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OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE

NO.267

PRESERVING OUR LIVES

Paul gave this blessing to the church, *“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (I Thes.5: 23)

Jesus explains it this way, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, ‘Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.’”* (Jn.12: 24-25)

We have all quoted these verses many times and as it is within our spiritual growth, we have understood these words at various stages of light. It was after Jesus taught that the corn of wheat must first die or it cannot bring fruit or multiply itself, that He continued by saying that if we hold onto our “soul” life, we will lose it.

Jesus was revealing that the Christ life is hid within the seed of our natural life. However, the seed of the natural life must die in order to release the Christ life that is hid within. Within the seed of a tomato is hid all the goodness of its fruit but until I plant that seed and let it decay and die in the ground, it will never release the life of the tomato. It is as simple as that.

It is easier to understand the process when we think of a tomato, but when we apply it to ourselves it becomes more difficult to grasp. Jesus explained this to Nicodemus, *“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God, that which is born of flesh is flesh, and that*

which is born of spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.” (Jn.3: 5-7)

We must first be born of the flesh but then we must lose the life of the flesh and be born of Spirit. This begins with accepting Jesus' sacrifice for our sins. But it must continue with a daily walk toward our daily death. Jesus told the rich young ruler, *“Take up thy cross daily and follow me.”*

This death is not the death of the grave, indeed one may go to the grave still holding on to the old life. This is the death of the self-serving nature of the man of flesh which must be consumed by the fire of the Spirit in an act of rebirth.

The nature of the soul man of flesh must die in order to release the Christ life within. Jesus was saying that the soul life **MUST DIE** to release the Christ life that is hid within. In another teaching, our Lord says, *“...how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? And then he will spoil the house.”* (Matt. 12:29) In order for the Spirit man to be released and take over our house, the man of flesh must first be bound and die.

One must first be born of water and then of the Spirit. When we were in Christ before the foundation of the world, we were spirit. We needed to be born of water (flesh) in order to give birth to the **NEW** creation of God in Christ.

The “psuche” or “soul” life is necessary in God's creation of the new Man. However it must die and go through the process of rebirth and growth. The

death of the self life BEGINS at the cross with Jesus as we reckon ourselves dead to sin. *“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (Rom.6: 11)

The life that we had in Christ from the foundation of the world, is spirit. It needs the earthen vessel. By itself, it cannot become the new, VISIBLE creation man that God is bringing forth in Christ.

Jesus is our Forerunner and He is our perfect example. He laid His “soul” life down in order to be raised as the new creation Man, and become the “Firstborn among many brethren.” *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be THE FIRSTBORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN.”* (Rom.8: 29)

When our Lord declared that it is absolutely necessary for us to hate, or do not prefer and cherish our soul life, He was saying that there is no other way to keep it unto eternal life. For us to become the new creation of God which is the visible man endowed with eternal life of Christ in the earth, we must not try to hold on to our old character traits. We must not “do it our way.”

Jesus was actually explaining how our transformation would take place. It is when we allow Him to burn up all our earthly desires and ambitions. It is when we offer our lives as a sacrifice that He consumes it. It is when the sacrifice is consumed that we find ourselves doing the perfect will of God and that we show forth our true new identity in Christ.

Our soul life has to be presented for a sacrifice that all the carnality that is within may be consumed and that we begin to be found as mature sons in Him. It was in the garden of Gethsemane that Jesus declared, *“My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death...”* (Matt.26: 38a)

Jesus was facing the great agony of the cross in His soul and body. But before He gave up the ghost, He cried with a loud voice, *“Father, into thy hands, I commend my spirit.”* (Lk.23: 46a)

As His Spirit went back to the Father, Jesus rejoiced and endured the cross for the joy that was set before Him. *“...Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame...”* (Heb.12: 2b)

And so now we come to the time that we must face our final cross with no regrets. The Word tells us that all men must die, but it also tells us that there are various kinds of death. There is the death of which man has no control and there is the death of the righteous. There is also the death of one who lays his or her self life down and willingly submits to God's fire.

Jesus, the pattern Son showed us that when He found Himself in the grave, the power of holiness raised Him unto new life. Jesus never saw corruption. This is the death that we submit ourselves to as daily we let this soul life fall into the ground and die.

