

John the Baptist and the Fire of God 2

Leonard Ravenhill:

You've heard me say this and I say it again, I am scared that when I get to the judgment seat and there are a billion people looking on me that God will say to me, "Son I had many things to tell you, but you couldn't bear them. You weren't grown up enough."

-- A man leaves his son millions of dollars. He puts a caution in the will, he says,

"You can't spend a dime of this until you are twenty years of age.

This money is all tied up until you have enough sense to use it." --

I believe Almighty God is saying that to the Church today. We've toiled, rather we've trifled with gifts of the Spirit. We are far more interested in the gifts of the Spirit than with the Holy Spirit Himself. And God has treasures beyond our comprehension.

So John moved the people. They say, "What shall we do?" The publicans cry out. They are a bunch aren't they? Stony-hearted rascals. And yet with the conviction of the Spirit they cry out, "What shall we do?" And John gives the answer in verse 16, he says, "I indeed baptize you with water, but One cometh after me, I am not even worthy to carry His shoes. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with Fire." Or with Holy Ghost Fire.

We talk about the baptism of the Spirit - it's really the baptism of Jesus. There's nothing you can get this side of eternity that didn't come through Jesus Christ. My dear old principal used to call the coming of the Holy Ghost upon us, "The coronation gift of Jesus."

"His fan is in His hand. He will thoroughly purge His floor. But He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. And many other things did he..." I wonder what they were. I wish He'd left a list, don't you?

Here is a man with no financial backing.

He has no program.

He has the favor of nobody.

He has the Roman army against him.

He has the religious army of the Jews against him.

He has the Pharisees against him.

He has the Sadducees against him.

He has no money (he doesn't need it) and

he doesn't have a miracle ministry -- It says very clearly: "John did no miracle" -- Nobody ran after him pleading: "Have mercy on my son he is a lunatic." Nobody cried, "Unclean, unclean, unclean" or "open my eyes," or "I'm deaf," or something. Nobody said that.

He never unstopped deaf ears.

He never opened blind eyes.

He never cured a withered leg or withered arm.

He didn't raise a dead man -

He raised a dead nation. SINGLE-HANDEDLY.

God has had this man in the school of silence. He's been talking to God and walking with God and weeping before God. He's lived with Jeremiah. He's lived with the prophets. He knew what Isaiah said that one day a man should come in the wilderness crying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Isaiah 35 says that highway shall be called the way of holiness, and that a wayfaring man, though fool, need not err therein.

"He shall baptize you with Holy Ghost and with Fire." God always works with the minority. You've got a wonderful list in I Corinthians 15 of people who saw Jesus in His resurrection power. And then it ties the knot at the end of the cotton and it says He was seen of 500 brethren at once. And I am convince in my spirit it was those 500 to whom He says, "Tarry 'til ye be endued with power." How many went? 120! 380 of them never bothered. It's always like that. God uses a minority.

There's only a few people want to go outside the camp.

There's only a few people that want to die with Him.

The only freedom that lepers had was to walk outside the camp. It was a place where all the sewage of the city went. It was a place where they threw dead bodies and dead animals. It was a stink hole. And the Holiest man that ever lived went outside the camp that you may go inside of it! And Yet you have to whip some people to church almost. If I went to the church they go to I'd want whipping too. Isn't it tragedy, almost blasphemy to go to a meeting and you say, "Oh, boy that meeting was cold"? "The meeting was so dead." How can you have

the living Christ in a dead meeting. Or put it the other way, How can you have a dead meeting if the living Christ is there? How can you go out? After all, our business is to know about eternity, is to talk about a time when there is no bonds and no other stuff materialistic, it's all vanished. We are going to a Kingdom that knows nothing of these material things, and yet, we are so slack and so careless about the eternal things.

William Booth, the founder of the Salvation army., just about got kicked out of the Methodist church. That day he walked outside and put his arm around his wife's shoulder, and said, "Darling we are going to raise up an army." "From where?" "We'll take all the cast off, or drop outs from the churches, we'll go to the gutter." And he wrote a wonderful hymn:

Thou Christ of burning cleansing flame, send the fire. (We ought to learn that.)
 Thy blood bought gift today we claim, send the fire.
 Look down and see this waiting host, give us the promised Holy Ghost.
 We want another Pentecost, (I am not sure if we do, but we need it.)

To make our weak hearts strong and brave, send the fire.
 To live a dying world to save, send the fire.
 Oh, see us on Thine alter lay our lives, our all this very day
 To crown the offering, now we pray, sent the fire.

Again, "make our weak hearts strong and brave." The only way you can get dross out of gold is put it in a crucible. Today they put it in an induction crucible. You press the button, the heat comes up, the gold sinks to the bottom of the crucible, and a man sits there with a sieve and he takes the scum off the top and throws it out and throws it out. He is there half an hour, then he quits. "Are you tired?" "No." "Why do you quit?" "It's pure." "How do you know?" "Because I can see my reflection in it."

