

# Set Me On FIRE

Joseph S. Olarewaju

*Dedicated to the warriors referred to in the last Chapter of this book, who were and are still on fire for God, and whose life has not ceased to inspire and challenge me. "May the arms of your hands be made strong by the hands of the mighty GOD of Jacob".*

*Special recognition to my brethren and partner, Brother Olubunmi Ogunsan and to the fellowship at New Covenant Church of Maryland, Grace and Blessings.*

Joseph S. Olarewaju

*June 2009*

# Preface

*And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*

*His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a **flame of fire**;*

*And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters (Rev 1:12-15).*

When you hear the mention of the word, "fire", what image does this create in your mind? What is fire? What would you say is the essence of fire in the world and in our lives?

Fire, in the physical world, originates from a chemical reaction between oxygen and a fuel in the presence of heat, and is characterized by a body of incandescent gas that contains and sustains the reaction while emitting light and heat. This body of incandescent gas is luminous and intensely hot. This is called "flame". Flame isn't just the result of fire; it is the fire. And it is this flame that contains and sustains the reaction. Without the flame's heat the fire would go out. And most importantly, it is flame that emits heat and light. No substance in its vicinity can remain cold or even lukewarm for long. And every wood, hay, and stubble will of necessity be burnt and totally consumed. But gold will not be consumed but rather purified.

Of course we're not talking about physical fire in this book, and as you'll see, the metaphor is appropriate and revealing. The title, "Set set on fire" expresses the desire of a saint whose passion is to be

fervidly hot for God. We're obviously not asking to be sprayed with gasoline and set on fire, it is the spiritual antitype we'll be meditating upon in this small book.

When a man is on fire for God, he is completely dominated by the passion to seek His face. His heart is always boiling hot with the love of God and he's full of His word. He cannot have enough of God's presence. Doing God's will becomes his passion and obsession. When he's in the presence of God in worship, you can see his entire being engulfed in worship. His spirit and the Spirit of God are in close communion. He serves God with all his spirit, with all his soul, and with all his strength. He is a man of prayer, and like Epaphras, is always laboring in intercession for the saints (Col 4:12, Col 1:7). *"For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me"* (Psa 69:9).

As we gaze into the face of the Son of man in this hour, we will be transformed by the flames of heavenly fire beaming forth from His face. The luminous and intensely hot flame from His eyes will penetrate and illuminate our mind. First, it will reveal all that we've hidden, destroy selfish and secret motive in our minds. Then it will consume every vestige of the carnal mind and will flood our whole being with light, purity and power. It will set our cold and lukewarm heart on revival fire of the Holy Ghost.

Therefore, let us draw near unto Him *whose eyes are as a flame of fire* in this hour. Let us fix our eyes on Him for they looked upon *"Him and were radiant, and their faces shall never be confounded"* (Psa 34:5 ASV). Let us look up to Him with our eyes of faith and be strengthened and inspired. The title of this book was inspired through the wordings of the second verse of the song--*"My Faith Looks Up To Thee"*:

*May Thy rich grace impart  
Strength to my fainting heart  
My zeal inspire*

*As Thou hast died for me,  
O may my love to Thee  
Pure, warm, and changeless be,  
A living fire. (R.Palmer 1808-1887).*

*May He fire up and direct my heart into the Love of God and make me fervent and passionate for my Savior and Lord. That I may, with the prophet say: "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name" (Isa 62:1-2).*

# Chapter 1

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## *Fire of God*

*For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it?*

*Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? (Deu 4:32-33).*

**T**he mountain was engulfed in thick cloud. Thunders, lightning flashes, and earthquake shook the mountain vigorously. Jehovah, the God of Israel had descended on it as He said He would. It was so scary that the people trembled and hid themselves. And even Moses, the man of God, was terrified. Referring to this incident later he said, *"I exceedingly fear and quake"* (Heb 12:21).

It was three months prior to this time that they came out of Egypt. Their journey has brought them into the desert and they camp right by Mt. Sinai on this safer side of the Red Sea. It was here God spoke to Moses and commanded him to tell the children of Israel of His plan to meet with them to establish His Covenant. God's message to the Israelites began this way:

*“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and I bore you on Eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. And now if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure to Me above all the nations; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exo 19:3-6).*

Moses was then told to tell the congregation that God would descend on Mt. Sinai, and would speak directly to the people that all may hear His voice. They were commanded to sanctify themselves for three days, and on the third day the Lord God would come down in the sight of all the people. But they were to stay away from the mountain upon which the Lord God would descend. They were not to go near nor touch it. So Moses set a boundary beyond which they should not go. Everyone was to stay behind this boundary under penalty of death if trespassed.

On the third day Mt. Sinai was enveloped in thick cloud; the mountain quaked and was filled with smoke as God descended upon it. There were flashes of sky-rending lightning followed by roaring thunders interspersed with the sound of trumpets.

It was a frightening occasion. The message from Mt. Sinai is clear. Man, under the first Covenant, cannot approach the presence of God. Mount Sinai, the place where God delivered the Law of the First Covenant, is a literal mountain. It is a physical mountain that can be touched, but must not be touched.

Man in his physical nature cannot approach the presence of God. That which is flesh is flesh, and that which is spirit is spirit. The physical or flesh nature cannot please God. The flesh cannot stand before the Fire of God. The natural man or man without Christ, cannot survive the Fire of God. He cannot approach the Presence of his Maker. He will be consumed, together with his wood, hay, and stubble, and all that he calls good works will perish with him in the fire; *“For our God is a consuming fire.*

So the message displayed by Mt. Sinai is “NO ENTRY” or “KEEP AWAY”. This Covenant tells man about the presence of God and then tells him he must stay away. In fact it keeps him away from it. *Because the way into God’s Presence was not yet made manifest.*

*“For you have not come to a mountain that may be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word should be spoken to them” (Heb 12:18).*

This passage from the Book of Hebrews describes man approaching the presence of God under the Old Covenant. Under this first Covenant, it all had to do with the physical. It was a physical mountain, one that can be touched. It was a physical blazing fire and a visible cloud that covered the mountain. The scenery was covered with thick darkness accompanied with whirlwinds and earthquakes. Their experience of the Presence of God and the Law which they received from Mt Sinai were associated with fear, with awesome manifestations, and with fiery judgment.

*But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. (Heb 12:22-24).*

The author of the Book of Hebrews contrasts the rigid atmosphere of justice under the Mosaic Law from Mt. Sinai, with salvation and grace under the work of Jesus Christ on Mt. Zion.

Mount Sinai is an earthly mountain, Mt Zion is heavenly. Sinai is a physical mountain that can be touched by a man's hand, Mt Zion is spiritual and cannot be touched physically. Mt. Sinai is the mountain of God from which people are kept away, Zion is the mountain of His holiness and the City of our God, where His people dwell in His Presence. Zion is a desirable city unto which people are invited and is full of the glory and the presence of God.



*We are come unto mount Mt Zion, the City of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.* Mt Sinai stands for bondage and slavery, Zion the heavenly Jerusalem is free; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Mt. Sinai and the Presence of God on it instills fear and terror while Zion is associated with the love of God. The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus came from Mt Zion. She's the City of God and the Good News of Jesus Christ is published within her walls.

Man without Jesus Christ must face the terror of Sinai. He must live under the Law of sin and death. Without Christ he cannot escape the terrifying judgment of fire from Mt. Sinai for he is under condemnation.

But anyone who is in Christ Jesus is no longer under condemnation. The fiery judgment is not for this one for this he has been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. God's children need not be afraid, for He loves them. It is true what the Scripture says that *God is a consuming fire*, but to believers, He is a loving Father. "*For the Father Himself*", the Lord Jesus said, "*loves them*".

Most people including many Christian have only heard of the Fire of God in relation to judgment. They only know Mt Sinai. They've read about the lake of fire and heard Evangelists preach about fire and brimstone by which the devil, his angels, and all who do not accept the Lord Jesus will be judged. Yes, this is true. Judgment is reserved for all who reject the salvation of God. And our *God is a consuming fire*. But we, the children of God, are not of them that go into perdition, but of them that believe and receive the salvation of God.

The message in this small book is primarily intended for those who have been redeemed and are at peace with God. It is to encourage and edify all who are of this precious faith and to by the Holy Ghost set their heart of fire for God.

As we meditate on this together, fellow saint, it is my prayer that the Holy Spirit will enlighten us and cause us to understand and enjoy the beneficial side of the fire of God.

We surely need to keep the words of encouragement sent to us through Apostle John in our mind. These words are in the opening section of the Book of Revelation:

*"Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming; and from the seven spirits which are before His throne; even from Jesus Christ the faithful Witness, the First-born from the dead and the Ruler of the kings of the earth.*

***To Him who loved us*** and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us kings and priests to God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (Rev 1:4b-6).

If you are a child of the Living God, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, you have nothing to fear. Let this be settled in your heart and mind, once and for all that--*Both the Father and the Son love you*. The Lord Jesus said so and our beloved Apostle confirms it in the passage above. Referring to our Lord Jesus, he wrote: "*Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood*". He loves us so much that He willingly died for us so that we would become God's children and escape the fiery judgment to come. Yes it's true the fire of God may perform some uncomfortable missions in our lives, but the end of it will make you and me better.