If we love and cling to the arrangements of our life, we will lose this life to the grave. But if we give our life over to the will of God to become one with His Holy Spirit, we will come into life eternal. It is so simple and beautiful, yet it makes no sense to the carnal mind.

Is this done by going to many meetings or doing many studies in the Bible? Is it done by good charitable works or by piously spending hours on our knees pleading with God? No. These things may have had a place in our growth for a time. But as we mature, we find ourselves moving away from all of these things and we are caught up to a much higher place.

We truly admire those who are led to do work among the needy; they have their reward. But we press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ which will eliminate poverty and suffering forever.

My experience tells me that all will be accomplished by being where God has placed us and letting Him pass us through the fire. We will find that the Spirit will do these things for us. We do not have to try to figure them out. He is faithful and will

bring the necessary situations to accomplish these things in our lives. Our part is to be attentive to His moving and yield ourselves to Him.

As we walk with Him, raging storms will rise up within our souls, our rebellious, stubborn and angry nature will first try to resist Him, but as we yield ourselves entirely to Him, we will be delivered from the egotistic and death producing nature of our flesh man. We will find that by His mighty power, He will perform in minutes that which our weary souls have been struggling to do for years-Die to self-

PSALM SIXTY-SIX

David was jubilant as his Spirit was lifting up a song of praise unto His God. *“Make a joyful noise unto God, ALL YE LANDS..”* (Vs.1) He continued, *“ALL THE EARTH (people) shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing unto thy name. Selah.”* (Vs.4)

After exalting His God's name and His mighty works, the Psalmist brings things down to a personal level. *“For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place. I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows.”* (Vs.10-13)

David knew that God gives the lesson first, then the test. He cries out, *“Thou hast tried us as silver is tried.”* Silver is a type of our redemption in Christ and silver is tried by fire. There is much more that follows our first repentance and taking our Lord as Savior.

Malachi writes, *“But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like a fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.”* (Mal.3: 2-3) The sons of Levi were the Old

Testament “priesthood.” Today the Levitical priesthood has been replaced by the Melchizedek priesthood and so those who are called to be kings and priests are being purified and purged even as silver and gold.

BURNT OFFERINGS

We always remind ourselves that God is love, but do we remember that our God is a consuming fire? *“For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.”* (Deu.9: 24)

When Israel was passing over the Jordan to go possess nations greater and mightier than themselves, we read, *“Understand therefore this day, that the Lord thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the Lord hath said unto thee.”* (Deu. 9: 3)

In the Old Testament, God's people were going up against a literal enemy, to possess a literal land of promise. But for us in the New Testament, these things are symbols of the land and its spiritual enemies that the Holy Spirit leads us to conquer.

Jesus Christ is He who has gone before us and who, by His Spirit, is leading us to possess the Land of this new creation that is being birthed within. Spirit, Soul and Body is the Land that we are called to possess. This land has been occupied for thousand of years by powers that have kept us out into the realm of darkness and death. These powers are the natural carnal ways, traditions and teachings by which we have learned to order our lives. But our Lord Jesus has gone before us and prepared the way for us to conquer all the powers that have claimed possession of our vessels.

In the inner man of our souls and spirits, we have already entered into the promises that are given to us in Christ, but now the time is upon us when the entire land must be conquered. *“For he (Christ) must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be DESTROYED is death....And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto*

him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.” (I Cor.15: 25,26,28)

As we enter our land we find that all that was of the old has to go. None of the things that have guided us in the realm of the dead can remain. None of the old emotions that plagued us can stay. The character traits that we inherited from our natural parents are no longer acceptable. God's Holy Spirit leads us bringing us face to face with the things that must go as he is causing them to surface through the events of our daily lives.

Paul said it eloquently, *“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” (Eph.4: 22-24)*

And again Paul tells the church, *“Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.”(Col.3: 9-10)*

The old man is that nature of the first Adam that works in all of us and keeps us in deception. We may have never been in a bar and we may be very nice law abiding citizens, but we are still deceived in all our ways and must be renewed or reborn after the image of the very One who created us in the beginning.

This brings us to the “burnt offering.” We have seen our needs and we find ourselves in a place where we desire with all our hearts to be renewed and to truly be delivered from the old nature that keeps plaguing us. But the best we can do is to desire it and bring our true yearnings to God.

