

Purged By

FIRE

**THE WAY
TO TRUE
HOLINESS**

JERRY SAVELLE

Purged by Fire

Have you noticed over the last few months that God has been dealing with you about sin in your life? Have you had to quit sweeping some things under the rug and take authority over them once and for all?

If you have, you're not alone. In fact, I believe that the Holy Spirit these days is demanding that the whole Church clean up its act. He's issuing an ultimatum that God's temple be cleansed—and we are the temple.

The Lord is not going to manifest Himself in a temple filled with filth.

We keep saying, "God, send the glory! O God, let us see more glory!" But if God were to turn up the volume on His glory while the Church is in its present state, it would kill half His people. You cannot stand with sin in the midst of the glory of God. That's why in the days of the Old Testament, if the priest entered the Holy of Holies without first purifying himself, the glory of the Lord took his life.

Dealing with sin is a side of the faith message we haven't talked much about, but I believe God would have us emphasize it from now on. Though it's true that we're the righteousness of God and we've learned to get rid of a sin consciousness, we nevertheless have no license to sin. Being God's righteousness doesn't permit us to keep playing around with sinfulness.

Yet you know as well as I do that there's sin in God's camp. In fact, there's sin in the "faith camp." There are ministers of God who are meddling with things that are ungodly, and I believe that we're living in an age when such actions will be exposed. It's already happening.

Some Christians are only playing religious games; they "talk the talk" but they don't "walk the walk." I don't mean to condemn them, but rather to warn them for their own good. We just cannot keep playing around by going from convention to convention, hitting a few church services, listening to a few tapes—and harboring things in our lives that we know good and well we must get rid of.

If we play games like that, we'll never see the glory of God in the way He desires for us.

The Bible says that the glory of the latter house will be greater than the glory of the former. So it seems to me that if God demanded that the camp be rid of sin in the former, He'll demand it even more in the latter.

I've decided that I've worked too hard, given too much, traveled too many miles, stayed up too many nights, prayed too many hours and studied too much to blow it here at the end. I certainly don't intend to be left out of the greatest move of God this planet has ever seen just because of some stupid sin! And I don't think you want that either.

For that reason I've been sharing an important message with pastors and churches all over the country, a message God put on my heart. It's simply this: God is raising up an army of people who will refuse to compromise not only their faith, but their holiness as well.

To understand what that means for us, we first have to be clear about what holiness really is. *Holiness* is not a bunch of "thou shalt nots." Holy people are not a crowd of long-faced, dried-up, half-dead, worn-out souls to be pitied.

Actually, *holiness* is nothing more than "the habit of being in one mind with God, loving what He loves and hating what He hates." And holy people are those who have the glory of the Lord upon them because they're in one mind with God. The Lord wants to lead the Church He is building in this generation into a walk of holiness that will stagger the world—because they see the glory of the Lord upon us.

In Ephesians 4:8-12 we read,

Wherefore He saith, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.) And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints; for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

We're told that God has given gifts to men—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers—for the perfecting of the saints. So it's clear that God's goal is for the saints to be perfected. We've certainly come a long way in that direction, but we're not there yet. Even so, I believe that God is accelerating the perfecting process, and we're rapidly reaching a state nearer to perfection than the Church has ever known.

For that to happen, we need all five of these offices, because no single one can fulfill the whole dimension of Jesus' ministry. But in these last days, I'm convinced that God will bring the apostles and prophets on the scene in full force. The Bible says that He originally built the Church on the foundation of these

two offices, so I'm expecting God to raise them up. But we shouldn't be concerned about who they are, or try to point them out—they'll be evident by their fruits. Even more importantly, we shouldn't become self-appointed apostles and prophets.

What we should be concerned with is being perfected, and that's what Paul was writing to the Ephesians. The next verse in this chapter says the process will continue *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ* (v. 13).

That means we're to grow up and be as big spiritually as Jesus.

When I received salvation and began to follow Jesus, I began to look to Him and say,

"Thank God, one day I'll grow up and be like Jesus. I'll learn to talk as He talks, walk as He walks, love as He loves, forgive as He forgives, heal as He heals, and cast out the Devil as He does. I want to grow up and be as big as my Master." And that's exactly what God wants for all His people.

The Lord is ready for the Church to grow up. Paul tells us that in the next verse of this chapter,

That we hence-forth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

Everything Paul said here by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is a goal God has for the Church; maturity, growth, perfection, unity, and knowledge. (When he says,

"knowledge of the Son of God," I think he means that in these last days there will be an explosion of revelation knowledge in the Church.)

In all these goals, Paul is talking about the Church growing up. I personally believe that the past year has been a monumental one for growth in the Body of Christ, and that some people will grow more in the next year than they have in the last five if they flow with God. If they don't, they may end up in worse shape than ever before.

Why is God so interested in the saints becoming perfected? In Ephesians 5:27 we see what He has in mind. Paul says that Christ's relationship with the Church is like the relationship of husband and wife, and the Church must be perfected *That He [Jesus] might present it to Himself a glorious church...*

Some people seem to think that the perfecting of the saints won't take place until we get to heaven. But the Bible tells us here that Jesus is coming for a glorious Church, not an immature one.

What is a glorious Church? That doesn't sound to me like a Church that's weak, or suppressed by the world. It doesn't sound like a Church that's just barely making it. So we should stop listening to doom and gloom preachers who talk only about how bad the Church is becoming.

What kind of witness would it be if the world were at its worst and we were no better? What testimony to the glory of God would it be if the world were falling apart, and we were worse off than the world? That's the kind of testimony we've had in the past, and it's no wonder that the world hasn't wanted to have anything to do with us.

