



## 1 Peter 1:6-7

### Refining Fire

My favorite bible, the one that has been on my lap through 20+ years of church sermons and bible studies, is literally falling apart.

I can't bear to retire it. It has the margin notes and musings from all those years sitting quietly before the Lord and listening as He shows me Himself, His Word, His Son. It is priceless to me. I also happened to belong to my mother, who has passed away.

Because it is priceless to me, I have to know that it is time to put it in a special place and not use it anymore in my day to day study. I will do that, but I find myself unwilling to relinquish the notes and highlights I have amassed in that 20 years of time. I decided, therefore, to do a project. I would go page by page from the old Bible into the new one, copying over all my notes. This is a little like moving a pile of schoolbooks from one old backpack into another. I don't want to be missing anything as I continue on my journey in the Word.

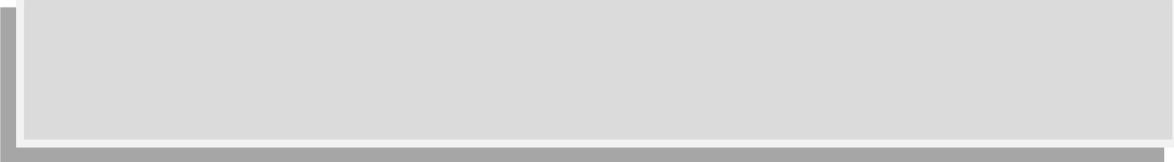
There have been some surprises along the way. Old verses have new meaning. Some notes don't make sense to me now and I am forced to explore the verses again to see if I can connect them to my scribbled thoughts in the margin.

There are also moments of great clarity. There are places where my notes and the scriptures take on a fresh meaning-- relevant to me right now, despite the fact that I may have written the notes years ago. How I love that this Word is alive and active, a never ending well of wisdom and comfort in the darkest places.

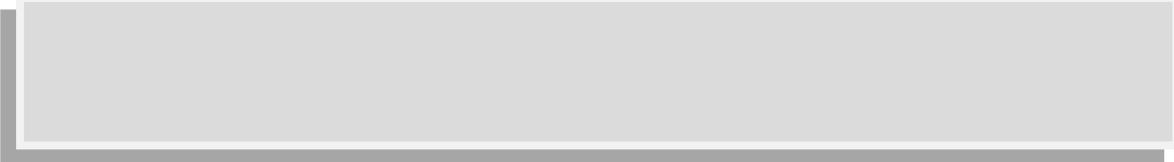
Today I want to walk with you through a concept in scripture that we can really learn from. I hope you find it as refreshing as I did when I transferred my notes in Exodus.

***Exodus 3:2- There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. (NIV)***

Sometimes, in living out the Christian life day-to-day, we can forget or forgo the experience of being 'on fire for Jesus.' Do you remember that feeling? Like you want to stand on the rooftops and shout about what Jesus did for you and how He changed your life? When was the last time you felt 'on fire' for Jesus? Can you describe that?

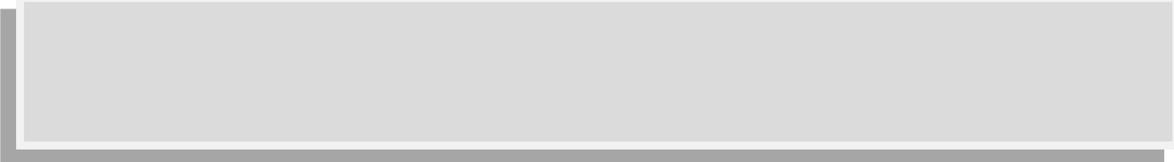


What are some of the things that keep us from experiencing that fire?



The note I was transposing from my old bible to the new one said this: “Like this Exodus fire, God consumes us but does not devour or destroy. He wants all of me, but he refines me into a new image, His own, reflective of Him like purified metal, to provide light and fire to the world.” First, let me say that this thought is so good and so deep I doubt it came from me originally. Probably some good teacher shared this thought and I wrote it down. I am so glad I did, because now I get to share it with you!

What is the difference between a destroying fire and a refining fire?



In scripture, God shows examples of both destroying fire and refining fire. Let's look at a few. First, the devouring or destroying fire:

***Numbers 11:1: And the people complained in the hearing of the LORD about their misfortunes, and when the LORD heard it, his anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp. (ESV)***

***Numbers 16:35: And fire came out from the LORD and consumed the 250 men offering the incense. (ESV)***

***Zechariah 12:6: “On that day I will make the clans of Judah like a blazing pot in the midst of wood, like a flaming torch among sheaves. And they shall devour to the right and to the left all the surrounding peoples, while Jerusalem shall again be inhabited in its place, in Jerusalem. (ESV)***

**Matthew 25:41:** "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (ESV)

**Revelation 19:20:** And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. (ESV)

**Revelation 21:8:** But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." (ESV)

What do these destroying fires have in common?

