

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

THE FIRE OF GOD

*And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them,
and they died before the LORD.*

Leviticus 10:2

The LORD often startles men with the swiftness and severity of HIS actions. Though HE is slow to anger and never does anything on the spur of the moment; when HE does manifest HIS glory, nothing can hide it nor in anywise diminish the power of it to accomplish exactly what HE intends to do. We see this illustrated here with Nadab and Abihu; and later, with the sons of Korah, (see Numbers chap.16). The ground opened and swallowed up the sons of Korah, along with most of their family. Then we read that others who were associated with them were also destroyed by the "fire of GOD". *"And there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense."* (Num 16:35)

Now we see in these instances the swiftness and certainty of HIS judgment as HE brought fire upon these transgressors. Yet the "fire of GOD" is not always visited upon men for that reason. Just prior to Nadab and Abihu's destruction, the LORD had sent down HIS fire to consume the first offering made in the Tabernacle. *"And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces."* (Lev 9:24) We see the same occurrence when David built an altar on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite (see I Chron.21:26) and when the Temple was dedicated by Solomon (see II Chron.7:1-3).

Fire from the LORD, is indicative of the overwhelming glory of GOD which is beyond the scope of men to even imagine. HE is that ONE *"Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."* (1Tim 6:16) No man can see HIM, until HE is pleased to reveal HIMSELF. *"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."* (John 1:18) Though HE is not defined by "the fire", yet HE is pleased to manifest HIS glory in that fashion, even as HE has revealed HIMSELF, in HIM who is the LIGHT of the world. John the Immerser testified on this wise, *"John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."* (Luke 3:16)

In the visitation of "fire" HE would demonstrate HIS power to bring HIS predestined will to pass, both swiftly and without remedy. I believe the apostle Paul had this in mind when he wrote to the Romans saying, *"Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth."* (Rom 9:27-28) The LORD does efficiently go about to call HIS own sheep by name, giving them ears to hear, and a will to follow HIM whose voice they are caused to recognize. HE has both determined to manifest HIS righteousness in the earth, and to bring the redemption of HIS people to pass by the shedding of HIS own blood on Calvary. Who can disannul it?

Herein is the proof of HIS LORDSHIP, even as HE was pleased to demonstrate the same on Mount Carmel, during the days of Elijah as he set forth this challenge to the prophets of Baal.

"And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken." (1Kings 18:24) The LORD did indeed answer by sending fire down from above, which lapped up the water in the ditch as well as consumed the sacrifice.

We see the "fire of GOD" fall upon that ONE who is the APPLE of HIS FATHER's eye, as HE became sin for HIS people, and the fire of GOD's justice burned hot upon HIM as HE cried "I thirst" and implored the LORD for mercy in our behalf. Has there ever been a more clear manifestation of the determination of GOD to judge and condemn sin? HE laid down HIS life because it was impossible that any man could take it from HIM, and HE suffered under the wrath of the very fire which HIS own hands had kindled.

Then we see the "fire of GOD" fall upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost. *"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 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, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."* (Acts 2:2-4)

There have been many (since that time) who have claimed to have this same experience. We cannot tell definitively, if all or any of these subsequent utterances are indeed from above or simply the product of man's religiosity and the power of suggestion. There was no doubt as to the veracity of that gift on Pentecost, however, because of the "fire of GOD." Men may duplicate these "utterances" but they cannot duplicate that which is the greater miracle which occurred on Pentecost. *"Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man **heard** them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how **hear** we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?"* (Acts 2:6-8)

*"Now when they **heard** this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* (Acts 2:37) This is the evidence that the "fire of GOD" fell that day. It was not simply that the disciples babbled in languages which they were unfamiliar with but rather that the LORD was pleased to call HIS sheep as HE said, *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."* (John 10:27) *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* (Rom 10:17)

When the LORD is pleased to send HIS WORD to the ears of the hearers, then we can be certain that the fire of GOD has fallen. *"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"* (Rom 10:14-15) This is that gospel which brings "life and immortality to light." Great is the work of GOD who sends forth this "fire" of mercy to accomplish HIS determined purpose to call HIS children from out of every kindred, tribe and tongue upon the earth.

Men can imitate preaching, they can imitate believing, they can even imitate being sent by GOD, but they cannot imitate "hearing", for in such is the manifestation of FAITH which is the gift of GOD, not of works lest any man should boast. I am reminded of Elijah who was quite fearful and dejected after the mighty work which the LORD demonstrated on Mt. Carmel. *"And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice."* (1Kings 19:11-12) It is this "still small voice" and not the fanfare (which might get the attention of men), which the LORD uses to call HIS people. It is a voice that cannot be heard by any but those to whom is given to hear it. *"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. (Rev 19:6) mam*