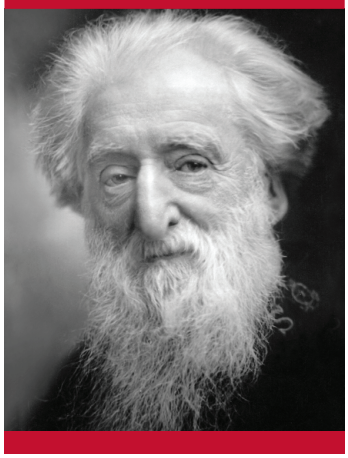
24/7 PRAYER RESOURCES



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THE BAPTISM OF FIRE

By William Booth

The substance of an address at the Darlington Council

*~ From Salvation Soldiery by General William Booth (1889), reprinted 2012**

I want to say something this morning that shall help you in the personal conflicts of your daily experience, and in the great warfare you are waging with the principles and principalities and devilries around you, and in attaining that success which I believe you all honestly and earnestly desire.

And firstly let me say—to you who are soldiers in The Salvation Army—you are embarked on this war—to you it is the great question of life, the responsibility for success or failure is upon you. However interested the civilian may be in any conflict that happens to be going on, either at home or abroad, he feels that the great responsibility of it is upon the shoulders of the soldiers. It is they who have to run the risk, and gain the victories, and wear the medals, and it is they who have to bear the odium of defeat; just so here, you are the soldiers of salvation, and the responsibilities of the war are all upon your heads.

Now there is in English law a curious fiction by which no man who once becomes a clergyman can ever cease to be one. If he goes into the greengrocery line he is still a clergyman, if he goes to prison he is still a clergyman, if he goes to the gallows he is still a clergyman; and, I suppose, nay, I am sure, when he goes up to the judgment bar he will be dealt with in the light of all the solemn responsibilities implied in such a position. Now, although you may by cowardice, or unfaithfulness, or disobedience, or other infamous action, be deemed unworthy of your position, and drummed out of God Almighty's Army—covered with disgrace and infamy—still the memory of your position, and the responsibilities of what you might have accomplished in it, will cleave to you, and grow upon you, and haunt you, and harrow you for ever more. How important then for you to be faithful.

The most solemn vows ever uttered by any of the inhabitants of God's universe have been on your lips; you have boasted of what you will be, and what you will do, with boastings so loud that God and angels and devils have heard them, and I don't condemn you for so doing. Some people are dreadfully afraid of any boasting in religion, but I say if your boasting be the outcome of true hearts, if it be the outleaping of a holy fire which must have an outlet or consume the very bones, if it is in the Lord, then let it come "housetop" fashion if you will. Go and tell Goliath that you are going to cut of his head and to give his carcase to feed the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and come what may you are going to shout victory over him. That is if you feel true, and are going to keep on feeling true; but if not, then so much greater the pity and the infamy, and the sorrow of God and men, and above all for your own poor self; but oh, we cannot go back, we cannot shunt, we must not, will not, dare not, fear. No! we must go on, on, on, till the last great crash shall end the war.

We are met this morning to get a baptism of fire to fit us for all this, to qualify us for the accomplishment of the great business before us. We have a great work to do, and a powerful foe to overcome. This one has tried his hand at it, and that one and many a one, and all say with one accord, the enemy is too strong for us; the work cannot be done. All are unanimous in saying that the work is not only difficult, but impossible, and it is this impossible work we have to do.

But the things, my comrades, which are impossible with men are possible with God. It is as easy for a rich man to go to heaven as a poor man if he is willing to come down and consecrate his all to God. The hindrance lies in his not being willing to lay his baggage aside. Come down and walk in the footsteps of Christ. In reality, lay all on the altar. Herein is the whole question of doing the impossibilities.

I went to a big fellow in our Warehouse at Blackburn one evening who was looking at the penitent form with such anguish depicted in his face as I shall not soon forget, and yet refusing to go down there and have salvation. I pressed him as to the reason for keeping back, whilst, evidently, so deeply wrought upon. At length he said, or rather

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hissed through his teeth, with indescribable bitterness, "If I go there they will call me a Shaker." That he should face that, to him the lowest depth of the ignominies, in the mill on the morrow morning, seemed impossible; but when he gave in, and went down, he not only found salvation, but gloried in the shame of it. And just so, my brethren, it is easy for any man to do the will of God when he willing to go all lengths.

