

THE CONTINUAL BURNT OFFERING

The observances which the Lord established in the Old Testament on a rather physical plane of worship pointed to something deeply spiritual and seemingly intangible. A believer is unable to apply them spiritually unless God reveals what they symbolize.

In the New Testament, the Lord used the parables in the same way. He called attention to the lilies of the field (Matthew 6:28); He spoke about a man building a foundation, and how the floodwaters came against it (Matthew 7:24–27). He always used illustrations which people could relate to their own lives and a spiritual condition when the truths behind the illustrations were revealed to them.

We think of the Feast of Pentecost as related to a harvest, but that harvest was always celebrated by bringing a burnt offering to the Lord. We often forget that fire was involved with these sacrifices. We are to enter into the same experience of fire. Much of this is dependent upon our preparation.

We read in both Kings and Chronicles of the dedication of Solomon's temple. Hundreds and hundreds of animals were offered in sacrifices. It must have been like a slaughtering yard, all in the presence of that beautiful temple covered with so much gold. But when they had made a complete end of that work, then the fire of the Lord came, the glory of the Lord filled the temple, and one hundred and twenty priests could not even stand to minister, but fell on their faces before God (I Kings 8:11).

It is significant that we not only bring our sacrifice to the Lord, but that we put the fire to it. There is a fire that comes from heaven as a

witness, as seen in the tongues of fire settling upon each one at Pentecost; but there must be a submission to the fire.

If we want the fire of God in our life, we can have it, because God gives us the match with which to start it. This is what happens when we come to the Lord; we determined to put the fire to self. That always precedes and determines the amount of the blessing of the Lord.

When we read about the fire falling on the day of Pentecost, we assume that the tongues of fire came as a sovereign moving of God. However, the first chapter of Acts tells us that the 120 believers were continually in prayer, waiting before the Lord. We do not want to forget what they had gone through to prepare them for that day.

We need a new definition of what it means to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire. We must understand first of all that the Holy Spirit is not given because of any discipline or dedication on our part. He is a gift that we receive by faith. We have tended to magnify that truth and utterly put aside the old tarrying meetings and that type of waiting before the Lord which was prevalent in the early days of the Pentecostal outpouring.

That practice was not as far off as we might think, because many believers came into deep experiences of fire. The tarrying went astray when people thought they could simply push or self-humiliate their way through to it, and they did not see the essential quality of faith in receiving the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, many people who believe that everything is received by faith may rattle on in tongues for a little while and then stop; yet one cannot tell them apart from those who have never

received the Holy Spirit, because there is no distinct change in their lives. They have received the Spirit, only to lock Him up in a cage of their own carnality, and cause Him to grieve and be quenched.

The only way to release the Spirit is to allow the chaff to be burned with fire. Much of that is up to us and has to do with our submission and waiting before the Lord. This is at least the prelude to and the early stages of the fire experience, which is common in the life of those who walk with the Lord. They come in, not only to believe and receive, but they continue to enter in, knowing that there must be a submission, a circumcision of heart, and a deep cutting away of the chaff from their lives.

When we begin to understand the experience of fire, we will not wonder what strange thing is happening to us (I Peter 4:12). It is not something strange. We opened the door for the Lord to deal with us. We opened the door not only to receive the Holy Spirit, but for the Lord to remove elements from our life that could never be touched by Him until we surrendered them voluntarily!

God calls us to walk with Him, and we walk like self-conscious adolescents who have too quickly outgrown their clothing, mindful of everything wrong in their appearance. We are growing so fast that we are embarrassed, aware that we are not clothed as we ought to be, with the robes of our priesthood.

Dedication is not accomplished in one running jump. We wish there were some way in which we could give it all to the Lord at one time, but we do not seem to be able to do so. As the Holy Spirit reveals our need and the remaining chaff, we find ourselves exposing it to the Lord to be consumed by the fire. It is our initiative to do that and to

give the Lord a continual burnt offering. We can never feel self-righteous about already having given the Lord so much. When we become a little proud of our spirituality, the Lord has to deal with us all over again, and always we find that we have held back just a little bit.

We progress in degrees of dedication; and as we grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, we seem to go from glory to glory as He deals with our hearts. He deals with us on one plane, and we give it all to Him, thinking it is total.

