

Is Your Work Being Tried by Fire?

by Carter Conlon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having the mind of Christ and building on the foundation of Christ, and warns against the dangers of carnality and the spirit of the world.

Duration: 1:00:50

Scripture: Matthew 3:11, John 2:13, Acts 20:33-35

Topics: "Sanctification"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal experience of his house burning down and how it challenged his theology. He reflects on the fact that there are some things in life that we cannot possess or make go away, no matter how much we confess or pray. However, he also highlights how God can take evil situations and turn them for good, as seen in his son's development of compassion and bravery through adversity. The speaker emphasizes the importance of having the mind of Christ and striving to be like Him, rather than pursuing worldly success.

Transcript

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And it's, is your work being tried by fire? How many, right now, I'm going to ask you a question before I even preach this. You're in a fire, and you don't understand this fire. This is a strange thing inside of you.

You look to the exterior, and the exterior seems to be fairly reasonable, but you're in, you've got this interior fire going on, and you don't understand why this is happening in your life. Can I just see your hand? I want you to, look at the hands here, folks. Just so that you know, you're not alone in this.

And for those that didn't raise their hands, you're probably in the fire, you're just not aware of it yet. And then there's others who'll just say, I'm beyond that, I'm burnt. Now, 1 Corinthians chapter 3, if you'll go there, please, and your Bible's with me.

Now, Father, I thank you for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Oh, Jesus, if you don't come, we waste our time. Now, Holy Spirit, you're the only one that can enlighten this word that you've given to me.

You're the only one that can make it real in my own heart. You're the only one that can cause it to find root in the hearts of your people, your church. My God, I pray today, give us open hearts and open minds.

Help us to understand things that are mysteries. They're hidden from those who walk in the flesh. But those who desire to walk in the Spirit, God, I pray today, please open it up.

Give me the power to open this treasure of your word and to make it real and desired to your people. I yield to you, Lord, and I ask you to guide my life, guide this message. I ask it in Jesus' name.

Now, before we go to 1 Corinthians 3, let me just share something with you. Paul, the apostle, says in 2 Corinthians, and I'm speaking to the same people. And in chapter 5, verse 18, he says, Now, he says, Now, Paul is saying to this particular church, and this is important because we're going to go back to his first letter momentarily.

But he says to this church, Now, the ministry is to bring about reconciliation on every level. Of course, the primary level of reconciliation is between men and God. I'm calling you, God says, to go out, and I'm calling you to make disciples of all nations.

I'm calling you to call men, as it is, to be reconciled to God, lest they should spend an eternity in hell without God. There is only one way that they can be saved, and that's through faith in Jesus Christ. God was in the world in Christ, willing as it is, to reconcile the world to Himself.

But our part, and man's part, is to receive by faith that sacrifice on the cross 2,000 years ago, and to bend their knee to it, and to call out to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Now, Paul says, in order to have this ministry, and I'm paraphrasing Paul, but I believe this is what he's saying. You must first be reconciled to God.

It's powerless to go out and confess something, as it is, to a society that we're perhaps not living ourselves. We are a church called to bring men and women in New York City and the tri-state area, and wherever you're visiting from, to a living relationship with God. In the future, at the end of June, we're going to Burundi.

There's quite a large contingency going from this church. And in Burundi, we're going to be on national radio and television, calling this nation to make reconciliation with God and with one another. There's obviously some very real difficult issues that need to be faced.

But the Lord is speaking to my heart and says, before I can use you, before I can use this church, there needs to be a reconciliation with me and with one another. I need to have ambassadors who are walking in truth. They've truly embraced the kingdom that they're representing.

And so, to that end, I bring this word, which I know is from the heart of God, is your work being tried by fire. Now, let's go back, well, I'll go back to 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verses 1 to 3. Paul says, I, brethren, could

not speak to you unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with meat.

For hitherto you were not able to bear it, and neither yet now are you able. For you are yet carnal, whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions. Are you not carnal and walk as men? Now, Paul says there's a carnality among the people that's keeping their ears closed to what the Holy Ghost would teach them.

The fruit of this carnality is producing envy, he says in verse 3, and strife and division. And he says, you know, folks, they didn't see it this way. Quite often, where the difficulty arises in our relationship with God, is God is calling something by a name, but we refuse to acknowledge that name.

He's calling bitterness, bitterness, but we're calling it justifiable grievance. We're giving it another name, we're putting religious garments on it. And the Scripture says the end result is division, the end result is strife.

And even more fearful than these things, Paul said closed ears. If I were to tell you today that your ears are closed to things that God wants to speak to you, wondrous things, wisdom that's been hidden from the princes of this world, would you want to know what it is today that might be closing your ears to this truth? And Paul was coming as a nurturing father to the Corinthian church, and he was saying to this church, I want to, I'm moved upon by the Holy Spirit to bring you incredible meat that you might be strengthened. And as we heard earlier in the next letter, Paul writes to the Corinthian church that you might be ambassadors of God's reconciliation.

