

Strange Fire  
By John MacArthur

This is a very special period of time for us here at Grace Church, at least in our little family, because Patricia, my wife and I, are celebrating our fiftieth wedding anniversary and I at least want you to see the gift - the best gift that God gave me in life. Patricia, would you stand up and please turn around and let everybody see you?

Now, so I was trying to think of how do you celebrate 50 years of marriage and 4 kids? And they are all married, they're all in our church. Fifteen grandkids are all in our church, and we're baptizing our way through the ranks. I'm down about 7 deep into the kids. They range from 23 to 3, the grandkids, and how do you celebrate that?

So I came up with kind of an off-the-cuff thing, I said, "How about I give you 50 days for 50 years?" You know, that's pretty meager when you think about it, 50 days for 50 years. So we're sort of in the middle of that, and we came back for this conference, and then we're going to go away, and I don't know, we might do 60 days, come to think of it, because we're having such a great time. But we'll certainly be back in just a few weeks to settle back into the wonderful ministry here.

We've been grateful for the love of the church, and the love of our children and grandchildren. There was a note on my desk this morning from two of my granddaughters, who collectively wrote me a note and told me to "preach well today." So, they'll be praying for me. So of all the gifts that God can give you to have your family in Christ, and in your church, and in your ministry, in serving the Lord alongside is really an unequalled blessing from the Lord.

We're addressing a subject in the conference this week, the subject of the contemporary charismatic movement, under the title of "Strange Fire." And this has been a concern to me for many, many years, a concern for many, many decades. You can go all the way back to the very early years of my ministry, when I began ministry and saw the early beginnings of this movement and was deeply, deeply concerned. Through the years, I have addressed this from this pulpit. Forty years ago a series on the charismatic movement on the issues that were at hand in the movement, a book *The Charismatics* some years followed, another book *Charismatic Chaos*, more series, more attention given to that to try to help our people to exercise discernment.

When people ask me, "What's the biggest problem in the church?" I always say the same thing: The absence of discernment. That is the biggest problem in the church because if you can't discern the truth with the Word of God in your hand, with the Bible in your hand, if you can't discern the truth, you can die of 1,000 heresies. It's like having spiritual AIDS. People who have a deficient immune system can die of 1,000 illnesses. The church can die of 1,000 heresies if it can't exercise discernment. This is always the issue.

And part of the responsibility of ministry is the positive side to instruct with great patience, as Paul said to Timothy. But the other side is to reprove, rebuke, and exhort, and use the Word of God to do that. And to exercise discernment is at the very heart of Christian living because Christian living is a reflection of Christian thinking, and Christian thinking must be attached to sound doctrine, and that's where discernment begins.

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It is very evident that a massive part of professing Christianity lacks discernment. And so the effort in this conference these days and with my dear friends who are going to be sharing in opening the Word of God to you and speaking to you is to help you to be discerning. We know there are people who are in this movement who are deceivers, and they know they're deceivers. They're false teachers, and they know they're false teachers. They're in it for the money, and they know they're in it for the money.

We also know there are people caught up in the movement who are deceived and may not know they are deceived. They are brands that need to be snatched from the burning, to borrow the words from Jude. There are leaders who need to be confronted and exposed, and there are unwitting leaders who need to be helped and encouraged and know the truth.

We want to be like the noble Bereans. We want to search the Scripture and see if these things are so, measuring everything against the Word of God, and that's going to be the effort this week. And as I said a minute ago, you really are the chosen. You have a special seat for this event. This has never happened to my knowledge in the church in my lifetime, where people have come together to think about this issue.

How big is it? There are half a billion professed charismatics on the planet, half a billion. To put that in perspective, there are a billion Roman Catholics. To put that in further perspective, there are 14 million Mormons. Fourteen million Mormons, half a billion charismatics. It's a massive issue.

I don't think anybody would fault pastors for confronting Mormonism, and they should. False view of God, false view of Christ, false view of salvation. Why is it that we have been so reluctant to confront this massive movement that has captivated 500 million plus people? So what we want to do in these days together, and to do it faithfully, and to do it lovingly, and to do it compassionately, but to do it in a very straightforward way, is to help you see the issues for what they are and be discerning. And you then become a force of folks who can help other people to see the light.

I want you to open your Bible to Leviticus chapter 10. It is in Leviticus 10 that we find the portion of Scripture which is the source for the title of the conference, "Strange Fire." The highest duty and the highest privilege, the most essential behavior, and the supreme responsibility for humanity is to worship God. Let me say that again because you may have been distracted in turning to your passage. The highest duty and privilege, the most essential behavior, and the supreme responsibility for humanity is to worship God.

