



# Surviving the Refiner's Fire

*Fresh Oil Releases*

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## Revealing His Jewels

A few days ago, certain circumstances in my own life increased considerably in pressure; so much so that I asked the Lord what He was doing. His reply was simple and brief and yet very revealing as to His intentions. He said, "I'm burning bridges and back-burning!" Both involve fire. Both draw a line in the sand so to speak which cannot be crossed because of what the fire has accomplished.

I want to deal with each process separately as I believe this will bring understanding to those who find themselves experiencing a sudden sharp increase in intensity of the trial they have been undergoing. These are not saints who find themselves in 'hot water' for the first time, but those who have already been through a long refining process and who know the Refiner's fire intimately. I believe God is doing a dramatic final quick work in order to bring His choice vessels to a state of complete readiness for what is ahead. We are wont to think that we have been through quite enough and that no more fire is necessary (nor do we feel able to handle much more if we are honest!) but this short sharp burst of flames is not for the purpose of bringing dross to the surface at all. So, before your heart fails you at the thought of more fire, let us look at God's expressed purposes in those simple phrases:

### Burning Bridges

Wikipedia says this: The expression is derived from the idea of burning down a bridge after crossing it during a military campaign, leaving no option but to win, and motivating those who otherwise might want to retreat

Suffice to say that when God burns bridges, there is no going back to defeat! I asked the Lord to show me an instance where He did just that in the Word and He referred me to the Red Sea crossing. After the Israelites crossed over, He

closed the sea again. This had a two-fold effect. It destroyed any enemy trying to pursue them to freedom and it prevented the Israelites from ever returning to Egypt and slavery. As we know, they later complained so much about their lot in the wilderness that if the path through the Red Sea had been open, they would probably have run back with open arms to their slave-masters.

Beloved, as God burns bridges in your life it is to prevent you returning by the way you came. The woman who flees to the wilderness in Revelation 12 has no opportunity to return to the captivity of Babylon because God has burnt bridges behind her. Remember also that this phrase originates from a practice carried out during a military campaign. We are in a war and He didn't bring us this far to take us back again. There is no other option but victory. God dealt with fear in Gideon's heart by assuring him of complete victory. He did not give him the opportunity to flee in spite of his fear. He only received instruction to keep going forward as each step of the battle unfolded.

Whatever God is busy doing in your circumstances right now is for the purpose of cutting off the path of retreat. The burning of bridges occurs behind you, not in you. The last chapter is being closed and sealed so effectively that there can be no return! If you see burning all around you, you can safely assume your present location is about to become your past. You are moving on! The Spirit calls us to come out of Babylon that we may not share in her plagues. There will be no returning to the leeks and the garlicks of the world-system.

### Back-Burning

The dictionary defines it thus: 'to clear (an area of scrub, bush, etc.) by creating a new fire that burns in the opposite direction to the line of advancing fire'

When there is a wildfire approaching, a

farmer or land-owner will back-burn in order to create a strip of land that is already completely burnt. This acts as a barrier for a dangerous wildfire because it can advance no further where there is nothing combustible to fuel it. When God back-burns in your life, it is to make you a barrier and a shelter - because when the fire of destruction reaches you it has to stop. You are already burnt! I was given the sense that this back-burning operation that the Lord is now busy with is in order to form a hedge of protection around His Body, a hedge of burnt ones, burnt stones. He is preparing in advance for the safety of His Body. He is preparing you to be able to stand firm and not flee in terror from what is coming.

We learn in Nehemiah 4 that burnt stones were used to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem.

Neh 4:1 But it happened when Sanballat heard that we built the wall, he was angry and greatly displeased, and mocked the Jews. Neh 4:2 And he spoke before his brothers and the army of Samaria, and said, What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they bring to life the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?

The word 'rubbish' can also be translated 'ash'. So amongst the ashes that were left after the raging fire, there were burnt stones that were salvaged and used to rebuild the protective wall around Jerusalem.