But he says you can't hear what God wants to speak, and you can't hear it because there is a level of carnality among you that is closing your ears to the truth. Now, the people didn't see it this way, I'm sure of it, up to this time of Paul's letter. You see, after all, they were simply divided among the lines of the preferred preaching styles of godly men.

This was the division. I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos, I'm of Peter or Cephas, and I'm of Christ. And Paul says, is Christ divided? Was I crucified for you? Paul was trying to, you see, this is where the problem begins.

You see, folks, it's a very subtle thing. Now, you're going to have to try to follow this because I'm going to be moving through a lot of thought here, so you're going to give me your good listening ear today. In order to build one man up, it is necessary, even subtly, to cast another one down.

There's no other way to do it. You see, they were forming camps in the body around preferred preaching styles. I can see the people who say, well, I love Peter because, you see, Paul preaches too long.

Remember in Acts chapter 20, he preached so long that a young man fell out of a window and died. He preaches too long. It takes him forever to get to the point.

I like Peter better because Peter is a meat and potatoes preacher. He just goes right to the heart of the issue, tells us all to shape up and get prepared to endure the trials. And then the Paul camp says, well, you know, I would like Peter, but he preaches too loud.

Peter's a loud preacher. I have no doubt Peter was a loud preacher. And, you know, it's just after a while, you can hardly hear the man.

He just screams for an hour and a half. And he's passionate, but I don't like that kind of preaching. And then, of course, there's Apollos.

The Peter crowd says, well, we like loud preaching. We don't. Paul preaches too long.

And Apollos, well, he's just too heady. I can't follow him. He's deep.

He's a very, very deep man. And he doesn't doesn't speak my language. And so here is this division, which seems to be holy.

But it's creating a carnality among the people, which ultimately will cause them to begin to fellowship in the body with people who they perceive to be like themselves and ultimately push the poor to the sides of the temple. And, of course, Paul again deals with that in first Corinthians, chapter 11. Now, in chapter two and verse 12, Paul begins this statement.

He's on this trend of thought. He's not he's not diverging from this all through these verses. He says, now we have received not the spirit of the world.

Now, Paul is inferring that the spirit of the world still has a place in their thinking. If it's left unchecked, it will open them to those who will use them for personal advantage. Oh, folks, I'm telling you, that's what's happened in the body of Christ at large in many places today.

This spirit has been unchecked. People have failed to understand that there are various ministries in the body. Each one has a function and a purpose in the kingdom of God.

Those who are truly men and women of God who stand in pulpits lead the people to Christ and to Christ alone. But when camps begin to be formed in the body, it opens the people's minds to those who would use them for personal advantage. Now put a marker there and go to Jeremiah, please.

Chapter five in the Old Testament. Now, you know that Jeremiah is crying out to a people who are heading and have headed into captivity. And Jeremiah, along with many of the prophets, all speak of the same spiritual condition that begins to be manifest at the time just before the greatest captivity comes of God's people.

In Jeremiah, chapter five and verse 26. Now, here's the spiritual condition of Jeremiah's day. Now, God's speaking through him and says, For among my people are found wicked men.

They lay wait as he that sets snares. They set a trap. They catch men.

As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit. Therefore, they become great and waxen rich. They are waxen fat.

They shine. Yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked. They judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper.

And the right of the needy, they do not judge. Now, Paul says, there are, well actually Jeremiah is saying, in every time when the backslidness is coming to the house of the Lord, there are these people who rise up. And you see the people's focus has turned to men and personalities.

They've lost the whole concept of why God has a fivefold ministry in the first place in his church. It's set around preaching styles and they don't realize it's opened their hearts to the exaltation of flesh. And when you've opened your heart to allow flesh to be exalted, you have now opened your eyes and mind to flesh that will stand before you that wants to be exalted.

That wants to be considered to be God's man of the hour. God's superstar for this generation. They're wicked men, Jeremiah says.

And they set snares and they catch men. Their houses are filled with deceit and they become great in the eyes of men and they use the people for their own personal gain and advantage. He said in verse 28, they shine.

And in the original text, in the Hebrew text, it means they are sleek, glossy and polished. Amazing. Sleek, glossy and polished.

They move like silken superstars from one end of the platform to the other. But you see, they move theologically according to their fallen nature. And those who agree with them become like them.

Now, folks, we're living at a time like this. This is why I'm laboring on this particular point right now. But back in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, if you put a marker there, Paul says, now we have received in verse 12, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God, which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, their foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But then Paul makes an incredible statement.