The Father seeks true worshipers. Believers in the gospel, in the Lord Jesus Christ, are those true worshipers. This is, then, our eternal duty, and privilege, and priority. In fact, any glimpse into heaven in the book of Revelation will reveal that all who are there, both saints and angels, are glorifying God, giving Him honor. The most serious activity anyone will ever do is worship. The most serious activity anyone will ever do is worship.

And not only in heaven, but even on earth. When you come together and you say it is for the purpose of worshiping God, you have just pronounced upon yourself an urgency, and a severity, and a seriousness in the very activity in which you engage. Nothing is more serious

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than worship. I'm afraid in our culture, worship has become frivolous, superficial, shallow, trivialized.

This is the most serious activity anyone will ever do, worship God. We are called to worship in spirit. That means with our emotions and with our human faculties. But we also are to worship in truth, and that is according to revealed Scripture. We are to worship with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We are to worship in love, because we are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The whole being, everything we are, is to be wrapped up in loving worship of God according to His revealed truth.

God established worship in Israel right here in the book of Leviticus. The early leaders of worship who came before God on behalf of the people were priests. And it really officially started with Aaron in the economy of Israel. Aaron is first called in Exodus chapter 29. He is consecrated in Leviticus chapter 8. And he is going to be the head of a priestly family, and they will have the responsibility of being the worship leaders for God's people.

In chapter 9 of Leviticus, Aaron offers a sacrifice for the people to God according to God's prescription. Aaron was told that God would respond positively when he offered that sacrifice according to the mandate that God had given. In Leviticus 9:6, "Moses said, 'This is the thing which the Lord has commanded you to do, that the glory of the Lord may appear to you.' Moses then said to Aaron, 'Come near to the altar, offer your sin offering, your burnt offering, that you may make atonement for yourself and for the people; then make the offering for the people, that you may make atonement for them, just as the Lord has commanded.'" God had given command and Aaron was to follow that command and make that offering. And if he did it according to the plan that God had revealed, the glory of the Lord would appear as a response.

If you drop down to verse 22 of that same chapter, "Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people, blessed them, stepped down after making the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings. Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting. When they came out and blessed the people, the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. Then fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the portions of fat on the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces."

Aaron did what he was told and what God promised happened. If he did what God told him to do in the offering of the sacrifice, the glory of God would appear. He did that, "the glory of the Lord - " verse 23 " - appeared to all the people." And then God Himself sent down fire to consume the sacrifice because God was pleased with that sacrifice.

That brings us to chapter 10. "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. And fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said to Aaron, 'It is what the Lord spoke saying, "By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people, I will be honored.'" ' So Aaron, therefore, kept silent."

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He had just seen his two sons incinerated. “Then Moses said to Aaron, ‘It is what the Lord spoke saying, “By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people, I will be honored.”’ Moses also called to Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Aaron’s uncle Uzziel, and said to them, ‘Come forward, carry your relatives away from the front of the sanctuary to the outside of the camp.’ So they came forward and carried them still in their tunics to the outside of the camp, as Moses had said. Then Moses said to Aaron and to his sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, ‘Do not uncover your heads nor tear your clothes, so you will not die and he will not become wrathful against all the congregation. But your kinsmen, and the whole house of Israel, shall bewail the burning which the Lord has brought about.” Called to national mourning over this. “You shall not even go out from the doorway of the tent meeting or you will die; - ” the tabernacle, “ - for the Lord’s anointing oil is upon you.’ So they did according to the word of Moses.”

“The Lord then spoke to Aaron, saying, ‘Do not drink wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons with you, when you come into the tent of meeting, so that you will not die - it is a perpetual statute throughout your generations - and so as to make a distinction between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and clean, so as to teach the sons of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken to them through Moses.”

Aaron was obedient and God consumed the sacrifice. His two sons were disobedient, and God consumed them. I don’t want to go into all the detail of this. Suffice it to say that when you come before the Lord, you better honor the Lord. You better come in a way that is consistent with His will and revelation. This is what it means to worship in truth.

Now the sons of Aaron were very honored men, very respected men. They were priests of the one true God. The oldest was right in line for the high priest’s responsibility, next in line. Moses was their uncle. Their names headed the list of nobles of Israel in Exodus 24. They were very respected men. Apart from Abraham and Moses, they are the only ones named in Scripture the first time Scripture refers to the leaders of Israel. They were really - apart from Aaron and Moses, I mean - they were the only ones named, these two sons, when the first list of the leaders of Israel were named. And that’s in Numbers and that was really the Sanhedrin, the first 70 elders. They were not sinister. They were not wicked. They were not usurpers. They were honored men.

With the 70, they were give the privilege of coming up Sinai part way to watch from a distance as God spoke with Moses. That is a great privilege because the people were not allowed to go near the mountain, even the animals were not allowed to go near the mountain, according to Exodus chapter 19. Everybody was to stay very, very far away. People off in the desert watching the fire and smoke on the mountain while Nadab and Abihu were invited to come up. And according to Exodus 24, they saw God and they ate and drank. Privileged men, closer to God than anyone else. Only Moses would be considered closer. They seemed so secure, so secure.