Doesn't Malachi say, "When He comes, He is a purifier of Silver?" Who shall abide the day of His coming? Dear God! We talk about one year revival. If we have Holy Ghost Revival, maybe you won't sleep for the first ten days of it. God will do such a refining, such a purifying, maybe not on your husband or your wife, on you. Fifty years ago the most popular chorus was,

"Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,
 All His wonderful passion and purity,
 Oh, Thou Spirit Divine, all my nature refine,
 'Til the beauty of Jesus is seen in me,"

The refiner sits there,
 He has me in the furnace and He heats it, and He heats it,
 and He heats it - and it feels like hell sometimes.
 He throws out what He doesn't like: my pride, my ambition, my secret lust,
 my temper, my unforgiving spirit, my stubbornness (we don't think
 much of that, but stubbornness is as the sin of witchcraft in the Word of God.)

He purifies until He looks in me and sees His reflection. He won't be satisfied with less. He doesn't come to make me a great preacher, or a great writer, or a great singer, or a great organizer. He comes because He wants to reflect His beauty in my life. Gentleness and meekness and holiness.

The self-life goes out.
 Self-interest goes out.
 Self-glory goes out.
 Self-seeking goes out.

Self-righteousness goes out.

Do you think it's easy? We have lived with it so long that we like ourselves. And God long ago stopped liking us. And the Scripture talks about the Word of God being a mirror. You know, when revival comes He holds the mirror up and you see yourself.

Remember the old story of Cromwell? An artist begged could he paint him, and Cromwell had a great big wart on his chin. And the artist painted him minus the wart. When he went in he said, "What do you think?" Cromwell answered, "Paint me wart and all! It's part of me." "Lord paint me, but don't show me my wart. Don't show me I am basically selfish, full of self-interest and full of self-seeking,

I am full of pride,
 I am full of anger,
 I am full of bitterness,
 I have an unforgiving...

don't show me that I am as ugly as the devil." The smart boys today tell you that your trouble is that your self image is so poor, you have such a poor image of yourself. No, your trouble is that you've too good an image of yourself! "Paint me wart and all."

He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost. William Booth put up his slogan, "Blood and Fire." Studebaker, the carriage and auto-maker, stood in New Castle, Pennsylvania one day, in the late 1890's. He was saying good-bye to a young man who was the most brilliant university orator in America. His name was Brengle. Studebaker shook hands with him and said, "Brengle, I wish I was as sure of becoming the president of the United States as I am that you'll become the Archbishop of Canterbury." Studebaker and this fellow had been buddies in college. Studebaker, poor soul, all he did was become a millionaire. This young man with his oratory, went and laid it at the feet of Jesus.

He got to London and to the Salvation Army head quarters tired out; it took four weeks to get there by boat. "Well, who are you?" William Booth asked. "I am Doctor Brengle." "Doctor Brengle?"

They didn't need doctors; their theology wasn't sick.

"What have you come for?" "I heard the Holy Ghost is here. I've crossed the Atlantic, I want to be filled with the Holy Ghost. I don't depend on my theology, my learning. I have a lot of scholarship, but I need Fire, I need Fire, I need Fire!"

William Booth said, "You'll get it.

Tomorrow morning at five o'clock, you'll polish the shoes of fifty students."

And none of them had one leg. A hundred big high-top boots! And not spray polish. But Dr. Brengle later said, "It is there God taught me a lesson of patience."

They did not open the door and say, "We were waiting for a talented man like you to teach on the book of the Revelation. We'd like you to lead the prayer meeting tomorrow morning." They said, "Stick your nose down there." Brengle did. And he waited on God and God filled him with the Holy Ghost.

Later, a deaf person was asked after one of Brengle's meetings why she had come to the altar if she didn't hear the message. She answered, "Because I could see what I never have seen in a preacher in all my life." "What was it?" "I saw the beauty of Jesus in him while he was preaching. I don't know what he was saying, but I knew there was something in him I did not have!"

Come on parent, are you living so your children will want something that is in your life, something that is beautiful? Something that they can't see in school, that they can't see in a magazine? And they can't see in church, maybe?

My mother was a role model for me, my daddy was a role model. The best thing he ever did, he took me to a prayer meeting when I was fourteen years of age. And I remember that night, it comes to me often, often, often.

See, we've got the idea that the only reason you have to be filled with the Holy Ghost is you are going to be a missionary. The greatest break down in America is not in brothels tonight, and it is not in abortion, the greatest break down in America is in the home.

