

# Don't Let The Fire Go Out

Dr. Michael Elliott

In the sixth chapter of the Book of Leviticus, we read about God's instructions to the priests regarding their ministry at the Brazen Altar in the Tabernacle of Moses. In verses 8 through 12, God gave very specific instructions regarding the duties of the priests. These instructions included their responsibilities as to how the sacrifice was to be burned; how they handled the ashes from the sacrifice; and the changing of their garments.

In verse 13, God concludes His instructions to the priests with a final reminder that they were not to let the fire within the altar go out. In essence, God was telling His priests, "You're going to be doing your job, day in, and day out, and there will be different demands on you and on your schedule. You will be continually changing clothes, preparing the sacrificial animal, burning the sacrifice, and dealing with the ashes. However, in the midst of all that you are doing ... **don't let the fire within the altar go out ... keep the flame burning!**"

Today, we are not charged with maintaining a flame within an altar. However, we are charged with maintaining our commitments to the fundamental principles of the Scriptures. Just as it was with the priests of the Old Testament, we are charged by God to remember, that in the midst of keeping our busy routines, we need to be diligent to maintain our commitments to Him. In order for us to maintain our commitments to the Lord, we must keep the flame of our passion for God, His Word, and His ways, ever burning within our hearts. Let's look at a few of the commitments that we are admonished to maintain.

## COMMITMENT TO PRAISE

Praise is the open acknowledgement of the faithfulness of our God. The Psalmist declared, *I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth* (Psalm 34:1). Every new day is another opportunity to praise the Lord. Every season of life is but another opportunity to give the Lord praise. Every circumstance, whether good or bad, is an opportunity to declare praise to the Lord. We look behind us, and we praise God for His faithfulness. We look around us, and we praise God for keeping His promises to us. We look ahead, and by our faith we offer God praise as a statement of our faith in Him.

Sometimes, we may not feel like offering God praise, but that is not a valid excuse to withhold it from Him. There will be times that we must over-rule our thoughts and our feelings. Remember the admonition of the Scriptures that we read in Hebrews 13:5, *Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name*. Regardless of what you are facing in life, maintain your commitment to offer God your praise every day.

## COMMITMENT TO THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving will help us keep a balanced perspective on life. Far too often, we become so focused on what we do not have, that we fail to see all that God has done for us and given to us. We become unthankful instead of thankful. Expressing our thanksgiving helps us to remember that He is the source of all of our blessings. The Bible instructs us in I Thessalonians 5:18, *In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you*. We are not expected to be thankful for bad things that happen to us; but, we are expected to be thankful for God's presence and His promise to help us in the midst of what is happening at the time.

## COMMITMENT TO PRAYER

Prayer involves the acknowledgement of our dependence on God for everything in our lives. Through prayer, we seek God's counsel and wisdom. Through prayer, we seek the Lord's grace, mercy and forgiveness. Through prayer we seek the Lord's comfort and fellowship. This is why the Scripture instructs us in I Thessalonians 5:17, *Pray without ceasing*. This is not to suggest that we withdraw from reality and spend every waking hour muttering prayers. It is however, suggesting that we keep prayer as a priority exercise as we face the issues of life and navigate through our daily routine.

If we are not careful, we will treat prayer as an opportunity to express our complaints to God for what we perceive to be a lack of action and faithfulness on His part. There are times we march to the complaint window and we proceed to give God His marching orders of what we want done and when we want it done. In order to draw out the full benefit of a disciplined prayer life, we need to balance our petitions of God with our praise to God. The Apostle Paul reminds us, *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God* (Philippians 4:6).

The highest form of prayer is to seek the Lord solely for the fellowship of His presence and to release the adoration of our hearts. The Psalmist cried out, *O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory. Because Your loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name* (Psalm 63:1-4). When we bow our hearts in prayer, we usually pray according to a prepared list of items we want to talk about. I wonder how much richer our prayer life would be if we occasionally laid our list aside and just asked God what He wanted to talk about ... and then listen with the full attention of our heart?

## COMMITMENT TO REJOICE

Rejoicing will help us maintain a positive attitude. The Scriptures instruct us to, *Rejoice always* (I Thessalonians 5:16). The word "*rejoice*" means to be "cheerful, glad & content." This is not suggesting that we "fake it" with trumped up demonstrations of phony feelings. However, it does mean that as we examine God's faithfulness to us, we should be genuinely glad, cheerful & content with His provision and blessings. We are to let our "*cheerful contentment*" be reflected in our countenance. In Proverbs 15:13 we read, *A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance*. Tragically, so many Christians go through life with sour and sad looks on their faces. We have reason to rejoice ... our sins are forgiven. We have reason to rejoice ... the Lord has promised to take care of us. We have reason to rejoice ... the Lord has promised that He will never leave or forsake us. We have reason to rejoice ... the Lord is preparing a home for us in His heaven. Rejoice and let your rejoicing show on your face!