People often see the destructive side of fire. It is true that fire, especially "wild fire", can be destructive but we don't need to look far before we see several beneficial aspects of fire in our lives. There are two sides to this marvelous agent of God's working in our world. And what you see and experience depends on which side of it you are. It is the same and even more so with the heavenly flame.

When the fire of God descended on Mount Sinai, it was too terrifying for the children of Israel. They fled from the mountain and begged that God would not speak to them anymore. But it was from the midst of this fire that the Covenant and the blessings of God came unto Israel. It was by fire, the Pillar of Fire, that they were protected while in flight from Egypt. That Pillar of Fire acted as their source of light, of warmth, of protection, and of guidance at night. That same Pillar of Fire was a barrier and a terror to

Pharaoh's Army pursuing them from behind. It depends on which side of the fire you are.

The flame from the fiery furnace killed the mighty men from Nebuchadnezzar's army who tied and threw the three Hebrew children into the furnace. But the three children of God, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who were actually thrown into the furnace were seen walking unharmed in the midst of the fire. They were seen fellowshiping with a fourth man in the fire. And guess who that was? You got it! The *"form of the fourth man is like the Son of God"* (Dan 3:25).

When most people hear of fire they immediately think of forest fire, or wild fire, something razing down a building, or someone's future going up in smokes. But the benefits derivable from fire are manifold. These include cooking, preservation, purification, blacksmithing and smelting of metals for tool making, pottery, heating, lighting, protection during camping, repelling predators, heating shelters, cauterizing wounds, purifying water and precious metal, etc.

So there're two sides to the operation of fire. On the one side, fire consumes and devastates, on the other it preserves and purifies. Fire is useful in destroying worms and for preserving food. God uses it to destroy all the pernicious dross, hay and stubble in our life thus purifying us. Gold is purified in the fire.

The Apostle John banished to the Island of Patmos saw the Lord and wrote the account of what he saw and the message from Him in the book o Revelation. Let's consider for a moment what he saw:

*"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.*

*And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven*

*candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. (Rev 1:9-13,)*

It was here he saw one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot and walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. It was here he saw Him with His head covered with wooly hairs as white as snow. His feet looked like fine brass burnt in a furnace. His countenance was as the sun shining in full strength. And ***His eyes were as a flame of fire.***

John, banished to this treacherous isle of Patmos, was *in the spirit* and heard a voice. As he turned to *see* who was speaking, he saw the Lord in His glorified body. He saw Him. Not as he had seen him before on the shores of Galilee, but saw One whose appearance transcends any natural description.

As John looked upon Him, his attention was attracted to His eyes which blazed like flames of fire. His eyes were like lamps of fire shinning forth the light of God wherever they are turned. And everyone or everything upon which these rays emanating from His eyes fall receives both the light and a quickening energy from God.

When the flames of fire from His eyes fall on those that live in darkness, light instantly shines upon them. When it is turned upon them that live in lethargy and cold formalism, they receive a quickening spirit and come alive for God.

His countenance, the appearance of His face as John saw Him, was as the sun shining in full strength. No one can look into his Face and remain the same. Eyes as a flame of fire, and Face as the sun shining in full strength. That is the face of the Sun of Righteousness, shining with healing in its rays.

The beams of light and the flames of fire emanating from the face and the eyes of the Son of man, carry life, healings, and illumination. They are rays of life and not of death. They are flames that bring forth light and illumination and not darkness. They arise from the Sun of righteousness and have healing in their wings. Upon whoever His eyes is turned, darkness is dispelled and the light of life

springs forth for "in him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1:4,5). And anyone who looked upon Him will live and never walk in darkness but will enjoy the light of life. "They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed" (Ps 34:5). "

*"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;*

*The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up" (Mat 4:-14-16, Isa 9:2).*

A vast majority of humanity has for centuries sat in utter darkness and under the dominion of death, but the One whom John saw, whose appearance was as the Son of man, whose eyes were as a flame of fire, whose face was as the Sun shining in full strength, has come to shine upon them. The flames of fire from His eyes will deliver them from the darkness and from the cold gloomy shadow of death inside which they are imprisoned. They will be set free into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

As we gaze into the face of the Son of man we're transformed by those eyes that are flames of heavenly fire. Many things in our lives are deeply hidden, but the eyes of the Lord, the luminous flame will expose everything and bring to light every work of darkness. He will shine forth the glorious light of His illuminating eyes until we are all refined and brought forth as pure gold!

And as we continue gazing into His eyes we are set on fire by the Son of man whose eyes that are as flames of fire. When a man is on fire for God, he is completely dominated by the passion to seek His face.

Saul of Tarsus initially had a terrible obsession. His passion was to destroy the followers of Jesus. He excelled in this beyond any of his colleague. He was obsessed with the one goal, to go from town to

town, arrest and jail the people of the way, torture them, make them recant if possible, otherwise kill them. He could not think of anything else for this was his dominating obsession. He used every force at his disposal to fulfill this obsession. Then he met the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus. Then, there was such a complete turnaround. He was saved and miraculously transformed from a persecutor to a pioneer of the way he previously opposed. Transformed from the *gutter-most* to the *utter-most*, he became obsessed with the mission to edify and strengthen the very people he had been persecuting.

Our Lord Jesus spent his brief time on earth driven with the passion to please the father. His meat and drink was to do His will and His goal was to reveal the Father and make Him known. He was driven by love and compassion for all men in every walk of life. It did not matter if they were rich or poor, Jew or Gentile, friend or foe. He loved them all. He lived to meet their needs, to heal the sick, teach the kingdom of God, and to expose the hypocrisy of the religious system that men had created to exploit them. He could draw a multitude at any time with his marvelous miracles, yet he gave himself to twelve men, to train them in the ways of God.

What is it that fills your mind? What do you plan your life around? What is it you are most willing to spend your time and money for? What in life are you most obsessed with? With some of us it is our families. With others it is their job or career. While for some others it is convenience and pleasure.

Worldly people are obsessed and fervently zealous with things of the world. But what about us, the saints of God? What are we zealous for? What is it that fill our mind? What ambition consumes you and me? What are we on fire for? In this day and hour, God is raising up a people who will be on fire for Him. He is raising up a generation who will be obsessed with the desire to worship Christ. He is raising up a people whose passion will be to know Him and be known of Him. This is the generation with the magnificent obsession.

# Chapter 2

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## *The Living Fire*

*After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter (Rev 4:1 )*

**T**his must be miracle, he said to himself, as he turned aside and walked closer to the scene. He has pastured his flock in this field and had never seen anything like this before, no, not in almost forty years. He suddenly had an premonition that what he's seeing is beyond natural. And began to consider that the flame he's staring at is no ordinary fire. He, at first, wondered who might have set this bush on fire and why? But did not dwell on this thought.

He kept his eyes on his flock and at the same time was partially watching this fire through a corner of his eyes. But as time went on, he noticed the grasses upon which this fire is burning still remain intact, standing unaffected by this big flame of fire. The fire is burning but the bush, which is supposedly the fuel for this fire, is not being consumed.

And so, Moses said to himself: *"I will turn aside, right now, and see this wonder of wonders; and examine why this bush which is on fire is not being consumed"* (Ex 3:3 Paraphrased) Of course he did not

know yet that it is the Angel of God that has appeared unto him in a flame of fire.

What Moses saw was no ordinary fire. And the Fire we're meditating on in this passages is not natural. It is no ordinary fire but a divine fire from the Lord. This fire does not annihilate. It is not a fire of destruction. It is not a fire that put an end to life or existence, it is the *living fire*.

This fire does not bring death, in fact it brings life. It brings hope of emancipation from slavery and liberation from the power of sin and death. This fire does not need any natural fuel to exist. It is a living fire, for it has life in itself, and the word of God is in it to give life in abundance to all.

Fire is known for devastating everything it contacts; consuming and razing to the ground, buildings, vegetation, living and non-living things in its path, until nothing is left. And once everything is consumed, the fire itself dies, for it exist as long as the fuel it's consuming exists. It dies once the fuel is consumed. This is the image in Moses' mind when he saw the huge flame on the burning bush which attracted his attention in wilderness of Sinai. He expected that this bush, probably made up of dry combustible desert grasses, would be razed to the ground in no time.

As he continue feeding the flock, you can see him occasionally glancing at the burning bush and examining its physical condition. After a while he came to the conclusion that something out of the ordinary was happening. He therefore suspended what he was doing and turned to the burning bush. "*This*", he must have said, "*is no ordinary fire*". And he was right.

Some people might be baffled by the title of this book: "Set me on Fire". However, by now, everyone who has read the text up to here knows we're obviously not talking about physical fire. We are without doubt talking about the *fire of God, the refiner's fire, that not only purifies but also brings a message of hope, of deliverance, and of salvation from the throne of God*. It's a living fire; a fire that burns in the living, causing the cold or lukewarm to be revived, bringing life to the dead, and creating a divine uneasiness in the



man of God so he cannot hold his peace but must speak forth the word of the Lord. Hear Jeremiah cry :

*"And if I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain" (Jer 20:9).*

For some concrete reasons Jeremiah became fed up with all the troubles around him and the afflictions he had been through for the sake of the word of the Lord. He's had it and was ready to throw in the towel. He was going to shut his mouth and never prophecy again. Can you blame him?