But we have the mind of Christ. We have the mind of Christ. We have a new mind.

We don't think like fallen men think. We don't view success as who gets the bigger crowd and who has the nicer car and the biggest bank account and who holds the highest position on the corporate ladder. This is not God's view of success.

God's view of success is how much of Jesus Christ has been allowed to be manifested through my life. How kind have I become to people who need to experience kindness. How much am I willing to stand for truth in the face of whatever kind of adversity comes against me? How much of the virtue of Christ, the life of Christ, the kindness of Christ, the truth of Christ, the generosity of Christ is being formed in me? How much am I like Jesus Christ? You see, we can only have His mind if our objective is to be truly like Him.

Folks, we have myriads of theologies leading people now in the supposed body of Christ and their objective is not to be like Christ. Their objective is to be like the carnal man, to be like men whose view of success is coming from a worldly perspective, not from God's perspective. Now, go ahead with me to Philippians, please, chapter 2. Put a marker again there in Corinthians.

Go to Philippians chapter 2 where Paul talks about this mind. We have this mind of Christ. Now, in verse 5, Philippians 2, 5, Paul says, Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation.

Let this mind be in you. Oh, folks, how many people serve God for reputation today? How many people get in a knot? Because nobody has recognized this incredible selfless service that they've been performing for God's name even in His house. And they get all in a knot.

Do you want to know why they get in a knot? Because this mind is not in them. Christ made Himself of no reputation even though He was equal with God and it was not robbery to declare Himself equal with God. In other words, He had every right to say, I am God and stand up.

He had the right to create, recreate anything He wanted. He had the right to do anything He wanted to do because He created the whole universe by the word of His mouth. But this mind that was in Christ that Paul said should be in us, He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a servant, not of a Lord, not of a king.

That will come one day. But the mind, the Scripture says, that we're to have which was in Christ Jesus is that He made Himself of no reputation and became a servant to people and was made in the likeness of man. Didn't try to pretend that He was something else than those He was speaking to.

Didn't try to pretend that He had somehow achieved this pinnacle of perfection and that He was not tempted in all measure and means as others around Him were. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. There's so little humility left.

There's so few people who are willing to walk humbly before God and just simply become obedient to death, to the dying of ourselves, the dying of our reputations, the dying of our image of who we think we are, just simply to be humbled and become obedient to God. Paul says again in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 10. Now you may wonder where I'm going.

That's why I've asked you for a good ear because we're eventually going to get to the trial by fire. Paul says in chapter 3 of 1 Corinthians verse 10, According to the grace of God which is given to me as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds thereon, but let every man take heed how he builds thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Paul says I've laid a foundation for you, O Corinthian church, and you must be careful how you build on this foundation because if you're not building according to the mind of Christ, it's not going to last, it will never prosper. Paul said in Acts chapter 20, let me just paraphrase it for you, verses 33 to 35, as he was leaving and heading on his missionary journey. I've coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel.

I've worked for others, especially the weak, and I've taught you that it's more blessed to give than to receive. Paul said I can appreciate what others have, but I've not coveted it. I've worked with these hands.

First I've supplied, he says, the needs in my own life, and I've worked with these hands to supply the needs of people around me. I've taught you it's more blessed to give than to receive. Now Paul goes on in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, in verse 12, he says, Now if any man builds upon this foundation, this foundation of Christ, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

If any man build on this foundation gold, oh, we've got a lot of people building gold on the foundation of Christ today, there's no doubt about that. They've got gold dust, gold teeth, gold bars, gold hair, gold

everything. Now, there is a resource, of course, that Christ provides, but it's for the purpose of being as Christ, and doing the work of Christ in our world and in our time.

But I think of those who build for gain. They build for reputation and recognition. Just as Nebuchadnezzar built a golden image of himself as it is, and commanded people, when you hear the music, bow down to this golden image.

If any man build on this foundation silver, before the days of glass, the invention of glass, silver would be used and made into plates and polished so people could see a reflection of themselves. And I can't help but think of the number of people who build something and they like to see a reflection of themselves. They're not building it to see a reflection of Christ.

It's a reflection of themselves. I'm always wary when I visit a church and people walk out the door and all they talk about all the way down the street and through the week is the pastor, the pastor, the pastor, the pastor, the pastor. Oh, folks, I'm telling you, if you walk out of this church saying these words, then we have all failed you.

You ought to be walking out of this church, through exits 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, saying, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. If we are leading to ourselves, then we have failed you. We are producing in you a carnality and a division.

You ought to be stirred to become like Christ. If I'm preaching from the throne, something should be happening in your heart. There should be a deepening inner desire to be like Him, to walk with Him, to yield to Him, to obey Him, to be conformed to His image.

