

The Fire of God

by Duncan Campbell

The sermon emphasizes the need for revival, the manifestation of God's power and presence, and the importance of humility and prayer in bringing about this revival.

Duration: 48:28

Scripture: 1 Kings 18:37-38, Psalm 85:6, Isaiah 64:1, Joel 2:28, Matthew 6:33, Acts 2:3

Topics: "Fire Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on a remarkable move of God in a village in Persia called West Ben Haar. The village experienced a great stir and many people professed faith in Jesus Christ. The speaker emphasizes the difference between carnal and spiritual aspects of Christianity, and laments the lowering of standards and conformity to worldly ways in evangelistic efforts. The sermon highlights the desperate need for revival in the current world, stating that nothing short of a supernatural manifestation of God's power can address the dire situation.

Transcript

First book of Kings, chapter 18, and to verse 38. We might read verses 37 and 38. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their hearts back again.

Now let me say in passing, only God can do that. Only God can turn the hearts of sinful men. Verse 38, Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

I want to direct your attention especially to the words, Then the fire of the Lord fell. The fire fell, but it was the fire of the Lord. This wasn't false fire.

There are some portions of scripture so charged with gracious meaning that we find ourselves turning to them again and yet again. And I believe that this is one such portion. I must have spoken from this passage many times, but it came very forcibly to my mind and heart last night on returning from the meeting.

Then the fire of the Lord fell. It's wonderful to be in a place or in a community when you are conscious of the fact that God has swept in, that the fire of the Lord has fallen, and you can have no doubt whatsoever

about it. The fire of the Lord falling.

Those of you who are familiar with this part of Old Testament story will remember that two facts stand out with great clearness. First of all, this fact. It was a time of apostasy and peril in the nation.

Forces antagonistic to God were at work both in the court and among the people. The situation was really desperate. For three years the divine judgment lay heavy upon the land.

In the words of scripture, there was a sore famine in Samaria. What a picture. What a picture.

But I would say that it pales before the picture that confronts us today in this world of ours. Perhaps in the community that you come from and in the world that we come from. A situation appalling.

A situation that is desperate. I wonder if this is a far-fetched comparison to suggest that this really is a faint picture, a faint representation of the places that you'll purpose visiting in a very short time. A sore famine in the land.

A sore famine. Are we not in the day spoken of by Paul in his letter to Timothy? For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears. They shall turn away from the truth.

Now, I quoted something a few days ago, part of a statement made by Dr. Ramsey, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Now, here is the full statement that he made. This gives you an idea of the appalling situation that confronts us today in Great Britain.

The appalling situation. Here are words spoken by the supreme human leader in the Christian church in England. Heaven is not a place for Christians only.

Those who have led a good life on earth but found themselves unable to believe in God will not be debarred from heaven. I personally expect to meet present-day atheists in heaven. I hope to have fellowship with Judas.

And then he goes on to say this, among many other things that he said. It is possible to believe in Jesus without believing in his virgin birth or in his miraculous resurrection. These are words spoken by the leading representative of the Church of Christ in Britain today.

Well, might the prophet say to the law and to the testimonies, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. And that is what we are going to face in the appalling situation that is too common in the world today. But you will notice that there is another fact here.

That is the challenge to these powers of darkness. God had his man, and God has his man today. I believe that.

I believe that God has raised up this very mission to defy and challenge the powers of darkness. Well, there you have the prophet. And he throws down the gauntlet in his attack upon the prophets of Baal, and the evil in the court is laid bare, and in the name of his God challenges them to a test which would prove whether Jehovah or Baal was supreme.

And that is the challenge that you must present in this our day and generation. And cry, The God that answereth by fire. That's my God.

The God that answereth by fire. Oh, Jehovah's God is alive. Jehovah's God is on the throne.

The prophet's God, Elijah's God, is on the throne. And in his name we go forth to challenge the powers of darkness, strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. And the God that answereth by fire.

Oh, we must be clear about this, that we are in touch with the God that answers, and the God who can turn the hearts of men from evil to that which is good, from unrighteousness to righteousness. There must be a demonstration of that. Oh, let me say again, unless this is made visible, the average man will not be impressed by your efforts, not a bit of it.

He will stagger back from it all, disillusioned and despairing. But let there be a demonstration of fire, penetrating, burning, illuminating, making God real and visible. That is a cry for our day and generation.

