

Revivals And Church History :: Strange Fire -chuck smith**Strange Fire -chuck smith - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2005/12/12 22:46****Strange Fire**

When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, God gave Moses the design for the tabernacle, a place where people would meet God. God then anointed certain men among the Israelites with special building skills so that they could build the tabernacle according to the blueprint that God had given Moses on Mt. Sinai. They carved out the acacia boards and overlaid them with gold. They set them in sockets of silver and put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark. They sewed the linen curtains, and they carved the cherubim over the top of the mercy seat. They laid on the goat's hair coverings, the red-dyed ram's skins, and then over all of those, the badger skins. When the brass altar was put in the front of the tabernacle with the brass laver, Moses and Aaron initiated this place where the people would gather to meet.

Beginning in Leviticus 9:22, we read of the dedication of the tabernacle:

And Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people and blessed them and came down from offering the sin offering, the burnt offering and the peace offering. And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the meeting and came out and blessed the people, and the glory of the Lord appeared to all of the people, and fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces. Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it and offered profane fire before the Lord which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said to Aaron "This is what the Lord spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy and before all the people I must be glorified.'" (Leviticus 9:22-10:3).

From this passage of scripture we know that as Moses and Aaron initiated the tabernacle according to God's plan; they cut the sacrifice of the burnt offering and laid it upon the altar and went in to offer the blood before the Lord. As they came out to the people, God's glory suddenly appeared and a fire from God came and kindled the altar and the sacrifice that was there. When the people saw this fire spontaneously begin to consume the sacrifice, they shouted and fell on their faces worshipping God. At this moment the two sons of Aaron; Nadab and Abihu, took some strange fire and put it in their small golden censers with incense. They rushed to offer it unto the Lord and as they did, fire came from God and killed them.

Why did God disrupt such an exciting occasion with the killing of Aaron's sons? All the people were filled with religious fervor and excitement, rejoicing and praising God. Suddenly God hushed them all as the fire killed the two boys and a fear enveloped the entire group. Why did God dampen the zeal of the people at that precise moment?

It is important for us to realize that what is said of God in the New Testament is also true of God in the Old Testament. In the New Testament we read "For God so loved the world..." God has always loved the world. God has always desired that all men should know Him. To demonstrate His love to the entire world, He chose the nation Israel and gave His law to its people. These were the laws by which a man might live in harmony with God and by living in harmony with God, might then experience the blessing, power and presence of God in his life. Through the nation Israel, God wanted to demonstrate His love for the whole world and the advantages that people could have if they would fellowship with God and walk with Him by keeping His commandments.

Having chosen Israel to be His instrument, He then chose the tribe of Levi as His priests to be special representatives to the people. As the priest went in before God with an offering or sacrifice, he was a representative to God for the people. The priest was also God's representative to His people. In turn, the people were to be God's representatives to the world so that all people would know that God loved them.

God needed to keep a proper image of Himself before the people. If a priest misrepresented God or was evil in any way, the people and the witness of God would be corrupted. God wanted the world to know the truth about Him so that people would be drawn to Him. But here, as the priests were beginning their ministry, there was a failure among the sons of Aaron to properly represent God. This is why God dealt with them severely and immediately; to keep the people of Israel from getting a corrupt idea of God, and to save the rest of the world from a corrupt witness.

My heart breaks as I think of how often God has been misrepresented by His servants. I never stand before the church without the awesome consciousness that I am there as God's representative. I know it is important that I properly represent God so that people have a true concept of Him. If a situation arises and I react with anger or irritability when God isn't irritated or angered, I misrepresent Him to others. I am responsible to God for my misrepresentation of Him. I am constantly aware of the awesome obligation of every child of God to be His representative to the world.

As we read the story of Aaron's sons, we ask ourselves why they were slain. When we get to the 16th Chapter of Leviticus, in the first verses, God speaks of the occasion of the death of Nadab and Abihu. Verse 12 says that God instructed Aaron to take the fire from the altar and put it in the incense. In other words, the fire for the incense offered to God was to come from the fire that God had kindled. But Aaron's sons had grabbed strange fire to offer to the Lord. They offered fire other than that which the Lord kindled and thus their work.

God doesn't want us to bring strange fire to Him. It is always important for us to examine our motives. Ask yourself just what is it that is motivating you to do this service or work for God. If there is any fire (enthusiasm or excitement) that is motivating you other than the fire that God has kindled in your heart, your service for God cannot be accepted. It is of no value. Therefore, we must examine ourselves and remember that the scripture says if we will judge ourselves, we won't be judged of God.

A day is coming when our works will be judged by fire. God will see what motivations really were behind the things that we did for Him. Jesus said, "Take heed to yourself that you do not your charitable deeds before men to be seen by them." (Matthew 6:1) If I were ministering only because it satisfied my psychological need for acceptance from people, then God help me! I would be serving Him with strange fire. If my motivation is to draw attention to myself and receive praise from men, then I am serving God with a false motive and it is unacceptable to Him. Paul said, "For the love of Christ constrains me." (II Corinthians 5:14) That burning love of Christ within my heart is the only true motivation for any service that I offer unto God. Good works have to come from a heart that is burning with the love of Jesus Christ.

