

## Strange Fire – Sermon/Lesson

We are going to be talking about the subject of the contemporary charismatic and word faith movements. I consider them very much the same thing and call them the “Strange Fire Movement.” This is something that has been a concern of mine and something that I address any time it comes up in my home, my extended family, the church I work at, and the seminary classes that I teach at CABBI. I am very passionate about this subject because it falls under and is rooted in what I believe is the biggest problem in the Lord’s churches today. The absence of discernment. The absence or lack of discernment amongst Bible believers, those who claim to know Christ, and many churches today is a huge and dangerous problem, and it is this problem that has led to what I call the “Strange Fire Movement.” If you can’t discern the truth from God’s word then you risk dying the death of 1,000 heresies. The lack of discernment is like being spiritually anemic. Anemia is a condition in which the body doesn’t have enough red blood cells which causes a person to have a weakened immune system causing the person to sickly and tired, it makes the person’s body weak against contaminants. Lacking the ability to discern the truth of God’s word leads to spiritual anemia where we have a weakened spiritual immune system which causes us to spiritually weak against contaminants.

At the very heart of Christian living is discernment. Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy Chapter 3: <sup>10</sup> You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, <sup>11</sup> my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. <sup>12</sup> Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, <sup>13</sup> while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. <sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom<sup>[a]</sup> you learned it <sup>15</sup> and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

Paul is telling this to Timothy but it is applicable to us today, because Christian living is connected to Christian thinking and Christian thinking is anchored in sound doctrine and sound doctrine begins in proper discernment. There are those who are evil and those who are impostors but we are to continue in the faith and know firmly what we believe. How do we do that? Through the Word of God which is inherent, authoritative, supreme, and sufficient for all things pertaining to life and godliness. How is it sufficient for these things? Through teaching, training in righteousness and also in reproof and correction.

Now we know that there are those who are involved in The Strange Fire Movement that are purposely teaching wrong things. They are in it for the money, they know they are in it for the money, they just don’t want anyone else to know they are in it for the money. There are those who purposely teach the wrong things because it is profitable and because it empowers them and benefits them. They are wolves in sheep’s clothing. They are deceivers.

We also know that there are those caught up in The Strange Fire Movement are honestly and genuinely deceived. They have been deceived and do not know they have been deceived.

So there are those that are purposely teaching false things and they need to be rebuked and corrected. There are also those who are deceived that also need rebuke, correction, and also teaching and training

in the scriptures so that they can have their eyes opened to the false teachings they are caught up in and come to a knowledge of the truth so that they might know Christ and trust in Him alone for salvation.

These things are also already slowly creeping into churches that we would say have always been doctrinally sound churches. They have always believed and taught the truth of the scripture, but have let their guard down in one area or another and have allowed Strange Fire to creep into their churches no matter how small it is, it's a problem. There are also true believers, people who have placed their faith in Christ alone for salvation, many that call themselves Baptists, that have allowed strange fire to creep into their lives one way or another and again no matter how small it is, it is a problem that needs to be addressed, lest a small ember turns into a large Strange Fire.

The way this is combatted when it creeps in, and the way that it is avoided and kept out is the same: Discernment.

“The highest duty, highest privilege, the most essential behavior for humanity is to worship God.” Jesus said in John chapter 4 that God the Father seeks true worshippers, those that worship in spirit and in truth.

I get the phrase Strange Fire from Leviticus Chapter 10:1-2 **Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. <sup>2</sup> And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. <sup>3</sup> Then Moses said to Aaron, “It is what the Lord spoke, saying,**

**‘By those who come near Me I [a]will be treated as holy,**

**And before all the people I will be honored.’”**

**So Aaron, therefore, kept silent.**

God had given a specific way and plan about the proper worship of God. When the worship offering was done properly the glory of the Lord would appear and then God would send fire out that would consume the sacrifice showing God was pleased with that sacrifice.

Aaron was the top priest of Israel, and his own sons offered worship to God improperly. Aaron was obedient and God consumed the sacrifice, his sons were disobedient and God consumed them.

Aaron's sons were very honored men, very respected men, they were the nephews of Moses, everyone knew them. In Numbers we see they are listed as leaders of Israel. They were not wicked, they were not evil, they were not divisive. They were invited to come up the mountain in Exodus 24 and it says they saw God and they ate and drank. These are men that seem so secure in their obedience to the Word of God, but they didn't properly discern the commands, the rules, the word of God and God said “By those who come near me I will be treated as holy, and I will be honored” These two guys disregarded the word of God that God had given them they didn't treat God or His word properly as holy and honorable presenting what the Bible calls “Strange Fire” and they were consumed because their worship was corrupt and contaminated.

