

Living Water

"Call unto me and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."—Jer. 33:3

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A Flaming Church

BY REV. EDWARD LAST

He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.
—Matt. 3:11.

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.—Acts 2, 3, 4.

WALKING along the street I saw upon a news placard outside a shop the words, "A Church on Fire." As I read it I could but think what would happen if in city, town, and village the various churches of all denominations were ablaze with Holy Ghost fire. If every church burnt brightly and clearly in the district where it is located what light would shine forth, what a glow there would be!

I do not think we can say that the great characteristic of the church today is the spirit of burning. We sadly need churches on fire. John the Baptist foretold the fire that should come; the early disciples saw the fulfilment of the promise, and we may have the experience today. There are many things we might wish concerning our churches, but what greater thing than this could be desired—even to see them on fire?

A church on fire must receive its kindling from God. If the fire is not from heaven it will soon burn out and leave nothing but ruins. Fever is not fervour, although some people think it is. The fire necessary is that associated with the Holy Ghost, and that cannot be had apart from Him.

The spirit of burning denotes the ardour, zeal, spiritual energy, and holy enthusiasm created in the human soul by virtue of its intimate fellowship with the Holy Ghost. And it is not enough to be on fire for God, we must be aflame with God.

The favorite Old Testament symbol of God is fire. We think of the burning bush, the pillar of fire which guided the Israelites by night, the fire which fell at Mount Carmel, the chariots of fire, the perpetual fire upon the altar—all these spoke of the presence and power of the Holy One. This is the fire reeded. A church can only burn effectually as it gets its fire from God. With God in the fulness of His divine power in the midst, a church may well be on fire.

A church on fire has a wonderful effect upon its members. It could not be otherwise. Wherever a fire burns brightly its light is seen and its glow is felt.

Fire purifies. It has cleansing power. It burns up the rubbish, it separates the pure metal from the dross and gives it its right value.

Fire liberates. The precious metal is gripped by that from which it can only be set at liberty by the fire. It liberates from bonds. The three Hebrew youths were bound hand and foot and cast into the fire, and all it did was to set them free from their bonds. There are many bound Christians, bound by fear, bound by customs, cannot witness for Christ, cannot speak or pray. When the church gets on fire there is a loosening of bonds.

Fire unites. Some time ago I was shown over a large foundry. I watched the furnaceman feeding the furnace. He cast in different kinds of iron, lumps of pig-iron and some from a large scrap heap, broken iron pots, old ploughshares, rusty bolts and nuts, and a hundred other odds and ends, rough, hard, jagged, unsightly, all went the same road, mingling with the pig-iron in the furnace, and when the fire had done its work the furnace was tapped, and the molten metal came forth in a liquid stream; no one could distinguish the different things which had been cast into the furnace, they had all become one, united by fire. Nothing creates unity in a church like fire.

Read the early chapter in the Acts of the Apostles, the unity of the early Christians, their consideration for others, their liberality. Gold and silver melt in the fire; a church on fire works wonders.

A church on fire commands the attention of outsiders. It cannot be hid. People may in thousands pass a building without noticing it, but if it catches fire all passers-by will see it, and many others will go out of their way to behold the sight. So is it with a church aflame with God.

Many of us can remember the time of revival in Wales. It began in a little church, a place obscure and practically unknown. There the fire came and burnt so brightly, and spread so rapidly that it commanded the attention not only of the religious world, but of multitudes who up to that time had not been at all interested in spiritual things. People could not help seeing the churches on fire. They attracted universal attention, and people came long distances to see churches and individuals aflame with God. It was my privilege to pay a visit to the Rhondda Valley, and in the hotel where I stayed there were people from England, Scotland, Ireland, Switzerland, India, and Australia, all drawn together by the same thing, a flaming church. Many of those who came to see were themselves swept into the fire, they caught the flame, and went away to set other people and churches on fire.

This was how the fire spread after the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. The little company in the upper room received the fire of God, and at once were impelled to go out into the streets of the city, and what a mighty, on-sweeping fire was soon burning!

Had they gone forth before the Holy Ghost came they would have failed miserably, but because they went forth aflame with God they were irresistible.

Some one has said: "The way to gather a congregation is to set the pulpit on fire, and crowds will gather to see it burn." This is still more likely to be the case when the church is blazing also.

A Church on fire is God's agency for the evangelization of the district where it is placed. We have seen wonderful things wrought by great united missions. Whenever they have come my way I have thrown myself heartily into them, and would do so again. But I am inclined to believe that

a greater and more permanent work might be done if each individual church caught the fire of God and started out each in its own locality to do the work Christ intended His church to do. These great missions would not be needed if all churches realized the purpose of their existence and were equipped for service, and the Divine equipment is being baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Think what might be done if every church became a soul-winning agency, all its members filled with a holy enthusiasm for the glory of Christ in the salvation of souls. God intended His church to be the great agency for the evangelization of the world. I say nothing against outside missions; it is to the shame of the church that they became necessary. They would not have been needed had the church been true to the commission given by Christ and, burning with Holy Ghost power, had gone forth to make known the gospel with the definite desire and expectation of winning souls. Christ's plan of campaign was to make known His gospel through a flaming church.