His prophecies, which were all from the Lord, have earned him nothing but trouble. He had spent the previous night before his decision in the slammer, not just in a nice jail, but in a deplorable cell with his hands and feet locked in stocks. This was after Pashhur, the son of the priest, gave him a nice flogging the night before for delivering the word of the Lord to the king of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Pashhur did not like Jeremiah's prophecy, and since he was the chief officer in the house of Jehovah, he got hold of Jeremiah, gave him some beating, and locked him up in a prison cell.

When they brought Jeremiah out in the morning he was worn out from maltreatment and humiliation. He had become a laughing-stock of the whole city. In his own words, this is how Jeremiah, the weeping, prophet described this to God:

*"O Jehovah, thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded; thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am become a laughing-stock all the day, every one mocketh me" (Jer 20:7).*

Then he considered his options. He chose the option of keeping his mouth shut. At least if he never gives them a "thus says the Lord" anymore, they will have no reason to afflict him. And he will get along with everyone and live happily ever after.

But there was just a tiny problem with this decision--He discovered he just couldn't keep quiet. Why? God's words in his

heart has become a fire, like a *"burning fire shut up in his bones"* burning so fervently that he couldn't contain it or hold his peace.

*"And if I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain" (Jer 20:9).*

It is this fire that kept Jeremiah speaking for God. That fire within, kept him hot for Jehovah. It is also this fire that energized him and sustained him in the midst of all opposition. Even when his intimidators and persecutors were mocking and urging him to denounce and never speak for God, he stood firm. It is this fire within that kept burning, and like an internal combustion engine, continuously pushes him to move for God with a piston-like invigoration.

Yes, it is the fire of God in his heart. That fire that burns but does not consume is also the fire that brings forth a *"thus says the Lord"*

This is the fire of the Holy Ghost that John the Baptist talked about when referring to our Lord Jesus. John clearly spoke in his declarative statement concerning the Lord at River Jordan. The people gathered around him in expectation, inquiring of him to tell them if he (John) was the Christ. And he told them the truth and lied not. He said:

*"I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:*

*Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable" (Luk 3:16,17).*

I am convinced that the Jewish people he was talking to unequivocally understood what he meant. They knew he said that he, John the Baptist, is not the Messiah, but a forerunner. And that just as he baptizes with water, the Christ who is the Messiah will baptize His followers with the Holy Ghost and with Fire. This

baptism is what the disciples experienced on the Day of Pentecost and, from that day on, they were never the same.

They were on fire. They were transformed. They could no longer keep quiet neither could they hide as they did the previous fifty days after His death and resurrection. Peter who denied Him three times now becomes the fearless preacher who boldly, with an accusatory finger, spoke to the Jewish people saying:

*But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses" (Acts 3:14,15).*

They became fearless and were consumed with the passion to preach Christ not fearing persecution. Some of them were imprisoned, others killed, many disgraced, punished, with divers afflictions. In spite of all these, *"the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith"* (Acts 6:7). They could not keep quiet. The zeal of God completely consumed them. The fear and timidity that once dominated them is long forgotten. They are now filled with the Holy Ghost. The Chief Priests and the Scribes did all they could to silence them, but failed. Gamaliel's star student, Saul of Tarsus, joined the fray, determined to snuff out this fire ignited by the Man of Galilee. He himself arrived at a different shore. Intimidation and martyrdom could not quench the fire that burns on the inside of these uneducated men and women. In fact, the more they were persecuted the more they grew and multiplied. These are the men and women that turned the world upside right.

These early disciples were truly on fire for God. They were filled with the Holy Ghost and fire and this was evident in their ministry. Their lives were totally offered unto God upon the altar and was a sweet smelling savor unto Him. The spiritual and divine fire of God which takes a cold, hard substance and transforms it into a spiritual fragrance that rises up to the throne and brings pleasure to the Father was at work in them. They faced persecution of all sort but were overcomers. They were on fire within, experienced baptism by fire (persecution) without but were not consumed.

They were the starting members of the Church, they were "the bush that was under fire", *the bush that burns but is not, and will never be consumed.*

Let's take a time-out here and closely examine the opening passage of Scriptures for this Chapter. Moses is in the wilderness of Sinai and encountered the inexplicable burning bush.

Notice the fact that the bush is burning. It is on fire. Whichever way we look at it, as long as we're here in the flesh, the feeling from fire is not a pleasant experience. Fire is hot on the flesh. It is not comfortable. The fire of God, as alluded to above, is not a destructive fire; however, it may not be comfortable and does consume certain things. As we'll meditate upon in later Chapters of this book, the refining fire of God does consume "wood, hay, and stubble". Its purpose is to leave us purified as refined gold.

The bush upon which this fire is seen must be symbolic of the Church. She is the burning bush that has been on fire for centuries and yet is not consumed. She has been on fire for God and He has spoken through her to the world. God has brought deliverance to nations, and salvation to the end of the earth in speaking through her. And also from the world's side, she has been under fire. Persecuted, intimidated, and afflicted; she has remained unconquerable by the world. She has indeed been under fire of affliction from the world but has not and will never be consumed.

However, there are characteristics of this living fire that we must consider as portrayed by physical fire. First, we know that for fire to exist there needs be heat. Flame of Fire inherently indicates intense heat.

Being on fire for God indicates that we're fervent in spirit. The flame on the burning bush indicates the bush is hot for God, and as the bush is fervent for Him, He will begin to speak from within the burning bush. The Church needs to be on fire for God. As the Apostle admonishes, *"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord(Rom 12:11)*. It is when the Church is fervent for God that God can speak to the nations through her. It is then God can speak deliverance to the nations.

And so the Living God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush saying: *"I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey"* (Ex 3:7,8).

God desires a fervent Church. It is through and within such that He performs His mighty works. He does not deal with a lukewarm bunch. He actually detests lukewarmness.

*"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;*

*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.*

*So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth"* (Rev 3:14 -16).

Draw near to the holy men and women of the past and you will immediately feel the heat of their desire for God. They yearned for God earnestly. They were fervent in prayer and fasting. Sought after God day and night, in season and out of season, they are on fire for Him.

Moses was such a person. He desired above everything else to know God better. *"Now, therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight, show me now Thy way, that I may know Thee."* And God was pleased with the intensity of his desire granted him his desire and he became acquainted with God's ways.

David's life was also a torrent of spiritual desire, and his psalms ring with the cry of one seeking after God. Paul confessed that the burning desire of his heart is to know Christ. *"That I may know Him!"* was the goal of his heart, and to this he sacrificed everything so he might by any means *apprehend that for which he was apprehended by Christ Jesus.*

# Chapter 3

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## *A Living Sacrifice*

*"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom 12:1).*

**T**hey have travelled for almost three days. The place for the sacrifice is within sight now. With the help of his father, he picked up the wood for the burnt-offering. Walking alongside with his father while carrying the wood on his shoulder, they walked towards Mount Moriah.

He is, as you might call him in my native colloquial language: *"the true son of his father"*. And indeed the only begotten son, both in figuratively and in reality. He was always around his father especially when he's worshipping God. He has assisted him many times in building altars and in the solemn worship with Burnt-offering unto God. He loves his father. And, now even more than anything, he's beginning to love the God of his father.

However, he remembers, on previous occasions when planning for the Burnt-offering, they've always had the fire, the wood, the knife, and something else. Something even more important. Yea! he remembered. A lamb! The sacrificial lamb that would be killed and laid on the altar of Burnt offering. "Possibly, father must have forgotten this time", he said to himself.

So he called his father's attention to the missing item on the offering catalog expecting him to take action and make sure they have all they need for this offering. He's a young boy alright, but he's just as concerned in the success of this mission as his father is. As they walked along the path, and beginning at the foot of the mountain he paused and asked:

*"My father. And he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold, the fire and the wood. But where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" (Gen 22:7)*

The boy doesn't know that his father has been thinking about this for a while too. In fact, he's been thinking about this for more than three days. But has made a quality decision not only to obey God, but also to believe His promises. He had resolved to walk in faith and obedience.

*"And Abraham said, God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son. So they went both of them together" (Gen 22:8).*

*"When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son" (Gen 22:11,12).*

And like a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, though an imperfect type, he lay there obedient to his father even unto possible death. We do not read here anywhere that this young man resisted or tried to run for his life, though he could have. He was strong enough to struggle and fight for his life. I imagine him to be eight or nine, though the Scripture doesn't tell us. He was old enough to understand what the requirements for a burnt offering were and old enough to carry the wood and walk several miles up the mountain after travelling on foot for almost three days with his father and the servants. But, in obedience to his father whom he trusts completely, he laid it all down. He indeed, is a type of the Lord, who laid His life down willingly for us in obedience to His Father God.

This indeed is a willing sacrifice. And a willing sacrifice is a living sacrifice. God does not take any offering from you or me if we don't offer it to Him willingly from our heart. Apostle Paul teaches that when giving to God in worship we should always do it from our heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for *God loves a cheerful giver*. This is part of what the Lord was telling the woman at the well when he said: "*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him*" (Joh 4:23)

In the Old Covenant, God emphatically told the Children of Israel this same message:

*And the LORD called to Moses, and spoke to him out of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying,*

*Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, If any man of you shall bring an offering to the LORD, ye shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd, and of the flock.*

*If his offering shall be a burnt-sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of **his own voluntary** will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD (Lev 1:1-3).*

The requirement for a burnt-offering acceptable to God is clearly outline in this passage of Scriptures. First, the offering must be of domestic animal from the herd or flock and must be without blemish. This is to pre-signify the purity that is in Christ who is the true burnt-offering acceptable to God.