God is very serious about the way we worship Him, and Jesus said God wants those who properly worship God in spirit and in truth. What we believe about God and His Word are extremely important, that's part of worshipping in truth.

The Strange Fire Movement is dishonoring to God, it is dishonoring the whole God-head. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all dishonored in the Strange Fire Movement.

It dishonors God because it misrepresents God. When we say things about God that are not true then that is a major problem. One major leader of the movement, Jesse Duplantis recently asked his congregation and followers to donate money so he can buy a new private jet that costs \$54 Million Dollars. He says God told him he needs to buy this jet, the same guy takes the scripture out of context quoting Proverbs 18 and says, "God has the power to take life, but He can't. God's bound. The Bible says life and death are in the power of YOUR tongue. You choose when you live, you choose when you die, the power of life and death are in your tongue, not God's." That's blasphemous. That's dishonoring to God, that's unbiblical.

### **Jesse Duplantis Clip**

Job tells that that "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Job also tells us in **Job 14:5 "Since his days are determined, The number of his months is with You; And his limits You have <sup>[c]</sup>set so that he cannot pass."**

**Acts 17:24-26 The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; 26 and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation.**

**Psalms 139:16 Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.**

There are many other examples of God being the one who holds the power of life and death, The Flood God determined when everyone would die, except 8 that God determined would live. Hezekiah the king that was told by God he would die, asked God to allow him to live longer and God granted him life. God says he can prolong our lives if He wishes, that by honoring our father and mother our days on the earth may be made longer.

It dishonors Christ, God the Son because it misrepresents Him. Christ alone saves.

Another prominent leader in this movement. Kenneth Copeland claims that he can control the weather. His wife tells a story about how they were at the beach one day at their beach house and a whirlwind came down out of the sky over the ocean and her husband Kenneth pointed at that storm and said "I rebuke you!!" and the storm went away.

### **Copeland's Clip**

He also has a section on his website about how to be saved, there is a 6-step process he says to being saved in short, he says that First, you have to believe and that belief is the first step in salvation. Second, to be saved and that part of keeping your salvation is to speak scriptures out loud and give voice to your

salvation. Third, you have to pray. He says that all you have to do when you are ready to be born again is pray and gives a list of prayers you can say that will help you obtain your salvation. Forth, he says that salvation isn't just about heaven that salvation should be changing your life each and every day. This isn't really a step to be saved, but if you read in depth what he teaches what he is talking about is prosperity. That a truly saved person will reap earthly rewards and if you aren't then you must have missed a step somewhere along the way and need to start over. Fifth, he says that you have to apply God's word to your life to be saved. You have to live out the scriptures in order to be saved. I have several issues with this and other statements like it. You can't live the gospel, you can't preach the gospel always and when necessary use words. The gospel by definition is good news. You don't live news, you share news. The sixth step in salvation according to Copeland is to keep living the right way and you will know you are because you will have a happier, healthier, and more successful life. If you don't then go back and start over because you messed up somewhere.

That's works. The Bible says we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Kenneth Copeland sounds ok with part 1, Believe. But then he says that's the first step in being saved. Jesus said in John chapter 3 when talking with Nicodemus that **Whoever believes on the only begotten son of God shall be saved.** Jesus also says in John chapter 3 that **whoever believes on the Son is not condemned but whoever does not believe is condemned because they have not believed on the Son.** That's it, end of the story. Now we can spend a lot of time talking about what the word believe means, because James says even the demons believe. But understand Jesus is talking about trusting Him. The demons believe that Jesus is real, but they don't trust Jesus. Jesus says if you want to be saved trust completely and fully in Him.

**Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.**

They teach many other things that dishonor God and Jesus. Creflo Dollar teaches that we are like God. That we are little Gods. That's how satan tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden, by telling them they could be like God.

They teach that salvation involves works, that true believers are happy, healthy, and wealthy and if you aren't then you just don't have enough faith. They tell people to send them money because God will bless them and multiply that money back to them and if God doesn't it because they lacked faith so send more money and have more faith. They offer health, wealth, and personal success. The same things that satan tempted Jesus with in the dessert. You look hungry and weak Jesus, here make these rocks into bread so you can be strong and healthy. If you are truly the Son of God then throw yourself off this cliff and surely the angels will save you, if you have enough faith that you are the Son of God then prove it to me Jesus. Hey Jesus look at all the kingdoms of the world, if you will worship me then I will give you all these kingdoms and give you all this worldly success.

satan's tools for temptation have always been the temptation to be like God, the temptation to prove your faith through some earthly sacrifice, the temptation to be healthy and wealthy and successful.

