

Pastors Thoughts of the Week

Send the Fire!

I am come to send fire on the earth Luke 12:49

The superstitious Romans alternately worshipped Vulcan, the god of fire, as a benefactor, while at the same time fearing him as a malefic destroyer. Their deluded worship did little to prevent Vesuvius from spreading its lavatic destruction to the libidinous citizens of Pompeii.

From childhood, we all beheld fire with a mingled reaction of fear and fascination. Fire is a phenomenon created by God to serve both positive and negative functions. By fire, we heat our homes, light the darkness, cook our meals, and drive the engines of machines and vehicles. But unconfined fire presents the possibility of irreparable damage. In a spiritual context, we must consider the awesome power of fire and its frequent use in scripture.

The first mention of fire is seen in the flaming sword that sealed the entrance to the Edenic paradise lost. Fire and brimstone issued forth from the Almighty in consuming judgment at Sodom and the cities of the plain. Moses received his commission as the emancipator of the exiled Jews while God spoke to him through the burning of an unconsumed bush. That same devouring fire sat atop Sinai as the Lord wrote the engraved law in tables of stone. The pillar of fire provided light, leadership, and protection as the children of Israel traversed the wilderness. At Carmel, Elijah summoned fire from on high to consume the sacrifice. When Daniel receives his glimpse of glory he said God's "throne was like the fiery flame" Truly our God is a "consuming fire".

God promised Noah that the world would never again suffer a diluvial cataclysm. The second destruction will be conflagratory. "The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." And worse than the destruction of the material earth is the "everlasting destruction of the spiritually lost. We must be solemnly reminded that the unsaved will meet with a fiery eternity.

But fire also has its positive connotations. The Holy Spirit descends at Pentecost in cloven tongues of fire. It was an outward attestation to an inward baptism of fire that exhilarated the inert disciples to go forth and fulfill their great commission. Jeremiah's heart burned with the unquenchable flame until he could no longer stay. He burst forth the chamber with heart aglow and lips bursting with the prophetic word of God. The two Emmaus disciples felt that same heartburn.

"God's Soldier" is how they referred to William Booth. He earnestly prayed:

'To make our weak hearts strong and brave,
Send the fire!

To live a dying world to save,
Send the fire!

O see us on thy altar lay
Our lives, our all, this very day,
To crown the offering now we pray,
Send the fire!

Have a blessed day,

Pastor