They've seen us as a bunch of weaklings, people who couldn't make it in society. We were the people on the wrong side of the tracks who would never amount to anything.

"We only joined the church, folks thought, because we were failures in the world.

But that's not the case today. We're not in the minority, we're in the majority. We're not failures anymore. We know who we are in Christ, and we're determined to win! I'm totally convinced that we are the generation who will be known as the glorious Church, and that we will usher in the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

So what is a glorious Church? A glorious Church is a Church full of glory. And the glory of God is the expression, the manifestation, the personification of the invisible God. When a Church is full of glory, then that Church has the ability to express and manifest and personify God. The Bible tells us that such a Church will be exalted and that people will flow into it.

Jesus said of His Church that "*...the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" (Matthew 16:18) A glorious Church is a powerful Church. It's a Church that's marching on, taking back territory Satan has stolen from us.

I'm convinced that in these last days, we'll recapture everything we've lost.

Above all, a glorious Church is one without "*...spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; ...*

holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27).

And that's the direction God is taking us now.

He's cleansing us.

We need to remember though, what Jesus said in John 15:1, *I AM the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away.* Sadly enough, there will always be some people who won't flow with God. Not everyone will listen to His prophets. Not everyone will be willing to be cleansed. There have always been some who refuse to submit themselves to Him, and this generation is no different.

Meanwhile, the Bible tells us, in the last days Satan will dispatch a mighty army of seducing spirits to deceive, if possible, the elect. Even some ministers will refuse to flow with God. They won't be willing to preach what God says to preach.

Considering these circumstances, this is not the time to run from God, it is the time to run to Him. This is not the time to become selfish, self-centered, and negligent about what God is saying to you. This is the time to tune your ear to Him and do whatever He says. You should make a decision now that if you're not fruitful, you intend to become fruitful.

But even for those who are fruitful, Jesus has some sobering words. John 15:2 goes on to say that *...every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it.* Of course, we don't like to talk about being purged and pruned; but the truth is that the Lord is going to prune us.

Have you ever pruned a fruit tree? When the pear trees in my yard begin bearing fruit they get so full that the limbs break. Someone who isn't familiar with pruning might say,

"Let's not bother those trees. They're bearing so much fruit that we don't dare touch them."

But if I left the trees alone, they'd die. So I have to prune them to allow them to bear even more fruit.

In the same way, Jesus prunes us so that we'll bear more fruit. If we want to be more fruitful than we are, we must submit ourselves to the pruning of God.

Yet, how does the Lord prune us? In Matthew 3:11 John the Baptist speaks of God's pruning and he says that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire: *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire.*

So John speaks of two baptisms here.

When we experience the first one—we also experience a measure of the baptism with fire, mostly in the form of zeal. Our spirits were set on fire, and that fire compelled us to tell others about the Lord, to lay hands on the sick, and to minister to others.

But that was only a measure of the baptism of fire. I believe that the greatest measure of it has been reserved for the last days. Even though we're experiencing it now, it's going to become greater.

John goes on to say in Verse 12:

Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

The baptism of fire will also "burn up the chaff" in the Church so that all that remains is pure wheat—a glorious Church.

Isaiah 4:2-4 brings together these two pictures of purging—the fruitful, pruned branch and the purifying fire—in a prophecy about the Church:

In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for those that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.

I believe we're experiencing this baptism of fire right now. That's why things are getting hotter and hotter. That's why God won't let us get lazy, but instead keeps stirring us up every time we try to settle back in apathy. The judgment is already starting with the preachers, and it will soon filter right on out to everyone.

Of course some people will say, "I won't submit myself to the fire." But this baptism is not something we should run from. To refuse to submit to the fire is to refuse to submit to the Lord, for our God is a consuming fire. Our goal should be instead to go through the purging and washing of God so that we can be a part of that Church which has no spots or blemishes or wrinkles.

When God's people have been cleansed, the result will be a

Church full of glory. As Isaiah has prophesied,

Arise, shine; for thy light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon thee (Isaiah 60:1).

His glory will come and reside within everyone in the Church.

That glory, Isaiah tells us, *shall be seen upon us, shining out in the surrounding darkness of the world (v.2)*. If you think our society is corrupt now with pornography, witchcraft, drugs and crime, just wait, it will get worse.

For behold, says the prophet, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people. . .

Yet the Church will shine all the more brightly, so that people in the world will have a light to look to. If we submit ourselves to the purging fire, we will become, as Jesus said, "the light of the world"—and it's that light of God's glory which will bring people to the Lord.

The Bible tells us that God is love. God loves you. In fact, He loved you so much that He sent His Son Jesus to the cross to pay the price for every one of your sins.

The love of God did not stop there. He has sent the Holy Spirit to be with and dwell in those who receive Jesus as their Lord. The Spirit of God is present in the earth today to reveal the Father to His child.

God has given His very best for you. My prayer is that you will determine in your heart to receive His love today.

Dr. Jerry Savelle is a noted author, evangelist, and teacher who travels extensively throughout the United States, Canada, and around the globe. He is president of Jerry Savelle Ministries International, a ministry of many outreaches devoted to meeting the needs of believers all over the world.

Well-known for his balanced Biblical teaching, Dr. Savelle has conducted seminars, crusades and conventions for over twenty years and has ministered in thousands of churches and fellowships. He is in great demand today because of his inspiring message of victory and faith and his vivid, and often humorous, illustrations from the Bible. He teaches the uncompromised Word of God with a power and an authority that is exciting, but with a love that delivers the message directly to the spirit man.

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