Second, the owner must offer it to God of his own free will. If any offering is to please God, it must be given to Him willingly and done in love. Christ, our Passover Lamb willingly offered himself for us. And any offering of worship that offer to God must be voluntary and from our innermost being.



Third, it must be presented and offered to God through Christ Jesus who is the Tabernacle of God. The Scripture tells us above that the offerer must present his offering at the door of the Tabernacle. The Lord Jesus is the is Door. As the Scripture declare, Jesus "*is the way the truth and the life*" and the "*door into the sheepfold*" (John 14:6, John 10:1). Here in the Outer Court, the offerer stands facing the brazen altar of burnt-offerings, and lays his hands on the offering that would make him acceptable to God.

*And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.*

*And he shall kill the bullock before the LORD: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And he shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into his pieces.*

*And the sons of Aaron the priest shall **put fire upon the altar**, and lay the wood in order upon the fire:*

*And the priests, Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat, in order upon the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar: But his inwards and his legs shall he wash in water: and the priest shall burn all on the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the LORD" (Lev 1:4-9)*

Next, the offerer must put his hand upon the head of his offering, signifying his desire and hope that this substitute would be acceptable by God to make atonement for him. The sacrifice is then killed before the Lord. The priests takes the blood of the animal and sprinkles it on the altar round about. By doing this, they are signifying the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ and thus the remission of sins and the purifying of consciences, *for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin*. The ninth Chapter of Hebrews describes this in the 21st verse:

*"Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was*

*therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (Heb 9:21-23).*

After these, the animal for the burnt offering is cut into pieces and laid on the altar. The priests would then proceed to put fire upon the altar, for this is to be a **burnt-offering** unto the Lord.

The word translated Burnt-offering in Scriptures literally means "ascending". A Burnt-offering, is one that is offered up to God by fire and "ascends" or "*that which goes up*" unto God. It is a "whole" offering because, because the entire animal used for the offering is burnt upon the altar before the Lord. The Book of Leviticus in details describes several different offerings: the meal offering, the drink offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, the heave offering, and the burnt offering.

In contrast to the sin offerings, a Burnt-offering is an offering of worship. It is not an offering relating to the sin of the offerer but one offered up as a fragrance for God's acceptance and pleasure. In the Sin and Trespass offerings, one comes as a sinner to pay the penalty for sin and trespasses. In the Burnt offering, one comes to offer oblations of worship to God. This offering is for God. In this offering, sin is not seen or thought of. It is an offering from the faithful giving a sweet and voluntary worship to his God.

As this offering is burnt, the fragrance of the incense rises up before God as a sweet smelling savor. In this offering God finds satisfaction. In the burnt offering, the worshipper places the entire animal on the Altar, and since the Altar is the table of the Lord as declared by prophet Malachi (1:11,12), whatever is placed on it is "*the bread of God*" (Lev 21:6). It's all His. The fire from Heaven consumes the offering, and it ascends unto God as sweet incense.

*For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.*

*But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible" (Mal 1:11,12).*

*They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God; for the offerings of Jehovah made by fire, the bread of their God, they do offer: therefore they shall be holy" (Lev 21:6).*

The Burnt offering together with the Meat-offering and the Peace-offering, are *sweet savor offering*. These three offerings are offered up unto God by fire upon the Brazen Altar in the outer Court. But of all these, only the Burnt offering is *wholly burnt* on the Altar as a sweet smelling savor unto God. This is indicative of when a worshipper totally offers himself or herself unto God. This is significant as we'll discussed later in this Chapter.

Peculiar to the Burnt offering is the fact that a life is offered on the Altar. "*And he shall kill the bullock before the LORD: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation" (Lev 1:5).* In this the Burnt-offering is different from the Meat-offering where corn, oil, and frankincense are offered. In the Burnt-offering a life is involved and life is that part of creation which, from the beginning, God claimed as His. This is why in the first offering given to God by the two sons of Adam, Abel's offering was accepted while Cain's was not. God desires an offering of life and a living sacrifice.

We need to understand, at this junction, the importance of the action of the offerer during the offering up of his burnt sacrifice. Here, I am referring to the laying of the offerer's hands on the head of the animal victim being offered. This act is an expression of identification of the offerer with the offering. In doing this, the offerer identifies with the offering, and in giving up of the offering to be burnt he signifies complete surrender of his person as the offerer. The offering, whatever type of animal it might be, stood for, and is looked upon as identical with the offerer.

Therefore, in Burnt-offerings, as the whole offering is set on fire and burnt on the Altar before God, and as its fragrance rises up before the Throne of God as a sweet smelling savor, it signifies that the offerer is accepted by God. His prayer is acceptable to God and his worship and incense are pleasant to Him. In this case, this true worshiper has presented and wholly surrendered himself upon the Altar of the Lord as a sweet savor unto Jehovah.

The Apostle Paul teaching this in the New Testament wrote in his Epistle to the Romans:

*"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service.*

*And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, and ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom 12:1-2).*

Here the Apostle is admonishing us to present our body to God as a living sacrifice which is one that is acceptable to God. As we discussed above in the early part of this Chapter, God spoke to Moses stating that when anyone brings an offering to Him, it must be from a willing heart. An offering from a willing heart is a living sacrifice and this is what is acceptable to God. Here, the Apostle is saying that, like the Burnt-offering of the Old testament, we should wholly and willingly surrender our bodies as a living sacrifice on the Altar of Burnt-offering. And as we do, the fire of the Holy Ghost will fall upon us and our life will be offered unto God as a sweet smelling savor, holy and acceptable unto Him.

We are to present our bodies wholly to God as a living sacrifice. This is our spiritual worship. God seeks a spiritual offering, an offering presented in spirit and in truth. An offering given to Him of a free will and out of the heart. An offering of life, willingly and wholly laid upon the Altar. Not one given grudgingly or under compulsion. But one which, like Isaac, is laid on the Altar in obedience and total submission to the Father God. We are to, like

our Lord and Master, willingly lay down our life on the Altar of Burnt-offering.

It is important to understand that Burnt-offerings refers to worship and communion as it pertains to our relationship to God. Burnt-offering is not an oblation for sin, but an offering made by fire to bring worship and adoration to the Most High. Burnt-offerings means worship. We worship God not only with our words but with the totality of our life laid upon the altar. A life total devoted to God in words and deeds is the worship He desires.

We must understand that offering our worship to God is not just singing and praying but the life that we live in praise of our God. A life lived in honor of God and dedicated to the cause of righteousness and holiness, a life lived as "*Holiness unto the Lord*" is the acceptable worship and desired sacrifice that God is looking for. This is the living sacrifice the Apostle is talking about. And the living fire will fall upon the living sacrifice laid on the living altar offering up a sweet smelling savor unto the Living God.

# Chapter 4

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## *Fire Upon the Altar*

*"And the fire upon the altar shall be burning in it; it shall not be put out: and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order upon it; and he shall burn thereon the fat of the peace offerings.*

*The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out" (Lev 6:12-13).*

**T**he showdown is on. Elijah is on one side, and four-hundred-fifty prophets of Baal on the other. Ahab had send a message to all Israel and gathered these prophets on Mount Carmel for this contest. *"How long will you waver between two opinions?"*, was the question Elijah asked the people of Israel. *"If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal is God, follow him"*, he told them. Both sides have come to an agreement. They would build two altars of Burnt-offering, one for Baal and the other for Jehovah. The 450 prophets of Baal will call on their god, and Elijah will call on his God; and the God that answers with fire, is God indeed. That, simply put, is the contest.

From morning until noon, the prophets of Baal had toiled and toiled, shouting and screaming, intensely calling on their god to set their altar ablaze; but there was no answer. Elijah mocked them.

He advised them to shout louder so as to wake up their god who might be asleep, or probably on vacation. It was hilarious!

So they continued. Earnestly praying, shouting and screaming, jumping around the altar, cutting themselves with swords and calling upon Baal to answer them; but to no avail. They continued this until the time of the evening sacrifice. Baal could not answer, it's a dead god.

Then Elijah gathered the people around the Altar of the living God on Mount Carmel. He took twelve stones, each representing a tribe of Israel. With these twelve stones he repaired the Altar of the Lord which had been broken down by Jezebel. He took the bullock, cut it in pieces, and laid all the pieces on the wood for a Burnt-offering according to the ordinance of the God of Israel.

*"At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and that I have done all these things at Your word.*

*Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You, the Lord, are God, and have turned their hearts back [to You].*

*Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood and the stones and the dust, and also licked up the water that was in the trench.*

*When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and they said, The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!" (1 Kings 18:36-39)*

In the Old Testament, fire and flame were often associated with Israel's worship. The fire of God, descending from heaven and consuming a Burnt-offering is usually a symbol of God's satisfaction with, and acceptance of, the offering. Fire and smoke are often associated with God's power and presence as seen on Mount Sinai.

