

## The Scandal of Pentecost

Delivered: May 19, 2024

Scriptures: [Acts 2](#), [Romans 12:1](#)

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### [Acts 2:1-4](#)

1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

### **Altar Fire**

Here in [Acts 2](#), something absolutely scandalous takes place.

The scandal is not men and women speaking in tongues; that's miraculous.

The scandal is not the Holy Spirit filling God's people; that was prophesied.

The scandal is not 3,000 getting saved in a day; God said He could save a nation in a day.

The scandal is not even the tongues of fire; fire had fallen from heaven before...in [2](#)

[Chronicles](#) fire fell on Solomon's altar when he dedicated the temple,

“...fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the temple.

And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house” ([2 Chronicles 7.1](#)).

Fire also fell on Elijah's altar on Mount Carmel when he called out the prophets of Baal.

As amazing as heavenly tongues of fire falling in [Acts 2](#) is, it's not the fire falling that makes Pentecost scandalous...it's where the fire fell.

Prior to [Acts 2](#), fire had only fallen on altars. But here at Pentecost, we see God's holy fire falling on people.

Pentecost ushers in a new normal for God's people.

We aren't just believers,

we aren't just saved,

we aren't just followers of Jesus,

we don't just go to church and not do the bad stuff we used to do...

God's fire has fallen and God intends for His people to burn. God's people are to be marked by an internal flame of holy fire that continually purifies us, ignites deeper passion for Jesus, and consumes anything that is opposed to the purposes of God in our lives. God intends for His people to burn...every area of our born again lives is intended to be on fire. There is no separation between the sacred and the secular for Jesus People... its all sacred.

Hebrews 12.29 says that "Our God is a consuming fire." The nature of fire is that it spreads. Fire always reproduces fire. So whatever He touches should also be on fire. This is why Hebrews 1.7 says, "He makes His servants flames of fire."

### We Are Designed to Burn

We were designed to burn. We're gonna burn for something, and if we aren't burning for Him, then we're gonna burn for inferior things of this world...we will burn for sports or money or sin. If we don't burn for the things of heaven, we'll burn for the things of hell. You say, "hold on man, that's a bit extreme." Anything that distracts me from giving Jesus my affection has its origin in hell...it's antichrist. It's fruit of the tree of knowledge...that's why things of this world can look innocent and good and still quench our fire...because the good of that tree kills just as surely as the evil. If we don't burn for the things of the Spirit we'll burn for the things of the flesh.

Being a people on fire was one of the characteristics of the early church...and Pentecost was the spark that set the first church on fire. The internal flame of the Holy Spirit burning inside of this Jesus People is what propelled them to turn the world upside down with the Gospel...to actually believe things like,

"God will be glorified in my body whether by life or by death" (Phil 1.20).

This is how the early church talked because this is who the early church was. We think it's extreme, but that just shows how far we've slipped from normal Christianity.

For example, in **Romans 12** Paul tells the church in Rome what is now expected of them as followers of Jesus. After coming out of some of the most incredible explanations of the gospel that we have, after unveiling the mystery of God's heart and eternal plan of salvation for Israel, Paul gets down to brass tacks in the middle of chapter 12 and lays out some of the basic, fundamental traits of Jesus People...things like hate what is evil, love what is good (v9)...be affectionate to one another with brotherly love...give preference to one another (v10)...serve the Lord. And then in v11, in the middle of some of the most practical things that should define the lives of Jesus People, Paul says,

“Be fervent in spirit” (**Romans 12.11**).

The Greek word for fervent is *ζέο* (Za-o). *ζέο* means to boil, to become inflamed. Just as easy as Paul says hate what is evil, he also says to make sure your spirit is boiling underneath the sacred flame of Pentecostal fire.

He tells Timothy in **2 Timothy 1:6**,

“I remind you, fan into flame (ana-zo-pyrein - kindle afresh) the gift that is in you through the laying on of my hands.”