Now, there are several thoughts in this wonderful record, and to these I wish to direct your attention. First of all, I find here a vital necessity, and that is for a manifestation of a God that answers by fire. That is a vital necessity.

And then I have here further a significant fact. Revival came when the broken altar was rebuilt, and that to me is a significant fact. And then you have a divine visitation.

The fire fell, the people fell, and bless God, the rain fell. Revival came at last. So first of all, you have here a vital necessity.

Surely all will agree that the supreme need of the hour is for revival. Now, this may be a truism, may be a commonplace statement, but it has to be repeated again and yet again, that nothing short of revival, nothing short of a demonstration by God, oh, I stress this, I emphasize it again and yet again, nothing short of a manifestation of that which must ever be regarded as supernatural, will meet the dire situation in our land, yours and mine today. For here your land and mine has been in the grips of a spirit that holds perilous possibilities for the religious life of our land, a spirit that is out, oh, let me say it again, a spirit that is out to defy every known Christian principle.

That is the situation. We used to speak, when I was young, we used to speak of restraining grace and constraining grace. Now, I believe that this is something that is sadly lacking today.

I refer to restraining grace. If the grace of God was operative and restraining in the country, it would be utterly impossible for the Archbishop of Canterbury to make that devilish statement that he made. But somehow, restraining grace is not in operation.

The fear of God, the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom, is not a characteristic feature of the average Christian community today. We are living in desperate days, but unfortunately a pleasure-crazed and morally bankrupt generation refuses to face the facts of grim reality. And I fear that that spirit somehow has entered the Christian Church.

We want to be aware of this. Oh, we want to be aware of it. That's the situation.

You're not going out to a picnic. You're going out to a battle. You're going out to face an enemy that is out to defy God and defy every known Christian principle.

The answer, then, the answer is God. Oh, young folk, listen. Get to know your God.

They that know their God shall, shall be strong. We were praying much this morning for the young folk that left us yesterday, and asking that God would cover them, that God would empower them, that God would overshadow them. Young folk, listen, the God of Elijah is alive, always alive.

Well, if the answer is revival, why is revival not coming? Now, this is a searching and a solemn question. If the answer is in revival, and there must be a great number of people today in the lands that you come from, in the communities that you were born and brought up in, in our land and in your land, men and women who are burdened and longing for revival, they recognize that revival is the answer. Why, then, is revival not coming? Hath God ceased to be interested in the souls of men? Is he quite happy to see them drifting to hell, to be doomed and damned forever? Oh, that is not the God we believe in.

But I think of that verse of Scripture. It seems to me that we have the answer in it. If my people which are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive and heal their land.

Now, this question confronted a young minister on the island of Skye several years ago. He was newly ordained, and this was his first charge, a young man born and brought up in the part of the country that my good lady here comes from, Charlie Henderson, by name. And when he found himself in this parish, he discovered that he was up against a frightful situation.

Now, this was a very godly young man. His father and mother were saved during the first mission that the faith mission had in this part of the country. It was at that time that my mother-in-law was saved also under the ministry of one of our workers by the name of Angus McLean from the island of Tyree.

Well, this young man had a good upbringing. He was brought up in a Christian home. And while a student in Glasgow University had a wonderful experience of the power of God, he was saved as a lighthouse keeper.

And it was after that that he studied for the ministry, and God met with him in Glasgow. He is now in this parish. He is now facing this appalling situation, and I can assure you the situation was desperate.

He invited me to the parish to conduct some meetings. And I began on a Sunday evening with seven people in church, just seven people. On Monday we had five, and at the end of the week the average attendance was seven.

Now, that was an appalling situation. He hadn't a single person that he could call upon to pray, not a single person that could lead the singing in the church. The situation was desperate.

At the end of the week, he decided to spend a day in prayer. And I believe that the Lord made it upon my heart to get in touch with a certain businessman on the island of Louis in the village of Arnall, where God swept in revival blessing. And I knew that there were numbers there who prayed and who knew how to pray.

And to this man I phoned. And I mentioned the situation that confronted us in this parish. And I wondered if he and the other praying men would join us in a day of prayer.

And the day of prayer was to be Monday. So he agreed and said this, Yes, certainly, we'll join with you, and I'll close my factory. I'll close the factory, because nearly all his weavers were saved during the revival.