Doubtless the devil often tells you your work is impossible. He sets upon you first thing in the morning when you wake, feeling all sore after a hard night's struggle, seeing little or no success, and tells you that victory, at least to such feeble instruments as you, is impossible, and advising retreat. This cannot be, we must go forward, and forward to victory.

If we are to conquer we must fight, and the more fighting we get the better, and, so far as that goes, the more profitable it will be, and the more we shall enjoy it if we are sure our fighting will bring victory.

THERE ARE DIFFERENT KINDS OF FIRE: THERE IS A FALSE FIRE.

No one knows this better than we do, but we are not such fools as to refuse good banknotes because there are false ones in circulation; and although we see here and there manifestations of what appears to us to be nothing more than the mere animal, fanatical, human, blazing forth of a mere earthly fire, we none the less prize, and value, and seek for the genuine fire which comes from the altar of the Lord, and produces Divine effects in the souls where it burns, and which through them burns up the false, and the devilish, and the hellish around them.

THERE IS A DEVILISH FIRE.

Of this we have ample evidence—none more so. We see it burning in the homes of the people, in the public houses, in the mobs, that, but for the restraining hand of the Lord, would destroy us as they destroyed our Master. We see it in our meetings, in meetings in which we approach the nearest to the throne, to the very steps of the altar, mocking men, infidel men, men who, actuated by this fire, scoff and turn into levity the most Divine and tender efforts that God and man can make for their salvation. Oh it is this fire from Hell that is burning, burning fiercer and fiercer day by day in its hatred of all that is good and holy in the vain attempt to burn up and destroy the very traces of the Divine and holy out of the earth.

THERE IS AN INTELLECTUAL FIRE.

The fire of genius, which has its beginning and its ending in the intellect of man, which manifests itself in written thoughts or burning words. But however lofty its aspirations and aims, it is nevertheless a mere human thing; human and nothing more.

THERE IS A SORT OF SENTIMENTAL FIRE.

A morbid, emotional sort of thing which feeds upon the real or imaginary, which can be aroused by the material sufferings, or by the material joys connected with religion, just as readily as by the stories of any other sufferings, or any other joys. I could work upon your hearts this morning, and make you feel unutterable things, by telling you stories of the sufferings of poor humanity in Siberia, or elsewhere. You would probably feel, and weep, and perhaps shout also, and even be ready to do something as well, but yet the fire that aroused you would be an earthly thing, and just so men may feel about the sufferings of Christ, about the pains of hell, and about the joys of heaven, and there would be little or nothing beyond this human fire in it after all.

All this is very different from the **DIVINE FIRE**.

Do you want to know how you can distinguish the human fire from the Divine? I answer, *by the effects*; you can judge it *by its fruits*. Observe them.

NOW THE BAPTISM OF FIRE GIVES ASSURANCE; MAKES PEOPLE SURE IN DIVINE THINGS.

I take it that all of you feel settled and certain—as certain as men and women can be down here—of your own personal salvation. You say, I feel I'm saved; saved all over. Now, it is the Holy Ghost's testimony that brings this assurance. The memory of the

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time and place where God met and saved you is very good, but not sufficient for the certainty of today; it is good, though, and useful.

I remember a story that they told me in the north of England of one Christer, a rather remarkable miner of those days, who, in the early time of his experience, was very much plagued by the devil as to the reality of his conversion. To circumvent Satan, he hit at last upon the following device. He was a poor scholar, but he sought out somebody who could write, and made him describe on paper all the particulars of his conversion, the date, the place, the hour, what a devilish fellow he had been, how joyful God had made him, and what a wonderful change had been wrought in his life. When it was all written, he folded it up, put it n his pocket, and the next time the devil came to try him on this point, he pulled out the paper, and spreading it forth, said, "There, devil, if thou canst read writin', there's the whole account of it." After this, Christer says he was troubled no more on the subject.

Now I am supposing that every one of you carries about not on paper, but in your memory, in a never destroyable writing, the record of that transaction by which you passed from death unto life, and very useful that record doubtless is. Still, that alone is not sufficient; only the direct continuous testimony of the Holy Ghost can create the certainty which gives so much power in this struggle.

THE FIRE OF THE HOLY GHOST MAKES CLEAN THE HEART OF THE MAN WHO RECEIVES IT.

Fire is a great purging medium. Those to whom the Saviour spoke knew well its effects in separating the impurities and the dross from the precious metals; they purified their gold and their silver in the fire, and the promise of the Saviour to them of the Holy Ghost they knew was neither more nor less than the promise of a living flame, that should take out of their hearts all that which was dross, and tin, and impurity, and selfishness in the eye of the Holy Ghost. The baptism of the Holy Ghost means **PURITY**.