Being a people on fire was normal Christian life for the early church...even if they weren't there in Acts chapter 2, like the church of Rome or Timothy or even Paul...they knew that they were a people of fire because the birth certificate for the church was dated “Pentecost”...the day the fire fell on God's people.

We don't need another Pentecost...Paul didn't tell the church of Rome to tarry in the upper room until the fire falls...he just told them to be who they are burning ones. The same goes for us, if we would just give the Holy Spirit something flammable, we would be a people on fire...I believe this is why so few Christians are actually burning...because there's nothing on their altar to feed the flame. Without fuel, fires go out. The altar of so many Christian's lives are empty because they are either too distracted with this life, or they're waiting for something to happen externally that will set them on fire...something like the next conference, or the anointed man of God praying and prophesying over them, or revival coming to their church. Do we pray and prophecy over one another? Of

course. Do we desperately long for revival? Yes. But so many in the church are waiting for God to do something, while God is waiting for a people who will actually apprehend the fire that He's already sent? What if the source of revival fire in our day isn't God sending something NEW, but God's people actually believing what He's already sent is for them? That's what Peter says to the astounded masses on the day of Pentecost,

“Repent...be baptized...receive the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and your children, and to all who are far off, as many as the Lord will call”  
(Acts 2.39).

The promise of Pentecost is for you. Do you believe that Jesus is who He says He is? Are you born again? Then burn. Be who you are...a burning one.

We don't need another Pentecost, we just need to give Him something flammable.

### **Pentecostal Fire**

Paul tells us in Romans 12:1,

“I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God...”  
(Romans 12.1)

Fire doesn't fall on empty altars...the fire of the Holy Spirit is always looking for a sacrifice to consume.

Some would say, “Well brother we are under the new covenant of grace...this sounds like works to me...He desires steadfast love not sacrifice.” And yet here is Paul, with the same pen, able to write,

“by grace you have been saved through faith; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2.8-9)

And also have no problem writing “make sure your spirit is burning...and make sure your life is a living sacrifice...fan into flame the gift that is in you.” Yes, everything that we receive, do, and experience is all a gift of God's matchless grace. But we must make room in our theology for human responsibility. He is a sovereign God who acts according to the pleasure of HIS will...and YET He has chosen to demonstrate Himself to the lost and dying world through people...

a people who have their own will and

their own plans and  
their own personalities and  
their own ideas of what the normal Christian life should look like.

He is sovereign and everything we receive from Him is all grace...but unless we are on fire, we will grow cold and be consumed with our will, our plans, our preferences. The idea that your internal flame will sustain itself is not reality. Not only is it not reality, it's not biblical...it is a lie from the enemy that's intended to get you to settle down.

What was the indictment against the church of Ephesus in [Revelation 2](#)?

“You’ve lost your first love.”

What was the problem with the church of Laodicea in [Revelation 3](#)?

“You are neither hot nor cold...you’re lukewarm.”

Why were they lukewarm? Because they were rich and had need of nothing according to the flesh. They had gotten comfortable.

The trajectory of the American gospel is a lukewarm church that prioritizes its own comfort and preferences over God’s eternal plan of being glorified in His church... whether by life or by death.

Ours is not a gospel that invites us to believe, get saved, and then settle down and get comfortable. Ours is not a gospel of passivity. The comfortable never brought the kingdom of God to their community, apathy never changed anything. Ours is a [2 Corinthians 5.14](#) gospel,

“The love of Christ consumes me.”

Ours is a gospel that turns cold, dead, men into living torches. [John Piper](#) says,

“This is God’s plan; the Light and Life of God has come into the world but, the darkness is not going to be conquered the way a bolt of lightning brightens the night sky. No, darkness will be conquered by millions of cold, dead, human torches being ignited with the oxygen of the Gospel and the mysteriously spontaneous combustion of new birth.”

