

94.3 Keep The Fire of God Burning!

When I was five, my mother, newborn brother and I lived on a hill overlooking the town of London, KY while my dad was at sea with the Navy. One night, the City Hall burned and I still remember watching the fire with fear and trembling. Fire fascinates and terrifies us. Nothing is better than a warm fire on a cold winter's night; nothing is as frightening as the thought of being burned. I wonder how the three Hebrew boys, John Hus, and other martyrs, felt facing the fire. Yet, fire is a powerful force for good.

At least four times in scripture, God tells us He is a consuming fire (**Exodus 24:17, Deuteronomy 4:24, 9:3, and Hebrews 12:29**). Such a fire is good when we use it as a controlled burn, for instance. A fire burning out of control across the plains of Oklahoma or in the forests of California would be terrifying. God identifies with both aspects.

As a consuming fire, God works positively to purify us in our encounters with Him. The prophet experienced this with God and the seraphim (*fiery ones*) in **Isaiah 6:5-6** (NKJV):

⁵ So I said:

**“Woe is me, for I am undone!
Because I *am* a man of unclean lips,
And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;
For my eyes have seen the King,
The LORD of hosts.”**

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal *which he had taken with the tongs from the altar*. ⁷ And he touched my mouth *with it*, and said:

**“Behold, this has touched your lips;
Your iniquity is taken away,
And your sin purged.”**

Like the silversmith of **Malachi 3:3**, God removed the impurities from Isaiah's lips with fire so that he could blamelessly proclaim His message. Though painful, removing our spiritual contaminants enables us to be better people and present the gospel in purity. Otherwise, if we live impure lives and water down the word of God, we will drive people away rather than attract them to God. **Charles Finney** was correct when he called preachers and churches to account for the condition of the culture.

"The church must act right or the country will be ruined. God cannot sustain this free and blessed country, which we love and pray for, unless the church will take right ground. Politics are a part of religion in such a country as this, and Christians must do their duty to the country as a part of their duty to God. It seems sometimes as if the foundations of the nation were becoming rotten, and Christians seem to act as if they thought God did not see what they do in politics. But I tell you, he does see it, and he will bless or curse this nation, according to the course they take."

In **1 Corinthians 3:12-15** (NKJV), Paul wrote of how we build on the excellent foundation of Christ with permanent or temporary materials. He said:

¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw*, ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Too many sell themselves to the shadows instead of the substance and give up the rewards of the permanent for the ease of the temporary. Like Esau, we may succumb to the tyranny of the urgent rather than hold out for the important. As a fire, God will test all that we have and all that we are. The temporary things we build will burn away, but the eternal will survive. Through the fire, He can turn us into committed servants.

God's liberty consumed our forefathers. The fiery speaker, **Patrick Henry**, gave his rousing speech on March 23, 1775, before our **Declaration of Independence** had been written. In part, he declared:

"It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace, but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

I am all for God's liberty, but it comes with the price of fiery and purifying trials. The testing of our faith produces good fruit in our lives, according to **James 1:2-4**, separating the temporal from the eternal within us, and separates the "wheat from the tares" among believers. God called Moses by fire at the burning bush, and he witnessed God's fire at Mt. Sinai. Elijah called down fire at Mt. Carmel. John the Baptist predicted the baptism of the Spirit and fire as he pointed to Jesus. Jesus promised fire, and the Holy Spirit delivered it at Pentecost. There is a fire yet to come.

The call of God enabled John the Baptist to address the opponents of God as "vipers." The zeal of God's house empowered Jesus to confront evil in the temple courts, overturn the money changers' tables, and engage corrupt religious leaders. Instead of quenching the Spirit of God in our lives (**1 Thessalonians 5:19**), let's invite Him fill us with His presence (**Ephesians 5:19**). Jesus said that if we request the Spirit, God will provide in **Luke 11:13** (NKJV):

¹³ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!

When the Spirit of God is present, we say people are "on fire." Years ago, I attended an event at a church in the OKC metro. As I was leaving, a man and I saw a firetruck by the building. We wondered about it, and, as a joke, I said, "Maybe they heard this church was on fire." The man took a few steps, and the humor hit him. Would we say the congregations we are attending are "on fire"? What about you and me?

God's churches are not religious clubs for lukewarm believers. They are to be powerhouses of God's fire. My friend, **Daniel Henderson**, says that the devil doesn't have to destroy our churches; he merely needs to distract them. When we are diverted from God's mission, there is no fire, impact, or liberty, for genuine liberty only comes where the Spirit of the Lord is present (**2 Corinthians 3:17-18**), and the Spirit is a fire.

Let's Keep The Light of God's Fire Burning!

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