And so we do just that, but often we find ourselves frustrated because even though we “choose” to forgive and forget what others have done to us, we find that the memory keeps coming back like a song... It is like a tape playing in our heads over and over again when we least expect it...This has been my experience over the years and perhaps yours as

well...

However, today, I want to shout the good news...Our God is a consuming fire and He is coming suddenly to His temple to consume our sacrifices and burnt offerings! He is answering by fire, and burning up forever all the things that defile in our temple and that we have been helpless to destroy. He has already begun this work, and we know that when He begins a thing, He does not stop until it is finished. Hallelujah!

ELIJAH AND THE FALSE PROPHETS

There came a day in the life of the prophet Elijah when he had a mighty job to do. In his time, the land was teeming with false prophets. Does that sound familiar to us today?

God gave him a task that must have felt enormous, yet because it was God's task, he went about accomplishing it without a hitch. The purpose of the trial was to prove to the people that God is truly THE TRUE and LIVING GOD who answers by fire.

This was the acid test then, and it is the acid test now. The Spirit of Elijah is alive and well in our midst and all the false prophets, the false doctrines, the fears and superstitions that have been taught as God's truth will be exposed. They will not be exposed by pointing the finger; they will be obsolete when the fire of God destroys them.

This has already happened among us. Many of the things I was once led to believe have no place in me anymore. There is no way that anyone could persuade me to worship in front of a statue for my safe keeping or that I would believe that I will be lifted up bodily in a rapture in the sky.

There is no way one could make me endorse the doctrines of fear and terror that are still being taught in Babylon. Oh! Yes I fear God and I see His power to bring down all that man has accomplished and claimed as its own inventions and good works. Yes, I see the fires of hell all over creation today but I do not believe that when our God gave His only begotten Son to save this world which He so loves that it was only for a few! Yes, there is an order in God

and not all are “firstfruits” but be assured that the hearts of the firstfruits are set just as the heart of the Firstborn among many brethren is set.

In his day, Elijah had to contend with the wickedest king that Israel ever had. King Ahab was married to the sorceress Jezebel and the worship of Baal was rampant among the people. Just as it is today, false prophets were striving in the land and God's prophets had been hid in caves to preserve their lives.

The day came when the Spirit of the Lord arose in Elijah and he confronted the people saying, “...*How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.*” (I Kgs.18: 21) There was such a mixture among the people that they were not sure who they were following. They needed to be set right.

Elijah was going to give the people the acid test. He was going to show them how to discern who is the true God and who is the impostor. So he called all the false prophets- four-hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of the grove- altogether eight-hundred and fifty false prophet versus ONE true prophet of God.

God never works with many but this seemed ridiculous! However when it is God's work, *nothing is impossible*. So the scene was set. Each one would present the same sacrifice to their God and the God who answers BY FIRE AND CONSUMES THE SACRIFICE WOULD BE THE TRUE GOD.

So each camp made ready a bullock. They cut it in pieces and laid it upon the wood of the altar with no fire under it and they called upon the name of their gods. This is exactly where we are today. The bullock upon the wood of the altar is the old sinful and mortal nature that we are as humanity. We are waiting on our God to come and consume this old nature and bring us into the eternal image and life of the Son of God. All the prophets assembled represent the many sects and doctrines and religions that are in the land under the name of Christ or other names as well.

Because of darkness and immaturity, even those who have been separated from man's denominations are still fumbling not knowing what to believe. This is all part of our seeking but I see the day at hand when the proof of the pudding will surely be in the eating. For it is when we notice that what we have been is no longer what we are that we know that our God is consuming our sacrifice.

It is when we see that the things that used to rile us up hold no more power over us, that we know our God has consumed that sacrifice. It is when we see that our hearts no longer feel lifted up above those who have not yet seen the Light as we have, that we know our God has consumed our sacrifice. It is when we know that the unforgiveness in our hearts are truly now completely gone, that we know our God's fire has consumed our bullock.

