

"Tending The Fire"

Leviticus 6:8-13

Illustration: Charles J. Connick was a craftsman who became famous for his stained glass windows. He tells about a time when one of his young apprentices came to him and asked if he could borrow his tools. Connick asked him why, and the young apprentice said, "I'm very dissatisfied with my work. I'd like to use your tools to see if I can do better." In about a week Connick went back and said, "How are things going?" The young man replied, "Not so good, sir." One of the older artists in the workshop overheard the conversation and interrupted to say to the young man, "You not only need the tools of the master; you need his fire!"

These priests had many tasks, but among them stood one supreme duty.

The fire on the altar, the eternal flame on which sacrifices were offered to God, was to be tended with care. Other duties could be postponed. Other tasks could be deferred. But the fire on the altar was to be kept burning because it was the visible symbol of God's presence among his people.

I. Spiritual Application.

A. We are far removed from those ancient days and customs. We don't worship with burnt offerings. We don't maintain an eternal flame in our churches

1. But the physical of the Old Testament brings spiritual truth to us today.

a. For the Christian, the inner flame of devotion to God, which represents the consecration of our lives to his service, burns on the altar of the heart. That inner fire of devotion must burn brightly if the outer life of the Christian is going to reflect, in word and deed, the light of God in the world. Whatever else the person may choose to do or not to do, the sacred fire on the altar of the human heart must be tended and kept burning. It must not go out.

VS. 8 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 9 "Command Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the law of the burnt offering: The burnt offering shall be on the hearth upon the altar all night until morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it. WASN'T A SUGGESTION!

2. What are you doing to maintain the fire that God has placed inside of you because just like it was the priest's job to keep the fire ablaze at all times we as believers share the same responsibility.

B. The Bible uses fire as a metaphor.

Matthew 3:11 11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

1. Baptism was an outward sign of commitment. To be effective, it had to be accompanied by an inward change of attitude leading to a changed life—the work of the Holy Spirit. John said that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. This looked ahead to Pentecost (Acts 2), when the Holy Spirit would be sent by Jesus in the form of tongues of fire, empowering his followers to preach the Good News.

Luke 12:49 49 "I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!

a. The nature of fire is that it needs fuel to continue to burn. What are you keeping your fire burning with?

Psalm 104:1-4 1 Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty, 2 Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain. 3 He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters, Who makes the clouds His chariot, Who walks on the wings of the wind, 4 Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire.

2. If your ministering for God or have a desire then the fire of God must be burning bright within us its our life source its what radiate through us and shines forth for the world to see.

II. Dangers To The Fire.

A. The 2nd law of thermodynamics it that everything in life digresses. Over time a fire if left unattended will burn out to a pile of ash.

1. **EXHAUSTION;** can extinguish the flames of revival.

a. No fire can burn without fuel. The priests in ancient Israel had to ensure a ready supply of wood, lest the flames be exhausted by a lack of fuel.

b. Many Christians struggle against spiritual exhaustion. Their spiritual exhaustion really comes from physical exhaustion.

c. We need rest sometimes. Story of Louie Paulino: you can't be effective in the battle unless your well rested.

d. There are at least twenty-seven instances where Christ insisted that time be taken to get away from the burdens of the work. Even God on the 7th day rested.

A powerful and gifted preacher of the last century, Robert Murray McCheyenne, died before the age of thirty, a physically broken man. Never strong in physique, he drove himself mercilessly in his work. A year before his death, with signs of his impending collapse clear, he remarked to a friend, "God gave me a horse to ride and a message to deliver. Alas, I have killed the horse and will not be able to deliver the message."

2. **NEGLECT;** When people fall away from salvation/Ministry/Calling/Destiny, it doesn't happen in an instant. They don't say, "I'm not going to have any more to do with God, the Bible, or the Church." No, it doesn't happen instantaneously. It happens slowly, through disregard of the inner life, to the inner fire.

a. Their priorities change the fire or tending it isn't as important anymore they miss service they don't pray they stop reading their bible they stop outreaching they neglect the fire and sooner or later it dies out.

VS. 9 "Command Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the law of the burnt offering: The burnt offering shall be on the hearth upon the altar all night until morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it.'

3. **COMPROMISE;** When deeply held convictions are thrown out the window, the flame of inner devotion to God is dampened.

a. Our choices and decisions can either keep the fire raging or it can stomp it out or maybe its gradual little choices here and there. If you start compromising on the little things it makes it easier to compromise on the important things.

i) Compromise can quench the flame, dimming both the vision and the desire for God. But a renewing dedication to God can rekindle the fire. This is the character of the God we serve.

III. Tending The Fire.

A. If were going to keep the fire burning then we like the priest of the temple are going to have to follow specific instruction.

VS. 10-12 10 And the priest shall put on his linen garment, and his linen trousers he shall put on his body, and take up the ashes of the burnt offering which the fire has consumed on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar. 11 Then he shall take off his garments, put on other garments, and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place. 12 And the fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not be put out.

1. This is a picture of us coming to an altar in humility removing the ashes of past decisions, maybe failures, or mistakes.

a. Renewing a decision to take God at his word and letting him restore renew and rejuvenate you in your spirit once again.

B. Maybe you find yourself here in this place this morning the fire isn't what it used to be. Maybe the voice of condemnation has set in and the enemy has lied to you and told you it will never be like it used to.

1. That's not what God thinks.

Matthew 12:20 *20 A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench, Till He sends forth justice to victory;*

a. Jesus cares and what is going to rekindle the fire on the altar of our heart is if and only if God breathes upon it but we have to let him breath upon it. When we make this choice God becomes our advocate.

2. The condition of your fire is important to God in our text 3 times it commands that the fire shall not go out do you hold that same conviction? What condition is your fire in this morning?