And then it happened, verse 2, “Fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.” Moses said, “Because they had come before Him in an unholy way and offered strange fire.” We don’t know what the strange fire is particularly. I think the best assumption that it’s fire from another source than the required brazen altar which

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God Himself from heaven had ignited. They were to take their fire from the brazen altar which God had personally lit in some supernatural way. Obviously, they brought fire from some other place, some other source. It might seem like a minor matter. It might seem to the carnal, casual, self-indulgent, flippant generation like ours that this is really a severe overreaction. Well, why does God care where the fire came from? Isn't that a minor detail?

There may have been more than that, however. It wasn't a minor detail to God and there may have been more to it. The fact that down in verse 9, Aaron is instructed not to drink wine or strong drink may indicate that they were actually drunk. They were not in control of their thoughts. And this led to their blasphemous disregard for the prescription that God had ordained.

The same fire that ignited the sacrifice in 9:24, torched them in the 10th chapter. This is sobering and this is terrifying. It's reminiscent of God killing Ananias and Sapphira in front of the congregation in Acts 5 because they lied to the Holy Spirit about how much money they got when they sold their property. That also might seem to a casual, carnal culture a little overreaction, or a great overreaction. But let me just make it simple for you. The most serious crimes against God occur in corrupt worship. The most serious signs, the most serious crimes, rather, against God occur in corrupt worship.

Turn, if you will, just for a minute back to the 32nd chapter of Exodus, Exodus chapter 32. I have so many things to say, we're going to ramp up and go a little fast here. But I know you remember the story of Exodus chapter 32 because it's the story of the golden calf. Verse 4 of that chapter, this is Aaron now who has led this.

"He took from their hand, and fashioned with a graving tool and made into a molten calf; - " all the gold the people had brought " - and they said, 'This is your God, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.'" The golden calf was a false representation of the true God. And the people, as it tells us in verse 6, "rose up, offered burnt offerings, peace offerings; sat down to eat and drink, rose up to play." They were worshiping the true God in a false form, transforming the glory of God into a blasphemous misrepresentation and image.

And you know how the story went. It was a disaster for them. There was a massive slaughter. People were killed on the spot. Brother rose up against brother with a sword and hacked his own family member to death, carrying out the mandate of God to punish the worshipers who had corrupted worship.

I just want to repeat that again. The most serious crimes ever committed against God are committed in corrupt worship. That takes us to the point where we need to say the charismatic movement continually dishonors God in its false forms of worship. It dishonors the Father. It dishonors the Son. But most specifically, it dishonors the Holy Spirit. Irreverent ideas, irreverent actions, untrue beliefs, false claims, false promises, fleshly behaviors, all these things are attributed to the Holy Spirit, but they are a dishonor to Him that they would even be identified with His name. It's more strange fire and the sad thing is it's ground for judgment, it's ground for judgment.

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When I was talking about this some months ago to our church, I said, "It's this severe." Jesus said to the Jewish leaders, "You have attributed the works of the Holy Spirit that I have done to Satan." In other words, they said Jesus did what He did by the power of Satan, Matthew 12, and He said, "You've attributed the works of the Holy Spirit to Satan."

It's fair to say that the reverse has happening in many places in the charismatic movement. They are attributing to the Holy Spirit the works of Satan. Once they had attributed to Satan the works of the Holy Spirit. Now it's reversed. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, the triune God is not to be trifled with. It is dangerous to all who offer strange fire. It is dangerous to all who offer corrupt worship. It is dangerous to declare things that the Holy Spirit has not done, has not said, would not participate in as works of the Holy Spirit. That is not a small matter. It is a radical seriousness in dishonoring the Holy Spirit that apparently escapes these people.

I was watching the other day some behavior among Hindus who are a part of what's called the Kundalini cult, the Kundalini cult. They have certain body movements that appear to be perhaps best explained by demon possession. And they're the absolutely identical body movements to people in the charismatic movement in the extreme behaviors that we see in so-called revivals. This is paganism. This is the work of Satan. This is the work of the kingdom of darkness, and it is not to be attributed to the Holy Spirit.

It's a tragic thing. In some ways it's so ridiculous you might laugh at it. It is a tragic and agonizing irony, frankly, that those who claim to be most devoted to the Holy Spirit, those who claim to have a corner on His power, those who claim to be experiencing His presence are following patterns that blaspheme His name, and that are the same as those who are engaged with demons.

Attributing to the Holy Spirit deeds He did not do, words He did not say, experiences He does not author is a very serious crime, a very serious crime. In some ways, the charismatics have thrown their fantasies into the strange fire of mystical experience, and demonic power, and worship the false god that came out.