It's not what YOU have to bring to God. It's what GOD can give you. We don't have men like we used to have. When Whitefield came from England the population of Boston was 12 thousand and he drew 14 thousand a night without black-topped roads, without restaurants. One man says, "I put my wife on the back of the old mare and I got up, the snow was so deep we struggled up hills and valleys, and finally I got off and just led the horse. And I was soaking wet. There were no pews no shelter, I stood there in the snow and I heard a man who was blazing with God! I never realized till I moved that my trousers were almost stiff with frost, they were wet through and then they were stiff in the frost. We went home. The poor old mare was tired out the next day when we got home, but we turned round and we went back again." Why did they go all that way? Preachers don't have to do that now. You just get enough money and you get a TV program and poor swell-headed guys think they are turning the world upside-down. And we are as far lost down the pit as we were before we started.

God isn't looking for organizing. He is looking for agonizing. And he talks about praying in the Holy Ghost. And I want to learn more of that. It's beyond praying in tongues. And I am not knocking tongues.

What we've had in the last 25 years with all the Pentecostal churches we haven't moved this nation for God. How is it that 120 turned the world upside-down? They'd no money, they hadn't the screen, they couldn't

throw what they were saying into a million homes.

I am sure in my own heart, what God is looking for is to take total possession of some men in their spirit, their soul, their mind, their will.

I went a little college, Cliff College. It only had one revival, I wasn't there. A friend of mine, he was up in years in 1932, and 33. He'd been in World War One. He was a drunkard, a blasphemer, and everything else. A very precious, gorgeous lady lead him to Christ and he fell in love with her, and they fixed a day for their wedding. One day they went to an old Holiness meeting and they were singing, a hymn, but when he came to the stanza:

"Here I give my all to Thee,
Friends and time and earthly store,
Soul and body Thine to be
Only Thine for evermore."

And he sang it. "Here am I to give my friends." He thought, "She is the only friend I have in the world; we are going to be married in three months. I've a house stored with new furniture." And the Lord said, "You want to be filled with the Holy Ghost, it will cost you everything. Postpone your wedding for three years. Give Me all your time. Your earthly store is all the furniture you have for the future, sell it and use it to pay to go to Cliff College."

He went to Cliff College. There were about thirty-five students there, as there were when I went there, thirty-five men. He woke up one morning about two o'clock with a craving for God. Dan Philips, was his name. He came down in his pajamas into the lecture hall, between one and two o'clock in the morning and started crying to God. And he just roared: "Lord, I'm a preacher. Lord I win souls, but my heart is not full of Holiness, it's not full of love, it's not full of the power of the Spirit, it's not full of humility, it's not full of gentleness, it's not even full of peace. Send the fire down to this heart of mine." And he cried for about half an hour, and every man in the college left his bed and they were all there in that room in their pajamas crying to God. And the Spirit of the living God came on them. And the Holy Ghost swept through the College for weeks.

He didn't think when he yielded his life, and his future wife, and all he had in Manchester, the result would be that a whole college revived. We had some of the most brilliant preachers, Samuel Chadwick was there, Joe Brice was there, some of the outstanding preachers of England were there, but it wasn't through their preaching. It was when a man obeyed God, and tossed the bedclothes on one side and went down in the room that was cold and said, "God I need just the fire of the Holy Ghost, not for tonight, but for all my life. I want to refill my life continually with the Spirit."

It is not enough to be filled with His Holy Spirit ten years ago. I don't care where you were baptized.

The question isn't were you filled ten years ago but are you filled tonight?

Are you filled with God tonight?

Are you filled with love tonight?

Are you filled with power tonight?

Are you filled with passion for the lost?

Come on, in God's name. God is going to bypass us.

You may scream if you've gifts, you don't scream for the fruit. It's not easy. God will wreck your career. He'll wreck your life style. But if He does...If you let Him...If He can use you to pour out His revival through, one day the pillar of fire is going to come, and you know what? We won't need to advertise. There will be such a meekness, such a sweetness, such a holiness, such a gentleness, such a loving kindness - the fruit of the Spirit.

We are going to sing Mr. Hatch's hymn - a brilliant English preacher, he had a packed church, he had stacks of money, he was the favorite preacher in town. "But one night," he said, "I went into my office, and said, 'Lord I am not satisfied with popularity, I am not satisfied with the favor of men, I am not satisfied, with my eloquence. Breath on me breath of God.'" And he snatched a piece of paper and he wrote this hymn we are going to sing now.

Maybe you want to meet God in some new way. If you do, why don't you kneel at your chair while we sing and let others sing it. Kneel somewhere and say, Lord I want something tonight that I've never had in my life. I want the destruction of my self-life, my self-interest, my temper, my pride, my fear of man, my fear of the future, my fear of what the relatives will think of me, destroy it.

All hell is looking into this meeting at this moment. All angels are looking in. And Jesus is waiting to see the fruit of the travail of His soul.

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