Then we relax and go on, until He deals with us again. Each time we must adjust to a whole new step. We go on from one experience to another, from one level of dedication to another. Each time we say yes, it is a little more unconditional, more of an absolute and total surrender.

Sanctification is a definite experience, but it is an experience that expands and grows and progresses without any limitation. Now you can see why we must have a continual burnt offering. We always have something more to give.

We must have a continual burnt offering to give to the Lord. Continually we come to Him. One of these days we will have given the Lord the perfect offering He desires. He will look upon us and see nothing but the refined silver and gold of our hearts, and we will mirror His own face, His own attributes, and His own perfection! We will love Him with the perfect love with which He loves us.

There is no better way to be aware of the Lord than to have faith that He is aware of us. As we draw nigh to God, He will draw nigh to us (James 4:8).

Why does the Lord want us to give? Give, and it will be given unto you (Luke 6:38). Never come before the Lord and say, “Give me, Lord.” There is that which withholds and it tends to poverty, but the generous soul shall be made fat (Proverbs 11:24–25). This principle opens up a process. When you come before the Lord, do not be concerned about receiving something. First be concerned about giving, and then have faith to receive.

We say, “Come and meet me, Lord”; but He says, “No, you draw near to me, and I will draw near to you.” We open our heart to Him, prepared to worship and to give. We may not have much, but at least we can give Him a little token. Then the Lord will start giving to us— heaped up, shaken down and running over.

“And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God...” Deuteronomy 16:11. The Scripture from Numbers 28 speaks about a continual burnt offering coming up as a sweet aroma to the Lord. This passage in Deuteronomy tells us to come before the Lord and rejoice. Can we rejoice in being made a living sacrifice? Yes, everyone must rejoice in that. We must understand that this one element of rejoicing is the antidote for the basic unbelief, fear, and doubt in our lives. Consider that truth very carefully.

If you stand and rejoice in the Lord, it will counteract all unbelief, murmuring, and complaining. We cannot rejoice and complain at the same time. We cannot rejoice in all that the Lord is and in all that He has said, and still be filled with unbelief. It is very difficult to whine and

rejoice at the same time. One of the best ways to eliminate the negative is to accentuate the positive. When we are completely full of rejoicing in the Lord, then we can submit to all that is involved in the continual burnt offering experience.

Everyone knows how wrinkled an empty gunnysack can be. But when that sack is filled with grain, it bulges, and not a wrinkle is left in it. When the Lord comes for a Church without spot or wrinkle, it will not be for a Church that has been preoccupied with getting rid of wrinkles, but a Church that has been preoccupied with being filled with all the fullness of God. This will take care of the spots and the wrinkles. While God is putting us through that continual burnt offering process to perfect us, we need to stand and rejoice before the Lord. Being full of joy and full of the Holy Spirit will take out all the wrinkles.

Unity is not achieved by our joining the church. The process is not as if the Lord were taking two pieces of metal, drilling a hole in them, bolting them together, and saying, "Now you are one." Instead, the Lord puts the fire to us until we are welded into one. As we approach the Lord and His dealings upon our lives, we begin by including everyone—the stranger, the widow, the orphan, the neighbor, the Levite who happens to be in our town or who is scheduled to serve there. We include all of them.

In the New Testament we read of the Holy Spirit bringing to remembrance what the Lord had spoken (John 14:26). In the Old Testament, believers were constantly reminded to remember. The Lord knew they would forget, so they were told to bind the Law upon their foreheads (Deuteronomy 11:18). Remember, remember, and remember! Rejoice and remember.

The fastest progress is made by the person who maintains the fullness of the Spirit with a rejoicing heart as they continually review, remember, and calls to mind what the Lord has been speaking to them.

We must continually encourage one another because this is a different way than people have walked before. This work of the Holy Spirit which God is restoring is not the same as that experienced by the Charismatic movement. This is not something we have embraced as a biblical experience to enhance our position, to aid our programs, or to help us to be a little more scriptural in our approach. This is the restoration of the fire.

It is important that every one of us find the fire welding us into one spirit. God is bringing forth His sons in the earth, and judgment will follow. God will meet us in the process we must go through. Because of our dedication to the Lord, when we go through the fire it will be as it was with the three Hebrew children; it will only succeed in burning off the ropes that bind us and in revealing His presence with us in the midst of the fire.