Paul speaks of a day which comes that will try every man's work:

1Co 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1Co 3:12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 1Co 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest ( BE

REVEALED): for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 1Co 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 1Co 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Beloved, the fire only destroys wood, hay, chaff and stubble. It cannot damage gold, silver or precious stones. If you have built well, there is no need to fear the back-burning fire of God because all it does is remove the outer chaff obscuring the treasure in your earthen vessel. Thus it reveals the value of what He has built within you! One of my favorite verses in the whole Bible is in Malachi 3:

Mal 3:16 Then they that feared the LORD spoke often one to another: and the LORD listened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. Mal 3:17 And they shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in that day when I openly display( bring forth) my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him.

How does God openly display His jewels that He has been fashioning, cutting and polishing away from the eyes of man? Previously I had sort of imagined Him opening up His jewelry box and showing us off! Now I realize that it is connected to passing through of the fire of God in order to burn off anything that obscures Christ within us. Malachi 4 speaks of a day that burns like an oven:

Mal 4:1 For, behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. Mal 4:2 But to you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing

in his wings; and you shall go forth, and skip as calves let free from the stall. Mal 4:3 And you shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, says the LORD of hosts.

A stall is made of wood. It is a place where cattle are tied up. The fire that burns the stubble of the wicked also burns the stall and releases those calves, God's jewels so that they shine with the glory of God and display their true beauty. God uses His fire for a two-fold purpose - to destroy and to reveal. The kernel of the wheat is surrounded by chaff and after winnowing at the threshing floor, the fire is used to deal with the chaff which was previously obscuring the wealth within! The day when God reveals His jewels is the day when He burns the chaff and stubble.

Stubble is that part of the wheat plant that is left after the harvest is taken from the field. Remember in Matthew 24 where it says, 'there will be two in a field, one will be taken and the other will be left. Many have used these verses to explain the rapture but the word 'taken' actually means 'to draw near or embrace' in the Greek. In the field, it is the harvest that is taken, drawn near or embraced by the arms of the harvester and the stubble that is left in the field to be destroyed by the fires of judgment. The wheat is then taken for winnowing and the chaff separated; then the wheat kernels go to the storehouse. Malachi 4:1 tells us the wicked are stubble. So the fire that burns stubble separates you from the wicked just as the closing of the Red Sea and the burning of that particular bridge separated the Israelites from the wicked Egyptians!

In Revelation chapter 21, there is a description of the heavenly Jerusalem. We discover that only the wall has jewels in it. The rest of the city is made of gold:

Rev 21:18 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. Rev 21:19 And the

foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; Rev 21:20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.

SO the jewels that God reveals are the foundations of the wall He builds around His heavenly city. The burnt stones, revealed by fire are forming a hedge of protection around the city.

Two things to remember about this back-burning are :

1) it is controlled and done under a watchful eye

This is not the rampant raging attack of the enemy, intent upon destroying. It is started under specific orders and closely monitored and contained under God's watchful eye, specifically with the safety of many in mind.

2) it is brief and removes dry brush and anything combustible.

It produces a safe zone, a buffer that effectively halts the progress of destruction. Beloved, God's back-burning in your life only removes chaff and stubble and reveals the beauty within you. It effectively makes you a buffer and a shelter from the coming storm; a barrier that halts the prospect of imminent destruction for others. Isaiah 32 speaks of a time when a king will rule in righteousness and there will be those who are shelters from every kind of onslaught:

Isa 32:1 Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in justice. Isa 32:2 And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a shelter from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

Once God has completed the back-burning in your life, there is absolutely no need to fear anything that may come. When this brief controlled fire has already passed through your life, there is nothing combustible left. What can be shaken has already been shaken and what is unshakable remains! Then you stand as a hedge and a buffer-zone; one whom many will run to in the coming days to seek shelter and comfort and wisdom. You will comfort with the comfort you have received from the Father and shine like stars as you hold out the Word of Life.