As it was in the days of Elijah, today our God is a consuming fire. The prophets of Baal were given the entire day to prove their gods. They cut themselves and called upon their gods from morning to night, “*O Baal hear us! But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.*” (I Kgs.18: 26) “*And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.*” (Vs.28)

What a scene this was. Surely they were expecting some answers and results. Is this not a picture of our own self efforts trying to move the hand of God to do our bidding? Is this not the way we pray and ask God to bring about the results we desire in this life? When will we learn that all our crying aloud and leaping upon the altars are not going to move the Hand of God?

Some of these things may have worked in the days of our spiritual youth, but as we mature, we know that it is the Name of Jesus that is the power of God's right hand. It is not saying and repeating the name “Jesus” as we may have done in the past; it is coming into that very same nature and image.

So Baal's prophets were given the entire day to try their hand at bringing the fire down unto their sacri-

fice, but it was all for naught. One might say, this was about false gods, like Baal at the time, it is not about us. True, but until we know the true God, all we have had were our imaginations of who He is. Even if we have read the Bible from cover to cover, we cannot know God until He reveals Himself to us. God reveals Himself in the Son, *“When you have seen Me, Jesus said, you have seen the Father.”*

And the Son is the One who is revealing Himself in us. Immature Christians are still waiting for Jesus to appear literally in the sky, but the truth is that He reveals Himself in the Spirit from within. This is His appearing. We are seeing Him more and more clearly each day. We are feeling His presence within at every turn.

He is the One who is leading us unto our full salvation. *“Even so it is that Christ, having been offered to take upon Himself and bear as a burden the sins of many once and once for all, will appear a second time, not to carry any burden of sin nor to deal with sin, but to bring to full salvation (perfection) those who are eagerly, constantly and patiently waiting for and expecting Him.”* (Heb.9: 28 Ampl.)

Indeed, He has spoken to our hearts and He is appearing each day, moment by moment to each one who is expecting Him. So we are not of those who are still putting all the promises in the future. And we are not of those who wait for Him to appear outwardly in the sky. We are of those who have received Him as He is in His Holy Spirit and now we are seeing that He has been swallowing our death and that His life has been formed in us.

The time has come for Him to be seen by us and in us. Christ the Son has come to marry His bride (body, church). As Paul speaks of the church as the bride, he adds, *“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”* (Eph.5: 30)

When Paul spoke of the man leaving his father and mother to be joined unto his wife, he said, *“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”* (Eph.5: 32)

Indeed Christ has left His Father and has become a

new creation man in the earth, to be joined to His wife the church, which is also His body in the earth.

So the false prophets, the false ways of worship and all these things have had the entire day to prove themselves as true, and they have failed. The sacrifices of our own good works and penances along with our calling out in despair for our God to move for us have come to an end.

The day of judgment has come and God is consuming our sacrifices by fire. Elijah certainly prepared well. He poured buckets of water upon the bullock until the water ran down from the altar and filled the trench that was dug all around it.

The bullock we offer is our self nature, our bodies. *“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)

All the deeds of the body have been drenched in the water of the Word. *Cleansed and sanctified with the washing of water by the word..*” As the Word has been working in us, we become fit to present our bodies as living sacrifices. Yes, we are not yet perfect as He is, but we can be perfect for who we are today.

When God introduced Job to Satan, He said, *“...hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?”* (Job 1: 8) Was Job perfect as Jesus is perfect?

No, Job was not perfect as Jesus is perfect, but Job was perfect for his day. Today, as we have the Word and the Spirit leading us, we are perfect for our day- unto the “Perfect Day.” This is the “Path of the Just” as spoken by the wise man, *“But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day,”* (Prov.4: 18)

So in the “perfection” that we have attained today, we are able to present our body a living sacrifice. And if so we can expect that our God will come and

consume our sacrifice for He is the God that answers by fire.

This is how we move from glory to glory, from perfection to perfection until we are exactly as He is. *“But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”* (II Cor.4: 18)

WHEN THE LORD COMES

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” (II Pet.3: 10)

The fulness of the glory of the Lord is at hand. We are not talking about the lone and lowly Lord Jesus who came to earth some two thousand years ago. We are talking about the Lord of glory who is arising from the midst of His body prepared for Him.

Before Jesus left the earth, He prayed to the Father, *“Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.”* (Jn.17: 1-2)

Jesus was about to do something special for those whom God had given Him. He wanted to give them “eternal life.” While He was here on earth, He could not do that. Jesus was asking the Father to send Him to the cross and through resurrection, give unto Him the glory of being the Head of a new creation.

