

BURNING HEARTS

By Maurice M. Johnson

The World Is On Fire

The world is on fire today and the fires have only begun their frightful destruction. In the great forests the foresters fight fire with fire. They start a counter fire so controlled that it will burn away only strips of timber directly in the path of the wild fires and thereby check the main blaze when it gets to the newly burned area. I desire to speak to you about a counter fire. While I can not offer you any Biblical hope that the raging infernos all over this Christ-rejecting world can be stopped by any or all of us, I can, thank God, present the Biblical method afforded God's children in such dangerous days as these. "The Burning Heart" is my subject. You who are "hot-headed" will not be satisfied with my message. Lovers of our Lord Jesus Christ will.

WILD FIRE

There are different kinds of fires burning within the human breast. We read in the first chapter of Romans of *filthy fires*. Nor are those vile fumes confined to that ancient past, either. Listen to this: "*God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use unto that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet*" (Rom. 1:26,27).

Are not our modern movies and magazines and televisions fuel for the "playful" flames consuming the human refuse pile? Oh yes, there is much laughter, but is it not the kind of laughter referred to by Solomon when he wrote: "*as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool*" (Ecc. 7:6). To those poor, Christ-rejecting unbelievers the One alone Who can rescue them from themselves and save them from the deadly fires of pride and lust and fear will one day appear, not as their gracious Savior, but as "*a consuming fire,*" "*revealed from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Heb. 12:29 & II Thes. 1:7,8).

My unsaved friend, the fires of filth and fiendish hate are spreading. Today *“is the day of salvation.”* Today you may have those deadly fires within your own breast brought under perfect control by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will thus be delivered from present defeat and sin and also from *“the wrath to come.”*

HOLY FIRE

When a sinner comes by faith to the Savior, acknowledging his sins and their awful guilt, and gratefully receives by faith the perfect, finished work that Christ has already done for the entire race of fallen man, that sinner is instantly given new life. *“For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Rom. 6:23). And this new life from above is a fire. Oh no, there is not the smoldering and flickering that always characterizes those destructive fires, sooner or later. This is holy fire—fire that only strengthens and brightens the Christian’s life. Those believers who “walk in the Spirit” always have hot hearts but never have “hot heads.” Do you have the blessed privilege of knowing many people with glowing lives—lives that are aglow because their hearts are burning hearts?

When Christians sing “Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love” they are singing a fact. It is a fact that all of God’s children are bound together. We are super-naturally bound together by the blessed tie of Divine love *“shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit”* (Rom. 5:5). And what guilt is being laid at the feet of all who allow pious pretenders to help them smother this holy fire of love that each new creature in Christ has for every other saved person.

A BURNING HEART

The apostle Paul was pre-eminently a man with a burning heart. And oh, what a holy fire that was that seemed to burn so steadily in the heart of that “bond slave” and “good soldier of Jesus Christ!” His heart was a veritable family hearth for all of God’s children, a warm and hospitable living room with an open fire-place, as it were. Hear him as he writes: *“O ye Corinthians, our heart is enlarged...For as I have said before, ye are in our hearts to die and live with you”* (II Cor. 6:11). And to the saints at Philippi he wrote *“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you*

in my heart...For God is my record how greatly I long after you all in the bowels (inward affections) of Jesus Christ” (Philip. 1:2-10).

My Christian friends, how large are your hearts? How many of your spiritual brothers and sisters have a warm welcome in your hearts? John the beloved wrote by inspiration that *“We know we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren”* (I John 3:14). Did he mean some of the various splits among the Plymouth Brethren, or so-called Brethren Church, or United Brethren sect? Or did he mean all of those whom God calls “brethren”? Oh may God send all the bolts of divine lightning necessary to break down the miserable little partitions that so many of us Christians have allowed Grandma and Grandpa Tradition and “Ir-reverend” Mr. and Mrs. Denomination to build in our hearts, or rather, in our minds! And I am sure that nothing less than bolts of God’s own lightning can actually tear down all the ungodly divisions among regenerated people.

FLESHLY FLAMES

You know, most of us Christians get angry at the wrong things and at the wrong people. Of course, the unsaved consistently waste their diminishing stock of emotions on vain things and vain hopes and supposed enemies, but children of the living God are capable of knowing just what they should love and exactly what they should hate. David said: (concerning God’s Word) *“I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way”* (Psalm 119:128).

I think probably there are many Christians today who think that a Spirit-led Christian will not get angry. The truth of the matter is that a Spirit-led believer will always be angered by those things that anger God Himself. By inspiration Paul wrote: *“Be ye angry and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath”* (Eph. 4:26). Possibly he meant to be angry but don’t “get mad.” Let your heart burn into a flame but don’t allow a fleshly flame to make you “boil over” and put out the fire. Haven’t you seen professed Christians who got all heated up and fired with determination as they opposed this or that false doctrine or false teacher? But first thing you know their fire had all been put out. The trouble was that it was not a splendid flame of Biblical conviction that had aroused them. It was merely a fleshly fire fanned by some spell-binding evangelist or reformer or mob psychologist. The coals of animal heat had been stirred up, made to burst into flame, caused the mind to boil over; and the flames soon subsided to be followed by a period of cold clamminess.

WILD-FIRE

This sort of fire is “wild-fire.” It is fanaticism. It may be ever so warm and beautiful for a time but eventually it burns itself out, being only destructive. It started from the soulish man and not from the Spirit of God. It is rather like a skyrocket rather than a comet. It starts even heaven-ward some times, with a thrilling “swish” and a brilliant light. And, indeed, it finally burns into yet more brilliant colors but it has burst. It has spent itself. It must fall back to earth with a dull thud.

My friends, are your religious experiences earth-born and ultimately earth-bound, even though for a time they may seem to be pointing and heading heavenward? Is Christ your life and light or is organized religion? Are you more thrilled in a throng gathered before a cold cross on top of a hill in a cemetery at some artificial Easter season celebration than you are alone with the church epistles, the inspired letters of Paul which are Christ’s love letters to the members of the true spiritual Church which is His body? The emotional fires that are aroused by crowds of people are soulish fires but not spiritual. The flashes of enthusiasm and zeal that are stirred and enflamed by the sight of beautiful church buildings, cathedrals and basilicas with stirring music set your physical senses afire but not your new natures, nor “the eyes of your understanding” (Eph. 1:17,18), if you are a true Christian. Christ is the true Light by which and from which all holy fires are kindled.

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