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST MEANS ENTHUSIASM.

Fire means warmth, burning, heat, kindling the body to a glow, nerving every muscle and faculty for the utmost exertion; so the fire of the Holy Ghost creates earnestness, spiritual heat, makes hot saints.

The baptism of the Holy Ghost means enthusiasm, the right kind of enthusiasm, the enthusiasm of angels, the enthusiasm of Jesus Christ Himself. Enthusiasm that suffers, works, sacrifices, that no opposition can daunt and no enemies destroy.

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST MEANS POWER.

Fire is a great motive power. This was but dimly understood by the ancients. Its discovery is an accomplishment of modern science; but the Master saw it, and the mighty force which whirls this whirling world along makes fire a tenfold more expressive illustration of the meaning and value of the baptism of fire. Without fire and water we should suddenly come to standstill, but with these forces we move on faster and faster—Luggage-train speed—Parliamentary train speed—Express train speed—Electricity-speed, and I know not what other speed. Just so, in the spiritual world, the Holy Ghost was to be not only purity and zeal, but the actual propelling force which was to carry with ever-increasing velocity the people of God forward in conquest and victory, until the whole world was subdued to God. We want in mightier measure than ever this morning this baptism. We want a people cleaned as with **FIRE**.

I often think of the prodigious work accomplished by the early disciples, and I often think of the striking similarity there is between us and those very people that met in that upper room. If we could have had a photograph of that remarkable group in that room, I fancy there would have been a striking similarity, even physically, between them and us here in this room this morning. They were doubtless about the same height, and the same age, and the same figure—some as little, and some as tall. Perhaps they had one as big as the doctor here. And then I have no doubt they were very similar mentally. I am not willing to admit that they were in any way superior in this respect, and while they were not superior as men, they were certainly at a disadvantage to us in the way of *circumstances*. They had no railways, nor penny postage,

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nor electric telegraph, to help them, as we have. Oh that we were all as ready as they were to wait upon the Lord and believe in Him.

God is no respecter of persons, and given the same kind of men, and circumstances, and Divine co-operation, you will have the same kind of results. So there will be here a Peter, with his reckless daring and vehement thunders; a Barnabas, with his faith and enthusiasm; and others of varying character, making together a company of men and women who will go forth to suffer to the shedding of the last drop of their hearts' blood; while there may be also, although I pray not, a Judas Iscariot, who will be false and traitorous, and if there should be, I could almost hope that he would hang himself right off, as Judas Iscariot did, and so save us a lot of trouble.

There are many people who seem to be ever reckoning how much they can get out of God for as little as possible in return. If you are the weakest here, and yet bring to Him a simple, honest heart, with an intense earnest purpose to do your utmost for Him, He will do his mightiest for you, both within you and by you. Come to His feet, determined to be and to do all that He can make you be and do, and He will take you up, the very weakest of you, and fulfil in you and by you the grandest promises of this Book.

Alas! what a mixed state of feeling, and experience, and realization do we find in professors of religion. Christ in one eye and the world in the other. No wonder there should be such a mixture in what comes out of them, and what is done by them, a mixture that puzzles both men and angels to discern whether it be from the manufactories of heaven or hell.

With us, my comrades, let there be no mixture; no more linen and woollen. Let web and woof be alike, the same, all the same, through and through, and through.

Saints or devils! I WANT OUT-AND-OUT SAINTS. We shall all have to come to this to get into heaven, and the sooner we come to it the better for The Salvation Army, and the better for this poor perishing world of ours. Let us come to a full faith, a full service, and a full reliance upon Jehovah.

I have read somewhere of a beggar who, amidst the direst poverty, was so happy and joyous as to be a perfect wonderment to all about him. When asked the secret of this, whence he derived this joy and gladness, seeing he was in such abject circumstances, the beggar replied that his inward gladness proceeded from the enjoyment of the *Creator*. And when asked, further, where he found it, he replied that he found it just where he ceased from depending upon the *creature*.

When the rays of the sun come streaming into the window in the early dawn, the weary watcher blows out the candle, or turns off the gas; he is independent of these glimmering lights now; and when we are really and fully relying on God, and consciously have God to rely upon, we are no longer dependent on the creature, and God is not only our chief good, but we know it and feel it, and this knowledge makes us truly independent and happy.