Israel went astray after false gods of the nations around them. This started from the reign of Solomon whose heart went after strange women. He married many strange women from heathen nations

and they led him into idolatry. During his reign he erected high places for these strange gods in Israel. Not long after his death, his kingdom was divided according to the word of the Lord. National apostasy began, and idol worship became rampant in Israel and in Judah.

Yet through this time of apostasy God was faithful in sending His prophets, whose missions were to turn the nation back to God, and to point the people to the ancient landmarks and bring them back to the faith of their fathers. Back and forth from the days of the judges to the reign of the kings, we see God's people repenting from idolatry and then turning away from God after they have been delivered and brought back. There were seasons of revival followed by a turning away from God. And many more times ungodly rulers succeeded those whose hearts were right with God.

There were kings like Hezekiah who did what was right in the sight of the Lord, after the steps of David, and brought revival to the house of God (2Kings 18). And there were evil kings in Israel that followed the ways of Jeroboam, who caused Israel to sin. There were even worse kings who followed the ways of Ahab and Jezebel, the mother of harlots. For *"there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel"* (I Kings, 21:25-26).

The people of God who once loved and served Him under king David forsook Him. Their love for God grew cold. They left their first love. They turned away from Him and followed after other gods. So God sent Elijah the prophet to call the nation back to Him. It was to be a time of revival for Israel. For God sent His messenger as the *"refining fire to purify the sons of Levi"*.

And so Elijah, the messenger of God, called upon Jehovah and He answered. The fire of God fell from heaven and consumed the bullock upon the Altar. This indeed is a sign of approval from God. The fact that the fire of God fell and consumed the bullock of



Burnt-offering is an indication that this public worship organized by Elijah organized is acceptable to the God of Israel.

This fire that fell from God's presence signifies the power and presence of God on Mount Carmel. It is a fire of revival. It is a fire to make His people return to their *first love*, their love for God. And God's desire is that this fire will continually burn on the Altar. God commands in the Old Testament that the fire upon the altar of Burnt Offering be kept burning continuously. It is never to die or be put out. In the book of Leviticus, He spoke to them concerning this Law of Burnt-Offering.

*"And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, Command Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the burnt-offering: the burnt-offering shall be on the hearth upon the altar all night unto the morning; and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning thereon*

*And the priest shall put on his linen garment, and his linen breeches shall he put upon his flesh; and he shall take up the ashes whereto the fire hath consumed the burnt-offering on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar."* (Lev 6:8-10).

The Lord God commanded the priests on this occasion to initiate a divine ordinance. This was to be the beginning of a life style of worship for Israel. The priests were to put the Burnt-offering upon the altar that night and set it on fire. They were to make sure it the fire stays on all night unto the morning. In the morning the priest would then gather and consecrate themselves unto the worship of God.

This is a new day, dear member of the Royal Priesthood. The Spirit of God is telling us that the *"fire is already upon the Altar"* and this is the day of consecration. We the priests of the Most High God are to congregate for worship at the golden Altar of Incense. We are to take the censer and fill it with our living sacrifices which will produced a sweet aroma before the God of the whole earth.

The censer is a small vessel used to carry fire from the Brazen altar in the outer Court to the Golden Altar of incense. We also

remember on one occasion when Aaron took fire from the Altar, put it in the censer and put in some incense and ran among the people to stay the plague.

*Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun.*

*And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed (Num 16:46-48).*

Re-echoing the last verse: "And Aaron stood between the living and the dead, and the plague stopped" This is a marvelous picture of intercession.

What is the incense we are talking about here? Let's listen to John, let him tell us what was revealed to him:

*"And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. " (Rev. 8:3-5).*

This heavenly scene witnessed by John the beloved is taking place in the Temple of God. This is not in the earthly realm but in the true Tabernacle which the Lord made. The incense put in the censer are the worship and prayer of the saints. These are what produce the smoke that rises up before God. And this smoke, as from a Burnt-offering, produces before God a sweet smelling savor.

As stated before, this is not just the occasional worship song or prayer that we offer to God that He's referring to here, but our life wholly offered up as a spiritual offering of worship unto Him. It is a life of worship and prayer He's seeking. It is to be a lifelong continual thing.

You would notice in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> verses of the passage from Leviticus quoted above, the Lord God commanded saying

*“ And he shall put off his garments, and put on other garments, and carry forth the ashes without the camp unto a clean place.*

*And the fire upon the altar shall be kept burning thereon, **it shall not go out**; and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning: and he shall lay the burnt-offering in order upon it, and shall burn thereon the fat of the peace-offerings.*

*Fire shall be kept burning upon the altar continually; **it shall not go out**” (Lev 6:9-13).*

He told the priest that after putting on the proper attire in the morning, to gather wood and put these on the altar, and then to lay the burnt offering upon it and that the fire upon the altar shall not be put out.

The wood, hay, stubble, and all the dirt in our lives are to be consumed by the fire of God. Junks are created in our lives every day. And every day we come in contact with junks. As we live down here and on this side of eternity, all the junks that we gather in our everyday walk must all be placed with the wood of the Altar to be consumed by His fire. But the divine substance that really glorifies Him is not the wood hay and stubble, but the Burnt-offering laid upon the Altar. That is our life offered up to Him as a living sacrifice. This indeed is our spiritual worship.

We must never forget what God is commanding us in this passage—*the fire shall not be put out, it must be kept burning upon the altar continually.* We are to do everything within our power to keep the fire burning.

Apostle Paul summarized this same message in his Epistle to the Thessalonians in three short verses:

*“Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit”* (1 Th 5:17, 18, 19). In other words: Don't put the fire out. Praise Him always. Pray without ceasing. Rejoice evermore. Whatever happens, don't do anything that might dampen the zeal that the Holy Ghost is stirring up either in you or in another believer around you. Instead, do everything in your power to stir up the fire. Add more fuel.

*“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”* (Heb 10:24-25).

*“Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;*

*Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord”* (Rom 12:9-11).

The praise, worship, and prayers of God's elect are not a useless exercise. They are part of bringing God's purpose to pass on the earth. We have missed the importance of our ministry unto God in the Spirit. We have thought prayer was just for *getting things* from God. That is part of it. But the spiritual ministry of the Royal Priesthood in this heavenly temple of God which manifests itself in prayer, praise, and worship, is an important function in the eternal purposes of God.

*“And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.*

*And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.*

*And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake” (Rev 8:4,5).*

As our lives are laid on the altar in submission and worship, a living sacrifice giving up a sweet smelling savor unto God, other supernatural things are being accomplished on earth. The fire from the Altar that released the incense from our prayers is cast down into the earth. This divine fire as seen in the vision by John, produces the purposes of God on the earth.

Not only does the incense from our worship and prayer produce the sweet savor that ascends before God, but as it is cast into the earth, the power of God is released shaking the earth to its core. Voices are heard, as the word of the Lord is released. Thunders shake the earth to its foundation, as the power of God is manifested. Lightning lightens the world, as the illumination of God flashes within the consciousness of men. And a great earthquake erupts, as the kingdoms of men are overthrown and the kingdom of this world becomes the *Kingdom of our God and of His Christ*.

This heavenly scene witnessed by John the beloved is taking place in the Temple of God. This is not in the earthly temple but the true one which we are. As we live a life of worship and prayer, we are indeed sending up to God a sweet odor as from the Burnt-offering. As our lives is laid on the altar in submission and worship, it is like a living sacrifice giving up to God a sweet smelling savor. Not only this, but also the fire from the prayers or the censer of our lives is cast into the earth producing the purpose of God. As the sweet odor of our prayers and praise and worship ascends before God from the golden altar within us, there is produced an effect on the earth to the glory of God.

# Chapter 5

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## *Through the Fire*

*"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee?" (Isa 43:2).*

**T**he king orders his men to add more fuel to the fire. The furnace is already very hot, but he wants it hotter. In fact, he wants it seven times as hot. Nebuchadnezzar the king gave this order to his servants in anger. He has just been told that certain stubborn men from among the captives from Judea have no regards whatsoever for him. *"These men",* a jealous Chaldean reports, *"will not obey your decree, will not serve thy gods, neither will they worship the golden image which you've set up".* The king could not believe what he was hearing.

*Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king.*

*Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?" (Dan 3:13,14)*

The three Hebrew men were urgently ushered before the king. He wants to give them the last chance before he lets all hell break

loose upon them. So he asked them to confirm whether what he had been told is true or not.

*"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.*

*If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.*

*But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Dan 3:16-18).*

The king has heard enough. His visage completely changed. He was irate and literally fuming, and smokes, figuratively speaking, were coming out of ears. He ordered his mighty men to make the fiery furnace seven-times hotter than it presently was and to throw these stubborn Hebrews into it. *So was the king's decree, and so it was done.*

### ***Into the Fire***

*And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.*

*Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. (Dan 3:20,21).*

Let's not forget that at the time these three men were standing their ground before the king, they did not know for sure what was going to happen to them. They had counted the cost and were ready to face whatever comes in the fiery furnace. God did not tell them beforehand how this was going to end. So imagine what was going on in their minds. But they said to the king--*"Our God is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace, but if He does not, we will still not worship your golden image".*

God has not promised us a bed of roses as we pass through this world. But one thing is sure, He has said He will never leave nor forsake us. Even when we are in the fire.

And so the Hebrew children were cast into the fiery furnace. The furnace was so intensely hot that the mighty men from the army who threw *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego* into it were killed by the superficial contact with the flame. But God was with His Children, even in the fiery furnace.