When you discern the fire of God behind you and the flames burning within, remember God is burning bridges and back-burning that His glory may be seen in you as you surround and protect His precious Body along with many other burnt stones! Trust Him to complete the work He began in you and do not be afraid. You're going forward to certain victory!

Selah



### Smoking out Vermin

In the last article, I spoke of the Lord BURNING BRIDGES and BACK-BURNING. In my life, this is still underway so I have been given much opportunity to ponder the processes. One thing about back-burning is that it has the effect of driving out any livestock lurking in the underbrush! From observing the pattern of other bush fires, I notice that the flames cause both snakes

and rats to flee their hiding places and run into the open where they can be easily caught and identified. In our lives, as the Lord back-burns, it has the effect of exposing the hiding places of both 'snakes' and 'rats' which have been operating unbeknown to us in our daily walk. They operate from hidden places and before the back-burning commenced, were not detectable.

Snakes represent those voices which hiss from underneath the rocks of our belief-system, asking "has God really said...?". They are the voices of Doubt and Unbelief which seek to subtly lead us to question God's declared intention and thereafter to act according to our own understanding - because we suddenly feel we have a better grasp of the situation than God has. Snakes are the voices that urge us to respond in a fleshly way. They have been doing it since the Garden of Eden; appealing to our pride and desire to become like God. These voices assure us that a fleshly action will lead to a spiritual goal! Their assignment is to lead us off the highway of holiness onto detours that are paved with the wisdom of man. And Beloved, their hissing suggestions are very appealing to the flesh because they urge us to look at the situation we are facing with our natural eyes just as Eve did!

Gen 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasing to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit, and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

Praise God for His back-burning which drives these serpents into plain view. Then we can apply our heel to their heads by choosing rather to stand upon and decree the promises God has given us! The greater the pressure to act urgently in the flesh, the more we must abide in Sabbath rest and overcome by the Blood of the Lamb and the word of our

testimony.

The Bible lists rats or vermin in general as being unclean. God's Old Testament people are instructed not to eat them. The verb 'to rat' in the English language carries with it a sense of betrayal, distrust, abandonment. The rats represent those thoughts within us that attempt to get us to stop trusting in the faithfulness of God to fulfill His spoken word to us. God does not want us to partake of these ratty thoughts! The voice of the 'rat' is always the voice of Fear in some form, telling you God is not going to come through for you. Remember the rats and snakes do not operate from an open place in your conscious mind. They are the voices that whisper from hidden places, sometimes hiding in your subconscious mind. This is why the back-burning is necessary. The heat of the fire brings hidden fears to the surface so that we can face and deal with them.

True trust is not clinging onto God as tightly as you can - this would depend upon your strength which is limited. True trust is letting go and allowing God to hold onto you - this depends on His strength which is unending! It is not faith that makes us cling to God, but FEAR. When we surrender and truly trust God, we are in a place of rest, like a child in its mother's arms. All hell may be breaking loose around her but in his mother's arms the child feels completely safe when the mother is at peace. When we let go and stop trying to control the outcome of a situation and begin to focus on the strong arms of God holding us, we start to become aware of the deep peace that is a tangible atmosphere wherever God is.

Isa 26:3 You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You; because he trusts in You. Isa 26:4 Trust in the Lord forever; for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.

As you will have noticed if you have witnessed a bush fire, all the living creatures hiding in the underbrush come dashing out of the thicket at once. I have noticed during this intense back-burning period, all the snakes and rats emerge at the same time, creating a perfect cacophony of thoughts bombarding your mind. This what makes this period so difficult to traverse. There seems to be a continual assault of insinuations, doubts and fears rushing around the canvas of your thoughts. Therefore this is the time to actively anchor your thoughts and your mind on the Lord. John gives us such a nugget of Truth in one of his letters:

1Jo 4:18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has torment. He who fears has not been perfected in love.

