

## Refiner's Fire

When we come to faith in God we try to do things to please Him and be better Christians. We struggle not to sin. We get caught up and fall. God our loving father shows us that we can't do it. We need to surrender it to Him. God works in us "...to will and to do for *His* good pleasure."(Phil 2:13) That sin ceases to enslave us. Then our refining God turns up the heat to remove the next big impurity (sin). He refines us into purer gold through each trial.

The thing we miss so often, because our vision is limited, is that God's rules and desires never change with the circumstances in our life. We see different sins and different situations and assume different rules apply. It is our lack of heavenly perception that hinders us. God sees sin; the degree and circumstances do not matter. The are just dross to be skimmed out.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are pictured as refiners in the Bible. God is the master refiner. He uses the Son, The Word, to break us from the ore of the world. He uses the fire and head of the Holy Spirit to test us. Testing brings our impurities, our sin, to the surface. There they can be removed because they are not a part of us. We are new creations in Christ; the old nature is gone. (2 Cor. 5:17) With each layer of sin skimmed off, God can see more and more of the reflection of Jesus in us.

Here are some things we tend to overlook from this analogy. First, the refiner is acting upon the gold. It does not refine itself. It takes outside action and outside heat to refine the gold. It is God working in and through our life that changes us and not we ourselves. (Ps. 100:3) If we could earn our salvation and achieve perfection then there would have been no need to send Christ to die for us.

Secondly, there is no refinement with out heat and fire. These tests and trials of the Holy Spirit in our life need to be welcomed. We complain, whine, and rebel against them. God clearly says in His word that "...all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose." (Rom. 8:28) He uses these trials to make us into the image of His son Jesus. That way we are built up into "...the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ..." (Phil. 4:13) Even though the fire of the Holy Spirit hurts it shows God's love. It shows that He is at work in us.

Thirdly, we cannot be pure gold while hanging on to our sins. Gold that has impurities is not finished with the refinement process. The harder we that hold on to the dross of our sin the higher the heat has to be turned up to make us release it. We need to realize that all we have to do in our trials is to let go and let God take our sins. Then we begin to see His love, strength, and joy and our perspective is changed. We begin to see with His eyes and joy in the fact that we are becoming more and more like Christ.

One of the hardest things to grasp about the refining fire is that, the flame does not go out till there is pure gold. This means until we see Jesus face to face (through rapture or death) we will not be perfect.

I struggle with this process. So many times I think God has refined all of a particular sin out of me. Then He turns up the heat to reveal areas that were hidden away.

It hurts being in the fire. I have gotten comfortable with that sin. I enjoy it. Even though I know it is wrong and not my new nature in Christ. I let it have dominion and present my members to sin and not to God. (Rom. 6:13)

I just have to praise God that He does not quit. My heavenly Father loves me and wants to see me in perfection. He shows me my sin. I release it to Him by asking for forgiveness. Then He takes it and forgives me. He is a patient, careful, and artistic craftsman. He looks at me and knows the plans He has for me. (Jer. 29:11)

God the master craftsman is revealed in His word so many times. He is a gold and silversmith, potter, gardener, builder, and so much more. All these pictures involve Him working with us and in us for one reason, so He is glorified. He is in control and we need to yield to the master with the eternal vision.

We are a one part of the whole. We are one body in Christ. We see and understand in part and God sees fully. He is building His kingdom and praise the Lord He is using us to do it.

Lord help us to trust you while you are refining us. Let us not try and struggle against you. Too often we let our will, plans, and vision make us hard to use. Help us to surrender to you each day. Use us, mold us, and build your kingdom with us. Help us to see the beautiful creation you are making us to be.

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