

Is the Holy Spirit Refining You?

When the Holy Spirit came upon the 120 disciples in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost, He manifested in primarily two ways: (1) the sound of a rushing wind and (2) flames of fire that miraculously appeared on each person's head. We do not know the exact nature of this fire; it obviously was not physical fire or it would have burned everyone's hair! It was most likely the visual manifestation of the Spirit's presence. But most assuredly this fire also represents to us the holiness of God.

Before John the Baptist was beheaded, he prophesied that God would endue His church with power. He announced that Jesus Christ would give His church a double portion of His Spirit. John said: "He [Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit *and* fire" (Matt. 3:11, emphasis added). When the Day of Pentecost arrived, sure enough, both wind and fire were evident. True Pentecost has both.

We've known the wind during the last 50 years since the charismatic movement started bringing renewal to the church. We have felt "times of refreshing" in the Holy Spirit's renewing presence. We've enjoyed His healing, learned about the gifts of the Spirit, claimed His prosperity and received His supernatural power. Some of us have spent a lot of time on the floors of our churches, soaking in His miraculous anointing. We love to shake, bake, rattle and roll. We saturate and marinate in the anointing. We experience Holy Ghost goose bumps. And sometimes, because of our immaturity, we use the Holy Spirit's power to feed selfish desires to meet emotional needs.

But genuine Pentecost does not consist of wind alone. It's not just about noise or feelings. John said Jesus would baptize us

in fire as well as power. What is the fire of the Spirit? It is a refining flame. John the Baptist said: "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:12).

When it comes to Pentecost, holiness is not a side issue. It is the essence of the Holy Spirit's work. When He comes in power, He also comes to burn up the sin in our lives. He comes with conviction, searching our motives, uprooting our unforgiveness and shattering our pride.

Our problem is that we treat the whole scene in Acts 2 as if it were a party. We want hoopla and the noisy speaking in tongues, but we don't really want the fear of God or deep conviction of sin that comes when we are exposed to His holiness. We spend all our time splashing in the shallow end of His river, when He has deeper things for us. We are afraid to embrace Jesus' winnowing fork, and we resist when the fire of His Spirit comes to burn up our selfishness.

Are you willing to allow God to purify you, even in hidden areas? Suppose you have lived in the same house for 24 years and you decide to move. The process of packing and cleaning that house is never easy. Imagine what you will see if you pull your refrigerator out from the wall to put it on the moving van. It has been in the same corner of the kitchen for a long time; no one has ever swept under it. The tile would be filthy. The floor might be caked with layers of grime, dust, stray nutshells, specks of rotted food, lost hair bands, dog hair, and unidentified stains that have been there for more than two decades. *Yuck!* This would require some special cleaning to get your house ready for a new owner.

It is a scary thought, but you may have areas such as this in your own life. Sometimes we hide our secret sins in private compartments. We know how to mask our ugliest attitudes. But

when the Spirit comes in power, He comes to scour us of our grit and grime. He moves the furniture around in our lives in order to cleanse us of resentment, anger, shame, addictive behavior and so many other things that can create distance between God and us. I encourage you to open your heart to the Spirit's fire. {eoa}

Adapted from Set My Heart on Fire by J. Lee Grady, copyright 2016, published by Charisma House. Only when we fully surrender to the Holy Spirit can we know God intimately and share His love with others. The encouragement in this book will ignite His fire in your heart. To order your copy click on this link.

PRAYER POWER FOR THE WEEK OF Nov. 27, 2016

This week, invite the Holy Spirit to examine your heart and uncover areas that need to be swept clean. Ask Him to burn out the dross and purify your heart and motives. Yield yourself completely to His power and purpose and tell Him that you want Him to have His way in your life. Pray a dangerous prayer of surrender and tell Him that you'll trust Him no matter what.

Continue to pray for those who rule over us and ask the Lord for a smooth transition of government leadership. Pray for the protection of our cities and newly elected officials. Declare the sovereign will of God over the nation and pray for a cessation of violence and anarchy.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, 1 Timothy 2:1-2, Hebrews 12:29 and Matthew 3:11.