form in which this experience came to those Christians. No Biblical account indicates that it ever happened again precisely like that. Still, strong wind and the kindled flames are symbols of what always takes place when Christians go, and permit the Spirit of God to possess them, direct them, and use them as the fully surrendered servants of their Lord. The wind, or breath of God sustains and energises them. The fire of God makes them clean and confident and contagious in their discipleship.

Too many of today's Christians have no such sign of fire upon them. "In no real sense", says Raymond Calkins, "can we be said to be on fire for God; by no figure of speech, by no effort of our imagination, would anyone say of us that we were burning with any passion for righteousness. We are not kindled or kindling personalities. If Calkins is right, a lot of us had better pray: "Spirit of burning come!"

What will it mean for such a prayer to be answered?

I.

We need to think of Him as burning out the litter of all that is unworthy in the Christian's heart. Isaiah, in the opening chapter of this prophecy, hears God speaking to his covenant people and saying, "I will purely purge away thy dross." (1:25)

Five chapters later the prophet gives us

an account of his own experience of passing through the fire of God's cleansing. The vision of the Lord in his holiness smote upon him and he cried: "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips." The confession was the prelude to the cleansing. His lips were touched, he tells us, with "a live coal" from the altar of God, and the assurance was given him: "Thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged" (6: 7).

We are too proud or too self-satisfied to admit it as a rule, but the truth is that most of us Christians have a lot of litter on the premises of our hearts that needs to be thrown into the fire of God's consuming Spirit.

The hearts of some of us are littered with values that are unworthy of Jesus Christ. We are more regular with the comic strips than we are with the Bible or some other enriching book. We get more excitement out of a discussion of the latest fashion in clothes than we do out of conversation about the latest victories of the Christian church in missions. We know more about the uses of chlorophyll than we do about the latest efforts of the liquor crowd to blight our community and sabotage our homes. Cheap values, that is what we have on our hands. We had better feed them to the purging flame of God's Pentecostal Spirit. There are higher values on which the dedicated Christian should set his soul.

II.

What about the unsightly litter of our low motives? How that needs to be burned out as dross. All of us act; few of us raise the question of why we act as we do. Except those actions that are, in the most elementary way, instinctive our ways of acting should be challenged by this simple question, "Why?" That puts you in the realm of motive. Although a good motive cannot sanctify a bad action, a bad motive will always kill a good action. Take Prayer for instance, is a good action. Yet Jesus made it plain that if our praying is done to be seen of men so they

will remark how pious we are, the whole affair is poisoned; it is bad.

Take the unholy habits and attitudes of that litter and make ugly the inner landscape of many a Christian. Rev. Samuel L. Zwemer in one of his searching sermons cried out, "All meanness, all hatred, all envy, all impurity, all criticism, all suspicion, all jealousy, that is in your heart or mine will disappear if we just throw them into the crucible of Christ's loving soul."

Yes, the Word of God from his ancient prophet is being fulfilled; the Spirit of burning is destroying the unholy refuse in the hearts of his people. The Lord is washing away "the filth of the daughters of Zion" and is cleansing his Jerusalem. He will do this for us if we will pray and mean it, "Spirit of burning, come!"

Conclusion:- The Holy Spirit performs a ministry not only of burning out but of burning in; He burns in the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ. To be sure, Christ is our pattern. But we are only fooling ourselves if we think that we can turn on a little more will-power here or strain out an extra effort there, and thus imitate the Lord Christ. There is too much of that, that passes for Christianity. It misses the point which the New Testament stresses again and again. We are to let Him, in the person of his Holy Spirit, inhabit us and so reproduce his likeness in us.

*are you letting the Holy
spirit control your life.
Is He your comforter & guide.
Let us pray for an outpouring
of His spirit in our lives if
we want our church to live
& grow*