A lot of strange fire is being offered to God today. Churches and para-church organizations are using all kinds of motivational gimmicks to get people to give, to support their ministries and thus serve God. Prior to leaving the denomination I had served for many years, I went to a conference in Phoenix, Arizona. The bishop stood before the ministers and declared to them, "I realize that motivating people by competition is carnal motivation but we must face the fact that most of the people we minister to are carnal and thus we need to motivate them with carnal motivation." My opposition to his statement was obvious, so I was invited for a cup of coffee with the bishop immediately after the service.

He began to talk to me about rebellion and I explained to him what bothered me about what he had said. I also felt that motivating people with competition was carnal, but how much better it would have been if he had said, "Let's seek to correct this by ministering to the people in a way that will make them spiritual people." If he had said that, I could have wholeheartedly agreed with him. But to suggest that because the people are carnal, pastors should come down to their level and use carnal motivation was wrong in my eyes. It could make it impossible to ever lead them to become spiritual people.

I told him I desired to be spiritual and I desired that my people be more spiritual. I didn't stay with the denomination very long after that and I'm glad, because I don't want to motivate people with carnal motivations anymore. I spent too many years in the ministry trying to push programs and trying to entice people to do the work of God with carnal motivation. I've given away too many giant beach balls, lollipops, bicycles and who knows what else in an effort to generate enthusiasm in people for doing the work of God. I am tired of pushing people. I came to a place in the ministry where I said, "God, I'm so tired I can't push anymore programs, I quit." And I left the ministry, weary of offering false fire to God.

Then God began to kindle His fire within my heart. I felt that burning love for Jesus Christ and wanted to minister to people in the Spirit and let God do the work in their hearts. It is so beautifully easy when God does it!

Leviticus 10:9 gives us another hint of what went wrong with the two sons of Aaron. The Lord said to Aaron when his sons were killed, "Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when you go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest you die." It could be that Aaron's sons were drunk. In a half-drunken stupor, perhaps they really were not aware of what they were doing. As they sat there enjoying the dedication, the fire of God suddenly came and lit the altar. Everybody was shouting with excitement and worshipping. In the excitement they grabbed their censers and put the coals and the incense in them and went in to offer this incense before God with an unclear mind because they were under the influence of false stimulants.

God doesn't want any service from false stimulation. He wants you to know what you are doing when you commit yourself to Him. He wants you to have a clear understanding of what that means. He wants your mind to be clear and sharp when you worship Him and He wants to know your actions are coming from a clear mind and a willing heart.

There is one more indication in the text of what possibly went wrong with the two boys. That is in verse three:

And Moses said unto Aaron, this is that which the Lord spoke saying, I will be sanctified in them that come near me and before all the people I will be glorified.

You see, God doesn't want anybody seeking glory for themselves as they serve Him. It could be that when all of this excitement arose and all the people were worshipping God, that the sons of Aaron suddenly distracted people from what God was doing and drew the attention of the people to themselves by stepping out and offering their incense at an inappropriate time. At a time when people's hearts and attention were centered on God and God was ministering to His people, these two men with their false offering were an interruption. They sought only to glorify themselves by reminding the people that they were God's priests. God does not want anything or anybody to distract attention from Him. God will not share His glory with any man!

I realize that I have the awesome responsibility of properly representing God to you so that you don't get a false concept of God. I pray that you will also recognize your responsibility, because you represent God to the world and you can't let people get the wrong concept of Him. In everything you do for God, take care that your motivations are pure and that it is only God's fire that you are offering unto the Lord - and not the fire of your own enthusiasm or your personality. Make sure you have a clear mind and full knowledge of what you are doing. Make sure you have a willing heart and that you do your service to Him in a way that won't distract from the One that we have come to represent. Make sure that you don't take attention from God and call it to yourself, but that people see Christ through you.

May God help you be a true and faithful representative. God loves the world and He wants the world to know that. He has chosen you as His instrument. And you can walk in fellowship with Him and He can bless your life so completely that you will be filled with His joy, His power and His love and the needy world around you will see the benefits of walking in fellowship with God.

Re: Strange Fire -chuck smith - posted by shibu (), on: 2005/12/13 2:48

Oh what staggering, striking and heart-searching article it is! Thanks brother for posting this. I fear often many of us get side-tracked by debating /fighting over minor issues of doctrine and miss out or exclude major things (core), like things (testimony of our inner life before the world, human zeal and motive behind our Christian activities, etc.) which were mentioned by Chuck Smith in his article. No wonder the counter number of views for this types of thread is very less compared to other threads on other minor issue. This does not mean that we have to compromise. No, we don't have to give up our personal convictions on minor issues.

In Him,
Shibu