Am I discrediting everyone in the movement? No. I think there are people in the movement who desire to worship God in a true way. They may be caught up in this false worship, as well, because intention is not enough. The movement itself - listen carefully - offers nothing to true worship. Can I say that again? The movement itself has brought us nothing to enrich true worship.

Why do I say that? Because the charismatic movement as such has made no contribution to biblical clarity. It has made no contribution to biblical interpretation. It has made no contribution to sound doctrine. We have had an accurate biblical interpretation long before the charismatic movement started. We have had strong doctrine long before the charismatic movement happened. We have had going back in the steady stream of faithful men, all the way to the apostles, a clear stream of truth that gives us a full rich understanding of the Word of God.

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That is why a Christian today can go back and read the apostles, and then go back and read the Reformers, and read the Puritans, and follow the flow of the truth through history, and find richness, and understanding, and clarity on every issue going all the way back. They didn't add anything to that. They brought in chaos, confusion, misrepresentation, and misunderstanding.

Do some in the charismatic movement believe the truth? They do. They do. Do some in the charismatic movement hold a sound theology on some issues? They do. But none of those true understandings have come to them through that movement. The true understandings have always been there in the long line of godly preachers and teachers that God has used to keep the truth and to keep the church on track. The movement adds nothing to that. It detracts and it confuses. It is not a source for any advancement of our understanding of Scripture or sound doctrine.

Have people truly been saved in charismatic churches and under the preaching of charismatic preachers? Answer: Yes they have, but nothing coming from that movement has been the reason they were saved. The gospel is the reason they were saved, and it wasn't invented by that movement. In some places, it is still intact. In some it's not.

Nothing coming from the charismatic movement has provided recovery or strengthening of the biblical gospel. Nothing coming from the charismatic movement has preserved truth and sound doctrine. It has only produced distortion, confusion, and error. The faith of the biblical gospel has been intact. It has survived. It will survive because God protects it and raises up faithful men in faithful churches to pass it from generation to generation.

Yes, there are people in the charismatic movement who know the truth, who love the truth, who are orthodox on the gospel, and heterodox on the Holy Spirit. Not all of them are heretics. But I say again, the contribution of the truth to people in the movement doesn't come from the movement. It comes in spite of it.

But on the other hand, the charismatic movement is loaded with non-Christians, people who don't know God, people who are involved for carnal reasons, carnal desires, and emotional experiences. I'm grateful for those who do know the truth and are faithful to the truth, but the vast majority, I fear, are in the dark. And this is the greatest delusion of all. The mass of people that you see in Matthew chapter 7 who are the many, many who say to Me, "I did this in Your name, I did that in Your name, I've preached in Your name, I did miracles in Your name." And Jesus says to them, "Depart from Me - " what? " - I never knew you." This is a prophecy, certainly in one sense of this movement.

I glorify God for His grace to sinners who are in those churches and under those influences, and God has allowed the truth to reside in some of those environments. And I give Him the glory for that grace that is given to sinners who are in those churches. It is possible in spite of the movement to become a believer, but not because of it.

The world over, my great fear is that people are lost, lost in the movement, chasing carnal desires and false promises, with little or no understanding or interest in the true gospel, true

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repentance, the true Christ, and true salvation. No movement supposedly based on an orthodox gospel, has done more damage to the church than this movement, no movement. As I said, you only have 14 million Mormons. The damage that 500 million people can do to an orthodox understanding of Scripture and divine truth is monumental, and I fear that its success comes not from its connection to the truth, but its success comes from its connection to the kingdom of darkness. It is successful because it is promising what unregenerate sinners already want. Evangelicalism has thrown its arms open and welcomed the Trojan Horse of the charismatic movement into the city of God, and its troops have taken over and placed an idol in the city of God, not the truth.

Is there anything more serious than this? There can't be. By contrast, reformed theology, sound doctrine, is not a haven for false teachers. It's not where false teachers reside. Reformed theology, sound doctrine, faithful, biblical exposition among the long line of godly men is not a place for false teachers. It's not where frauds go. It's not where greedy deceivers end up. It's not where you find liars and those who misrepresent the truth. You're not going to go to an association of reformed churches - those who believe the doctrines of the reformation that take us back to the doctrines of the New Testament - and find false miracles, false visions, false prophecies, false anointings, bizarre mindless pandemonium breaking out. You're not going to find people shaking, and babbling, and rolling over, and falling down, and saying bizarre things about the Holy Spirit. That's not going to happen in that environment because they're anchored to the truth. Once experience, and emotion, and intuition becomes the definition of what is true, then all hell breaks loose.