Trials will come. And even fiery ones may come our way, but one thing we are assured of is that the Lord our God will be with us. *Nebuchadnezzar* thought he had finished these troublesome Hebrew kids. He had thrown them into the furnace. "They must have been reduced to ashes by now", he thought to himself few minutes after. And so, sitting relaxed on his throne he casually glanced at the furnace.

And what did he see? He saw these men walking unharmed in the fire. He was amazed! He got up and looked closer and now saw, not just three, but four men. And *the form of the fourth is like the Son of God*" (Dan 3:35).

Hard and perilous times may come, but take heart, be of good courage for the "*fourth man in the fire*" will show up and help you through. He will be with you always. He has promised.

It may be that your experience in this life is one that can be described as "*baptism by fire*". The Lord God is saying that you should not feel forsaken that He's right there with you in the midst of the fiery furnace. He's also teaching us that there's a glorious purpose for your trial. And there'll be a glorious outcome from your situation. It will work for you an eternal weight of glory.

The phrase *baptism by fire* is often used to refer to a soldier's first experience in battle. Baptism because battle, into which he is thrown or suddenly immersed, is new to him, and fire because of the explosions of grenades and firing of guns he's under and surrounded by. Without doubt, this is analogous to the life of the soldier of Christ.



Therefore, *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you, [rather take it as a matter of course, an expected part of your training] and rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed ye may be glad also with exceeding joy; if ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." ( Pet. 4:12-14). "If we suffer with him we shall also reign with him;" (II Tim. 2:12) And thus are we "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." (Rom. 8:17).*

It is true that your faith, and mine also, will be tested by fire. This testing or trial is not to destroy us, but on the contrary, to refine and strengthen us. The Scriptures point out that our faith, which is precious before God, will be **refined** by fire.

*"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:" (1 Peter 1:6-7)*

Not only will our faith be tested by fire, both collectively and individually, but our works also will. In fact it is this testing of our works that will determine what reward you and I will receive when the Master returns. He therefore admonishes us to be careful what type of work we perform for Him while we're here. For each of our works will be tested by fire and only the ones that pass the test will bring us rewards.

*"If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he*

*himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames."*  
(1 Corinthians 3:12-15)

It is only that which survives the fire of God's testing that is going to be rewarding to us. Every work of the flesh, even if performed in His name, will be consumed by the Refiner's fire. Only those works performed of the Spirit will survive and come *out of the fire*.

### ***Out of the Fire***

The fiery trial is not fun. But when we endure the testing, make it through, and come out of the fire, we are the better for it. We become better just as refined gold coming out of the furnace. All the impurities are gone and it's now pure gold. It is gold tried in the fire. Not only does this fire purify the saints, it also produces a more tempered people. A people who are now more useful for God. They now come forth out of the fire in the image of their Master and become a red-hot shining light to the world.

*"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent (Rev 3:18,19).*

The Lord will have no incompetent ones in his kingdom. "*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried [not before,] he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*" (James 1:12). Our trials are the means whereby we are fitted for the place God has for us in his kingdom. They give us the necessary training for our office in that kingdom; without them we would not be fit for our place in the kingdom at all; hence they are the price we have to pay for a government position under the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is the knowledge of this fact, that every trial properly borne brings us nearer to the goal and the reward of the overcomer, that enables the believer, not only to bear them with patience and resignation, but even to rejoice in them. For we know that though

*"for the present they are not joyous but grievous, yet afterward they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness." (Heb. 12:11).*

Now then, in regard to trials, if we can only see and understand that they are needful for our training to fit us for a glorious future, then although we would not rejoice in the trial for its own sake, but we can rejoice for the sake of the benefit awaiting us. Men of the world act upon this principle.

An athlete submits to the most rigid training and to great self denial for months and years in order that he may gain the prize in some competition. *"Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." (I Cor. 9:19-27).* If God could open our eyes to catch a glimpse of the glories in store for the overcomers we'll understand that the trials in the path to those glories are nothing compared to the reward soon to be revealed.

*Paul says, "We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the holy spirit which is given unto us." (Rom. 5:3-5, KJ).* The whole point in this passage rests on the word "knowing." We glory in tribulations, *"knowing that tribulation worketh patience,"* etc. Do you know this? Do you know that our troubles and sorrows and distresses chasten, refine and set us apart, and make us *"meet for the inheritance of the saints in light?"* (Col. 1:12). Do you and I know that this is the only way whereby we may be made thus meet? Do we desire to sit with Christ on his throne? If so, we must suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together (Rom 8:17).

*"It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself (2 Tim 2:11-13).*

Whatever calling or occupation a man may choose, he would, of course, expect to pass through a certain process of study and training to fit him for that calling. That preparatory process is a necessary part of the calling. So it is in *the High Calling* of God in

Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:14). The process by which we are prepared for the high position of kings and priests in the kingdom, is of course, a part of our calling. How inconsistent it would be to seek for an *abundant entrance* into the kingdom and then draw back from the discipline which alone can fit us for that entrance into the kingdom.

Oh! what a wonderful privilege it is to be permitted to share with Christ in his sufferings and then in His glory! *"Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him but also to suffer for his sake,"* (Phil. 1: 29). And if we see this as our calling and the eternal weight of glory in store, we shall *"rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ."* (Acts 5: 41).

Therefore *"My Brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (trials), **knowing this**, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have its perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."* (Jas. 1:2-4).

# Chapter 6

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## *Baptism with Fire*

*“And there came suddenly out of the heaven a sound as of a bearing violent breath, and it filled all the house where they were sitting,*

*And there appeared to them divided tongues, as it were of fire; it sat also upon each one of them, And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, according as the Spirit was giving them to declare” (Act 2:2-4 YLT).*

**E**xactly ten days had passed since the Lord ascended into heaven from Mount Olives. It was also fifty days after He rose from the dead. And on this day the disciples are gathered in Jerusalem as He commanded them to. They had just gone through the traumatic experience of His crucifixion and death, which though He had told them before it happened, still took them by surprise because they did not really think it could happen. But when they saw Him arrested, humiliated, tortured and crucified, sorrow had filled their hearts.

Then the impossible happened. He rose from the dead, just as He said He would. He had told them on several occasions how that He will be killed, and how that on the third day He would rise from the dead. But this had fallen on deaf ears. They heard what He said, but

the information did not really sink into them. So when Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James came early resurrection morning with the news that the Lord had risen from the dead, *"Their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not"* (Luke 24:11).

Afterwards the Lord Himself appeared to several of them on many occasions. He appeared to two of them on the way to Emmaus. On another occasion He came in unto another group through locked doors where they were hiding for the fear of the Jews. And He said unto them: *"Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you"* (Joh20:21). He showed them His hands and His side and they were extremely glad.

They saw Him breaking bread as His manner was. They heard Him teach again, speaking to them things pertaining to the kingdom. The eleven disciples went ahead of Him into Galilee, unto the mountain where He had chosen to meet with them. There, He spoke to them and gave them His authority to go forth and preach:

*"All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"* (Mat 28:18-20).

For forty days, He was with them until the day He ascended up into heaven. While He was with them, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Father which He previously told them about.

*"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.*

*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

*And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;*

*Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same **Jesus**, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Act 1:6-10).*

So they obeyed. They all stayed in Jerusalem not knowing what to expect. And when the Day of Pentecost arrived, they gathered in the upper room.

This day in question was a Feast day in Israel. It was a day for celebrating one of the three great Feasts of the Lord, namely the Feasts of Harvest or Pentecost.

The three great annual Feasts of the **Lord** in Israel’s worship are described in considerable details in Exodus and Leviticus. These feasts typify and prefigure the whole Church age beginning with the Cross and reaching its conclusion at the glorious manifestation of the Sons of God spoken of by the Holy Ghost through the mouth of His holy prophets. These Feasts, therefore, begin with the Passover, and end with Tabernacles; and in between we have the various steps and degrees by which the Church is brought out of death into life, out of rejection into exaltation, and out of suffering into the everlasting Kingdom.

The Feast of Pentecost, also called the Feast of First Fruits, or the Feast of Weeks falls on the 50th day after the Passover Sabbath. This feast is a reminder, a guarantee from God of His power to produce spiritual fruit in the field of human salvation. The literal *first fruits* of the soil are merely the physical expressions of the real first fruits of the Holy Spirit. The first fruits of the Holy Spirit are the true believers won to God by His Son on this memorable day in Jerusalem.

This breathtaking experience is recorded in the second Chapter of Acts. It was the day that the early harvest, a kind of "firstfruits" is

celebrated by Israel, and agricultural community. But even greater than this, God Almighty chose this day to bring forth the "Firstfruits" of believers from the earth. And these being the firstfruits is a pledge from God that a full harvest of an even greater out-pouring of divine power is scheduled for the near future when the main harvest of human beings will be gathered in. This will be during the *Feast of Ingathering*.

*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.*

*And there appeared unto them cloven **tongues like as of fire**, and it sat upon each of them.*

*And they were all **filled with the Holy Ghost**, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4).*

Let it be known that, at Pentecost these men and women were baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. They were filled with Ghost and baptized with fire. For as they gathered in the upper room, appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. From then on, a fire burned within them. They were never the same again.