And I said to him, No, John, no, I'm not asking you to do that. I'm asking you to get a few of the praying men, men who know how to pray, to wait with us at the throne, and if at all possible, get little Donald MacPhail to pray with you. I've referred to this lad again and again.

He was a man who knew how to get in touch with God. He was in touch with God. So he agreed to that.

And at ten o'clock on Monday morning, we got on our knees in the study of the mans, and a few men got on their knees in a cottage in Lewis. And on our knees we waited, pleading one promise that I knew would be brought before the Lord in Lewis. I will pour water on him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground, all day waiting upon God.

Oh, young folk, get to know God in prayer. I'm glad that my good lady stressed that in her word to you, the vital need of being much in prayer until we are, as it were, saturated with God himself. Well, we were there for the whole day.

We're now sitting at tea, just before leaving for the church, when a rat came to the door. And the minister's sister responded to the rat and went to the door, and then came back and said to her brother, Charlie, something wonderful has happened. Something wonderful has happened.

The merchant is here offering you his car to take you to the church. This had never happened before. The merchant never darkened the door of a church he wasn't known to be ever in a place of worship, since coming home from Glasgow and setting up business in the parish.

But here he was, offering to take us to church. We are now moving from the manse down the avenue, making for the church, when this man spoke to his minister and said, Mr. Henderson, what is happening tonight? Now, I'm stating absolute fact. I want you to listen to this.

The God of Elijah is alive. He said to the minister, what is happening? I've just met a bus that has come fifteen miles, crowded with people, and they're making for the church. And it will be impossible for us to get a parking place with the number of cars that are there.

And then the minister spoke, I believe that God has answered prayer, and I believe that revival has come. And this godless merchant turned toward the minister who was sitting beside him and said, did you say revival? Does that mean the fear of God? If it does, I'm gripped by the fear of God. Does it mean the fear of God? If it does, I'm gripped by the fear of God.

And listen, young folks, when we got to the church, that parish church was crowded to capacity. Crowded to capacity. And half of the congregation from a neighboring congregation, the free church.

And I saw the crowd in front of me, I thought to myself, now there must be somebody here that will lead us in the singing. So I asked if there was anybody there that could lead the singing for us. Of course, the singing was in Gaelic, the preaching was in Gaelic.

An old man rose and he said, yes, I'll do my best. And of course there we have to present the psalm. And if he had one tune, he had at least three tunes before he got to the end of the first verse.

But I can assure you the singing was glorious. It would disturb Mr. Scamble with an ear that is always after harmony. But I can assure you the singing was glorious that evening.

My, they sang. God is our refuge and our strength. In straights at present day.

And they sang and they sang and they sang. Now, I couldn't tell you how many were saved in that church that night. But what I want to impress upon you is this, that in answer to prayer, the parish and a neighboring parish became moved by God.

Miracle happened. And the God of miracle is alive. We've got to believe that.

I'm sure that there are those here, the young man who took us up from the hotel, was relating to me an experience that his grandfather had in Russia. And how they were led from Russia. And how the angel of the Lord protected them.

How God was, as it were, a flame of fire around them, leading them to their destination. The God of Elijah is not dead, he's alive. And the miracles that happened can happen again.

Well, we got home to the manse. We got home to the manse. No appeal at all, just left them in the church, left them to find their way to God.

That's why the times, God, when God does the work, he does it thoroughly. However, we got home. It's now two o'clock in the morning, and I heard the telephone ring.

And I heard the minister go to answer the call. And this was the wife of the publican, the wife of the man who owned the Paris hotel. And she told the minister on the phone that she was greatly disturbed, she couldn't sleep.

She suddenly discovered in that meeting that she was eating and drinking damnation to herself by sitting at the Lord's table and not a Christian. And she begged the minister to come and see her. Then her husband got on to the phone, and he pled with the minister.

He said in his talk to the minister, I'm somewhat afraid that my wife may go mental in the distress that she was in. That was at two o'clock. The minister is just back, and we're in bed when the telephone rings again.

And this was the mother of the parish nurse asking the minister to come if at all possible that her daughter was in a terrible state of distress of soul. And that morning, the local nurse, along with a number of others, were led into Christ. Now why do I tell you that story? Why do I tell you that remarkable visitation? To stress the point that the God of Elijah is alive.