Our inheritance is glory to glory, faith to faith, promise to promise...increase. And the flame of the Holy Spirit inside each one of us is not there to keep us warm or give us goose bumps in our perfectly choreographed worship services...it’s there to burn hotter

and hotter until one day we actually glow. I don't want the story of my life to be I burned hot for Jesus when I got saved and then learned how to study the Bible and live a blessed life. Heaven forbid our best days of burning are behind us. I know when we stand before the Lord one day and we see the story of our life played out we are going to wish we could do it all over again burning like we could have. The reality is no one is going to stand before Jesus and say, "I prayed too much...I evangelized too much...I fasted too much...I believed for too much breakthrough in my community." We're going to stand there and realize that there was so much more available to us if we just would have sacrificed our need for comfort on the altar.

### **The Cross**

You don't get Pentecost without the cross. And just as Pentecostal fire is now the new norm for born again believers, so is the crucified life. Those are two sides of the same coin. Jesus People never leave the upper room...and we never graduate from the cross. The church of Ephesus left their first love because they left the cross. Laodicea became lukewarm because the cross got too comfortable. Jesus people never leave the upper room and they never leave Calvary. The solution for lack of fire is always the cross.

Now, we may try to dilute the experience of the cross and make it more palatable, but a diluted cross will never seat anyone under the flames of Pentecost. The real cross...the cross of Christ...the one He commands us to pick up, without any mention of ever putting it down, doesn't simply redirect us from the life we were living...it slays us.

[A.W. Tozer](#) says this of the cross, "The man in Roman times who took up his cross and started down the road was never coming back. The cross made no compromise, modified nothing, spared nothing; it slew all of the man, completely and for good."

"Pick up your cross and follow Me," is what Jesus said..."Whoever loses His life for My sake will find it."

[Leonard Ravenhill](#) said, "Jesus didn't come to make bad men good, He came to make dead men live." Our gospel, and the cross of our gospel, is not diplomatic...it's a prophetic declaration that there can be no compromise, no mixture in anyone who says

they will follow Jesus. The gospel of the kingdom is a gospel of full surrender...a total surrender of our lives is what the gospel demands of us.

It's the goodness of God to crucify us with His Son...because only those who have embraced the cross of Christ will be able to endure Pentecostal fire. At some point in every person's life there will be an encounter with the fire of God...that's not the question. The question is; when the fire touches you, will you endure its burning? [Isaiah 33:14](#),

“Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire?

Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?”

Isaiah isn't talking about hell-fire there...he's talking about the fire of God. Who can stand in the presence of the everlasting flame? Isaiah answers his own question in the next verse,

“Who can dwell among the everlasting burnings? He who walks righteously...”

This is the same language Jude uses at the end of his letter,

“...to Him who is able to cause us to stand blameless in the presence of His glory with exceedingly great joy” ([Jude 24](#)).

Those who are found IN CHRIST, who have been crucified with Christ and now live the crucified life of resurrection power, who have already been touched by the everlasting flame of God, will shine even brighter on that day when everyone stands before the judgement seat. Consider it; the devouring fire that judges the wicked will be the same glorifying fire that causes the righteous to glow forever. Everyone's gonna touch the fire... but only the righteous are invited to be baptized in fire now.

These are the marks of the Jesus People...Pentecostal fire and the crucified life...and we don't ever graduate from either one.

### **Closing**

[Amy Carmichael](#) said, “Make me Thy fuel, flame of God.”

[Jim Eliot](#) said, “God makes His ministers a flame of fire. Am I ignitable? God deliver me from the dread asbestos of other things. Saturate me with the oil of Thy Spirit so that I may be aflame. Make me Thy fuel, flame of God.”

Smith Wigglesworth said, “If God has His way we should be like torches, purifying the very atmosphere everywhere we go, moving back the forces of wickedness. To make my weak heart strong and brave, to live a dying world to save, O see me on Thy altar, this very day to crown the offering now I pray...send the fire.”