If that's not happening in your heart, then I am not representing Christ before you. If any man build on this foundation precious stones, now, those precious stones can represent truths that are being planted within the heart that are conforming us to the image of Christ. But they can also represent those that become proud and possessive of their giftings.

Pushing out anybody that gets close to their turf as it is. Proud of what God alone has given them. Proud, too proud to be humbled.

Too proud to let this mind of Christ come into them and to be humbled and obedient even unto death. If any man build on this foundation wood, now, wood is a good thing. In the days of Solomon's temple, there were skilled workmen that came in and carved beautiful flowers and roses and such like things which truly glorified God.

But there are others who carved things to glory in the work of their own hands. Oh, folks, it's when we sit back like the Old Testament king and said, look what my hands have done. Hasn't it been incredible? I'm the best Sunday school teacher in this whole church.

Six children last year were baptized in the Holy Ghost under my ministry. Look what my hands have done. Glorifying in the work of his own hands.

And then lastly he says, if any man builds on this foundation wood, hay or stubble. And hay and stubble speak to my heart of just worthless things. And that's what Paul was talking about.

He says, you're yet carnal. There's among you envy and strife and division. And you're carnal and you're walking like men.

You're building worthless things. Folks, if you are here today and you are in strife and you are in division and you are proud and you will not walk according to the word of God, you are building a worthless thing on the foundation of Jesus Christ. Now, how does God deal with this? Verse 13 says, every man's work.

Now, I'm talking about the true Christian. Folks, we all fall into these traps. Goodness sakes, man, there's nobody here that can say I've not gone astray in my thinking.

I've not spoken something wrong with my lips. I've not done something that I shouldn't do. There's nobody here that can even make that claim.

But when we begin to move in a direction that is not good, Paul says, every man's work shall be made manifest. The day shall declare it. It shall be revealed by fire and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

Now, this is where it really gets interesting because that is a future context. I've always preached it this way. We're going to get to heaven one day.

Everything I've done, the whole wagon load is going to be taken and put on the altar of God. Churches I've pastored, services I've preached, things I've done in the name of God will all be put there, and the fire of God's purity is going to touch it. Everything that was birthed in God, that honored God, that represented God, that had the mind of Christ will stand, and I will be rewarded, the Scripture says accordingly.

And everything that isn't God is going to burn, and there will be a loss. There will be no reward. So what's the point of even doing it? Oh, folks, think it through.

But you see, there's something that makes this very interesting because in the original text of this verse of Scripture, the pulpit commentary translates it this way. It is being revealed in fire. It is actually written in the present tense.

It shall be. They call it the continuous present tense. The better way that this could have been translated would be this.

The day shall declare it because it is and will be revealed by fire. God says, I will show you what your work is by bringing you into the fire. You'll find out how deep this theology that you espouse has truly led you to Christ.

Now, follow me. Matthew chapter 3. What is the fire? You're going to be surprised to see this. What is this fire that will try my work? Is it trial? Is it tribulation? Well, it can appear to be that.

It's deeper than that. Is it difficult circumstances? Is it not being able to pay my electricity bill? Is it being short a loaf of bread this week? What is the trial? What is the fire that will try the purity of the work in my life? Matthew chapter 3. You know, when you pray, O Lord, send the fire, you better be sure you know what you're singing. Matthew chapter 3, verse 11.

This is John the Baptist speaking. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. But he that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I'm not worthy to bear.

He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Now, the word fire here is the same word that Paul uses in Corinthians. The fire that will try your work of what sort it is.

The fire that continuously tries the things that are being built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. Oh, I've heard so many people. Oh, God, baptize me with fire.

And they have no idea what they're talking about. Now, the Holy Ghost is the power of God to live the life of Christ. That's God.

Coming into your life, taking the promises that become ours through Jesus Christ and making these promises a living reality. The fire is different. The fire is an inner passion.

It's born of the life of Christ within us. It's a fire that is always gathering and burning or consuming that which does not conform to the image of Christ within you. It's Christ.

It's a manifestation of Christ in you, the hope of glory. When he came into your temple, he came in with a godly jealousy. He came into the very heart of you and says, I will give you the power to be the man, to be the woman I've called you to be.

But I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. And I will go within you and I will I will roust out and roast out everything in your life that is unlike me. Everything being built on the foundation of my name that does not conform to my image.

This godly jealousy that I have for you, I will set fire to this thing and burn it right where it stands. I will try your works by fire daily, every day. I will try what you do and where you're going by fire.

You see, John says in verse 11, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. And in verse 12, now here's the fire described, whose fan is in his hand and he will thoroughly purge his floor and gather his weed into the garner. But he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

He came into your life and he came in with a purpose to raise you and I from the dead, to quicken us according to the power of his mighty life working within us, to make us new creations in Christ Jesus. His fan is in his hand. He's inside of the temple, constantly working inside of us, constantly lifting and purging, changing and cleansing, challenging.

