

God's Fire: Refining Gold Week 2

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[0 : 00] What is going on? We know he is still in control. I asked last week if any of us enjoy suffering or going through difficult times in life.

And the simple answer is, well, no, of course not. None of us enjoy going through difficult times. But understanding what James tells us in the book by his name, we understand that the trials and the troubles and the tribulations and the things we go through have a reason and have a purpose. We know that the trials and the troubles and the tribulations we go through can help us be more prepared to persevere, to be more prepared to be able to go through the things that come into our life with patience, with endurance, and be able to bring glory to God, to knock off the rough edges, and to purify those things in our lives that ought not to be.

Experiencing what the Bible calls the refining fire of God can be difficult, but it's a necessary part of life.

Matthew Henry, in his commentary, teaches us that Christ by his gospel shall purify and reform his church, and by his spirit working with it shall regenerate and cleanse particular souls.

[1 : 39] For to this end he gave himself for the church, listen to this, That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, and according to Titus 2.14, To purify to himself a peculiar people or a people that belonged to himself.

So the big idea of today's message is this, by being refined by God's holy fire, It's a good thing for us.

Being refined by God as he allows us to go through the refining process in life, it's necessary to root out all the junk that's part of our lives.

Because we're all human beings, and we all are typically self-centered. We tend to be self-secure. And God wants to take all of that and wants us to become completely dependent upon him. So let's take a look, first of all, at what Job said about his trials.

[2 : 58] Now we know when we talk about trials, we think about Job. When we think about some of the worst things that could happen to a human being, we think about all the things that Job went through.

Losing his crops, losing his flocks, losing his children, losing his health. All of these things were very, very difficult for Job.

But notice what Job says in Job 23 and verse number 10. Job 23 and in verse number 10, Job said, But he, speaking of God, God the Father, he says, But he knows the way that I take.

And I want us to pay particular attention to this next phrase of Job's. He says, When he has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.

God burns away all that which is unholy in our lives so that he can develop us for his purpose. And God does have a purpose for our lives.

[4 : 10] God has a purpose for your life. Now, what is God doing when he allows us to go through trials and testing and difficult times and we go through grief in our life?

If we allow him, what God is doing is God is producing character in our life that is worth more than gold.

It's worth more than rubies, more than diamonds. Our character, our reflection of the life of Jesus Christ in our life is worth so much more than gold.

Look at what Job said in 23 verse number 10. Think about your own troubles.

While you're going through them, are you thinking about this? You know, God knows where I'm going. And when he is done with me, I'm going to come out just like gold.

[5 : 27] That typically does not come into our thinking when we're going through a difficult time. But Job, even though Job was not privy to the conversation that God had with Satan, he didn't know

what was going on behind the scenes.

He just knew that God was in control and he trusted God. He said, God knows where I'm going. And when he's done with me, I'm going to come out more precious.

I'm going to come out more valuable to him than I was before. God knows where he's going. And when he takes us through those fiery trials in our life, that which refines us, he wants to remove pride.

He wants to remove self-centeredness. He wants to remove our self-will, our sense of independence. And he wants us to make us more useful as he builds his kingdom.

Think about precious metals. When they are in creation, when they are in nature, when before they become that beautiful necklace or that ring or whatever, they're not valuable, they're not useful in their initial state.

[6 : 50] It takes the refiner. It takes the process of taking that ore and breaking it down and putting it through the fire and refining it. And it comes out as silver or gold or platinum or all these other metals that that are refined in the fire, just like we saw in the video last week.

The goal that God is developing in our lives is a refined character. It's a purified faith. The goal God is referring to is the nature of Christ that is produced in our life.

Not the big ministries that we see on TV. It's not that we're going to come out as gold and we're going to be flashy and shiny. No, he's talking about that nature of Christ that is going to be revealed in us as he does that.

