

~Other Speakers A-F: Richard E. Bieber:

Pentecost is one of the festivals that has been observed in the Body of Christ since its beginning and has been recently rediscovered in large areas of the Church.

We often think of the of the Holy Spirit
as the One Who Gives Us Utterance, which of course, he does.
And as the One Who Gives Us Power to do things, which of course,
he does.

Weâ€™re talking about being able to bear witness at work, and share in our daily round with people; to have the wisdom to know when to open our mouths and when to keep them shut; when to get aggressive, and when to be really easy going.

All this has to do with the work of the Holy Spirit,
but in order for the power of the Lord, through the Holy Spirit,
to move out across our lips, and through our hands as healing,
we have to first see the Holy Spirit as
God Himself coming to dwell inside us.
This aspect of His coming to us is sometimes overlooked.

Today weâ€™re going to think in terms of what the essence of this thing is that happens to us and that we have to keep alive.

Throughout Godâ€™s dealings with us as race, the symbol of fire occurs again and again.
Very often, when we think of fire in connection to God,
we think of judgment - of that which purifies,
refines,
brings pain,
until finally all the dross is removed and nothing is left but the pure gold.

â€œHe will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.â€•

Two different baptisms.
And the baptism of fire brings with it, as it brought to our Lord Himself, a cross.
For us, that cross means a fire that burns everything in us that can be burned
until only the unshakable and indestructible nature of God is left and steps out
of that furnace to stand forever.

But there is another kind of fire.
Very, very different from the external fires of judgment which do, and will come.
There is a fire which is not merely an instrument of God, but which is Godâ€™s heart.
Which is really God Himself.

â€œFor our God is a consuming fire.â€•

And the whole purpose of our Lordâ€™s coming was to make it possible
for that fire to get back inside us.

But even prior to that, every man and woman of faith, from the fall of Adam
down to the coming of Christ was visited by that fire in some way.

For instance Abraham:

When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold
a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between
these pieces of the sacrifice. On that day, the Lord made
a covenant with Abraham saying, â€œTo your descendants
I give this land from the river of Egypt, to the great river Euphrates,

Or Moses:

Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he lead his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush. And he looked, and lo the bush was burning and yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight why the bush is not burnt. When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses."

Or Elijah:

And at the time of the evening oblation, Elijah, the prophet, came near and said, "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people might know that thou, O Lord, art God, and that thou hast turned their hearts back." Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And all the people saw it and they fell on their faces!

Or Isaiah:

The year King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having in his hand a burning coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin is forgiven."

In each of these cases, except for Elijah's, this marked the beginning of God at work in these peoples' lives in a special way. The fire which was above now comes to walk with them.

In the case of Abraham, it was when he saw that flaming torch and that smoking fire pot, that his life was really turned around.

Moses, very clearly, the turning point for him was the burning bush. And certainly in the case of Isaiah, his call began the second that burning coal touched his lips.

This experience made these men into prophets even though the fire for each of them remained external to them -- never really fully got inside.

In fact, the closest thing we have, prior to Calvary, of the fire getting inside, is in the case of Mary where the fire literally enters her body and she conceives -- carries that fire around inside her for nine months.

But after the child she bore accomplished what he came to do, died and rose again, the fire no longer remains on the outside, but comes inside the human heart.

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all

together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The sound from heaven filled the room, but the fire divided, split, moved, and settled individually on each of them.

Meaning that now the fire of God
has come to rest upon,
dwell within,
and rule the heart of woman and man.

The Lamb had accomplished his purpose. He had atoned. The curse had been removed and now for the first time it was possible for the fire of God to come and rest inside the human heart.

That's what we were made for!
Without that fire burning inside us, we are incomplete. In fact, we're dead.
And often we don't realize this.

We can know our Bibles inside and out,
have Christian principles coming out our ears,
be able to spot heresy ten miles away.

But if we don't have this flame burning inside us, we're dead.
We're white-washed sepulchers.
We think we're alive, but we're not.
Before we talk about being filled with the Holy Spirit,
and speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives us utterance,
and performing signs for God,
and prophesying,
we first have to understand the Holy Spirit coming to dwell in us as the fire of God.
Having this invisible flame, which is God Himself, ruling us,
driving us,
moving us.

Until this flame is burning inside us,
we can have the best intentions in the world,
know what we ought to be doing,
and can really want to do it, but we will never have the power.

All we'll ever do is sit around,
make resolutions,
criticize everything in sight,
wish we were some place else, and remain unchanged.