And taking those things that are unlike him and burning them up in the fire of his own inner passion for the glory of his life to be revealed within us. Go to John chapter 2, please, if you will. I want to show you how this works.

John chapter 2, verse 13, tells us it was a time when the Jews Passover was at hand and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And I walked into the temple, into the physical temple. And he says he found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves and changers of money sitting.

You see, these are things that had just kind of crept in, just like the Corinthian church. They got there, people didn't see them as wrong, and all of a sudden the fire of God shows up. The Redeemer comes, but the fire comes with the Redeemer.

And when he had made a scourge of small cords, doesn't the scripture say in Hebrews that he scourges every son that he receives? He challenges, he changes, he chastises. He drove them all out of the temple, all the sheep, the oxen. He poured out the changers' money and overthrew the tables and said to them

that sold doves, take these things hence and make not my father's house a house of merchandise.

And his disciples, verse 17, remember that it was written, the zeal of thine house has eaten me up. You see, folks, the baptism of fire was within. Now think of how, for a moment, if the physical temple had been capable of emotion, it must have felt.

If the physical temple was capable of emotion, this inward upheaval. Just think of yourself as the Old Testament temple for a moment. And all of a sudden this Christ comes in to the middle of the temple.

And you're completely satisfied with the way you're worshiping God, everything is in order. All the doves are over here, the goats are over here, and the money changed, everything is necessary. As far as you're concerned, it's all necessary.

These are just personal preferences. All of a sudden the fire comes into the temple. And inside of you is this incredible upheaval going on.

Goats are running in this direction, sheep are going in this direction, doves are flying in this direction. Tables are turning over, you feel sick to your stomach. What is going on? Have you ever been there? Have you ever felt this? Am I the only one in this church that goes through this? Where you just have this incredible inner turmoil going on.

It feels like an earthquake is happening inside of you. And all your ducks were lined up on Sunday. Everything was fine.

It's now Wednesday afternoon. And there's this incredible fire going on. Say, God, what is going on in my life? As far as I'm concerned, everything is fine, but I feel this upheaval is happening inside of me.

I'm so stirred, I'm so restless, I'm so discontent, I'm so troubled. God, what is going on? You see, that's exactly what the Old Testament temple would have said had it been able and capable of speaking and feeling. But you see, the problem we face is that in the New Testament, we, you, me, are the temple of the living God.

The same Christ that walked into that temple the moment you received Him walked into your temple. He came into the midst of your heart. He came in with the power to redeem you.

He came in with the power to raise you from the dead. He came in with the power to make you a new creation. But He also came in with a fire and a godly jealousy that everything built in His name in your life would be conformed to the truth.

The baptism of fire came to Him. Oh, Lord, send the fire. I learned about these in the natural realm years ago, and I've been learning about some of these things in the spiritual realm even today.

I bought a house as a young Christian and spent 12 years renovating this house, building it in the way that I thought it would look nice, adding a piece here, taking a little bit away there. And after 12 years, finally, I got this house to the way I thought, this is nice. I'm finished.

Oh, this house looks good. You can be 12 years saved, and you can have been reading the Bible, you can be studying, you can be listening to tapes, and you've built the house, and you say, this house looks good. You look in the mirror in the morning, that's a good-looking house.

Windows are just right. Everything is the right length. Vocabulary seems to be correct.

This is a good house. I'll need to go on a trip, preaching, and come back and find out that God sent fire to my house, or let's just say allowed my house to burn to the ground. You see, I learned something that day that fire does what it wants to do.

Only water can put it out. And in the Christian life, only agreement with the Word of God can put out the fire. Jacob was in a fire.

Uncle Laban was teaching him some grand lessons of life. And he came back to God, and he said, I want you to bless me. I can't go back until you bless me.

And you see, many, many years before, he had asked for this blessing, and his father had asked him, what is your name? And he lied. He gave his father another name. He declared himself to be a man that he wasn't.

And so, because of that, he was taken into this place of incredible trial and fire, because God was jealous for the legacy and the life that he longed to give him. And finally, he ends up wrestling with God himself before going back to face his old fears. And the Lord says the very same thing that his father once said to him.

He says, bless me. I won't let you go until you bless me. And then he says, what is your name? Agree with me.

Agree with what I have called you. You see, Jacob was given the name Deceiver. Tell me what your name is.

Agree with me, and then I will bless you. Years ago, as a young Christian, somebody handed me some tapes. And I began to listen to these tapes.

And it sounded so good. I was young in the Lord. I was young in the Scriptures.