As we discussed above, the physical presence of the Lord Jesus was so important to the twelve that they were filled with deep sorrow when He told them that He would leave them. In the Gospel of John we read: *"But now I go to him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart (John 16:5,6).*

They were filled with consternation and greatly troubled at the thought that He was really going to leave them. Look at their faces and what do you see? They looked like scared kids who were just told to prepare to become orphans.

Then He turned to them and spoke concerning the promise of the Holy Spirit whom He called the Comforter. He knows very well that is whom they really need at this hour of sorrow. He continued:



*"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I depart; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send him to you "(John 16:7).*

At this point they probably didn't believe what they were hearing. He said, "It is better for you, or it is to your advantage that I go away" How can that be our advantage? they're probably thinking. They were essentially mourning on the inside that He was leaving them. And now He's tells them it is to their advantage that He's going away.

The Lord Jesus was telling these distraught disciples that if He did not return to the Father that sent Him, the Holy Spirit would not come. His going away would mean the coming of the Spirit, He told them. He told them plainly that it was better for them that the Spirit should come and remain with them. Wonderful was His presence and ministry **among** them, yet far more blessed and wonderful would be the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit **within** them.

*"I will pray the Father", He assured them, "and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever;*

*Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you" (Joh 14:16-18 Webster).*

*"These things have I spoken to you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said to you" (Joh 14:25,26 Webster).*

It is only the Holy Spirit, the Anointing that can teach and lead you into the Truth. Neither the world, nor the popular church in the world can lead you into the truth. Unlike in the world, in the case of the truth of God, majority is not always right. In fact, more often than not, majority miss it. And what majority declares as heresy may even be the solid truth. This was the case in the experience of the first Apostles. The Sanhedrin, and the council of Scribes and

Pharisees considered these firebrands as heretics. They were only a few of them to start with. Probably about a score, counting the disciples, the women that believed, and some other secret believers. What these few Christians were proclaiming was different from the orthodox doctrine of the day. They were therefore considered to be heretics or people holding to a false doctrine. But were they?

The apostle Paul was persecuted for decades and thrown into prison for preaching and teaching what the religious system of the day considered heresy. His message and teachings were completely contrary to what the main stream religious system believed and so was indicted for peddling "false doctrine". But was he?

An account regarding this is recorded in the twenty-fourth Chapter of Acts. Here Ananias the high priest and several Jewish elders arrested Paul with the intention to put him to death. They brought him to Felix the governor . These men described Apostle Paul as "*a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law* (Act 24:5,6). Answering for himself with regards to the accusation of heresy and sedition Paul said to the governor:

*"But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:"* (Acts 24:14)

Just because the majority of men, dominations of religious men, or even a committee of highly acclaimed preachers, similar to the council at Naisea, declared a message of Scripture to be heresy, does not make it so. The final word belongs to the Holy Ghost, the Teacher, the Anointing, whom the Father sent to us in His Name. He's the only one who can pontificate with regards to the truth. He is the one and only Pontiff, all others are pretenders.

This is so true in our day. You can go on the internet and search for what some define as heresy. Or visit some large global domination

and examine what they believe and what they declare as heresy, and, depending on what your personal intimacy is with the Holy Spirit, you will be amazed. I once checked up on this. The list of the “false doctrine teachers” that I found includes almost all of the true men and women of God I know. In some circles, anyone who believes in divine healing is a heretic. In others, if you believe in or speak in tongue you’re not only a heretic but a lunatic. If you claim that God speaks to you and that you experience the supernatural, you’re a fanatical heretic. And whatever you do, don’t even think of following the Holy Ghost if it’s different from the popular opinion of the religious order of your time. Don’t even dare.

Yes, the Scripture says “Ye shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you”, but it is tragic that majority of Christians think of this power only in term of some external wonder-working ability for service. They dream of a fantastic baptism that will give them power to perform some prime-time Channel-9 news miracles, like raising the dead on Broad Street. This, in summary, is the image that this Scripture create in their minds. So they go seeking the baptism hoping to see signs and wonders follow their ministry. Only very few Christians consider or even notice the many more important offices and supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

In our life-long search for truth, for example, why do we run from coast to coast, from prophet to prophet, and from counselor to counselor in search for answer, when the Spirit of Truth, the Counselor Himself is resident with us? Why have we not learnt that the divine supernatural Person that dwells in and with us is the Spirit of Truth? And that one of His principal and exclusive ministry is to lead and guide us into all truth? And that He is the ONLY one who can do this work accurately?

Have we never read the admonition from John the beloved saying: *“But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him”* (I Joh 2:27). Do we not believe that the anointing can teach us all things? Do we fail to

believe that this Spirit of Truth can show us things to come? Do we not believe that He cannot lie? And that we find absolute truth only in Him? Can't we hear the sage in the Old Testament saying: *"There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding"*? (Job 32:8)

But we must also learn that the indwelling Spirit may not be able to teach a cold, sluggish, lazy, and double-minded soul. For *"as a door turneth upon its hinges, so the sluggard turns upon his bed"* (Prov 26:14). *A double-minded person is unstable in all his ways.* (James 1:8) For a man cannot expect to be taught of God if he fails to give himself time to be alone with Him. How can the slothful expect to receive inspiration from the Holy Ghost if he fails to with due diligence spend time in communion with Him. He must set time apart to look into His Face; away from the crowd, away from religious activities, away from church organizations and programs, and alone with Spirit of Truth and Grace.

How can he expect to hear from God if he does not wait on Him in the silence of his soul? And how can he expect to hear from God when his flesh is always satisfied in every detail, his stomach always full, and his flesh is always put before the spirit?

Today, we need, more than ever before, to practice prayer and fasting. If the saints before us considered that it was impossible for them to hear from God and develop intimacy with Him, we today need this even more. Many of us are not healthy in our spiritual walk because we lack this proper nourishment that only the Spirit can give. Some of us are cold while many are lukewarm. We cannot become hot and remain fervent unless we practice entering into His presence and be face to face with Him whose *eyes are as a flame of fire.*

# Chapter 7

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## *Set Me On Fire*

*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Act 1:8).*

**I**t was a bright cold day in December, and the clock was about to strike ten. We had come into the house of worship a little late and the saints were already engrossed in praise and worship. We stepped in and made our way towards a vacant row of seats. I began to laugh within me as I pondered over the literal meaning of the words the worshippers were singing. I considered what some of my sense-knowledge colleagues would think if they had heard. I imagined how baffled they would be and how it would confirm what they had always thought about us and our beliefs. So, with the fervor of a fanatic, I laid my Bible on the seat and joined.

The song we were singing goes like this:

Fire, fall down  
Fire, fall down; On me, I pray.

I know that most people reading this book are conversant with this metaphor as much as I am, but why I was laughing on the inside was because I know a few people who are not familiar with things relating to the Holy Ghost and would see this differently. I laughed

also because of a flashback reminiscent of similar Holy Ghost filled prayer and worship thirty-years prior.

The specific incident that flashed across my mind took place in a University Chapel. One of our Christian Fellowship leaders, a close friend of mine and, in fact, my Prayer Band leader and the Fellowship Prayer Minister was praying in his usual way in the Chapel. But on this particular day, the Head of Department of Religious Studies, a Professor of Professors, and the reigning Chairman of the Chapel Committee happened to come by the Chapel during this hour of prayer. He heard a loud voice coming out from the Chapel but couldn't see any crowd. So he went near to see what was going on.

He entered through the main wing of the Chapel we call "Chapel of Resurrection"; couldn't see anyone and continued walking until he turned towards the right wing of the cross-shaped Chapel where my minister friend was praying or should we say, on fire. He was surprised! Not just because of the fervor, the sweating, the laboring, and the Epaphras-like prayers my friend was offering to God, but also because he couldn't understand a word my friend was saying.

So he rushed back towards the main wing and turned towards the Chaplain's office. As I wasn't there, he grabbed one of our other leaders who happened to be around with the Chaplain and dragged him towards where my friend was still praying, or as we use to say- "*blowing in tongues*".

Holding one of my brethren in one hand and dragging him closer in the presence of the Chaplain, he pointed at him and ask? "*Can any of you tell me that this fellow is not crazy?*"

Later when I came around, I was arraigned before him since I was culpable for this offence being the leader of the Fellowship; He relayed all he'd seen that day to me and demanded an explanation. He could not understand why we would stay in the Chapel for so long, sometimes all night, shouting and praying, *or babbling as he calls it*, in what sounded nonsensical to him.

*“Do you know”, he continued, “When I went close to your friend praying in the Chapel, Do you know none of his words were discernable?”*

*“Tell me, I want to know”,* staring me down and speaking authoritatively, *“What is the theology behind this your fellowship”, “What is the theology behind this your IUVC?”* (By the way, for some of you reader, IVCU stands for Ibadan Varsity Christian Union to which we belonged at the time. The Professor of Professors inadvertently mixed up the acronym calling it IUVC instead. This has become a refreshing saying, a nostalgic reminiscence, among the fellow ministers from this group to this day).

I don't remember what answer I gave him that day or the answer I gave the Chapel Committee where I was again queried concerning *“the way we serve our God”*. But we took solace in what the Apostle Paul confessed concerning his belief that after *“the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:”* (Act 24:14)

The Committee Chairman then proceeded to give me an assignment to write up for him the theology behind our fellowship, our jumping and shouting, our praying, and spending of endless hours in the University Chapel. I was supposed to write this up and submit it to him. This was 1978. The assignment is yet to be completed until this day.