And the God who listened to the prayer of the prophet Elijah is the God who has an ear for the sincere cry. A few years ago, we were at a wedding in which this young minister was officiating. And what a joy it was to hear him tell that all the office bearers in that congregation at that time were born again during that remarkable visitation.

That move did not spread beyond the parish, but I tell you it shook the parish. And all his office bearers were converted at that time. So if revival is the only answer, in a sense, we've got the key to it.

We've got the key to it in our hands if my people called by my name will humble themselves and pray. God has said it! God has said it! Oh, may God deliver us from listening to this word, and it fall from us like water from a duck's back. This is the word of God.

This is the word of God. If my people, weary people, called by my name will humble themselves. Oh, there's so much in that.

Will humble themselves. Let me quote again what was said recently at a conference of ministers. God is not obliged to send revival because we pray.

God is not obliged to send revival because we pray, but he is bound by covenant promise. He is bound by covenant promise to send revival when we humble ourselves and pray. When we humble ourselves.

Brokenness of spirit. Now will you notice how graphically the writer describes the entrance of God upon the scene. Here are the words.

Then the fire of the Lord fell. Something had happened. Heaven spoke.

The throne uttered its voice. And the fire fell. Now what is the meaning of this sentence? Well to me it is the point of division between the carnal and the spiritual.

And between the prophets of Baal and one man who humbled himself and prayed. The difference between that which is carnal and that which is spiritual. We are living in a day when unfortunately we lower our standards to worldly conformity and even in the field of evangelistic effort we ape the world.

May I read to you an advert that appeared in an Irish paper last year. And I think I better just tell you the truth. And it's an advert from four American evangelists who are conducting special revival meetings as they call them.

And this is the advert. We invite you to six wonderful days of heaven upon earth. See and feel the revival power of God in action.

Hear singing and music with a beat in an atmosphere that is different. And we guarantee results. My dear friends, when I read that I found myself saying, God have mercy on us.

May God have mercy on us. Six wonderful days of heaven upon earth. And we guarantee results.

Now it comes to my mind a convention that I attended years ago in Peebles in Scotland. Now at this particular time there was a very remarkable move in a village in Persia, the village of West Benhar. It was a great move.

There was a terrific stir in the village. And a great number made profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Perhaps I ought to mention that the three evangelists were from Elam, a Pentecostal church.

Now don't misunderstand me when I say that. I'll tell you what I'm still to say to you. However, on the Saturday of the convention two busloads from the village of West Benhar came to the Peebles convention.

And I tell you they caused a stir. Mr. Gavin, the founder of our mission, was giving his address when he found it necessary to stop preaching because of the racket that the young folk were making. It was frightful.

Praising the Lord, shouting, one man took out a handkerchief and he began to wave it about. He said, Lord send revival, Lord send revival. You never saw or listened to anything like it.

It was a real stir. However, after a week while they quietened down and Mr. Gavin resumed his message. That evening we were in at supper.

And sitting at the table with us there was an old man from Paisley. I'm sure you've heard the hymn, The Old Old Story, and Life, Life, Eternal Life, and the other hymn, Lord send us revival. He composed ever so many hymns.

His name, Willie Leslie. So he's sitting at the table when Mr. Gavin turned to him and said, Mr. Leslie, will you lead us in a word of prayer? And that dear old man bowed his head and he began to pray. And in his prayer he said this, Lord, now he was very broad Scotch, very broad Scotch.

He began by saying, Lord, I would like to thank you for the young folk from West Benhar. I'd like to thank you for their enthusiasm. But Lord, it must have grieved your heart, your heart, must have grieved your heart to have seen so much of the steam that ought to have gone to the piston blowing out through the whistle.

Now, you smile at that, you smile at that. But that old man was near the truth. There is so much steam today in our efforts, just being blown out through the whistle, and nothing going to the piston.

Oh, young folk, see to it that the steam goes to the piston and not out through the whistle. I came across this sentence in a book by Maxwell of Prairie Bible Institute. Unless the Church senses her divine resources unseen, untapped, unlimited, she is tempted to resort to any means, fair, fleshly, or foul, to command attention.

We need to remember, said Maxwell, that heresy of method can be as deadly as heresy of message. We want to be in touch with the God of Elijah. Then you will notice the significant fact.

When did God show his hand? Now, the answer to that question, to me, is a revelation of the factors which are manifest in every revival. Thus, there was a recognition of the fact that the altar was broken, that the altar was broken. And you see the prophet moving into operation, and he handles stones, and he places stone upon stone, and the altar is built.