Only saved maybe a year or two. And this guy on this tape was extremely charismatic. He was smooth and polished, slick.

And he said, you know, all sickness is of the devil. Nobody should be sick. And all poverty is of the devil.

Nobody should ever be poor. And all everything, he said, every denomination is of the devil. Nobody should even be in a denomination.

I remember I thought that was a little odd. But the other stuff seemed so good. It seemed so positive.

Oh, this is great stuff. I mean, if this guy really has the truth. And he said, if you want something, all you've got to do is confess it, and it's yours.

Just confess it, and you will possess it. Oh, that sounds really good. That really, really sounds good.

That sounds like goats and sheep in the temple if I've ever heard it in all of my life. And so, I started to embrace this. I even started to pass out some of the tapes.

I was invited as a guest speaker to a church. And I got up, and I espoused some of this theology. And the pastor was very kind to me.

He could have ripped me to pieces. At the end of the service, he said to me, where did you get your theology from? And I beamed, and I said, oh, from so-and-so. And he didn't say anything.

He didn't say anything to me. He said, just be very careful what you're listening to. All you have to do is confess it.

You possess it. Just speak it, and it goes away. You've got a cold? Just say, I don't have a cold.

It's gone. You don't have any bread in the cupboard? Just say, there's bread. There's bread.

By faith, there's bread. And bread appears. And it sounds so good.

Until my son fell into a fire that was in our backyard, where I was burning trash. And it was a miracle of God that he wasn't killed. But his hand was burned so badly that the doctors doubted that he'd ever be able to use it again because his hand went right into the coals of the fire to stop him.

I remember taking him to the hospital and sitting beside his bed. And this little boy was in such incredible pain. He was three years old.

And my heart was broken. And my theology was tried by fire. I'm not saying that God did that to get through to me.

I'm saying that that experience got through to my theology. And I began to realize, confess it all you want. There are some things you're just not going to possess.

Tell it to go away. There are some things that are just not going to go away. Now, God took an evil situation and turned it for good.

Out of that, my son has developed an incredible compassion for struggling people. The Lord put a grit in his gut through this that allowed him to become a marine and travel around the world. And he's got a bravery that is second to none I've ever seen.

An evil situation was turned to good. The scarring was not taken away. He still has an incredibly scarred hand.

But that has not stopped him. What it did is it stopped me from a pursuit and a theology that would have greatly harmed my life and my family. Paul says it this way.

If any man's work shall be burned, 1 Corinthians 3, 15, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire. Know you not that you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defiled the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

You see, the trial of fire will show him what kind of work has been going on in his life and how much of Christ has been truly in it. If the work is a defiling work to the name of Christ, God will destroy this work. God will destroy your image of yourself.

God will set his hand against it. He will put you in a fire that you're not going to be able to get out of. And the fire is his own passion for your soul within.

Isn't it strange? So you can't escape it. Go to Milwaukee. Run to Minneapolis.

Go anywhere you want. The fire is within you. It's not outside of you.

The fire is a godly passion of Christ himself that you be conformed to his image. And that the work that he does through your life truly bring honor and glory to his name. If it's a defiling work to the name of Christ, God himself says, I will destroy this work.

I'll destroy this temple. I'll tear it down. There won't be one stone left upon another.

I will show him his error and let him again begin to rebuild something to glorify Jesus Christ. You see the pattern all through the Old Testament. How invading armies would come in.

A trial of fire would come to the people of God. They would go for a season into a time of chastisement. Then God in his mercy would bring them out again with a command to build and rebuild and build according to a sure foundation.

The most wonderful thing that God could do for you and for me if we are not building on a foundation of truth is to tear it all down. To expose it today for what it is. Lest we end up going to the throne of God one day and have him say, All you did, I didn't know you.

I didn't know what you were doing. I never asked you to do what you were doing. It didn't bring any glory to my name.

I would prefer to be put into the fire now. 1 Corinthians 3.14 says, If any man's work abide which he has built thereon, he shall receive a reward. God says there's a reward if you walk in truth.

If I can prove you, if I can reprove you as it is. If I can hold you up to the light of scripture. And the work that I'm doing is verified to be a work that is after my mind and after my heart.

There is a reward. Now you're going to find that in chapter 2 and verse 7. Here's the reward. Paul says, We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery.

Even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory. Paul says, Listen, he starts out by saying to the Corinthian church in chapter 3, You can't hear what God is trying to speak because you're not building on what is the true image of Christ. But if you are willing to build on the image of Christ, Paul is saying we have something from God.

It's a mystery to those who walk according to the natural mind. But to those who are truly building a life in God that will be conformed to the image of Christ. There is a hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory.

God gave knowledge. God gave instruction. God gave power.

