

The King's Highway

An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

VOL. XXXVIII.

MONCTON, N. B., MAY 15TH, 1952

No. 296

Baptized with Fire

Samuel Chadwick

"I indeed baptize you with water. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." (Matthew 3:2).

John baptized with water; Jesus baptized with fire. The difference in the two elements expresses exactly the difference in the mission of John and that of Christ. John's was a mission of repentance. He was a forerunner. The King was coming and he must prepare His way. His cry is "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He then called men to serious thought, bade them return to righteousness, and pointed the way to a larger and purer life. He was a man pre-eminently fitted for his task; an iron man, stern, severe, and solitary. His words were short, sharp, and trenchant as a warrior's. They shook the nation. Kings, Pharisees, publicans trembled before him. But he warned them that his work was only preparatory. He pulled down, but he could not build. His message was divine, but hard; true, but cold. It was a baptism of water, good, but not enough. Water must be followed by fire; the outward washing by an inward purging. This John could not give. But Jesus comes to baptize with fire. He brings the inward renewal of which water baptism was the outward sign. He kindles in men's hearts a fiery passion for righteousness changes the spirit of cold obedience into a burning enthusiasm, and a lukewarm dutifulness into a flame of eager devotion.

The Holy Spirit is fire. Our God is a consuming fire. This has ever been the chosen symbol of God's presence among men. From the Gates of Paradise to the Upper Room of Pentecost this has been the sign. With the fiery tongues at Pentecost it vanishes, but the reality abides.

1. Fire Gives Light

This part of the Spirit's work is recognized all through the Scripture. He is the Revealer. The ancient prophets spake "as they were moved by the Holy

Ghost." Our Savior gave special prominence to this in His promise concerning the Spirit. He was to take up the unfinished teaching of Jesus, and guide them into all truth, recalling and explaining His words, and nothing is more remarkable than the marvelous enlightenment of the disciples immediately they received the Holy Ghost. Their faltering, perplexed, and worldly views vanished in the flash of divine illumination, and at once they saw and knew.

Nor is the elect privilege of apostles and prophets. The Spirit still reveals, and that which was once the rare privilege of the few is become the possession of all. He is given to every disciple to enlighten, interpret, and guide. The prophecy of Joel is fulfilled and upon sons and daughters, old and young servants and handmaidens, there rests the spirit of living fire in whose light they see and walk.

He is the source of all saving light and power. It is He who convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment; assures of pardon and acceptance; changes the heart; sanctifies the nature and regulates the life. He it is who inspires prayer and empowers for service. If there may be any good thing in us, any experience of faith, hope, joy, or love, it is the fruit of His presence.

2. We Are Saved By Fire

Light is not enough, we must have fire. Knowledge cannot save. If knowing the right would save, who among us would be lost? The drunkard knows he ought to be sober. The thief knows he ought to be honest. The liar knows he ought to be truthful. The adulterer knows the Seventh Commandment. They cannot plead ignorance for an excuse for wrong. They know, and even boast of their knowledge, but it brings no saving power into their lives. They sin against light, and against knowledge, and instead of bringing salvation it will bring the greater condemnation. It is not knowing, but doing, that saves, and in order to do, there must not only be light but fire. Water is not sufficient. Cold and exacting obedience to

law and precepts brings no saving energy. The washing away of filth is good as far as it goes, but sin goes deeper than water can get. It is in the very fibre of the soul, and can only be burnt out. Giving up drink and lying and lust may give a presentable appearance, but it cannot save. The sin of the soul must be purged away by the Spirit of burning. The way of holiness is through the baptism of fire. It is in the white flame of holy passion the soul finds its cleansing.

This saving enthusiasm for righteousness can only be kindled by an intense personal love for Jesus Christ. Men cannot blaze over formulas, precepts and abstracts. But over a person, what fiery passions consume the soul! It is the love of Christ that constrains, imparts and kindles the heart with the fire that saves. Not by cold and rigorous devotion to duty, but by the living glow of holy love we are transformed into the image of the Son of God. And it is by the Holy Ghost this love is shed abroad in our hearts.

3. We Are Kept by Fire

Fire means warmth, and our safety is in heat. Our peril is in cooling. When we grow cold we are lost. Friendship lives by fire. Religion cannot live in anything else. Our true defense is our passion. We must be clothed with zeal as a cloak. Wrap it around us from head to foot and walk through the world clad in fire. The devil's chance begins when we cease to burn. When we lose our zeal for the right we are ready to tolerate the wrong, and from toleration to transgression is a rapid and easy descent. We must not only keep near the fire, we must get into it, and dwell in it if we would be safe. Our God is fire. We walk in safety so long as we dwell in Him who is the Spirit of Burning.

The true sign of the Church of Christ is fire. Coldness in the church means its God has gone. Stiffness, propriety, reserve, these are not the signs of His presence. He is fire. Where He is there is warmth, intensity, enthusiasm. The

(Continued on Page 8)