

# Coach House Church **BEACONS**

---

## **FAN INTO FLAME**

---

**30TH SEPTEMBER 2020**

I was at in my office the other day preparing some sermons and catching up with paperwork, when I realised that my fingers were cold, my hands were cold .... In fact, my whole body was cold! I had got so used to the unusually warm weather of late, that when it turned chilly and the usual late September temperatures started to settle in, it caught me out. The air had chilled and my body temperature had fallen.

I'm pretty sure that most of you listening to this have reached for the central heating switch, or turned on the fire, or at the very least, found an extra layer of clothes or a warm blanket in the past few days. We have had the heating and the log burner going in the house, so the solution at the church office was simple.... Go downstairs and flick on the heating. So off I went, took some time setting some automatic times for others who use the building to make sure that they are warm and then pressed 'on'. I returned to my office and continued working for a while, but then became aware that the temperature wasn't really rising. I reached for the radiator..... it was colder than my hand! Something wasn't right, did the system need bleeding of any air, stopping the hot water from circulating through the system? I bled the radiator which did indeed have a lot of air in it, but there was no sign of anything resembling warmth filtering into it. I think the problem must be something else, so downstairs to the old boiler in the cellar. Now I know that most churches have some old boilers in them, but the one I was interested in was the one that controlled the hot water.... And it definitely wasn't playing ball!

The system was lifeless, so I investigated further. Then I noticed a fault referenced on the control panel. A quick internet search brought up the following for the code: 'The pilot light has failed to ignite....' Now I know that the pilot light is the source from which the boiler operates. Without the pilot light, the main burner cannot ignite to heat the water and hence my hands were still freezing!

Which got me thinking... We sing a song in church which goes.. 'set a fire deep in my soul' which to be honest, sounds a bit dubious until the next line comes along ... ' that I can't contain, that I can't control... I want more of You Lord, I want more of You' Ah. Now that makes more sense. We don't want to hide our light – deep down in our soul, but this is more like the pilot light that keeps burning, the source from which everything else ignites!

So, I can go with the theology of the song ... I want my experience of God to be deep rooted, a flame in the depths of my very being, the source of everything that comes from within. I want that flame to grow and grow, to consume everything that is me and allow it to control my thoughts, my actions, everything. ... and specifically: I don't want to restrain God in my life, I don't want to control what I allow God to do with me.

The problem is that in reality we do try and maintain control if we are honest. We want to sanction the actions and make sure that it makes us look good. The description of the Holy Spirit settling on the disciples at Pentecost was tongues of fire. an apt description because we associate fire with power and cleansing. Often, we use the description 'being put through the fire' to describe a process by which we are refined. God often revealed himself in fire. Speaking to Moses in a burning bush, leading the Israelites by night in a pillar of fire – fire speaks of Gods presence and might.... but it also speaks of Gods anger and destruction against His enemies. Don't play with fire!

If you remember back to your childhood, you may remember being told the story of Gideon with an army of only 300 against the massive Midianite army of over 120,000. How did Gideon manage to gain victory against such odds? By following Gods instructions for one .... And the clever use of fire. God told Gideon to do a strange thing – you can read about in Judges 7

***Judges 7:16 (NLT)***

***16 He divided the 300 men into three groups and gave each man a ram's horn and a clay jar with a torch in it.***

Doesn't sound like much of a battle plan does it .... Not even a sword in sight, just something to make a noise and a small flame hidden in a clay jar .... But with a small flame God can do amazing things.

***Judges 7:19-20 (NLT)***

***It was just after midnight, after the changing of the guard, when Gideon and the 100 men with him reached the edge of the Midianite camp. Suddenly, they blew the rams' horns and broke their clay jars.***

***20 Then all three groups blew their horns and broke their jars. They held the blazing torches in their left hands and the horns in their right hands, and they all shouted, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!"***

In that instant the Midianite army fell upon themselves in blind panic, thinking themselves surrounded by a large army, the noise and the burning flames throwing them into confusion. Later in the New Testament, Jesus tells us that we should not hide our lights under a basket where no-one can see it, instead let everyone see your light – burn brightly

***Matthew 5:15 (NLT)***

***15 No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house.***

The point of this verse is that it is not us that are being made known by this act, but Jesus in us. Our actions in this world should speak and show that Jesus is everything to us. We get less but we let Jesus consume us and we shine brightly amongst men – whether in the workplace or in the colleges and universities. We make Jesus known by the way in which we conduct ourselves. I'm reminded sometimes of how little I do this. We can easily be discouraged by our failures and the times we have failed to live up to the standards we know we should keep. It would be easy to despair that we could ever be the example to others that we want to be, however I keep coming back to one thing...

With a pilot light lit, deep down in my soul, a pilot light maintaining its power to ignite into flame, a passion that has been beaten down, discouraged and given up on. God has never abandoned us, or given up on us. There is time to turn back and stand up and shine bright... in fact the opportunities around us now are such that a world is crying out for something which has stability, power and hope. All characteristics that as Christians we know reflect God. Maybe, just maybe, it is time to let the pilot light turn up the heat?

***2 Timothy 1:5-6 (NLT)***

***5 ...I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my***

***hands on you. For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord.***

Fan into flames. It is impossible to fan into flame something that does not have the capacity to burn brighter. God has already placed inside every believer the Holy Spirit, who helps us to become more like Jesus, in our deeds and actions. But note the order of things. God gives the gift and then we work hard allow that gift to be shown and outworked – we fan into flames, that which God has graciously given to us..

The pilot light is within each of us who believe in Jesus and have accepted His sacrifice for us. The Holy Spirit within us is the guarantee of all Gods promises top you and me. The boiler at church had lost its ability to function because the pilot light had gone out. It needs some repairs to get things put right, so that it can function as it should. Once the pilot light is back in operation, the boiler will be able to heat the water supply on demand and send heat to the entire building.

We cannot function as we were intended without recognising that Sin has extinguished our pilot light and there is nothing we can do about it other than let the source of light Himself, Jesus, restore us by letting him into our lives and set a fire in our souls, a fire that we surrender to and allow to burn brightly in a dark world. We shouldn't be surprised by some of this terminology, after all, Jesus describes himself as the light of the world.

***John 8:12 (NLT)***

***Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."***

Let your light shine before men, dispelling darkness, restoring righteousness and speaking truth about Jesus – the Saviour of the World. Fan into flames the grace that has set you free and display it abundantly wherever you go.



---

**PASTOR ANDY JACKSON**



*Coach House Church*

leadership@coachhousechurch.org // 0161 432 5604

the coach house church, 222 wellington road north, stockport sk4 2qn