And in times of crisis, where does God want our eyes fixed, our attention fixed? Talk to me this morning. Where does he want our eyes to be fixed when we're going through a problem?

On him, exactly. But all too often, where is our focus? It's just like Peter when he was walking on the water and the waves got rough and the wind was howling.

[8 : 09] And Peter took his eyes off of Christ and he put them on his circumstances. And that's when he began to sink. And so God wants our eyes fixed upon him in times of crisis.

He wants us to fix our focus on him in those times of adversity. And as I said before, don't waste your problems. Don't waste your problems.

In times of crisis, we need to take advantage of this opportunity for God to develop godly character within us. In a book a number of years ago that John Maxwell wrote, *Failing Forward*, he says, When you fall down, when you fail, when you're on the floor, if you will, he says, Pick something up on your, take something with you on your way up.

Meaning, learn something from it. Don't let your failure just be a failure. Allow your failure to make you better. Learn something from it. Learn something from our trials.

Allow God to develop character. Allow God to remove the unholy stuff that's in our life. Allow God to knock off the rough edges when we're going through a difficult time.

[9 : 24] Or maybe when we get rebuked or rebuffed and someone corrects us. And all too often what happens is we respond or we respond negatively when that happens.

And we say, Why am I going through this? No, this shouldn't be. Instead, let's learn from it. Let God knock off the rough edges. Let God remove those impurities in our life.

Allow God to test your faith. See what happens when God tests us? He stretches us. And when he stretches us, when we go through a difficult time, do you realize that we don't go back to where we were before the trouble?

We are tested and we are stretched. And we don't go back to the way we were before. If we allow God to have his way, we come out the other end stronger.

Just like going into the gym. Just like going out and walking. And when you are working on your cardiovascular system and you're breathing.

[10 : 31] The more you do it, the stronger you get. The more you do it, the more you push your body, the stronger you become. And it's that way with the trials in our life as well.

God wants us to be able to persevere and endure through the tribulation. See, we need to embrace God for finding fire with expectancy. Just like Job did.

Job was going through some pretty difficult stuff. And he said, God, you know where I'm going. But when you're done with me, I'm going to come forth just like gold.

Hold on to that truth while you're going through the trouble and the trial and the problem and the tribulation. And you'll come forth as gold. So what God is wanting to do is through his refining process, he wants to refine our character and make us more like Jesus Christ.

And the second thing is we've got to remember it's a process. You know, we don't come into the Christian life. We don't begin to follow Jesus, trust Christ as our Savior, become a part of the family of God.

[11 : 38] And all of a sudden we come polished and ready like shining gold or like that diamond.

When diamonds are found in nature, they're rough. They don't have all the beautiful facets like what might be in your diamond ring.

No, they have to be taken and processed and cut. And that cutting process, when it's done by a jeweler, is very, very precise and is done for a purpose.

And it makes that gem more precious. It makes that diamond more precious. So it is a process. And also the process that formed the diamond didn't happen overnight as well.

It was all the pressures that God used when this earth was going through a difficult process. And I think a lot of it had to do with the flood. And I'm not going, I don't understand all the science behind it.

[12 : 35] But it was the pressure that formed the precious diamond. Let's look at 1 Peter 5. It is a process. 1 Peter 5.

And verse number 10. But may the God of all grace, who called us to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus.

What does it say next? God called us. He called us to his eternal glory by and through Jesus Christ that after you have suffered.

What? A while. After you've suffered a while, he might perfect and establish and strengthen and settle you.

The refining fire is a process. God improving us. God taking off the rough edges. God taking away the impurities in our life is a process.

[13 : 39] It is the growth process. It is the process of going through difficult times. The pressure of life. Allowing God to mold us. To shape us.

And I know I'm mixing metaphors. And I'm mixing analogies. But all of these are what the Bible tells us. He gives us to kind of give us a picture of what God is doing in our life.

And here's an example of the process. Last week we saw the video of how in modern times of how the refiner's fire is used to remove the impurities and the dross from metals like silver and gold.

