

The Refiner's Fire

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[0:00] Malachi 3 verse 2 talks about the refiner's fire. It says this, Malachi 3 verse 2. The refiner's fire. Let's pray.

Our Lord God, as we open your word together, still our hearts, help us to focus upon your word and let it be such that it will minister to our hearts today, Lord, that you would be glorified in every life. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. We're in Malachi 3 verse 2. And it's saying here that the Lord Jesus is coming back to planet Earth. And it says this, it says, When he comes, he will be like fire and like soap.

The refiner's fire, it refines, it purifies the soap, it cleanses, it cleans all the dirt away. The Lord Jesus is coming to separate the righteous from the wicked.

God's people need have no fear when Christ comes, like the fire and the soap. The refiner's fire does not destroy the metal, it purifies it.

[1:37] It burns away everything else. The rubbish, real metal, has nothing to fear from the fire. Fire takes the impurity away from the metal.

It does not destroy the metal. It just helps make it shine through more bright and true. The refiner's fire. What about the soap?

Clothing has no reason to worry about soap. The soap does not destroy it. It whitens the cloth. The Lord Jesus comes, he cleans, he purifies. The Lord Jesus does a refining work in the heart, within the life of the believer.

He makes us pure and holy and whiter than snow. How God can act as a refiner's fire in our lives? I want to encourage you to let the fire burn.

Number one, be ready. The fire is coming. It is going to happen. Isaiah didn't say, if you pass through the fire, he said, when you pass through the fire, God will be with you.

[2:47] The fire will come, from time to time. We may not like it, but it is good for us. Secondly, be real.

Be a real Christian. Be Jesus. The refining is done when all the impurities rise to the surface and are burnt away.

The fire takes away all the rubbish, all that is false, the unreal, the pretend, all the masks that we wear, all the make-believe, all that is fake and phony, all that is pretense, the facade, the games we play.

He takes it away. God wants to burn it all up, to burn it all away. And he wants to take away all that is of self and flesh and of our own making, of our own invention.

The Lord wants to do his refining work. He wants to do his perfecting work in us. And when his work is fully done, we will look and act like the Lord Jesus.

[3:53] Our precious Lord. We will be like him in doing what he would do, in being the kind of person he was with with others, in being a real Christian, being Jesus to them.

The refiner looks into that open furnace, at that glowing metal within the pot, and he can see his image reflected back, from the molten metal.

That's what Jesus wants to do with us. The Lord Jesus knows when his purifying work is done in us. When he takes a look at us, he can see plainly his own image reflected back. And that's what he is working on, to purify us until we are like him.

Then we can endure the day of his coming, and stand when he appears. We will be changed into his likeness. So, be refined.

[4:54] The refining process purifies it, makes us pure. Becoming pure and godly can mean discomfort. There's a fear and trembling aspect to go through.

The fire consumes us. Our faith will become even more consuming, more focused, more on fire. And if we want the refiner's fire to do its work within our lives, it's going to mean we're willing to give up all that we are, and let him consume us.

There will be no room left for disobedience, and selfishness. He will have all that we are. The refining strengthens. The fire will make us stronger.

One frustrated oppressor of Christianity, in the former Soviet Union, once said this, Religion is like a nail. The harder you hit it, the deeper it goes into the wood.

And the furnace of affliction that comes our way doesn't destroy us, it refines us. It makes us stronger. And we are either purified by the flame that is Christ, or we are burnt by that flame.

[6:02] The question is, are you real metal? Are you the real deal? Are you willing for God's fire to melt you and warn you, and take away all the coldness, and deadness, and selfishness, and make you alive and on fire for him?

As someone said about trials and tribulations, of troubled pain and persecution, no matter how bad it is, we can know that it is temporary.

The difficult stages of life that bring a refining for us are the making of us. As James writes in James 1, verses 2 to 3, My brethren, count it all joy!

When you fall into diverse temptations, he says, when you have these different trials, count it all joy, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

It's been said that the way of this world is to praise dead saints and persecute living ones. If you're facing tough times for your faith, be encouraged, be stirred, be made bolder, more faithful, God will bless you for it.

[7:24] God is preparing a people for heaven. Are you willing to let him have his way with you? God sometimes does a pruning work in order to remove that dead wood.

I could do a bit of that in my garden at the moment. The dead wood. And he removes, our heavenly gardener, removes that dead wood. He gets the shears out. He removes that dead wood from our lives.

Our weaknesses, our sin, our wrong attitudes and values. He wants to bring an increased fruitfulness into our lives. So that pruning is going to help us to grow. Sometimes he has to first prune and shape us to take us through the fire, to walk with us through the fire and make us trust him more than ever before.

The purifying work, the purifying fire, it may not cure our bodies, save our jobs, get our kids off drugs or bring world peace. We may have a long way yet in the wilderness before we reach the promised land, but our hearts begin to sing with joy and praise.

It won't be long. 1 Peter 1 verses 6-7 It says, Wherein, of trials, wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold, that perisheth.

[8:56] though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Let the fire burn, that in its blaze we shall see at last the reflection of the glory of God in the face of our maker.

The question is, is he really Lord? God is sufficient. He has, he is all that we really need. And let us learn to lean upon him through the time of refining.

Get back that zeal, that passion, that passionate love for Christ, the core truths, what really count, what matters. And let everything else go up in smoke.

Be willing to shed your blood, your sweat, your tears. Be willing to be extended and expended. Be willing to be misunderstood and maligned. Be willing to be hated and harassed.

[10:05] Let everything else burn away. Let your pride be burnt away. Let denomination be burnt away. Let your pet peeves and pickiness be burnt away.

Have we surrendered to his refining fire? Have we given our lives over to him? Have we let him burn up and burn up the dross, the rubbish?

The suffering comes first, then the glory. The wilderness comes first, then the ministry. The dying must come first, then the vitality.

And life. When we realize that maybe we're going through the refiner's fire, it should encourage us and stir our hearts and prompt us to greater faithfulness, to stronger service, to deeper sacrifice. It's no time to despair or retreat. It is a time to advance. Be ready. The fire is coming. Be real. A real Christian.

[11:08] Be Jesus. Be a real Christian. Be like our Lord. Let the fire burn such that his image will be seen shining forth from your life.

Be refined. Let the purity and power of Christ shine out of your life as you experience that purging and that strengthening that he can bring. Let's go to prayer.

Lord, we love you and thank you for the truth that you are coming again. and you will be as the refiner's fire, as the fullest soap. Lord, we thank you for that picture of that purging work, of that cleansing work.

Lord, that washing that deep down within can happen as we trust you as you save us and Lord, you sanctify us. You make us more like yourself. Help us, Lord, to be encouraged in these things.

In your precious name, our Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen. Amen. Go forward in faith and stronger for him. No matter what fires your face, he will strengthen you.