## COMMITMENT TO TRUST

Trusting God means that we keep our faith in God at all times. The Psalmist admonishes us in Psalms 62:8, *Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us*. We tend to lose our trust in God and in His ability to help us when we face negative circumstances; especially if we experience a reversal in what we had believed God would do for us. The Bible warns us, *Do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward* (Hebrews 10:35).

The Prophet Habakkuk was facing some very discouraging circumstances; yet, he refused to stop trusting God. We can read Habakkuk's commitment to trust in Habakkuk 3:17-19, *Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills*.

## COMMITMENT TO SERVICE

Service to God is not an option; it is a requirement for us as He didn't save us to just sit and partake of His many blessings. God gave us a purpose in life that will exalt His Name and advance His Kingdom on earth. In every season of our lives, we are to be busy in serving the Lord and fulfilling our God-given purpose in life. I Corinthians 15:58 says, *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*

We have all been given gifts and talents that we are to use in our service to the Lord. Our talents and spiritual gifts are not given to us for bragging rights. We are to invest them into the work of the Lord so that everyone's lives will be enriched and we all will grow and mature to be like Jesus. The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus and said, *Speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love* (Ephesians 4:15-16).

Far too many in the church today are merely “consumers” and they never become “contributors” to the cause of Christ and His church. In doing so, they never give of their resources, or of themselves; they merely take from others. It is sad to say, but it is human nature to want to quit when things get tough. However, the apostle Paul exhorts us to maintain our service to the Lord regardless of our difficulties, *We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed and broken. We are perplexed, but we don't give up and quit. We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going* (II Corinthians 4:8-9). We would do well to remember that one day; we will all stand before the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ. We will be required to give an account of how we invested our time, our talents, and our resources into the work of the Lord.

## COMMITMENT TO THE WORD

The Word of God contains wisdom for daily living. The pursuit of wisdom from His Word should be our top priority every day of our life ... *Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding* (Proverbs 4:7). In order for the Word of God to hold a priority in our lives, we need to develop a passion for the Word ... *My soul breaks with longing for Your judgments at all times* (Psalm 119:20).

We need to see our time in the Word of God as far more than fulfilling a ritualistic duty; we need to make it the delight of our hearts. The Psalmist told us that we will live in the blessings of the Lord when time in His Word becomes our pleasure and not just a duty ... *His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night* (Psalm 1:2). The Word of God holds the secrets for success in all areas of our lives ... *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success* (Joshua 1:8).

We need to let the Word of God shape our opinions and convictions about every issue in life. It needs to be our conviction that the Word of the Lord is perfect, right, and relevant to all matters of life ... *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether* (Psalm 19:7-9).

## COMMITMENT TO HIS HOUSE

Maintaining our commitment to the church is far more than just being regular in our attendance. It means that we are to stay connected to the family of God. The writer of the Book of Hebrews warns us, *Without wavering, let us hold tightly to the hope we say we have, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near* (Hebrews 10:23-25). The Scriptures teach us that as we see the signs of the times pointing us to the eminent return of Christ, we are to make sure we do not neglect our gathering together to worship.

The Bible warns us that in the Last Days, just before the Lord returns, there will be a deep spiritual darkness over people and that we will face difficult times on many different levels. When you read II Timothy 3:1-5, you would be tempted to believe that the words of Paul were coming from one of our daily newspapers ... *You should also know this, in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control; they will be cruel and have no interest in what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly.*

The Scriptures also warn us that just before Christ returns, many who claim to be Christians will fall away from their faith in God and their commitment to His Church, Matthew 24:12 tells us that their hearts will grow cold towards God ... *Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold.* Given the times in which we live, we need to do two things to maintain our commitment to His House: first, we need to guard our hearts from sin and from growing cold towards God ... *Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do* (Proverbs 4:23). Second, we need to make an unshakable and non-negotiable commitment to our tradition of worshiping together with the family of God ... *Therefore, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught* (II Thessalonians 2:15).

As you exact the routine of your daily schedule, be diligent  
to maintain your passion for your commitments to God:

OFFER GOD YOUR PRAISE  
BE THANKFUL AT ALL TIMES  
DAILY COMMUNE WITH GOD IN PRAYER  
ALWAYS REJOICE  
NEVER STOP TRUSTING GOD  
BUSY YOURSELF IN SERVING GOD  
MAKE GOD'S WORD A DAILY PURSUIT  
BE FAITHFUL TO THE LORD'S CHURCH

***DON'T LET THE FIRE WITHIN THE ALTAR GO OUT...  
KEEP THE FLAME BURNING!***