

BECOMING A VOICE OF FIRE

A SOUL WITH IMPACT

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CONTENTS

1	Introduction.	7
2	Fire Components	15
3	Fire Examples.	19
4	The Firebox: Demands of a Divine Call	33
5	The Firebrick: Risky Obedience	45
6	The Fire Starter: Great Faith.	59
7	The Fire Logs: A Ready Fire Needs Fuel	71
8	Price: Holy Conduct	73
9	Preparation: Being Ready for Success	83
10	Prayer: The Heart and Soul	91
11	Perspective: Heavenly Vision	109
12	Perseverance: Ride the Wave.	119
13	Persistence: Fan the Flame	129
14	Conclusion.	137

Introduction

IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL, CRISP Sunday morning. I strolled through the front door with my first cup of coffee and out onto the walkway as the sun was shining brightly, and its warmth pressed against my skin. I was on my way to retrieve our newspaper from the front yard as I did each Sunday morning. My whole being was alive; it was Sunday, a day we looked forward to each week as we focused on worship, on God's purpose, and on Him moving in our lives. This Sunday, as was our habit, we would certainly be attending church. It was a great day!

We went about our morning like a well-oiled machine running on all cylinders to accomplish our task of preparing the family for Sunday's service. We had been doing this routine for years; no new ground to cover, but each year or so we added to the size of our family, so the routine only had to be adjusted slightly due to the blessing of children.

Of course, I didn't know that this Sunday would be a serious turning point in the focus and direction of my spiritual life. I didn't have any idea how God would use it to stir my soul—how He would force an explanation of my beliefs, challenge the overall direction of my spiritual voice, and shape a voice after His heart in such a way that many lives

would be impacted. I was a Bible study teacher at this time and greatly enjoyed learning, teaching, and applying God's Word. This was the core of who I was in the Lord.

We moved through the morning as usual and enjoyed a powerful time in our Bible study class, teaching His Word, hearing personal testimonies, and sharing ministry opportunities with each other. From there we moved into the worship setting as always, anticipating a time of worship and to be inspired to know Him more.

As background: our church leadership had been moving the church through a cultural change. The pastor had attended a conference about how to become a "seeker style" church. He felt that this ministry approach was a change we needed, and he was leading us to become this kind of church. It was definitely a process of both teaching and trial-and-error implementation. However, the pastor was making progress in his quest to move us in this direction. Changes were common such as writing out your testimony by hand and then going back through it and taking out any references to the blood of Jesus, death on the cross, or the Holy Spirit because it was claimed that these references could be offensive or alarming to seekers. During this transformation time, many didn't fully understand what this new direction meant, but I certainly was willing to allow time and the Holy Spirit to confirm this direction. God always confirms His steps.

This Sunday the worship was outstanding, and I personally worshiped Him deeply. I felt as though Jesus was right there with me, that I might just reach out and touch Him. I felt so moved by the Holy Spirit that His presence brought tears of joy to my eyes. The pastor spoke more about becoming a seeker style church. It was interesting, but something was just not settling into my spirit. It seemed as though each time he spoke on this topic, I had more difficulty connecting the dots with what I knew about God's heartbeat. Let's be clear: I am not saying that he

was speaking or leading anyone in a wrong direction. I am just saying that I was having a very difficult time with this seeker-only direction.

At the end of this Sunday's sermon, the pastor told a story. He spoke of a couple who had attended the church last week. They had enjoyed the worship and listened to the message intently. God had moved upon their hearts to such a degree that after the end of the service, the couple came down to the front to speak with him. As a seeker church, we no longer had an altar time for people to respond to the message. The couple communicated that they felt like something was happening inside of them, and they just were not sure what it was. They seemed to be searching for something but didn't come thinking God was what they needed. They continued to express a need for something to help them in life. To me, it was obvious. I thought this was the very hope of every pastor and church who desired to see people like this coming forward to receive Christ as both their Savior and Lord. Right? Instead, he told them he was glad that they felt this way and for them to keep coming back. If God was speaking to them, they would know it in time. What? I just couldn't believe what I was hearing. As believers, we should celebrate this coming forward to seek God. The fact is, we invite, we long, we rejoice when anyone, like this couple, comes forward to say that they are looking for something but are not sure exactly what it is. We say it is Christ Jesus our Lord drawing you by the Holy Spirit. And we then use the opportunity to help them see their need for Christ and lead them to invite Him into their hearts. This pierced me to the soul. I began to question where the voices are today that cry out as one on fire for Christ. Do they exist, or has the church become a casual encounter of people who are indifferent to those whom the Holy Spirit has brought before us? Do voices of fire exist at all?

Today more than ever, both the world and the church are in need of what I call voices of fire, voices who hear from God and speak the truth in a culture that's revealing a desperate need for it, voices for the Lord

who will not dull the cutting edge on the sword of God's truth, voices who believe and preach, teach and live all of God's Word regardless of the way it is received or the way it makes one feel. Where are these voices today? Where are the voices who are willing to step out by the movement of the Holy Spirit within their souls, willing to speak a message from God, willing to take risky steps of obedience to the King, willing to be considered foolish by the world, willing to speak without compromise, and willing to speak with conviction, with power, with authority, with wisdom, and with God's revealed truth.