In 1657, John Owen wrote an analysis of communion with God in a sort of a classic way. The Puritans used to do this. This is the title of his book. Here's the title, *Of Communion with God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Each person distinctly in love, grace and consolation*. Now that's a pithy title, don't you think? Or, he says, here's another title. *The Saints Fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit Unfolded*. It's a treasure, this book by John Owen, because it discusses Trinitarian communion.

And Owen shows how our communion is with the Father, and with the Son, and with the Holy Spirit, and how we receive from and respond to each individual person in the Trinity. Our covenant relationship is tied together with each member of the trinity. Our relationship is initiated by the Father, it is ratified by the Son, it is communicated by the Holy Spirit. The Father expresses divine sovereign love. The Son expresses divine sovereign grace. The Holy Spirit dispenses divine sovereign life. We are - should be - engaged in full worship of the Holy Spirit, celebrating everything that God has done in the initiation, everything that the Son has done in the validation, and everything that the Spirit has done, if you will, in the consecration, the actual act of saving us and sanctifying us.

What is the work of the Holy Spirit? He convicts. He regenerates. He justifies. He illuminates. He cleanses. He converts. He sanctifies. He adopts. He baptizes. He indwells. He endows. He empowers. He guides. He delivers. He produces fruit. He secures us. This is what Scripture says.

And what it doesn't say is this: The Holy Spirit knocks us down. The Holy Spirit makes us laugh in a silly way. The Holy Spirit amps up our body heat. The Holy Spirit gives us the



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hiccups. The Holy Spirit gives us convulsions, puts us in a stupor, makes us look drunk, causes us to fall down, speak gibberish, make primal sounds, jump, roll. Ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous.

“The Spirit’s ministry,” writes John Owen, “consists in His bringing the promises of Christ to remembrance, in His glorifying Him in our hearts, in His shedding abroad the love of God in us, in His witnessing with us as to our spiritual state and condition, in His sealing us to the day of redemption, being the earnest of our inheritance, in His anointing us with consolation, in His confirming our adoption, in His being present with us in our supplication. Here is the wisdom of faith, to find out and to meet with the Comforter and all these things. Not to lose their sweetness, but lying in the dark as to their author, nor coming short of the returns which are required of us. We can’t let the wondrous work of the Holy Spirit lie dormant in the dark, we must acknowledge it and commune with Him in gratitude for it.”

Owen says, “The pattern of regular communion as a believer is with the three persons of the Godhead in meditation, prayer, and a duly ordered life. We should dwell on the special mercy and ministry of each person toward us, and make our proper response of love and submission distinctly to each.” This is full-orbed communion with God. It displeases God to make a mockery out of the Holy Spirit. Romans 12 talks about acceptable worship. This is a priority. The ultimate priority.

Another Puritan, Thomas Goodwin, says, “Our worship is sometimes with the Father, and then with the Son, and then with the Holy Spirit. Sometimes his heart is drawn out to consider the Father’s love in choosing, and then the love of Christ in redeeming, and then the love of the Holy Spirit in searching the deep things of God and revealing them to us, and takes all the pains with us. And so a man goes from one witness to another distinctly which,” says Goodwin, “I say, is the communion that we must have.”

He further says, “We should never be satisfied till all three persons lie level in us, and we sit, as it were, in the midst of them while they all manifest their love to us. This is the highest that ever Christ promised in this life.” I love that phrase, “To let all the persons of the Trinity lie level in us, giving them equal honor.”

There’s a warning in Hebrews 10, if you want to look at it for a minute. Hebrews 10:29, “How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which He was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?” We camp on the front half of that verse, about there’s a hotter hell for people who trample the Son of God. There’s a hotter hell for people who trample the Son of God. We don’t like it when people trample the Son of God.

Over the last 25 years or so, there has been a well-thought-out and extremely important defense of the gospel, organizations, institutions, coalitions, groups, I can think going back to before Jim Boice went to heaven, and he started the Association of Confessing Evangelicals, and everybody was jumping onboard. We have to defend Christ, defend His deity, defend His character, His nature, defend His cross work, defend His resurrection, defend the doctrines of justification, and the panoply of great truths that are related to His cross work and resurrection.

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There has been a ground swell that has continued, and continued, and continued, and continued, and maybe even gotten a little carried away, where now everything is to point to the cross, and everything is to look at the cross, and everything is to contemplate the cross. We have defended Christ with a vengeance and a relentless commitment whenever He is attacked.

And we've pretty much done the same when God is attacked. When some theologians came along and suggested that God didn't know the future, couldn't plan the future, had no idea of what the future was going to be, it was called "openness theology." There was a ground swell and many scholars, and writers, and preachers began to gather together and empower the community of evangelicalism to answer this attack on God the Father.

But in this verse, you need to be reminded that there is a severer punishment for one who has insulted the Spirit of grace, insulted. The verb *enubrizō* in the Greek, the noun form is *hubristēs*, from which we get the English word "hubris." It means "audacity, insolence, a violent insult, or an outrageous insult."