The Strange Fire Movement however also probably in the most severe way, dishonors God The Holy Spirit.

**Clip Drunken Spirit**

To falsely accuse and dishonor the Holy Spirit is a major deal. In Matthew 12 the Pharisees were claiming that Jesus was performing miracles through the power of Satan. Matthew writes in chapter 12 verses 25-28 **Knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, “[x]Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and [y]any city or house divided against itself will not stand. <sup>26</sup> If Satan casts out Satan, he [z]is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? <sup>27</sup> If I by [aa]Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? For this reason they will be your judges. <sup>28</sup> But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.**

Jesus rebuked them for attributing the works of the Holy Spirit to satan and demons. Now days the movement does the opposite which is equally offensive to the God-head. They attribute the works of demons to the holy spirit. Let’s look at a very scary passage of scripture. Matthew Chapter 7:21-23

**<sup>21</sup> “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many [u]miracles?’ <sup>23</sup> And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’**

Jesus says there will be many who say We preached in your name, we cast out demons in your name, we performed miracles in your name, and Jesus will say to them, I NEVER KNEW YOU, DEPART FROM ME YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.

How can someone that is lost preach, cast out demons, and perform miracles?

Preaching is an easy one I suppose, it would be easy to just pretend to believe something and preach something that you don’t actually believe. OR they could easily be deceived and be preaching something they have been deceived about. They could fake the healings and miracles and demon exorcisms. But what about the cases that we can’t prove it’s fake, how can they cast out demons and perform miracles though? We see in the scripture in Acts 19 that the sons of sceva were trying to cast out a demon and the demon responded to them and said, I know of Jesus, and I know of Paul, but I don’t know you and you have no authority over me, and the demon possessed man beat them so badly they left bleeding and naked. So how can a lost person cast out a demon or perform a miracle?? Deception. Satan is the master of deception. In order to continue to lead people off track and keep people stuck in this false teaching and false movement do you think that a demon would posses a person, and then let a false teacher cast them out in order to give that false teacher credibility so that the false teacher would keep leading people astray? Do you think a demon would possess a person and cause their body to be ill or hurt and then allow a false teacher to heal a person and then the demon leave that person so it would appear that this false teacher actually healed them so that people would continue to follow this false teacher? OF COURSE, The Bible says they can, and Jesus says if that’s the case then it is only for the purpose of backing up false teaching like that of the pharisees.

These very demonic things, are being attributed to The Holy Spirit and that’s very similar and just as serious as what Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for, when they attributed the work of The Spirit to satan, it’s no different then when we attribute the works of satan to The Spirit.

This is the basis of all heresy. Heresy is something that demeans, degrades, and misrepresents the God-Head as a whole or any member of the God-Head, Father, Son, or Holy Spirit.

We could spend days discussing and evaluating the Strange Fire Movement and never be able to cover every aspect of it, but I hope that we have laid a basic foundation for you today. That you will be able to recognize false teaching, more specifically the false teaching of this movement based on the idea of proper discernment. If a teacher, preacher, singer, worship leader, author, if someone says something about any member of the God-Head that is not true or says something that misrepresents any member of the God-Head that you will be able to pinpoint that. As a believer everything we do is worship. We tend to think of the music aspect of our service as worship, but the Bible teaches us very clearly in many places that everything we do as believers is worship. The way we talk, the way we live, the way we act, the activities we take part in, the preaching, teaching, reading, and yes the singing is all part of worship and Jesus said true worshipers that offer genuine worship are those that worship in spirit and IN TRUTH. If you want to be a worshiper that worships in truth then you have to learn biblical discernment, you have to read and study your Bible so that you will know what is true and what is not. If you are not discerning then you will be deceived. It is not an issue of if but an issue of when.

So just to spend the rest of our time together, let's cover some ways that the Strange Fire Movement is creeping into churches that otherwise are scripturally and doctrinally sound.

It creeps in, most likely it's subtle, it's not like you are going to walk into your Baptist church tomorrow and BOOM!! All of the sudden out of nowhere someone is teaching people how to speak in tongues or is performing miraculous healings in the altar. However, if we aren't careful the subtle aspects of Strange Fire, improper worship can and will creep in.

I think all of us, if not all of us, then most of us, understand that nonsensical gibberish, and flailing around and running around flopping on the ground is unbiblical, and is not ever ONCE, NOT ONE TIME, seen in the scripture as worshipping God. The only time we see anyone flailing around is when they are demon possessed.