They were going to shut us out of the Chapel, keep us quiet, and if possible, quench the Spirit and stop the *“tongues of fire”*. Little did they know that it was those opposition that made us fight harder in faith and grew stronger; and that it was those *“blowing in tongues”* that kept us overcoming every attack they mounted, exposing every collusion, and prevailing over every obstacles even when it seems in the natural that we had been cornered and surrounded on every side. It was those Holy-Ghost filled, tongue-talking warriors that prayed us through to victory when we stood alone against the rioting student union and broke the unholy solidarity of militant youths in our nation. It was those hours of *blowing in*

*tongues* that produced many ministers who are shining bright in many corners of the world today.

For me, this as you can tell, remains a sweet memory, which on recall, is both nostalgic and challenging. It challenges me that I must do everything within my power to be full of the Holy Ghost continually. It urges me to constantly and sincerely seek to remain hot in the Spirit, *building myself in this most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost*. It admonishes me to continue “blowing in tongues” for therein lies the secret of my power and edification. It reminds me to pray and keep seeking His face to fill me with the Anointing Oil and be on fire, burning for Him.

Understand that I am not saying that we should seek to return to the experience of the past, for we must move on. We must press forward towards the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. However we must forsake the ancient path and must follow that faith once delivered to the saints.

I am not saying that we should return to where we were when we first believed. But that we must retain or return to *our first love*. And since this “*first love*” is often misunderstood, let's clarify what it really means.

*“Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;*

*I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.*

*Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love” (Rev 2:1-4).*

In the letter to the Church of Ephesus, the Lord stated that the members of this church have left their first love. He first commended them for their labor, for their patience, and for their dedication to truth, their refusal to fellowship with evil, their



discernment, and commended them for how they have tried the false apostles and found them liars. He commended them for their steadfastness, for toiling on and on for His name's sake and have not fainted. This is not a bad record. In fact, this is good.

But He said: "I have something against you, because you have left your first love" What then is this first love that outweighs these wonderful works?

We have interpreted this as meaning that there was a quality of love we possessed in the beginning of our walk with the Lord which we have departed from. Of course, this is true in many cases, but this is not what the Lord is talking about here. What the Lord of the Church is saying is that we have departed from that which *should have first place in our lives*. Our first love is that which we love and esteem preeminently.

The precise meaning of the word used in this passage in the original translated "your first love" is foremost. Your first love is your most important love, your preeminent love, your supreme love. He is saying here that we should return to making our love relationship with God our pre-eminent and supreme love. His love should have the first place in our lives.

He is admonishing us, together with the Church of Ephesus, that if trusting and worshiping God in all things, if walking in faith, if presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice, and if doing the Father's will in every situation is down the line in our priority in life, then we have left *our first love*.

Salvation is a free gift. It is by grace through faith. But there is a vast kingdom of spiritual wealth and glory that is reserved for those who would grow up into the fullness of Christ. In the family of God you and I can choose for ourselves to remain thumb-sucking children or to mature unto the stature of Christ and reign as kings and priests with Him on His throne. Once we perceive by the Holy Ghost, the high calling of our heavenly Father, there is no more desire to return to a stage of spiritual infancy, but we'll keep pushing forward and upwards, stretching and reaching for the marks of the high calling of God in Christ. The will of the Father God then becomes our first

love. The high calling of God becomes our priority. And to attain the fullness of Christ becomes our passion, our first love, our chief love, our preeminent love.

Our priority is no longer doing religious works, or trying to get all kinds of worldly goods or blessings, but the will of God, and the fullness of His righteousness. To be found in the image and likeness of Christ becomes our *supreme* quest, our *first* and *highest* love.

Yes, our heavenly Father expects us to grow in grace, to grow in knowledge, and also to grow and abound in love for our Lord Jesus Christ. And this love must have the preeminent place. This is what the Spirit is saying to you and me in this verse. And He concludes it by saying—“*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*” (Rev 2:7)

While we are at it, considering the letter to the seven Churches, let us consider a similar message sent by the Lord through the beloved Apostle.

Everything in our physical universe wears out. Our human bodies wear out. Vehicle tires wear out. The clothes we cover ourselves with wears out. Even rocks and metallic objects wear out. Nothing in this our physical universe remains the same.

We may not always admit it but in the same manner, our once fervent love for God does not always stay the same. Especially when we are so occupied working for Him on the outside and do not spend enough time looking into His face to get re-energized. Our love for Him is not always as fervent as we would desire it to be. We go through seasons of revival when we’re set on fire for God followed by a cooling down.

During the blessed seasons of revival, we’re hot and fervid in our worship and fellowship with the Father. And we wonder how we ever lived without this experience. But as time goes on, we find that the fervency seems to dissipate and the zeal overtaken by apathy. Rationalization takes the place of inspiration, and we’re now dragging our feet where we were once contending with horsemen.

As we run the race set before us on this side of eternity, we'll experience seasons like this when we're weary. *"For this cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."* (2 Cor 4:16). The outward man grows weary and faints. Its ability and fervor abates and declines in strength with age. And sometimes he can even get to a stage where he's downright exhausted and out of it altogether. Remember Elijah.

After the tremendous feat performed by Elijah, the mighty prophet of God, discussed in the preceding chapter above, he did something totally unexpected.

First, he received a telegram from Jezebel. In this letter, Jezebel swore by her gods, that she would kill Elijah within 24 hours. When Elijah read the message, he was gripped with fear. He began to run for his life.

The mighty man of God who just publicly defeated 450 prophets of Baal and had them all killed, was so afraid that he left his servant, fled into the wilderness, sat under a juniper tree and prayed to die. Even strong men get weary. And fervent souls sometimes cool down. This is why it is important to continually draw near unto Him and constantly face to face look unto Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire.

As we gaze into the face of the Son of man we're transformed by those eyes that are flames of heavenly fire. The luminous and intensely hot flame from His eyes will penetrate, illuminate, and energize our being. While revealing, exposing, and destroying every selfish and secret motive in us, it will also flood our being with purity and power.

Many things in our lives are deeply hidden, but the eyes of the Lord, the luminous flame will expose everything and bring to light every work of darkness. The fire of those eyes is such that all the dross is made to emerge. The light of the Sun will shine on us and invade us through and through. He will shine forth the glorious light of His illuminating eyes until we are refined and brought forth as pure gold! The radiation energy from His Face which is as the Sun shining in full strength will also pump power into us and renew our

strength. The flame of fire from His eyes will melt our cold formalism and make us boiling hot and energized by the Holy Ghost.

God desires that we be fervent and on fire for Him at all times. Our love for Him must be fresh and fervid, and it must be first and foremost. The Lord expressed this in the letter to the Churches sent by the Lord through the hand of John the beloved there are crucial admonitions for us concerning this.

*“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*

*Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:*

*I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.” (Rev 3:14-18).*

The opening of the letter to the Church of Laodicea is different from that sent to Ephesus. In the letter to the Church at Ephesus, the Lord started with several things which are highly commendable in that Church. But with the Church of Laodicea, He opened with: *“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot”*. He also reveals what this Church thinks of herself. For this Church of Laodicea has an elevated view of her spirituality. In her self-delusion she sees herself as rich and lacking nothing. Of course that's probably true in a way. She's probably the richest church of all the church ages. With her beautiful Cathedrals, her Jet Planes, her rich and smooth-talking ministers, her political power; She is without doubt rich and increased with goods. But is this the riches her Master is looking for?

So the Master says: " You say, "I am rich. I have become wealthy. I don't need anything." Yet you don't realize that you are miserable, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked (Rev 3:17 ISV).

Without looking far there is little doubt which generation of the Church fits the description of the Church of Laodicea or the period of Laodicea. But are we going to listen and take heed? Are we going to hearken to the Spirit urging and admonishing us in this lukewarm era to buy of Him gold tried in the fire, and white raiment that we may be clothed? Are we going to repent, and let the Spirit work His wonders in us, or we going to continue our Bible school theology declaring ourselves ourselves as the Church of Philadelphia.

Yes we pride ourselves in goods and all outward opulence and high sounding religious activities and achievements while the Lord is calling us to buy of Him gold tried in the fire. He is calling us to draw near to Him and like Him be clothed in white raiment which is His righteousness.

It is time for prayer and fasting. It is time to cast off all outward appearance of religion and let the Holy Ghost perform His work in our hearts. It is time to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. It is time to let the fire of the Holy Ghost burn within us and set us ablaze for Christ. It is time anointing Oil of the Spirit poured upon us to flow up the Lampstand into the candlestick and let the light shine.

It is time to let our little light shine in the corners of the universe where we're planted. And as we each shine contributing our little lights the collective effect will be amplified by the Holy Ghost into inferno that will cover the whole earth as the waters cover the sea.

*Set me on fire Lord, And watch me burn for You.*

*And as I burn, let me be acceptable in Your Presence*

*As a Burnt-Offering, let this incense, O' LORD give up a sweet-smelling savor unto Thee*

*And if I burn and burnout, it's OK; for I will be satisfied when I awake, that I've completely given it all up as a sweet oblation unto Thee.*

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