Now you know that the altar speaks of sacrifice, speaks of sacrifice. Every visitation from God costs in human lives. I believe that with all my heart.

You remember that incident, the New Testament story, when Greeks came to two of the disciples and made a special request, we would see Jesus. We would see Jesus. Now, can you point me to any passage in New Testament story that makes it clear to me that those Greeks saw Jesus? They saw Jesus.

But I do read this in the same chapter, that Jesus went and hid himself. He went and hid himself. Now, I may be wrong, and I stand to be corrected, but this is my interpretation.

You will notice that between the desire expressed by the Greeks, were they Greek philosophers? They could have been. Were they among those that met Paul on Mars Hill? That could have happened. But between the desire expressed and Jesus hiding himself, you have these words, except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.

But if it die, it bringeth forth much. What is Jesus saying to his disciples? He is calling on them to face the implications of Calvary, except a grain of wheat. Oh, he's thinking of the hour when he will fall into the ground and die, when he will face Calvary with its shame and die.

But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. It comes to my mind a poem that I frequently heard the Dr. Grimsgrrove quote at his evening service. Soul of mine, must I surrender? See myself as crucified? Turn from all earth's ambitions, that thou may'st be satisfied? That is the place of blessing, but that surely is the price of revival.

Must I surrender and see myself as crucified? Was it not the late Andrew Murray who in one of his books said or wrote, it is comparatively easy to win people to a cross, but to a cross that leaves them uncrucified. Oh, beware, beware of the cross that leaves you uncrucified. We sometimes say that in the natural world we live to die, but in the spiritual world we die to live.

That's the answer, that's the secret. Well, here you have this man and he's standing now as God's representative. Oh, there's noise, there's noise, there's excitement among the prophets of Baal.

Oh, Baal, hear us! My, they're making a racket, aren't they? But one man with God saved the situation and put the prophets of Baal to shame. Oh, let us not lose sight of one outstanding fact, and that is that one man with God became the savior of the nation. One man with God.

Oh, it's wonderful what God can do through a man wholly yielded to him. Well, here you have the prophet. One man prepared the altar and took his stand for God.

Now, how was it that this man could pray as he did? Hear me, that this people may know that thou art God. How was it that he could pray that prayer? Well, I would suggest that he could pray that prayer because his own altar wasn't broken. He was in touch with God and he made it clear to the people listening that their altars would have to be built again.

He repaired the broken altar. In effect, he is saying to them, your altars are broken, your altars are broken, you must prepare them, repair them. And then we read that the fire, the fire fell, and then the people fell, and then the rain fell.

My, what a day. But here I use my imagination a little, and I find myself asking the question, when did the fire fall? When did it fall? Well, you know that the bullock was offered, the bullock was offered, a complete offering, entire, complete. The bullock is standing there at the altar, but nothing happens.

And then the prophet takes his knife, the bullock is slain and cut in pieces. And I can see the prophet handling every piece, placing piece after piece on the altar. Now listen, friends, I believe that I'm speaking to some in this meeting, and of them it can be said that God has handled certain pieces, and they have been placed on the altar, never to be taken off again.

Is that true? I believe it is. Piece after piece is laid upon the altar, but the fire hasn't yet fallen, fire hasn't yet fallen. Here let me say again that I may be using my imagination here, but can it be true that there came a moment when the prophet discovered that he had overlooked a small piece just underneath the altar, a small piece.

And I can see him stoop down and gently he handles this small and last piece, and he places the last piece upon the altar. It's a complete, it's an entire offering, the last, the last piece, and then the fire fell. May I ask this question, can we all say this morning, God, you've got the last piece, you've got the last piece.

So far as I know my own heart, so far as I know where and how I stand in your presence, God, I think I can say that you've got the last piece. It was when the last piece was offered that the fire fell. And listen brother, it will be when the last piece in your life is offered that the fire will fall upon your soul.

That's revival. That's revival. It begins, Lord send us revival and let it begin now in me when, when I place the last piece on the altar.

And that last piece to my mind is just an absolute surrender to the will of God. Oh may God help us. May God help us this morning.

It is then, oh it is then, that we become God's, God's ambassadors, sending us with a message, sending us with a truth to proclaim because the last piece. Now we'll have a time of prayer and may God lead us.

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