#### **CLIP ABOUT TONGUES**

#### **CLIP ABOUT FIRE**

However, the other things that do creep in are not as obvious to us.

#### **CLIP ABOUT JESUS CULTURE**

#### **CLIP OF THE GLORY FROM THE CEILING**

The emotionalism, the idea of playing on the emotions of people, and creating an emotional atmosphere and then provoking an emotional response from people rather than allowing The Holy Spirit to be the one who does the drawing, we try to create things in order to get a better response from people.

Galatians 3:1-5 - You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed *as* crucified? <sup>2</sup> This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of <sup>[b]</sup>the Law, or by <sup>[c]</sup>hearing with faith? <sup>3</sup> Are you so foolish? Having begun <sup>[d]</sup>by the Spirit, are you now <sup>[e]</sup>being perfected by the flesh? <sup>4</sup> Did you <sup>[f]</sup>suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? <sup>5</sup> So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works <sup>[g]</sup>miracles among you, do it by the works of <sup>[h]</sup>the Law, or by <sup>[i]</sup>hearing with faith?

Paul is writing to believers, these are Christians, they have received the Spirit Paul says, they have begun in the Spirit Paul says. Greek word bewitched, is the word **BASKAINOS** and it means to appeal to emotionally. We have to be careful not to allow emotionalism and the flash and bang tactics come into our churches. True Believers can be bewitched by false teachings, it happened to the believers in Galatia.

Ephesians 4:17-20 - <sup>17</sup> So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, <sup>18</sup> being darkened in their understanding, <sup>[m]</sup>excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; <sup>19</sup> and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality <sup>[n]</sup>for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. <sup>20</sup> But you did not learn <sup>[o]</sup>Christ in this way.

Now Paul here is referring to a different issue, but the concept applies so perfectly. Walk with the Lord rather than walking with a futile mind, a darkened understanding, ignorance, and giving over to sensuality. THEY PRACTICE GREEDYNESS. The words I want to focus on the most are in verse 20, you did not LEARN CHRIST this way. The way we avoid falling into false teaching and ungodly and unbiblical movements is by putting our mind to a purpose of study, rather than having a futile mind. Which gives us proper understanding rather than a darkened understanding. Being educated in the Word of God rather than ignorant. Being focused on the truth of God's word rather than sensuality and emotionalism. Learning Christ.

The Bible drives this point home again, and again, and again.

Romans 12:1-2 - Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, <sup>[a]</sup>acceptable to God, *which is your* <sup>[b]</sup>spiritual service of worship. <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this <sup>[c]</sup>world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may <sup>[d]</sup>prove what the will of God is, that which is good and <sup>[e]</sup>acceptable and perfect

The importance of renewing our minds, so we can have proper discernment is so closely tied to proper worship. Paul says that when we live our lives as a sacrifice to God that is our spiritual worship. Worshipping in spirit, living a Christian life. This is only achieved by not being conformed to the world but being transformed by the renewing of our mind, which is worshipping in truth. We can only live a Christian life, when we are being transformed by the Word to have Christian thinking. And Christian thinking is what allows us to discern what is proper and acceptable to God.

The Strange Fire Movement. Charismatic and Word Faith teaching, is futile, it's mindless, its sensual, emotional, and practices greediness. MAKE ME HEALTHY WEALTHY AND WISE, the strange fire movements are all about ME ME ME ME ME. That's not Christ-like. Christ came not for His benefit, but for ours.

Jesus Culture, Hillsong, Bethel Music, these are all groups used by these groups to draw people into what they believe. Watered down theology in the music, some unbiblical and plain wrong things in the music. But it's catchy and so subtle that we get caught up in it. I'll be the first to admit there are a lot of hymns that are bad and wrong too. My issue is not with the style or music, or a conference, or pastor or preacher, my issues are with the substance. Is what we do, is what we sing, read, preach, teach, and model before others TRUE and DOCTRINALLY SOUND and is it PROPERLY REPRESENTING THE GOD-HEAD and PROPERLY HONORING THE GOD-HEAD AS HOLY. Because that is what God commands.

Leviticus Chapter 10:1-2 Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. <sup>2</sup> And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. <sup>3</sup> Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what the Lord spoke, saying,

'By those who come near Me I [a]will be treated as holy,

And before all the people I will be honored.'"

Read your Bible, Thin Biblically, Pray Biblically, and seek council from others that read their Bibles and think and pray biblically. The scripture is the standard and if we want to treat God as holy and honor God in the way He commands to be treated and honored then we have to do, say, preach, sing, and act biblically. The only way to do that is to spend time in the Word.