This is Yahweh's Ruach. This is the breath of the Almighty. This is God the Holy Spirit. While we would all agree that hell will be hotter for people who trample underfoot the Son of God - meaning they know the truth of His life and death and provision and they trample it - but the same warning is given to people who are audacious, and insolent, and violently insult the Spirit of grace.

And the next verse says, " 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge His people.' " His people. "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God." People should be terrified, insulting the Holy Spirit, terrified.

The New Testament reveals to us that the Ruach Yahweh, the breath of God, the Holy Spirit, creates life, and transforms life, and purifies, comforts and conforms sinners to Christ, and equips, and empowers, and seals, and secures, and illuminates. These are the things for which He is to be honored and loved.

Here's a quote. "The greatest Satanic deception which has ever been offered is the false doctrine of once saved, always saved." Who is it that secures us forever? Who is it that seals us forever? Who is the earnest of our inheritance? The Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit is to secure us forever.

This is a quote from a charismatic leader. "The greatest Satanic deception which has ever been offered is the false doctrine of once saved, always saved." You've just accused the Holy Spirit's work of being the work of Satan. "Because of the work of the Holy Spirit who intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, everyone who is called is justified, and everyone who is justified is - " what? " - glorified," Romans 8. This is insulting the Holy Spirit. This is dangerous stuff, dangerous stuff.

Benny Hinn says this. "No, no, never ever go to the Lord and say, 'If it be Your will.'" Don't ever say that. "The acting of the Holy Spirit is dependent on my words. He will not move until I

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say it.” Really? You’ve just in two quotes seen the Holy Spirit accused of demonic activity and His sovereignty called into question. Benny is sovereign. The Holy Spirit is not.

This, by the way, comes from a false teacher who says he has the anointing from God. By the way, that’s a manufactured fantasy, that anointing, and he received his, he says, from visiting the graves of two dead women preachers: Aimee Semple McPherson and Kathryn Kuhlman, and while visiting their graves, he received the anointing.

I don’t want to waste time going through all the ridiculous claims that they make. I just want to highlight how serious this is. Again, back to the main point, worship of the triune God is the most fundamental of all duties and the highest of all responsibilities. In Exodus chapter 20, we’re instructed about God and the first half of the commandments relate to Him, to not make a graven image. And it all ends up with “Don’t take the Lord’s name - ” what? “ - in vain.” Okay? Taking His name in vain. What is that? It is to speak of God in any irreverent manner. To speak of God in any irreverent manner. It’s not just using God’s name as a curse word. It is to speak of God in any irreverent manner, any way that misrepresents Him in His nature, in His attributes, and His works or in His words.

Anything attributed to God that is not of God is taking His name in vain. To think of God, to conceive of God, to refer to God as other than He is, and to assign to Him things He would never do, words He would never say is to take His name in vain. It isn’t just swearing. It is ignoring what is true about God. It is misrepresenting God. This is the most severe thing. In Deuteronomy 28:58, just a couple of verses there. “If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in the book, to fear this honored and awesome name, the Lord your God, then the Lord will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants, even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic sicknesses. He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt of which you were afraid, and they will cling to you.” Take the name of the Lord in vain and God will punish you. Such will not go unpunished, says Deuteronomy. Such will not go unpunished.

You know, it does amaze me that the movement has survived the way it has. I just have to - people say to me, “Why doesn’t God strike these people down?” Because He is by nature patient and because His purposes are unknown to me. I don’t know any more about the secret councils of God than Job did. And God isn’t obliged to have to tell me everything. But I do know this. The growth of the false charismatic movement will not stop the hand of God in judgment, in God’s time.

We don’t need a golden calf version of the Holy Spirit. We don’t need a fake Holy Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit that’s revealed in Scripture, titled “the breath of the Almighty,” “the Almighty” in Job 33, “the eternal Spirit” of Hebrews 9, “the generous Spirit” of Psalm 51, “the good Spirit” of Psalm 143. And then all these names: The Spirit of the Living God, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Father, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the Son, the Spirit of life, the Spirit of grace, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of Counsel, Might, Understanding, Knowledge, and the Fear of the Lord; the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Holiness, the Spirit of Glory, the Comforter, and in Luke 1, the Power of the Most High.

Strange Fire  
By John MacArthur

As holy as the Father and the Son, so holy is the Spirit. As sovereign as the Father and the Son, so sovereign is the Spirit. As powerful as the Father and the Son, so powerful is the Spirit. As gracious as the Father and the Son, so gracious is the Spirit. As loving as the Father and the Son, so loving is the Spirit. One in perfection.