As I stood by a quay side the other day, I noticed that many of the barges and ships were fastened to each other, and so when one rocked the other rocked, and if one went adrift they would all float away together; but I saw other vessels fastened to the quay, and they were all firm and immovable, as the quay itself. No matter how the others rocked, these were secure. If you are dependent for happiness and gladness on earthly things, earthly things are always rocking, and consequently your happiness and gladness will be always rocking too; and if you are moored in part to earthly things you will be rocking and changing just to that extent. People get into a mixed state, partly dependent on God, partly on a husband, or a wife, or children, or a shop husbands, and waves, and shops, are prone to get adrift, and then their peace gets adrift too.

If a man walks on two planks, one sound and the other rotten, it is tolerably certain the rotten one will sooner or later give way, and over he must go, and he may thank a kind Providence if he gets up again. Put both feet on the sound plank, and go on your journey shouting. Depend altogether on the Lord, and your peace shall flow like a river—all the changes of earth and all the malice of hell to the contrary notwithstanding. O my God, take us off from the *creature* to the **CREATOR**.

God only knows what He would do with a few men who cared only for Him. He would

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save thousands and astonish the universe. O God, make us all alike—all for Thee. I was hurrying to catch an express train to London the other day, and was reckoning upon the train upon which I was travelling meeting it, but it was too late—not very late, just just late enough to let the other go and leave me behind, with a wounded leg, hurt through scrambling to catch it. I shall never reckon on that train again. God wants men and women that He can reckon upon, who will be there at the very time He wants them, and do the very work He wants doing, whatever may stand in the way.

My brethren, God is in full sympathy with you. He is a great deal more human than we have taken Him to be. We too often think and talk of Him as though He were a great Being sitting on the circle of the universe a long way off, in some sort of dense fog; too far away to see or hear anything very distinctly; and only communicated with by a sort of imperfect telegraphy—a hard-hearted, unsympathetic, stolid, immovable Being.

All this is opposed to the most direct teachings of the Bible. There, God is represented, by every conceivable form of statement and illustration, as a Being of most impressible sentiment and illustration, as a Being of most impressible sensibilities, loving, hating, repenting, rejoicing, sorrowing, troubled on defeat, and triumphant on victory. When I go to bed at night after a hard fight, in which to all appearance I have been badly beaten, I think of Him as feeling much as I do; and He comes to me and says, Never mind; we'll have another turn at them tomorrow, and we shall be too many of them in the long run. There is no mistake about it, and there is no advantage in denying the fact, that the devil has got the world in his power at present. But it shall not always be so, and God is only waiting for a people by whom He can conquer. For still, as of old, "His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth that He may show Himself strong on behalf of those whose HEARTS ARE PERFECT TOWARDS HIM."

And we can only be made such by the Holy Ghost.

Always acknowledge what God does by and for you. I think we do ourselves harm, and greatly grieve the Holy Spirit, by not acknowledging what He does for us. We forget, if we don't actually deny, His co-operation, and then we get downcast and grumble. I don't say, because I don't for a moment think, that there is any danger of *our not acknowledging what we do*. The devil is always ready to prompt us to say, *"I did this, and I did that, and I did it well,"* and others are always ready to speak of what *we* do. Bu we do err, I am sure, by not sufficiently acknowledging and glorifying the co-operating work of the Holy Ghost. Why not say, "The Holy Ghost was at work this afternoon. We have had a hard night, but the Holy Spirit has done His work. Blessed Spirit, I thank Thee"?

Before we go to our knees to receive the Baptism of Fire, let me beg of you to see to it that your souls are in harmony with the will and purpose of the Holy Spirit whom you seek. See to it that the channel of communication by which the baptism must be received is open.

I heard of some people the other day who could not get any water. They turned the tap repeatedly, but no water came. They sent to the office of the company, who sent a man to examine the connections and fittings, but all was right; plenty of water in the reservoir; pipes, taps, connections, all right, but no water. At last they pulled up the pipe, and *found a mouse in it.*

It is no use turning the tap, praying, singing, or even believing, if there is something you are holding back or refusing to do—some idol, something about which you feel condemned, but which you refuse to give up, *something in the pipe*. Perhaps some trumpery, contemptible thing. Out with it; give it no rest; drown it; give it up. Destroy your idols and hindrances and stoppages with an *everlasting destruction*. Let there be free communication between your souls and God. Let all go, and you shall be flooded before you rise from your knees; the world shall feel the power of it, and God shall have all the glory.

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