

The Fire

Have you heard of the saying, "Out of the frying pan, into the fire"? I feel like that these days. It's as though God is "turning up the heat" in my life. I wish I could say it is all wonderful, but it doesn't feel that way.

What am I talking about? I am talking about God dealing with the issues and attitudes of my heart, about Him confronting me with hidden sin, independence, pride, and anything that is unlike Jesus Christ.

How is He doing that? Sometimes it is by simple situations in which I find myself -- circumstances that "rub me the wrong way". How is it in times past that I could more easily decide that the problem was the circumstance, or the problem was what someone else did, or said? Now, however, my heart is being exposed more and more for what is really in there, and I can't seem to hide from it. I can't seem to defend my bad attitudes as justifiable, or resign myself that they are unchangeable. I can't seem to find a soft corner to lick my wounds and feel sorry for myself. *Instead, there is that fire...*

The fire of God is like a finger pointing at me, saying, "The problem is YOU!" The fire is being unable to shift the blame anymore. It is being confronted with truth, and feeling it burn inside. It is like King David being caught in the sin of adultery and murder. The prophet Nathan was sent in to tell him a story of someone who stole another man's sheep. Nathan asked David what should be done to such a man, and David said the man should die. Then Nathan said, "YOU ARE THE MAN!" The fire burned that day, and David repented.

So, does the fire burn less hot for sin other than adultery or murder? How about selfishness or lustful thinking? How about unbelief, self pity or resentment? God hates all sin, and He loves you enough to not let you get away with it anymore!

I am grateful for the beginning of revival fires burning in our country. First, Toronto was the talk of the town, and now it's Pensacola. What a privilege to live in a day when progressive waves of revival are coming on us!

What at first seemed to many people to be refreshing rain or healing oil (symbols of the Spirit) is becoming burning fire. ...at least it is for those willing to hear and respond.

Just last night I watched a video of Steve Hill, the evangelist in Pensacola. I rejoiced in my heart! A fiery evangelist is on the scene, preaching a clear uncompromising message calling for repentance and true salvation. This strong preaching (which is what preaching is supposed to be) is shaking up hypocrites, calling out backsliders, and drawing hardened sinners to God. 100,000 people have flocked to the altar of that church in the last 21 months. (Actually 200,000 -- but they only count half of them.)

If you listen to this revival evangelist, you will know for sure that God is turning up the heat on a lukewarm American church -- a church that I think He has been about ready to spit out of His mouth! What a merciful God! What a glorious answer to the cry of intercessors: city changing revival has landed somewhere in the USA, and we can all get in on it!!

As we feel the increasing spiritual heat, we find more and more that there is no room for pretense, no defending our carnality, and no hiding from the pure holiness of God. He has the right to send us all to hell, and apart from His mercy found in the blood of Jesus, He will do just that. I think we all need to have our feet put to the fire of hell in order to appreciate the blood of the Lamb! You better hear this Pensacola preacher, or another like Him! Only a fresh fear of God and a fresh realization of the terror of God apart from our salvation will suffice in these days when seducing evil is pouring out all around us. This revival preaching is like the urgent cry from heaven in Revelation 18, just before the judgment and destruction on the whole world system, called "Babylon":

"Then I heard another voice from heaven say: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes."

The time is overdue for us to get the world out of our hearts and *"wash our robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb"*. James 4:4 says, *"do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."*

In the Pensacola meetings, at every altar call, a young woman named Charity sings the same song: **"COME RUNNIN', COME RUNNIN', COME RUNNIN' TO THE MERCY SEAT! I'M RUNNIN', I'M RUNNIN', I'M RUNNIN' TO THE MERCY SEAT!!"** And they come...in a hurry and a rush, and go to their knees to find repentance and mercy for their sins.

I watched a video of their weekly water baptism, where each one being baptized also testified about their salvation. Never have I heard the depth and clarity of true conversion coming out of new Christians like I heard out of their mouths.

You know what it is? The beginning of revival. You know what that is? The greatest, and the only hope for America. And you know who needs it? You do. And I do.

It's time for deep repentance in us all, and time for us all to "come runnin to that mercy seat". In America we have all been part of a lukewarm Church; even the best of us may have been subnormal in our spiritual life.

But God is coming to turn up the heat. I for one don't want to "jump out of the pot" until it and I are boiling with the fire of God! I am asking God to let His fire burn in me, and bring me to a deep repentance in all areas of my life. I hope you are doing the same. And I'm clinging to His Blood along the way!

The glorious thing is that He is releasing the power of His Spirit to actually do the work in us. Were it not for the presence and power of the Spirit, we could not come through to the deep repentance that God is looking for, and no change would take place. It takes tears, but it takes more than tears to make a true convert to Christ. It takes change. The change that only comes with the powerful blood of Jesus applied to a heart broken in its awareness of sin and need, and knowing it is unable to become better. Only by the blood, and only by the power of the Spirit and His Word do people change.

I for one, need change. Deep change. More repentance from my superficial American Christian ways. More of God, less of me. Like the old song, "It's me, it's me, it's me, Oh Lord, standin' in the need of prayer...! Not the preacher, not the deacon, but its me, Oh, Lord, standin' in the need of prayer!"

"The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing-floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Matthew 3:10-12

I believe many of us were baptized in the Holy Spirit, but we never got the fire -- due to the lukewarmness of our spiritual culture. It's time for inward fire, the kind that puts passion for Jesus inside of us, and purity of heart and mind that only comes from the fire of His presence.

I recently looked at an article in National Geographic, and saw pictures taken by the Hubble telescope. The writer said that they pointed the telescope to one of the emptiest points in space, and focused it on a tiny area, the size of which was "as a grain of sand held at arm's length". There the telescope revealed this supposedly dark spot to be filled with countless galaxies, each holding billions of stars.

Most stars are bigger than our sun. Our sun is a fireball, the equivalent of thousands of hydrogen bombs exploding continuously. Our universe is filled with these fireballs. God created it all. He filled our universe with fire. Consuming fire. Was He not revealing Himself in this consuming fire of creation?

"See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken--that is, created things--so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."

Hebrews 12:25-29

We better come runnin...come runnin...come runnin to the mercy seat, to that miracle place of salvation through the blood of Jesus. Our desperate situation makes even sweeter and more glorious the news of Hebrews 4:14-16:

"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

John Matthews