All that simply leads me to say that we're here to try to call for the restoration of the true worship of the Holy Spirit in the church. It is hard for me to deal with. Zeal for God's house, if I can borrow the words that Jesus borrowed from the Psalmist, "The zeal for Your house has eaten me up. The reproaches that fall on You are fallen on Me." When the Holy Spirit is so dishonored, I feel the pain. The church has risen up, as I said, to defend the Father, risen up to defend the Son. Why will it not rise up to defend the Holy Spirit? Really no way to explain that failure.

The charismatic movement has successfully demanded acceptance on the basis of love and tolerance. So it's been welcomed, corrupting the church, cultivating emotionalism to the extreme, confusing people about prayer, worship, praise, faith, contentment, humility, sovereignty, and a myriad of other things. And another time, another part of history in the past, they would have been rejected as either heterodox, or heretical.

Let me close with some thoughts, and try to kind of wash out of our minds some of the negative things that I sort of forced you to think about. There's one great tribute to the Spirit of God that I want to leave you with, one great tribute, a tribute apart from all that we've talked about with regard to deceivers and false teachers, and this is His greatest gift to us.

For this I want you to turn to Romans 8, Romans 8. This is a very familiar portion of Scripture, but I want you to see it maybe in a fresh light. This is His greatest work for us. We'll start in verse 26, "In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." That's referring, of course, to the Holy Spirit.

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."

Romans 8 is the Holy Spirit's chapter, all about the Holy Spirit and His ministry. It comes down to verse 26, and "the Holy Spirit helps our weakness." He does it, first of all, by interceding for us. He is an intercessor as Christ is an intercessor for us. And He always intercedes according to the will of God because He knows the will of God. As a result of the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit, everything works together for good. Everything does work together for our eternal good as believers, not just because God says so, but because the Holy Spirit makes sure it happens, okay? The Holy Spirit is the one working everything together for our good, everything, absolutely everything.

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But there's another element of this. What is the essence of this goodness? What do you mean, all things work together for good? What's the good? Verse 29, here it is. Here is the good. "Whom He foreknew He predestined to become conformed to the image of His son." Now there is the ultimate work of the Holy Spirit, to conform us to Christ, okay? The Holy Spirit does His work in us so that everything works together toward one ultimate good, and that ultimate good is conformity to the image of the Son of God. So that He, then, becomes the preeminent one among many who share His likeness.

So what does the Holy Spirit want to do in your life? Simply stated. Conform you to whom? Christ, to make you like Christ. To be conformed to the eikōn, the eikōn, the image of Christ. He works in us to make us like Jesus Christ.

This is what Paul talks about in Philippians when he said, "I press toward the mark." And you say, "Well, what's the mark?" The mark is the prize of the high calling. What's the prize when we're called on high? We'll be like Christ. What we will become when we're glorified is the goal even now in our sanctification. What we will become if we've been predestined and called, and justified; we will be glorified. And when we're glorified, we'll be made like Christ - 1 John 3 - "we'll be like Him, because we see Him as He is." That is the final objective, the Holy Spirit will take us there.

In the meantime, until we are glorified and made like Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit is to ever increasingly conform us to His image. To understand His work, then, we need to look at Christ. We need to look at Christ, because we're going to see in Christ, who is fully man, a picture of the perfect work of the Holy Spirit.

How did the Holy Spirit work in Christ? Did He knock Him down? Did He make Him look drunk? Did He cause Him to fall, or flop, or roll, or laugh hysterically, or bark, or babble, or talk gibberish? It's a bizarre thing to think about anything like that. And people who make people do that are not Spirit-filled. That's not what the Holy Spirit does.

The Holy Spirit was the constant companion of Jesus, the constant companion of Jesus. It was the Spirit of God who gave Him life in the womb of Mary. The Son of God emptied Himself of His divine prerogatives, voluntarily submitted to the will of the Father in the power of the Spirit. Jesus restricted the independent use of His divine abilities, privileges, and yielded Himself to the Holy Spirit.

So His life went like this. Just listen to this. According to Luke 1, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. According to Luke, He was matured by the Holy Spirit, growing in wisdom, stature, favor with God and man. According to Mark 1, He was anointed by the Holy Spirit at His baptism. According to Luke 4, He was sustained by the Holy Spirit in His temptation. According to that same chapter, He was empowered by the Holy Spirit, Luke 4:14-15, for ministry. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, so that He walked perfectly in obedience. He was perfected by obedience, wrought in Spirit power, and through suffering by which He learned obedience. Hebrews 9:14 says He faced death triumphantly in the power of the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit who was operating in Jesus. Romans 1 says He was raised by the power of the Holy Spirit. Even after His resurrection, His post-resurrection ministry, according to Acts 1:1-2 was in the power of the Spirit as He taught things concerning the Kingdom.

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Now listen, the Holy Spirit was to Christ as He is to us. If you want to see the perfection of the work of the Holy Spirit in us, look at the work that He did in the perfect man. Let me go back over that a moment.