What are the differences?

Now let's look at the refining fire:

**Isaiah 48:9-11:** For my name's sake I defer my anger; for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another. (ESV)

**Proverbs 17:3** The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the LORD tests hearts. (ESV)

**Malachi 3:2-3** But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD. (ESV)

**Luke 3:16 John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. (ESV)**

**1 Corinthians 3:13 Each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.**

What do these passages have in common?

How are they different?

The passage I found to be most clarifying in reference to refining fire is the following, our core verse for this lesson:

**1 Peter 1:6-7 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (ESV)**

What is the stated result of testing/refining by fire, according to the above verse?

Now go back to the other refining fire verses and, where you can, circle the result that God has in mind. *Only circle where it is actually written out.* In the other passages, you may note in the margin whether/how you think the same result is expected, even if it's not spelled out.

What are some circumstances in your life that you would call refining fire?

How would you describe the connection between refining fire and glory to God?

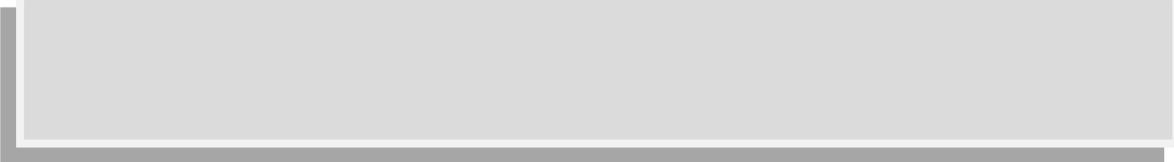
Why do you think God chooses to use this method to refine His followers?

Be honest. Do you think this is a fair or reasonable way for our loving heavenly father to promote growth in us?

In response to the last question, you may find the following verse helpful:

***John 15:1-27 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. (ESV)***

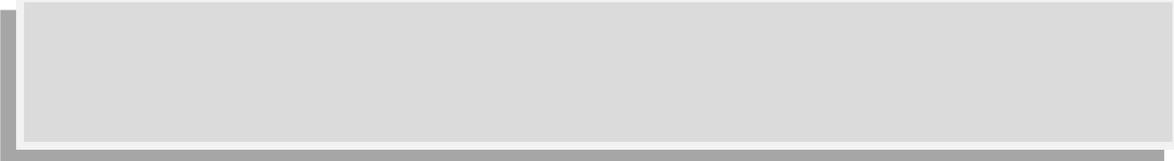
What do you think is the connection between our core verse for this lesson, 1 Peter 1:3-9 and John 15:1-27 (above)?



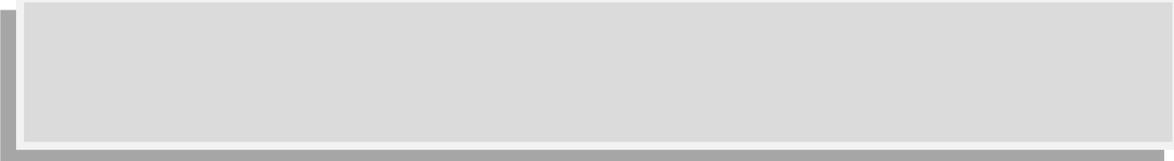
Bonus

Another way that God uses fire in scripture is to show Himself. When the God of all creation takes time in His Word to show Himself to us, we should pay attention. After each scripture, note what God is speaking to your heart. What is He showing about Himself in these examples? What comfort can we take from His character here, which never changes? How can these verses bless you even as you walk forward in the rest of your day today?

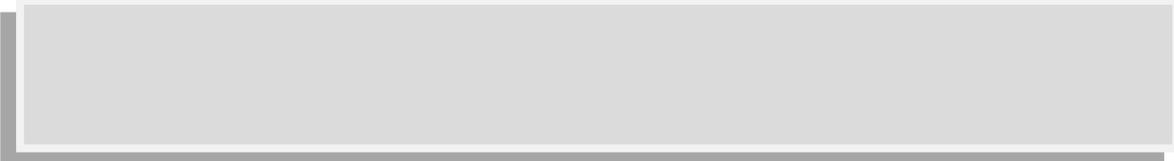
***Exodus 13:21 And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.***



***1 Kings 18:24 And you call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, he is God." And all the people answered, "It is well spoken."***



***Genesis 15:17 When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.***



***2 Chronicles 7:3 When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the ground on the***

***pavement and worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever."***