It is our fears that torment us. When we experience fears of various kinds, John says it means we have not 'been perfected' in love. The Greek word used here has a sense of completion and finishing. When we do not have a complete or full revelation of the extent of God's love for us, we are vulnerable to fear. So one of the main reasons for the back-burning is to deal with the hidden areas of vulnerability that we have not previously realized were within us. It is at the very time when the snakes and rats rush into plain view in all their ugliness, that God counteracts their tormenting voices by pouring out a deeper revelation of the extent of His love for us. Perfect love or a full revelation of His love drives out fear. One could almost say that it is the flames of His fiery love for us that drive out the rats and snakes once and for all!

Paul prays a prayer for the saints in Ephesus concerning the love of God:

Eph 3:16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in

the inner man; Eph 3:17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, Eph 3:18 may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, Eph 3:19 and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

God's love is four-dimensional and it is His intention that we should have a revelation of every single one of those dimensions. When we do, we are 'made perfect' in love.

LENGTH OF GODS LOVE - STRETCHES FURTHER THAN YOU CAN RUN AWAY

BREADTH - REACHES WIDER THAN THE EXTENT TO WHICH YOU HAVE WANDERED OFF THE PATH

DEPTH - GOES WAY DEEPER THAN ANY PIT YOU FIND YOURSELF IN

HEIGHT - RISES HIGHER THAN ANY MOUNTAIN YOU FACE

The Father's express desire is that we are rooted and grounded in His love, for if we are, we will be unshakable! Back-burning deals with the cracked places in our foundations. Are we functioning from a foundation of doubt and fear or are we living rooted and fed by the bedrock of His eternal love for us? If we are rooted in love, having a growing revelation of His heart toward us, we are able to fully surrender and TRUST Him. The desire to control what is happening in our lives is no longer an issue because we trust that if God is allowing something to happen in a certain way, He will surely work it for good!

Beloved, if I could sum up what a period of back-burning looks like practically, I would say it probably means God has so engineered circumstances in your life so that you have no control over what is happening to you or your loved ones - and every attempt you make to get things to play out the way you think they should, just comes to nothing! This is the perfect

way to get hidden pockets of fear to expose themselves because the desire to control is always rooted in fear, very often a fear that a traumatic experience of the past will repeat itself in some way. Sometimes, when God gives us a promise, things grow progressively worse thereafter, almost as if everything is conspiring to work in the opposite direction to the promise.

Consider the experience of the disciples who walked with the Son of God. He had been sent as a savior of the world because God so greatly LOVED all mankind. Yet their understanding of what needed to be done to make salvation available did not fit with the reality of what played out. Jesus was their Messiah who went about doing good. Yet he became progressively more hated and slandered by the pharisees and finally brutally killed on trumped up charges. When Peter tried to control what was happening in the garden to prevent His being arrested, it had no effect. Instead Peter ended up fleeing without his garment! Jesus in contrast, surrendered to the will of the Father, trusting Him to raise Him from the dead. NOW THAT IS TRUST! His attitude was "It doesn't matter what is coming against me and what I am suffering, I will come out the other side and experience the fullness of all that You have promised me, Father".

I had a very interesting visual lesson during the time God was underlining these truths to me. Driving along the road with my husband one afternoon, in a rural area, we noticed a car driving past us quite fast. It then continued in an erratic manner weaving across the road and finally rolled a number of times, went down the embankment, hit a barbed wire fence, was catapulted into the air and landed on its roof in a field. We immediately stopped to help. The car was completely flattened with a gap of about ten centimeters where the driver's side window used to be. My husband put his head inside and found a

young woman, still conscious and entangled in some of the barbed wire she had just traveled through. He managed to drag her out and we discovered she was unhurt apart from a small scratch on her right hand from the barbed wire. However, her car was a write-off and all her belongings were strewn over a large area. Apparently, she suffered from very low blood pressure and had gone into a sort of coma-type sleep which caused her foot to press the accelerator and cause the accident. I told her as I helped her up onto the road that God had really been looking after her that day. She replied that it had happened before and she never got injured! All her belongings were gathered up and returned to her. As her car was fully insured she would suffer no major loss but instead receive a brand new vehicle.