The altar sacrifice is dead until the fire comes upon it.
But when the fire comes down and ignites that sacrifice within,
suddenly we are consumed, obsessed with God.
And the instant this happens, we are free from ourselves.
When you are consumed with God,
you are no longer worried, and all the time thinking about,
"How I feel --- Am I happy or sad?
Am I a success or a failure?"

What does it matter when you have found God?

When you have really found God and see what this means,
it doesn't make any difference.
It's ridiculous to even think about success, failure, happiness, sadness.
All those things become dwarfed by the awesome presence of God in our lives!

To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be filled with that fire which is God himself.
God's holiness.
God's love.
God's purity.
God's peace.
God's utter lowliness.
God's passion for the lost.
God's authority over evil.

To have this flame burning to such an extent that God rules us, drives us,
compels us to move in God's will of mercy.

Notice now the fire split and the flame sat on the individual,
meaning that this is an individual thing.

For instance;
Your brother may have a flame that is really hot. And you may experience
a certain amount of encouragement and inspiration being around him.
But his flame will never get yours going just by itself, if you don't do anything about it.
Your sister may have a flame much more clear than yours. And you may love
to hear her pray and love to hear the things she says. But just being around her
is not enough. The reflected light and heat is not the same as having the flame
burning within us.

Each of us is responsible to maintain the flame herself/himself.
To get it. To hold it. To sustain it. To keep it clear.

The whole purpose of our Lord's coming, his death on the cross, his atonement, was
so that we can have that flame burning inside.

But so many of us are like the man in our Lord's parable who gets the demon cast
out of him. His life is swept and garnished, but hollow, empty, sterile.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the baptism of God himself.
Are we going to go to the cross,
receive our forgiveness,
have our sins washed away,
and then go on without receiving the nature of God planted in us? Burning?

People say, "Oh, that happens automatically."
Many times it does.
My friend, from experience look around. Look in your own heart.
Many times it doesn't.

Or are we going to let the flame, which was ignited by God sometime in the past,
burn down to almost nothing?

For some of us, this day of Pentecost, is the time that God is giving us another chance
to receive this fire.

"Receive the Holy Spirit", Jesus says to the disciples on the day of Easter.
"Wait in the city of Jerusalem until you receive power from on high."
"Have you received the Spirit since you believed", Paul asked the Ephesian disciples.

Now we receive this fire in us the same way we receive our justification before God -- by faith.
We ask. We receive.
We ask. And we trust.

We knock on heaven's door believing that it will open. And it does.

Lord, in the name of your Son,
pour down upon me the fire of your Spirit.
Flood me with your very nature.

And he will.

If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit as a gift to those who ask him?

Believe that when you receive the body and blood of the Lamb, you will also receive the Spirit of the Lamb afresh.

For some of us now is the time for us to accept responsibility for the maintaining of that flame.

Many of us still seem to think,
by the way we are living,
and the way we talk, that God has to keep that thing going for us.
I don't know what happened. What did I do wrong? It's gone.

Ten virgins went forth to meet the bridegroom and they carried lamps. And each of the lamps was alive with a flame.

But it was their responsibility to make sure those lamps kept burning right up until the time the bridegroom returned
no matter when that would be, or
how long they would have to wait.
For this reason, Jesus ends that parable by saying, Watch. Stay awake.
And so often he adds to that word watch, the word pray.
Because the fire of the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Prayer.

Who lives in us.

Opens the scriptures to us.

Makes them burn in our hearts as
we pray.

Was Paul exaggerating when he said, Pray without ceasing?

Surely this is how our Lord maintained the flame, as he, the Son of Man, had to just as we do.

When he finished feeding the five thousand, or when he got through spending a long period of time healing people, how many times could he feel that flame getting drained, weakened?
So he would get apart with his Father and renew it by praying.

And for some of us, the time has come for us to stir up a fire which once burned brightly in our lives, but is now nothing but ashes.

Stir up the gift which was given you, says Paul, through the laying on of my hands; for God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of love and of power and of self-discipline.

This is the most precious gift you have ever been given, bar none.
And you're going to let this thing peter out?
Stir it up!
Rekindle it!
Cry out to God for help!
And begin to exercise what is left of that fire
by ministering to God in worship, real worship,
and ministering to your fellow men in mercy, real mercy.

Lift your drooping hands, strengthen your weak knees, make straight paths for your feet,

The Fire Within

says Hebrews. Lay aside every weight.
Repent of every sin.
And get that thing going again.

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The same God that gave the Spirit to them gives the Spirit to us.
He desires that we should have the Spirit even more than we desire to be filled.

May God help us to open our hearts wide to receive
and may he help us, where this applies, to stir up what's left
of the flame that once burned.
That we may be filled and burning with the fire of God,
driven by that fire to fulfill our calling with a zeal that never ends.