A church on fire is the great need of today. To promote true Christian unity in the churches and among the churches, to put Christians right with one another and to bring churches of different denominations into proper relationship to every other church of Jesus Christ, the fire of the Holy Ghost is needed. A real Holy Ghost revival would do more to produce real unity than all the plans of men for a united church.

To vindicate Christ's plan, to meet the criticism of a cold world: the bitter, sneering things said about the church and its impotency, by its enemies, could never be said if it were on fire.

A flaming church is needed to call the attention to the things which matter most, to lay hold upon the masses at home and awaken them to a sense of their need, then to proclaim a full Christ for empty sinners, and further to press forth to the regions beyond. A church on fire is a missionary church. We are needing the fire, and when the churches are once more ablaze, then there will be a flocking to God's house, a coming to the place of united prayer, a delight in Christ's service, a meeting among the people of God, an awakening among those without, a turning of many unto the Lord, a gathering of many into the visible church, a multiplying of those who, being saved, seek the salvation of others. These things may be looked for wherever we see a church on fire. A small spark may start a great fire. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth" is true of that which is good as well as of that which is evil. Thus a man or woman on fire with God may presently set the whole community in a blaze. It was said of Brainerd that he prayed that he might become a flaming fire for God.

Alexander Duff, the missionary, both in India and Scotland, kindled to a sacred passion the congregation who listened to his burning words. James Gilmour, another devoted missionary, when urged to desist from labors which were consuming him, said, "I cannot be quiet; the fire of God is upon me."

As a young man William Booth heard an infidel lecturer say, "If I believed what some of you Christians believe, I would never rest day and night telling men about it." That sentence was like fire in his bones, and sent him forth with a burning message to men, and what a great fire was started and is burning still, because one man was set on fire himself, by, with and for God!

Again and again a church has experienced a gracious revival because some man or woman has caught the divine fire and has burnt brightly for God. Jesus said of John the Baptist, "He was a burning and shining light." It is

good to shine; it is even better to burn, for the burning Christian sets others on fire. Thus one flaming believer may cause a whole church to blaze. It is the lament of many earnest Christians today that so little warmth is found in our churches. Let those who feel this, stir up in their own hearts the fire, and let it help to melt the icy coldness and create an atmosphere more congenial, and let all live Christians of the different denominations draw close together, for a fire burns the more brightly when the burning coals are close to one another. In calling together the members of the Pastors' College Conference (I think it was his last call), the late C. H. Spurgeon wrote, "Brethren, we want a big fire this year. If every brother who comes up to the conference will bring a live coal, what a blaze there will be!" This could well be said of services. If every Christian coming to the service brought a live coal, what a glow there would be in pulpit and pew! If, as individuals, we caught the Divine flame, and with a holy recklessness blazed away for God, very soon the news would come from all over our beloved land of churches on fire.—*The Life of Faith.*

THE WEDDING GARMENT

BY MRS. E. H. WELBURN

I SHALL never forget when I received an invitation to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, I was God's child; I loved His house, His word, His work. I was happy in the thought of one day, after death, getting to heaven; but I knew not that the Holy Spirit was in the world for the express purpose of choosing out of the Gentiles a Bride for the name of Jesus. Oh! the joy when I heard that there was to be a real wedding and a great marriage supper. Who told me this wonderful news, do you ask? The blessed Holy Spirit sent a faithful messenger of God my way to deliver the invitation written in His word; I listened with rapt attention and with such a hungry heart. They taught us that though made a child of God by faith in Jesus' blood that I could not be part of that glorious Bride unless made willing to surrender soul and body eternally to Jesus and forsaking all others cleave only unto Him for better, for worse, NOT till death us do part, praise God, but while eternal ages roll. My glowing heart waited not to "confer with flesh and blood," but gladly cried:

"I will, I will be wholly Thine."

To every one there always is a special degree of interest attending a marriage, and particularly if there is to be a great supper and beautifully robed guests. We make our plans to be there on time. Yes, we will brave the elements, and if fortunate enough to obtain a seat of honor behind the white ribbons, we will take great pains to select suitable garments and spend all the money necessary to array ourselves as the occasion demands.

Who of us ever dreamed of being invited to the marriage of a king? Much less to be the Bride of that King, and He the KING of kings. This marvelous truth is so truly wonderful that there has never been written a fairy tale that could compare to it. There comes to my mind a story that charmed my childhood days as I read it again and gain. There were three sisters, the older ones were homely, but very proud and haughty. The youngest was named Cinderella, beautiful in face and form, but because of her beauty was hated by her sisters and forced to spend much of her time alone in the kitchen washing dishes, cooking and sweeping the floors while they, decked in gay attire, were dancing the hours away, caring nothing for the lonely sister at home, who was faithfully performing the tasks

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