Let's look at the stages that the process goes through. The first stage is the breaking. The first stage is the refiner breaks up the natural ore.

The refiner breaks up the natural ore. Take a look at Proverbs chapter 20. Or excuse me, Jeremiah 23, 29. Jeremiah 23, 29.

[14 : 50] God says, is not my word like a fire? Says the Lord. You see a pattern here? The refiner's fire. The Bible talks about fire and what it can accomplish.

Is not my word like a fire? Says the Lord. And then he shifts to a different analogy. And he said, it's also like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces.

And I think that's part of that first part of the refining process. Excuse me. The person going after the ore finds the ore and he takes it and he breaks it into pieces.

And then the second stage, the crucible. The refiner places unrefined metal into a crucible. The refiner takes those broken pieces of ore that has been broken down into more manageable pieces. Takes that crushed ore and places them into a crucible. Which is that fireproof melting pot able to withstand extreme heat.

[16 : 02] So that crucible, the ore is placed into the crucible. Then the refiner, excuse me, places the crucible into the refiner's fires. Remember last week on the video, we saw that some of these were, the metal was attached to different things.

Dentures and all kinds of other impurities that were still attached to it. It was part of it. They were broken down into smaller pieces. It was attached to the crucible. It was attached to the crucible at the exact temperature necessary for removing the metals from these other matters that would keep the gold or silver from being as precious as it could.

And just as a furnace is used in this refining process or in the crucible, the refiner, God the refiner, uses heat in our lives.

And our hearts to cleanse our character. So the fire that God uses in our lives, the trials, the troubles, the tribulation, is God relates it to the refiner's fire that the metals go through.

Look with me at Proverbs 17.3. Proverbs 17.3. The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold.

[17 : 28] But the Lord does what? He tests the hearts. He tests the hearts. He places the unrefined ore into the crucible in order for it to be refined.

Stage number three. There's the dross. The refiner places into the crucible the heated furnace. He does that to remove the dross.

Look at Proverbs 25.4. Take away the dross from the silver and it will go to the silversmith for jewelry.

In order for that metal to be useful, it's got to be refined. In order for the metal to be useful, we have to take away all the impurities, as much of the impurity as possible.

We need, it needs to be, all of the things that would keep it from being useful needs to be removed. We saw, again, that last week, silver, typically 99.9% pure in that most purest state.

[18 : 46] That's when it goes to the jeweler. You don't take a rock, even though the silver, the metal might be in there. It has to be refined before it can be useful. What about our lives?

We are most useful when we're most like Jesus. We're most useful when God removes the self-centeredness, the pride, the sense of independence in our lives.

As God begins to take all of the junk out of our lives, we become more and more and more useful for him. For us individually, dross represents misplaced dependency.

What do we think we're dependent upon today? Some people think, well, I'm dependent upon my retirement account. I'm dependent upon my job. I'm dependent upon my, I'm dependent upon all of these things.

Instead, we are to be totally, completely, and only dependent upon God. Because he is the one that provides life. He is the one that provides breath.

[19 : 49] He is the one that provides the health that you and I are able to have in order to be able to do what he wants us to do. So any wrong motive, any wrong attitude, any wrong action, anything that keeps us from being all that God wants us to be is the dross, the impurities that God wants to take out of our lives.

And then the next stage, the heat. The refiner raises the temperature to higher and higher and higher temperatures in order to refine that metal that's there.

After the refiner painstakingly skims off the dross and the impurities from the top of the metals. He then turns up the heat and he places the crucible back into the blistering furnace in order for it to be refined again.

Again and again, historical literature, also the Bible, it says as many as seven times the refiner does that as part of the process.

And more and more impurities begin to rise to the surface. And when it cools, those impurities can be removed. Those will be separated from the precious metal.

[21 : 06] He knows that only certain impurities can be released at certain temperatures. Take a look at Psalm 12, 6.

