

A DISCIPLE'S HEART – WEEK 4 BY THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT



Read Malachi 3:1-4

The beginning of this passage from Malachi, written 5 centuries before Christ, is a prophecy of John the Baptist, a messenger who will prepare the way for Jesus. After the way is prepared, “then the Lord you are seeking will come to this temple.” (Malachi 3:1b, NLT) The Lord in this case is referring to Jesus.

People were seeking for the Lord to come.

A DISCIPLE'S HEART

But Malachi was warning the people that the Lord would come as a refiner, as a blazing fire, burning out the dross (unwanted material that is removed from a mineral to make the mineral (like gold or silver) better than it was before; more precious. He will come like a strong soap that bleaches clothes. The Lord will come to make people better, eliminating the dross (the unwanted stuff) and cleansing them. WHY? SO WHAT? SO THAT... So that they will bring offerings and sacrifices (their lives) acceptable to God. In other words, to make them better, more pure, moving toward perfection.

The journey toward perfection always leads down this path. The theological word for this is sanctification. Sanctification is about the refining process by which the Spirit of God purifies our intentions, purges our hearts of anything that gets in the way of God's highest and best will for us, and prepares us to offer ourselves as the agents of God's love.

The refining fire of the Spirit prepares us to offer our lives as the gift of God's love to the world.

How does this refining happen?

- Sometimes, it happens in deeply personal ways as we wrestle with the unwanted junk in our lives.
- Sometimes, this happens through our friends and family, fellow disciples, lovingly holding us accountable by telling us the truth when we need to hear it.
- Sometimes, this happens through the events that we experience in our lives, events that test our integrity, push up against our deepest values, and challenge our most deeply held assumptions.

Reflect:

- Have you gone through a refiner's fire in your path of discipleship?
- Are you still in “the fire?”
- What dross has God burned away?
- What dross (unwanted material) do you still have that is blocking you from God?

(over)

A DISCIPLE’S HEART – WEEK 4 BY THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

The transforming paradox of the gospel is that new life comes only through death. The journey toward perfection always leads to the cross – where we die to old attitudes, habits, assumptions, sins, and ways of thinking and living SO THAT we can be raised to the new life that Christ has for us. It is what the Apostle Paul meant when he wrote, “²⁰My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20, NLT)

How can you let “Christ live in you” this week? And beyond?