That night, the Lord began to expand what I had witnessed and linked it to the verse He had given me that very morning from the Amplified Version:

Hebrews 13:5b for He Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. I will not, I will not, I will not in any degree leave you helpless nor forsake nor let you down or relax My hold on you! Assuredly not!

He said to me, "look at how that verse was fulfilled in that girl's life!" I realized how true it was. In spite of being in a situation completely beyond her control, she had suffered no harm. She had not been left without support as we were right behind her and could help her out of the car and contact her mother and emergency services. She was not left helpless because God had provided people who could extricate her from a trapped position that she could not remove herself from. She suffered no permanent loss and had only a small scratch on her hand to remind her of the incident.

Beloved, there is no need to fear even if you are in a situation that you did not get yourself into and over which you have no control. God, our Father is completely

faithful and will not in any degree leave you helpless or relax His hold on you. It may seem as if disaster is imminent and destruction looms over your head but whatever you are going through, you traverse it right in the palm of His Almighty hand and afterward you will receive recompense for all that has been damaged or destroyed during the experience. He has promised that He will restore the years the locust has eaten. Do you remember how Gideon built an altar to Jehovah Shalom? God is your Jehovah Shalom and the word 'shalom' means 'peace, tranquility, friendship, health'. Its root word 'shalam' means 'to be in a covenant of peace, to make amends, recompense, restore, complete'. Beloved, this is the kind of covenant you have with God! There is NOTHING, I repeat, NOTHING that you need to fear. God will never let you down or break His covenant of peace with you.

Isa 54:10 For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, NOR SHALL THE COVENANT OF MY PEACE BE REMOVED, says the Lord who has mercy on you.

During the last week I was prompted to reread an article I wrote in 2008 about negotiating safe passage through dire straits. One particular chapter jumped out at me and I sense it is relevant to this prophetic period God's tried and tested saints are undergoing. As I mentioned earlier, the intense pressure on the mind during God's back-burning is almost beyond bearing. Here it is described in another way:

'There are some who say that they have been in a narrow place for some time already and that the Lord has likened it to experiencing the birth pangs and being propelled down the birth canal to one's destiny - and the question is 'surely it is not about to become even narrower?' I believe that the Lord would have me say to you that yes, you have been making progress down the narrow passage towards

the full light of a new day and the pressure you have experienced has been the birth pangs of a new season approaching. However, you are about to experience the journey through the 'birth opening' so to speak. Although it is a very short distance relatively speaking when considering the long way you have come, it is the point of greatest resistance and intense pressure upon your mind. However it is the gateway to the large open place that He promised to bring you into. It is the point at which you need to die to your own understanding and your own wisdom and just rest and trust Him to bring to pass His promises for you and surely complete them. It is the place of being pressed beyond measure and trusting in God who raises the dead. It is the narrow strait which will birth you into the fullness of all you have seen only with the eye of faith. It is the time of the crowning of the head, the place of breaking through. He does not bring to the point of birth and not bring forth - so look not at the size of the cliffs, nor at the strength of the stormy wind. Lash your rudder to the plumb-line of His promise and confidently continue to declare in the face of the storm every promise He has given you.'

2Co 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves; 2Co 4:8 we are pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not unto despair; 2Co 4:9 pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed; 2Co 4:10 always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body.

Paul himself spoke of being in a place of intense pressure. Notice the reason he states for what he is undergoing:

2 Cor 1:8AMP For we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about the affliction and oppressing distress which befell us in

the province of Asia, how we were so utterly and unbearably weighed down and crushed that we despaired even of life itself. 9Indeed, we felt within ourselves that we had received the very sentence of death, but that was to keep us from trusting in and depending on ourselves instead of on God Who raises the dead. For it is He Who rescued and saved us from such a perilous death, and He will still rescue and save us; in and on Him we have set our hope (our joyful and confident expectation) that He will again deliver us from danger and destruction and draw us to Himself

The period of intense pressure was to rid them of any trust or faith in their own ability and to replace it with TRUST in the resurrection power of God. Saints who are being brought forth from the tomb of preparation must first and foremost experience that resurrection power within themselves so that they may emerge as vessels carrying the fullness of God.