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and it is the Holy Spirit who gives us life, born of the Spirit. Jesus was matured by the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who grants us power to grow. He was anointed by the Holy Spirit at baptism. It is the Spirit by which we are baptized into the body of Christ. He was sustained by the Holy Spirit in His temptations. It is the Spirit who strengthens us in the inner man in the midst of our temptations. He was empowered by the Holy Spirit in ministry. It is the Holy Spirit who gifts and empowers us in ministry. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. There might be a demonstration of the fruit of the Spirit and holiness. It is the Spirit who fills us and produces fruit in us. He was perfected by the power of the Holy Spirit in obedience, and the Spirit does the same in us. He faced death triumphantly in the Spirit. It is the Spirit of grace and glory who sustains us in our suffering. He was raised from the dead by the Spirit. It is the Spirit who raises us up, as well.

If you want to see the ministry of the Holy Spirit and how He works in us, look at what He did in Christ. Of course, in Christ, there's perfect compliance. But the Holy Spirit was to the Son of God who He is to us. The Holy Spirit has committed to do in us the work that He demonstrated in Christ.

In John 16 there's a really interesting verse, 7, "I tell you the truth, it's to your advantage that I go away; for if I don't go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I'll send Him to you." Jesus said, "It's better for Me to go, better for Me to go." Why? Why is it better for You to go? "Because if I go, I will send the Holy Spirit. I will send the Holy Spirit. Better because the Holy Spirit will do in you what He did in Me." That's His ministry. I've had My ministry. That's His ministry. Mine has come to an end, His is about to launch in its fullness.

John 14:16, "I will ask the Father, He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; the Spirit of truth." Verse 26, "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." This is first to the apostles who will write the New Testament, and extended beyond that to all believers who benefit from the truth ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 15, essentially the same thing, verse 26, "When the Spirit comes - " the Helper " - the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me." 16:13, "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth; He will not speak on His own initiative, whatever He hears He'll speak. He will disclose it to you what is to come. He will glorify Me. He will take of Mine and disclose it to you."

In other words, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to lead you into the truth, to disclose the things of Christ to you, in order that you might be conformed to Christ's likeness. Just an amazing, simple reality. The Holy Spirit does in us what He did in the Son, conforming us to the very image of Christ.

Jesus shows us what perfect humanity looks like, perfect humanity looks like. The Spirit is conforming us to Christ, empowering God's redeemed elect, to triumph in time over the power of sin, flesh, Satan, and the world, empowering us to be more and more like the Son of God.

Strange Fire  
By John MacArthur

The Holy Spirit is working in us holy knowledge, holy doctrine, holy deeds, holy attitudes, holy words, holy character, holy actions, holy ambitions, holy longings, holy affections.

What a horrible hubris, what an insult to Him to say He's responsible for the corruption, and the unholiness, and the foolishness, and even the demonic elements that dishonor the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit is to take corrupted image bearers who cannot glorify God in whom the divine resemblance is marred so profoundly that all will die eternally and spend forever in hell's torment with no possibility of escape, to take those marred and scarred people and restore in them the likeness of Jesus Christ.

I'll start believing that the truth prevails in the charismatic movement when I see the leaders who are the people most exposed to its principles looking more like Jesus Christ. I can see that they really are partakers of the divine nature.

Father, we thank You that we've been able to gather together. Thank you for these precious people. There's an eagerness in their hearts for the truth - not for its own sake, but for the sake of knowing You, and loving You, serving You, proclaiming Your Word. We know what the true work of the Holy Spirit is because You've told us.

And where we see Christlikeness, the humility of Christ, the meekness of Christ, the gentleness of Christ, the kindness of Christ, the truthfulness of Christ, where we see the Word of God exalted and honored, we know the Holy Spirit is at work. Where we see sacrifice, where we see love, where we see a passion for holy Scripture, where we see discernment and truth reign, we know the Holy Spirit's at work.

Well, we don't see that across this movement. We therefore cannot conclude that it's a work of the Holy Spirit. We would never attribute it to Him. We would be frightened to even think of doing it. Make them truth-clear, Lord. Make the truth clear. Help us to understand so that we can be a means of helping others understand.

Thank You for all that You have done in us. We don't feel cheated. We don't need to chase after any of these foolish falsehoods. We're content because the work of the Holy Spirit is truly unfolding in genuine believers. We're grateful that we experience that. It's manifest in our love for You, our love for truth, our love for the people of God.

These are the things produced by the Holy Spirit. Not only in what we love, but what we hate, a hatred of error, sin, corruption. We're not perfect - far from it. But we love what we love and we hate what we hate because of the work of the Holy Spirit in us. We thank You for that. We bless Your name. Give us a wonderful week and fulfill in us all Your good pleasure. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.