He yearned to triumph over death and hell and to become the One who “liveth and was dead!” His heart's desire was to receive His brethren into eternal life. He had promised them, *“And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”* (Jn.14: 3)

Jesus, the Firstborn Son of a new creation has a great mission to fulfill. In order for Him to bring all

of creation to the Father, that God may be all in all, He brings the firstfruits into His own express image receiving them unto Himself.

We are the laborers of the end. Those who have come before us have paved the way for us to finish the work. It has taken over two thousand years for His church to be where she is now. At this time, it is clear that the momentum is picking up and He is finishing the work quickly.

*“Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom you seek, shall **suddenly** come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come saith the Lord of hosts.”* (Mal.1: 1)

The Lord's messenger to His elect is the Holy Spirit. And as Jesus promised, He has been speaking and revealing the Lord to us from within.

Surely His Messenger has been preparing the way before Him. He has led us daily in the paths that we should follow. He has kept “the cross” before our eyes always.

He has fed us with the pure words of life from the tree of Life. He has taken us through the fires of purification. He has chastised us as sons and made straight paths for our feet. He has been a Husband, a Comforter, a Leader, a Lover and a Rod of iron that would not bend to our every whim.

He has been our Lord and Master and has never failed us. He has been the Angel of the Lord, His Spirit, but now He is opening the door to let the King enter in all His glory. When we see Him we will be like Him for we shall see Him as He is IN US, the new creation of God. We are His Holy temple and He is our God.

He has made us kings and priests unto our God. We are to be His government in the earth. Men have tried to organize the new order by copying the old order of priesthood but it is all in vain. The old is being burnt up, nothing of it will remain. All of these “elements” are melting in the fire of His appearing.

“Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.” (II Pet. 3: 12)

The heavens speak of the governing systems that have been established by carnal men. Jesus said that when we look into the natural sky we can tell what the weather will be the next day. Now we look into the spiritual heavens of today and we can see that everything is being shaken in world systems. By the Spirit we know what is coming next.

“Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwell righteousness.” (Vs.13) The new heavens are the ways of Christ that will rule the earth. His kings and priests are the replacement...but not as man has done in the past.

The elements melting with fervent heat are the old arrangements of laws, societies and values that have been ruling men. The word “elements” in the Greek means “fundamental arrangements.” Peter is saying that all that men have arranged and decreed are being consumed by God's fire.

Paul called man's order, “the beggarly elements.” *“But now, after that ye have known God or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?”* (Gal.4: 9)

After the old order was abolished, the church was turning again to what it had been delivered from. We have seen this happen over and over again as being delivered from one organized group, the saints plunged right back into a similar or even worse bondage. Some of the groups that claim higher truths have also brought the saints into a worse bondage than they were in before. At the end, all of their elements are melting with fervent heat.

Our goal is to SEE HIM AS HE IS and be like Him. We can no longer follow any man or woman no matter how anointed they are. We follow God's Word. God's ministers are to be heard, but it is the Word they speak that the Spirit makes real to us.

And it is the Word that we follow, not the person that speaks or writes it.

James declares that we are tempted or drawn away and enticed by the lust that is in our heart. Be not deceived, the carnal nature in us is filled with lust. Lust is any kind of a strong appetite or want that demands to be satisfied.

Lust is not only sexual, we can lust for food, drink and also for the feel of spiritual gratification. We can get a “high” as we rejoice with fellow Christians singing and dancing to the rhythmic sounds of loud music. We desire so much to be coddled and praised by our children and loved ones. All these things have a place in our lives but they must never come first and draw us away from the call of God on our lives. It is certain that, as mature sons, our affections and priorities are being tested in ALL things.

This is what Jesus meant when He said, *“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”* (Matt.10: 37)

This is a hard word. He did not say that we should not love them, He said that we should not love them more than Him. One might declare that they do not love them more than God, but when the acid test comes we hear all kinds of groaning and moaning about how ungrateful children are and how hurt we feel when they leave us and ignore us. This is a fiery test that sons must pass.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But MADE HIMSELF of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, HE HUMBLLED HIMSELF, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Phil.2:5-8)
And He is our example!

Because of His love, *Jackie Caporaso*