It has been said that a baby traversing the birth canal undergoes the same physical sensations as someone who is crucified - the intense pressure upon the ribcage, the claustrophobia, exhaustion and finally the pressure on the mind ("my God, why have you forsaken me?") The birthing of the head of the baby is by far the most difficult part of the process of emerging. Then the shoulders and the rest of the body follow easily. In the same way, winning this intense battle of the mind you are in; pulling down the whispers and resisting the pressure to give up and abandon the fight; taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ is the most difficult part of all you have experienced. Why? Because you are already weary from the process you have been through. However, remember this: God does not bring to the point of birth and then not bring forth.

Isa 66:9 Shall I bring to the birth, and

not cause to bring forth? says the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? says your God.

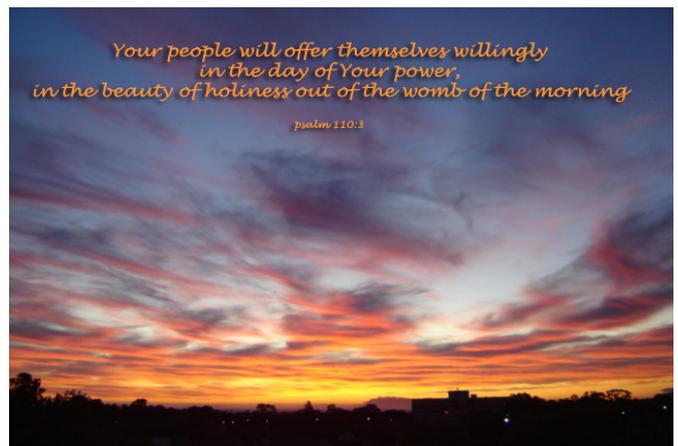
The dragon waits to devour the child as it emerges in Rev 12 but praise God, the manchild is caught up to the throne! This is what God is accomplishing in us through the back-burning. We are to ascend in our minds and understanding to the place where God is seated on the throne and look at all things from His perspective. We leave behind the fears and doubts that result from focusing on an earthly point of view and, rooted and grounded in a revelation of the love of God, we come to a deeper rest that we have ever experienced before - a place of total TRUST in His wisdom and omnipotence. Just as that girl suffered no harm because she experienced that accident from a state of complete and deep rest, so too we will come through everything the enemy has designed to destroy us, unscathed! Why? Because we may have our feet on this earth but our mindset and spiritual position are in heavenly places. In the depths of our heart we have laid hold of what Jesus declared on the cross - 'TETELESTAI' - it is finished! No longer just theoretically but now truly experiencing this seated place of rest, far above principalities and powers, we can watch Him bring forth ALL that He has promised according to His will:

Eph 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will: Eph 1:12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

Beloved, God has ordained that our lives should be to the praise of His glory. Therefore expect to see His glory displayed in you! Trust Him. He knows exactly what last-minute touches He needs to put to the vessel in order to hold His glory:

Rom 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Remember what Jesus said to His disciples, "A little while and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me" (Joh 16:16). Although you may not be seeing Jesus or experiencing the nearness of His presence at this time, in a very short while you will see and experience Him in resurrection power! Do not even think of giving up now. You are about to witness the answer to that bowl of prayer that you have filled up, poured out on the earth for all to see! You will see the fruit of the travail of your soul and be satisfied! He is at this very moment scanning the earth, in order to show Himself strong on behalf of those who earnestly wait for Him!



### Shaking Off Serpents

Previously we looked into the effect that back-burning has of driving out into the open the rats and snakes hiding in the undergrowth of our lives. I want to look at one more example in the Word of a roaring fire exposing the work of the enemy. We find this passage in Acts chapter 28:

Act 28:1 And being saved, then they knew that the island was called Melita. Act 28:2 And the foreigners showed us not the common kindness. For they kindled a fire and welcomed all of us, because of the rain coming on, and because of the cold. Act 28:3 And Paul had gathered a

bundle of sticks, and laying them on the fire, a viper came out of the heat and fastened on his hand.