God gave direction. God gave protection. God gave the most incredible victory.

God gave a clearness of mind. God gave a freedom to walk out of every prison situation. God gave a word that will have weight and authority.

God gave us the power to call a fallen world into reconciliation with God and with one another. God gave it. It's a hidden wisdom.

It's the wisdom of God that brings a man out of weakness and into the strength of Almighty God through Jesus Christ. It's a hidden wisdom that the natural mind can't understand. You will never find it in a success and prosperity seminar.

It's not there. It's a hidden wisdom which none of the princes of this world, verse 8, knew. For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

But as it is written, eye has not seen nor ear heard. Neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit.

For the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. God has given them to us. This incredible life.

This incredible power to be a servant. The power to walk a life that sees success is not the measure of how men see us, but how God sees us. For what man knows the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him.

Even so, the things of God knows no man but the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also, Paul says in verse 13, we speak not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual things.

Hallelujah! This is the reward. It's a mind. It's a heart.

It's a spirit that is open to the life of Christ. And God says if you truly call out to me in truth, I will come in. I will sit down with you, my father and I. We will sup with you.

We will open to you a banquet of truth. We will enable you. We will strengthen you.

And you will be called reconcilers in this generation. Not just trudging through. Not just trying to make it by until the day of the Lord's return.

No, more than conquerors. Victorious warriors for the name of Jesus Christ. The hidden wisdom of God.

I was actually going to call the message that at the beginning. Because that's the reward. It's a wisdom that was hidden from this world.

But it was ordained of God before this world was formed and you were born to bring you to glory. That's the reward. A mind that can hear.

Remember Paul started with the Corinthians. He said, I want to give you this, but you can't hear it yet. You see, for those who are being tried by fire, it's simply because God loves you.

Not angry with you. He loves you. He passionately loves you.

You invited him in. He came in with the Holy Ghost and fire. He baptized you in himself.

He constantly pursues you. Constantly cleanses the temple. Constantly challenges the things that we are building in his name.

God loves you. And he has so much more for you. All he says is, turn away from the reasoning and the thinking of man.

And agree with me. Walk in agreement with me. If you do nothing else.

In the course of this week, go back to Philippians and study the scripture. Let this mind be in you, which was in Christ and study it. Memorize it.

It will help you to filter everything that you ever hear preached in the church of Jesus Christ. Let this mind. Being you, which was in Christ Jesus.

Hallelujah. Thank you, Lord. Have father.

I have delivered your heart. I know I have. I pray in Jesus name.

Lord, give us the grace. To build on a true foundation. Take away from us strife and envy.

Building for reputation. Everything that offends you, Lord. Oh, God, thank you that you're not willing to allow these things to continue to coexist.

With your presence. And your life within us. I thank you, Lord, that you are challenging me every day.

I thank you, God. It's not easy. But you are there.

And even more so in the last while. I pray for the grace. To be of no reputation.

To be a servant. I ask you for the grace. To walk humbly and obediently before you.

To the suffering of the loss of anything that you want to take away. I pray it for your church. Lord, no other church will make a difference in this generation.

The days are very dark. And they're going to get exceeding dark. But, Lord, you said you'd have a people.

Who truly shine with the light of Jesus Christ. God almighty, challenge me. Challenge me, Lord.

Challenge me. Go deep in my heart. I don't want to end up before your throne and have half of my life's work burned.

Challenge me now. Father, I thank you for it with all my heart. Lead this church into the future.

Holy Spirit, I bend my knee to you. And I ask you to lead this church into the future. God almighty, thank you.

That you are dissolving our doubts. And you are chasing away the voices of the enemy. That would try to tell us that God is angry with us.

Lord, you're not angry. You're passionately jealous of us. Oh, God, take my works to the fire.

If that's the cry of your heart today. I'm going to ask you just to join with me at this altar. In a moment, we're just going to pray together.

He's called us to be ambassadors of reconciliation. Take our works to the fire. And you know what that's all about.

Let's stand up in the balcony, main sanctuary in the annex. Please, if you feel to move forward, you can stand between the screens. But I'm calling today those that are in the fire.

Instead of trying to justify yourself, ask the Lord now to take your works to the fire. Take them to the fire. Test me.

Prove me. Try me. This is what made David such a man after God's heart.

Search me, oh Lord. Try me. See if there'd be any wicked way in me.

Lead me in the way of life everlasting. This is what made him a man after God's heart. It wasn't the fact that he was a king.

He had a heart. He knew he needed God's ways. Can we sing that song, Take Me Past the Outer Court? Folks, we've got to go beyond just normative religion.

Beyond the excuses of our natural mind. Take us right to the place. Because in the Holy of Holies was the fire of God.