I see a church culture that is sacrificing voices of fire for voices of crowd pleasers, voices of power-of-positive-speech, and voices who are careful to not offend anyone. I constantly run into voices who seem more concerned about building impressive ministries, imposing buildings, bank accounts, and projecting images of church success as the world sees it rather than voices who consist of fervent, fiery communication of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I see a body of Christ that is impressed with size, success as man defines it, and everything grand in size instead of being impressed with the power of God that moves through voices who hear from God, voices God uses to impact lives each and every day.

I believe the heart of God is grieved by our lack of salt and our unwillingness to speak the whole truth. The church today is losing, if it has not already lost, its savor and will someday soon be rendered powerless in a world that is in need of a message from men and women who are voices of fire. I am disturbed by how many leaders are embracing this approach of preaching the Word of God. It is understandable that the sheep follow and enjoy this style of teaching, but it is inexcusable for godly leaders to pursue a man-pleasing approach any more.

Now, let me be clear about who a voice of fire is. They are not loud, passionate speakers who hurl judgment at sinners. They are not men who preach down to people trying to make them feel guilty in order to get a response. They are not men who purposely beat up people with

God's Word and somehow receive personal gratification from it. This is *not* what I mean by voices of fire. The voices of fire I am referring to are men and women who know God, love Jesus Christ, have a desire for all to hear the truth of God's Word in completeness, and stand ready to walk in His revealed truth. Yes, they preach, teach, and live with passion, they preach and teach the whole Word of God, and they know Him and His ways intimately. They are men and women who have spent time with God, know Him, and communicate His heart for the people with power! Voices of fire are people who preach and teach and live a life of power.

We have many examples of voices of fire in God's Word. Let me share with you a few men who are great examples of voices of fire. It is important for you to understand the type of person I am talking about.

Examples

A man like Abraham who lived his life with such faith in God that, "it was accounted to him as righteousness" (Rom. 4:3 ESV). This life was a voice of fire to such a degree that Hebrews tells us he believed God could bring Isaac back from the dead. This had never been considered up to this point in Scripture by anyone. Abraham believed God, lived His faith to the extreme, and stood for truth. Certainly a voice of fire!

A man like David who proclaimed awesome truths of God through the Scripture in some of the most difficult circumstances. He passionately knew our Lord in such a way that God proclaimed him, "A man after my own heart" (Acts 13:22). Certainly a voice of fire!

A man like Nehemiah who led with such wisdom and truth that God used him to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, something that had not been done for one hundred fifty years. A man who took a huge risk of losing his life in coming before the king in order to become what God was shaping him to be. Certainly a voice of fire!

A man like Elijah who stood before a king and proclaimed the judgment of the Most High God without fear when his life was on the line. He also stood before the priests of Baal and the people, calling fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice prepared unto the Lord revealing who was the one and only true God, “The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God” (1 Kings 18:39 ESV). Certainly a voice of fire!

A man like John the Baptist who was a voice strongly crying out about our coming Savior and being used of God to make ready the way of the Lord. His message was both powerful and so full of substance that people flocked to hear him and then responded with repentance and baptism. He was faithful to his call, ministered about six months to one year, and was beheaded. Certainly a voice of fire who fulfilled his part in the revealing grace of God!

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Matt. 3:11)

A man like Peter, who was a nobody from a very small fishing community. After being confronted with the living, loving Savior of the world, he committed his life, heart and soul, to proclaiming the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. At Pentecost, while moved by the Holy Spirit, he revealed truth with such power that about three thousand souls were saved as a result of his sermon. Certainly a voice of fire!

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified. (Acts 2:36)

A man like Paul who was known as the worst of the worst. He was viewed by many as a murderer, certainly a Christian hater, and a legalist with a passion to punish even to the point of death any who would break his rules. He would certainly not be a great candidate to be used

in the kingdom, right? *Not!* Jesus met him face-to-face on the road to Damascus one day and turned his heart one hundred and eighty degrees. He became a man who burned so brightly that the only way to silence him was to kill him. Paul himself proclaimed:

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Gal. 2:20)

Certainly a voice of fire!

All of these men were voices of fire. Of course, there are many others we read about in the Scriptures and those that we know not: common, every day men and women who were nothing without Christ, but with Christ all things became possible. Men and women with voices of fire and godly character who can teach us by their examples: all being called of God, undeniably chosen by the King, full of boldness and faith, preaching the truth at all costs, and calling sin, sin. All of these voices of fire were positioned in the right place at the right time, living life with holy conduct, willing to give instant obedience, selfless in all things—men and women this world was not worthy of, but they were called to be voices of fire! We see fire from heaven arriving on the scene because these men and women of God were called, found faithfully moving in obedience to His will, and believing Him in the face of absolute evil.

Know this for sure: *It is absolutely crucial for anyone desiring to become a voice of fire to be called of God and know this calling without any shadow of a doubt!*

Without knowing this call, you will be ripped apart without mercy, shredded, spit out, scoffed as fake, and in all probability, become a quitter. In other words, you will not succeed in the full destiny and purpose in that which God has called you. This is not to say you will lose your salvation or have no rewards in heaven. Of course, you will. That is not

what this book is about. It is about becoming a voice who is strong and unwavering, bold yet trained, and both powerful and compassionate, sharing the truths of God—true voices who are being used for the Lord God Almighty for His purpose and pleasure. I promise you this: you will need to return to this defining moment of the call of God often because this life God has called you to, becoming a voice of fire, is both life's greatest joy and greatest suffering.

Are you willing to follow? Are you willing to become a voice of fire? Then keep reading and allow the Holy Spirit to work within your heart, and I am fully convinced you can become His voice of fire for today!