

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Biblical and Southern Studies

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SBSS

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Adore and tremble, for our God
Is a consuming fire!
His jealous eyes his wrath inflame,
And raise his vengeance higher.

Almighty vengeance, how it burns!
How bright his fury glows!
Vast magazines of plagues and storms
Lie treasured for his foes.

Those heaps of wrath, by slow degrees,
Are forced into a flame;
But kindled, oh! how fierce they blaze!
And rend all nature's frame.

At his approach the mountains flee,
And seek a wat'ry grave;
The frightened sea makes haste away,
And shrinks up every wave.

Through the wide air the weighty rocks
Are swift as hailstones hurled;
Who dares engage his fiery rage
That shakes the solid world?

Yet, mighty God, thy sovereign grace
Sits regent on the throne;
The refuge of thy chosen race
When wrath comes rushing down.

Thy hand shall on rebellious kings
A fiery tempest pour,
While we beneath thy shelt'ring wings
Thy just revenge adore.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

The Majestic God is a Consuming Fire

"For our God is a consuming fire."

Hebrews 12:29

"For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God."

Deuteronomy 4:24

God's glory is as a devouring fire. Remember when Moses went up into the mount where God met him? There was where the glory of Jehovah abode and the cloud covered Mount Sinai. On the seventh day Jehovah spoke to Moses out of the middle of the cloud. "And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel" (Ex. 24:17). Would you think of the majesty of God in conjunction with His being a consuming fire? Yes, it is an overwhelming picture for the finite mind to conceive. Comparing God to a devouring fire perhaps acts as a cautionary part of His portrait as an overwhelming holy being. The jealousy of God guards His holy person against any detractions against Him with the purging of His consuming fire. Joshua declared to the people that they had disqualified themselves, for Jehovah is a holy God and jealous (Josh.24:19).

We should seek to serve our holy God reverently and with godly fear. Why? The reason is "our God is a consuming fire." We must remember that a holy God must be a consuming fire. "God cannot but be holy, therefore cannot but be just, because injustice is a part of unholiness" [Charnock]. The fire goes before Him to remove the unholy (Ps. 97:3). God being holy He can only endorse that which is like Himself. He is the enemy of unlikeness. He hates all sin which cuts us off from Him as it cut the godly man Christ Jesus off from His Father when He bore our sin. "Whatsoever is contrary to the nature of God, will fall under the justice of God" [Charnock].

Fire was symbolical of the person of God (Deut. 4:24), and the wrath of God (Ps. 18:8, 12-14); it portrayed His acceptance of sacrifice picturing the purging away of sin. How did the God who is a consuming fire accept many of the offerings in the Old Testament? "And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces" (Lev. 9:24). "The glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people of Israel that day; and some flash of the bright fire of that glory shot down on the altar and consumed the pieces of the sacrifices, thus giving the final attestation of complete acceptance" [A. Bonar]. The people as it were in assemblance bow to Christ for every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord. The result of the impact was their worship of God because He had accepted the sacrifice and His wrath against their sin was appeased.

How many frown when they hear that our God is a consuming fire! But Jehovah will not acquit the wicked: Jehovah has His way (Nahum 1:3). Our God is just as holy and righteous under the covenant of grace as under the covenant of law. "The law is just as honored under the gospel as under the law" [Spurgeon]. Yes, we have been made accepted in the Beloved for He received the consuming fire of God's wrath on our sin to set us free

from the bondage of sin and death (Eph. 1:6 ff.). “The substitution of Jesus as much displays the wrath of God against sin as even the flames of hell would do” [Spurgeon].

We are accepted *in* the Beloved who was pictured for us in the atoning sacrifices of the Old Testament. Our God is a consuming fire and the fact that Christ endured that fiery judgment of God’s wrath in our place has provided us acceptance in the Beloved. Those outside of Christ must face the eternal consuming fire of God’s wrath eternally in hell. That which has been made holy through the blood of Christ escapes the fire for their representative has extinguished that fire eternally through the credibility of His impeccable redemption.

Charles H. Spurgeon explained, “You will be rather surprised when I say that this dreadful sentence (‘For our God is a consuming fire’) is my hope: it is a joy to me that our God is a consuming fire. Behold two altars upon Carmel. The Baalites have laid their victim upon one of them. Do you see them as they prance about the altar, and even leap upon it? Do you hear them as they cry and cut themselves with knives and lancets? ‘O Baal, hear us! O Baal, hear us!’ There lies the sacrifice: there is no trace of Baal’s hearing them, for their god is not a consuming fire. Now comes Elijah. ‘Pour water,’ says he, ‘on the bullock. Do it a second time: do it a third time;’ and they fetch up from the sea huge buckets, and pour the water over everything until the trenches are filled with it. And now the prophet lifts up his prayer to heaven. Down comes the fire! It is God’s sacrifice, and God accepts it. He is a consuming fire, and the token of His presence is so manifest that the people cry, ‘Jehovah, He is the God, He is the God.’ Turn your eyes again to Solomon’s temple, gorgeous with gold and precious stones. The king pleads with the Lord of the whole earth to accept the shrine. Lo, the priests are present in their robes of office, and the sacrifice is waiting on the altar. If no fire descends, there is no acceptance; but we read, ‘The fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house.’ If I am a true and sincere man, and I am believing in Jesus, and I have brought my humble sacrifice with fear and reverence before God, then it will be accepted; for He is a consuming fire, and my sacrifice will be consumed, and go up to Him.”