It was the manifested fire of God. And that fire would kill everything that truly dishonored the name of God. Take me there.

My God, I truly want to honor you. I don't want to stand in Burundi without authority. This is about a nation turning, Lord.

You've called us to be reconcilers. We first have to be reconciled to you. And to one another.

Help me in this, God. Help this church, Lord. Help us, God.

Father, we ask you in Jesus' name. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, God.

Thank you, Jesus. Lord, you love the testimony of this church. And we've been tried by fire over and over again.

But one more time, Holy Spirit. One more time. One more time.

We invite you to try this work by fire. Everything that is being built in your name, Jesus. Come.

Come, Holy Spirit. Come with the passion that you have for every soul. My soul, God, and the souls of your people.

Come and overturn the tables and kick out the dove cellars. Everything, everything, Lord, that we are building that closes our ears to the hidden promises of God. Oh, Lord.

Oh, God. Lord, we're a people in need of a supernatural experience. Not just theories and theologies, but a supernatural working of God within us.

God, you're the only one that can make us shine in this darkened hour. You're the only one that can give our voices authority and weight. You're the only one, oh, God.

You're the only one. Oh, Jesus. Oh, God.

There's nothing in us that's any good except for you, Lord. You're the only good thing that we have. My God, my God, come and build the temple.

Come, Holy Spirit, and build the temple. Come and build the work of God, the virtues of Christ in my life and mind and heart. Come, oh, Lord, purge and purify everything in me that's unlike Christ.

My God, my God, I yield to you, Lord, I yield to you, oh, God. As Abraham took Isaac to the altar, I take my own heart, my own ministry, I take everything to the altar, oh, God. And I ask you, Lord, I ask you, God, to touch it with the fire of your purity.

Oh, Jesus, my Savior, my God, oh, Lord, don't let the candle of this church ever go out. Keep the candle of this testimony burning brightly until the day you come and take us home. Don't let us settle, oh, God, for anything apart from you, Lord.

Don't let us build with things that don't satisfy. My God, I pray, let this pulpit always be a burning bush, challenging us, oh, God, to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. My Lord, let the truth of Christ always be preached here.

Oh, God, let there be a penetrating word that goes right between soul and spirit and joint and marrow and discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart. God Almighty, we yield ourselves to this. We yield ourselves to it.

We ask you, Holy Spirit, to come and speak to us. We ask you to challenge us. We ask you, God, we ask you, Lord, to purify the work that you are doing within our hearts, oh, God.

Would you lift your voice with me now? Would you lift your voice and pray with me? Ask God for the purity of his presence. Oh, Jesus, do this work, oh, God. Do this work that only you can do, Lord.

My God, my God, my God, we welcome the baptism of fire. We welcome this baptism of fire. We welcome your passion for our souls, oh, God.

We welcome, Lord, your challenging of the testimony of your life. We welcome it, God. We welcome it into our very being.

Challenge us, oh, God. Let our testimony count for your glory. Oh, God, open our ears to the truth of your life within us.

Give us the hidden wisdom, oh, God, that the carnal men know nothing about. My God, lift us out of poverty and into the wealth of Christ. Lift us, oh, God, lift us into the knowledge of our God.

Give us the power to be servants. Give us the power to lay down reputation. Give us the power, oh, God, to care for nothing but your honor and your glory among men.

My God, my God, my God, we cry out to you, Lord. We cry out to you, oh, God. Lord, you're the only one that can do this.

Come and do it within us. We invite you. We say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Come, come, Holy Spirit, come. My God, come and do the work that only you can do.

Jesus, thank you. God, thank you for this. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, mighty God. Hallelujah. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you, God. Oh, Jesus.

Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh, God.

Guide us. Guide us now, Holy Spirit. Guide us.

Take us to the very heart of Christ. Help us, God. Help us, Lord.

This is a dark city. It's a dark time. Take us now.

Take us, God. Open our ears to the meat. Give us the meat of Christ.

Father, we thank you for it, God, with all our hearts. Oh, folks, if this is in your heart this morning, the Lord is pleased. Just thank him now.

Just give him thanks. Give him praise. Thank you, Jesus.

Thank you, Lord. If this is your church, beloved, please hear me on this. You should attempt to be at least two services a week.

We have three on Sunday, one on Tuesday, one on Friday. I'm not saying this to pack the pews. This house is full all the time.

You know that. I'm saying this for your soul's sake. You must grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ now.

Everything that can be shaken will be shaken. It's already begun. Only the foundation of Christ can't be shaken.

Oh, God promises through Isaiah to have a people in the midst of the fire that will praise him, that will give him glory, that will cry out to those who still live in darkness. There will be a testimony. There will be a victorious church until Christ comes.

Thanks be to God. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

This is the conclusion of the message.

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