Firstly, let us set the scene. Paul has just survived the worst storm of his life, which lasted for two weeks. During this time God had promised him that all on the ship would come through unharmed. In spite of the ferocity of the storm and the signs in the natural that told him otherwise, Paul chose to believe the promise of God:

Act 27:24 saying, Fear not, Paul! You must stand before Caesar. And behold! God has given you all those who sail with you. Act 27:25 Therefore, men, be of good cheer, for I believe God, that it will be so, according to the way it was told me.

Beloved, does this not describe your situation? In the midst of the demonic storm that was whipped up against you and yours, The Spirit of the Living God comforted you with a promise of protection and deliverance. AND you chose to believe His word even though the circumstances continued to grow daily worse!

In Paul's case, the roman vessel that was transporting them was completely broken up by the strength of the waves and the passengers made their way to shore clinging to boards and pieces of the ship. This ship represents our mindset or understanding about the way God will fulfill His promises in our lives. It is the understanding of man as opposed to being carried by the wisdom of God. Paul probably did not realize that he would have to get wet to reach the shore and that the strength of the waves which at one point had destroyed the ship, would then be the very force which propelled him through the churning waters to shore! Beloved, in the same way, all that we have understood about the way God works may have been completely dashed to pieces by the strength of the attack coming against you, but God works all things together for good and the very same waves that have wrought destruction, will also be God's means to carry you safe and unharmed, albeit somewhat

drenched, to solid ground.

The island God had ordained for them to be deposited on was called Melita. This means 'affording or providing honey'. Honey is symbolic of revelation. So we discover that the solid ground God brings you to is the place of revelation; the place where once again you begin to see and hear what the Father is saying and doing. Before during the darkness and mayhem of the storm, you had only the whispered promise of deliverance in which you put your trust, but now you find yourself in a new place, a place where understanding and light is released to you. Not only that, but you experience the kindness and love of God through others. The islanders built a huge fire to warm those washed onshore and Paul wanting to contribute to the fire, added a whole bundle of sticks he had gathered. As they were cast into the fire a serpent CAME OUT OF THE HEAT and fastened itself to his hand. The sticks represent those who you have gathered, loved ones whose lives bear no sign of the life of God. They are dry sticks which you have been interceding for that the life and power of God may be seen in them. You commit them to the fiery love of God, letting go and trusting God with them and at this point the enemy launches an attack against you. You see, as long as you hold onto those dry sticks, the fire of God is unable to set them aflame BUT when you surrender them to God's dealings, He is able to do what only He can do - turn them into flames of fire, carriers of His fiery jealous love for mankind!

Your surrender of every situation you have gathered and carried and your trusting God with those you love angers the enemy and he launches an attack on you openly for all to see. It seems to be a dire situation and your destruction is sure this time. You have survived the storm only to be wiped out by this viper that has attached itself to your hand. As those watching puzzle over this strange occurrence, they decide it is a sign of God's judgment on you for sin:

Act 28:4 And when the foreigners saw the

creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, being saved from the sea, Justice has not allowed to live.

What does Paul do in this situation? He knows that God did not bring him through the storm just to let him be killed once he reaches shore. He is confident that God will bring to pass His purposes for him and surely complete them. The angel had told him on the ship that he was destined for Rome and so Paul knew that no attack of the enemy could derail God's expressed purpose for his life. He took no notice of the way things looked in the natural but rather just shook off the viper into the fire so that it was destroyed by the very same heat which was warming him:

Act 28:5 Then indeed he shook off the creature into the fire, suffering no harm. Act 28:6 But they expected him to be about to become inflamed, or to fall down dead suddenly, But over much time expecting and seeing nothing amiss happening to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god

Even after he shook off the attack, the people watching were convinced that the expected consequences of such an incident would occur. When one is bitten by an adder, one dies. Everybody knows that! However Paul's life was not governed by natural laws or the understanding of man. His destiny was governed by the eternal purposes of God and the declaration of the risen Christ:

Mar 16:17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; Mar 16:18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

And again in psalm 91:

Psa 91:11 For He shall give His angels charge over You, to keep You in all Your ways. Psa 91:12 They shall bear You up in their hands,

lest You dash your foot against a stone. Psa 91:13 You shall tread on the lion and adder; the young lion and the serpent You shall trample underfoot. Psa 91:14 Because He has set His love on Me, therefore I will deliver Him; I will set Him on high, because He has known My name. Psa 91:15 He shall call on Me, and I will answer Him; I will be with Him in trouble; I will deliver Him, and honor Him. Psa 91:16 With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation.

So Beloved, do not be alarmed at the sudden unexpected attack of the enemy as you warm yourself at the fire of God's love! Nothing shall by any means hurt you. BELIEVE THIS. SHAKE IT OFF - you will come to no harm. God's plans for you are for good and not for evil, to give you a hope and a future! In fact, let us look at how God used that which the enemy intended for evil to bring good into Paul's life.

Act 28:6b but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god. Act 28:7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. Act 28:8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. Act 28:9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed: Act 28:10 Who also honored us with many honors; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.

God allowed this to display His glory in Paul and cause people to recognize he was no ordinary man, to open a door of favor for him!! The attack of the enemy and Paul being completely unharmed by his devices caused the islanders to say that he was a god. In the same way, you will be recognized as a son of God because of the hallmark of God's protection on your life. Paul did not scream and shake off the snake. He just got rid of it as one would dust off an

insect. He was not affected emotionally or physically by the attack. Nothing moved him from his position of trust in God. He was a prisoner of God, not of the Roman empire and he knew that his life was safe in God's hands. In fact, as it turned out, the attack of the viper served to put him in a position of great favor with the islanders. Publius means 'popular' and Paul spent three days in the house of popularity with his every need provided. Beloved, expect the attack of the enemy to ricochet into an outpouring of favor and provision into your life! Also expect to be used by God to touch and bring healing to those who minister to you just as Paul prayed for Publius' father and raised him off his sickbed along with many others.

Your arrival at the island of Melita heralds the beginning of a season of favor and provision for you, triggered off by an attack of the enemy in open view.

After three months Paul and the others left in a new ship and Paul tells us something significant about it:

Act 28:11 And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.

The sign on the ship is the roman name for the Gemini constellation. Bullinger gives us some useful information about this constellation in the heavens: 'The name in the ancient Denderah Zodiac is Clusus, or Claustrum Hor, which means the place of Him who cometh. It is represented by two human figures walking, or coming. The second appears to be a woman. The other appears to be a man. It is a tailed figure, the tail signifying He cometh.'

Paul tells us that the ship that he traveled on after tarrying at the place where revelation was provided and favor granted sailed with a certain sign or message on its prow. I believe the message is is the announcement of the coming of the Bridegroom and the Bride together ministering in the earth. Bullinger

continues: 'The old Coptic name was Pi-Mahi, the united, as in brotherhood. Not necessarily united by being born at the same time, but united in one fellowship or brotherhood. The Hebrew name is Thaumim, which means united. The root is used in Exodus 26:24 "They (the two boards) shall be coupled together beneath." In the margin we read, "Heb. twinned" (RV double). The Arabic Al Tauman means the same.'

So we see the Bride coming forth in the earth in the image of and united with her Bridegroom. This is a totally different mindset than the one which carried Paul to Melita. The way you arrived at this place of revelation is not the way you will travel on from here Beloved. Your experience of the favor and provision of God during this time will release to you an understanding of the heart of the Bridegroom and your rights and privileges as His Bride. The fire of God's love will even use the wiles of the enemy to open doors and make a way for you so that you leave this place loaded down with provision in every way. So shake off the bite of the adder and continue to be unmoved from your position of complete trust in the wisdom and goodness of God! He is watching over His word to perform it in your life!

Selah