Psalm 12, 6. He says, The words of the Lord are pure words.

Like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. You know, sometimes we have to go through a trial more than once before God is done with us.

Sometimes we have to go through a particular trouble or problem in order for God to completely teach us, build our perseverance, build our endurance in order for us to be as precious as possible and for us to be as useful as possible in his service.

And then stage five, the purification. The refiner continues to remove the impurities each time with the utmost skill, the utmost patience. The refiner has his hand on the thermostat and he uses the fire to remove those impurities, leaving behind gleaming gold or silver or other precious metal, purer and purer than it was before.

[22 : 28] And to gauge his process, scripture tells us that the refiner looks into the metal. He looks in to see his own reflection.

The more the more impurities are removed, the clearer and the less distorted his reflection is going to be. Think about your life. Think about the last difficult time you went through.

What was God trying to do? He was trying to produce his character in your life so that when people look at you, who do they see?

They see him. God wants to take the life of Christ. He wants to take the holiness of him through his Holy Spirit.

He wants to reproduce Christ likeness in our lives. The refiner. The Bible says that a refiner sits over the refining process to purify us.

[23 : 36] Job again, verse 10. But he knows where I'm going. He knows the way that I take. And when he has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.

And then the last stage, stage number six, the reflection. The refiner is able to see his reflection, a clear image of himself.

Only when the refiner investigates the crucible and he sees a clear reflection of himself is the process complete. Finally, the gold or silver gets to the point where it attains its highest degree of purity.

And add to that, like we said last week, he does it with loving intentions. God does all of this so that he can make us into who he wants us to be.

He allows us to go through the furnace of affliction in order to make us more like Jesus Christ. And as we trust him to use our trials, to cleanse our character, to purify our hearts, we'll begin to see the silver lining.

[24 : 46] Our last verse, Isaiah chapter 48, verse number 10. Isaiah 48, 10. He says, behold, I have refined you.

Not as silver. I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. God has his hand upon us. See the big picture?

It's not about us. It's not about you. It's not about me. It's about God wanting to reproduce the likeness of Jesus Christ in our life.

It's always been about him. Long before you and I were born, it was always about God and God alone. Do you realize there's not going to be one selfish person in heaven? This morning in Sunday school, we talked about the saints, the elders before the throne of God.

They take off their victor's crowns and they cast them before God. Yes, we will receive rewards in heaven for the work that we've done for Jesus here on earth.

[25 : 47] But they're not about us. They're about him. And so we will be unselfish. We won't want to say, you know, this is mine. I don't want to turn it loose. We will take those crowns.

And he says the elders took their crowns and cast them before the glassy sea, before the throne of God. And see, after God pulled Job out of the fire, he was polished and he was blessed so much more than before.

God replaced all that he took and even more. And the life of Job, I think, is proof that we may not know what's going on on planet earth, but we know that God is in control and that he knows what he's doing in our life.

Job knew that God was on the throne. Job knew that God was sovereign. We need to understand and believe in the sovereignty of God when we're going through the problems.

It might be financial problems. It might be family problems. It might be relationship problems. It might be professional work-related problems. Know that God is in control.

[26 : 57] Job never lost his faith. Job never lost his trust in God, even though he was going, even though God was testing him to his very core.

See, never lose your faith in God, no matter the circumstance. See, don't focus on your circumstances. Let's fix our eyes on him, no matter what circumstance you find yourself in.

Let's pray. Lord, our Heavenly Father, we know that as you are testing us, as you are refining us in the trials and the troubles and the tribulations and the problems that come into our lives, Lord God, we know that you have your hand on the thermostat.

We know that you will only do what is best for us. That as we're going through difficulties, we're going through trials and troubles and tribulations, Father, we know that you are in complete control. Father, we thank you for what you are going to do, and we praise you for it. For it's in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.

[28 : 16] Amen. Amen.