

# (The Word for Today) Isaiah 33:18 - Part 1

by Chuck Smith

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*Pastor Chuck Smith explores the multifaceted symbolism of fire in relation to God's nature and our spiritual lives in Isaiah 33:18.*

**Duration:** 25:59

**Scripture:** Isaiah 6:1

**Topics:** "Expositional"

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## Description

The video is a sermon by Pastor Chuck Smith entitled 'Driving Fire.' It focuses on the theme of God's presence as fire and the consciousness of God that the people of Jerusalem had come to. The sermon references Isaiah chapter 6, where Isaiah sees the Lord high and lifted up on the throne, and his glory fills the temple. Pastor Chuck emphasizes the omnipresence of God and the inability to escape His presence, comparing it to a slow burning fire of nature that reduces our bodies to dust. The sermon encourages listeners to have a true consciousness of God and to recognize the awe and power of His presence.

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## Transcript

Welcome to the Word for Today. The Word for Today is a continuous study of the Bible, taught by Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, California. Pastor Chuck is currently teaching from the Old Testament, and if you're following along in your Bible, we'll be continuing today in Isaiah chapter 33, beginning with verse 14, as we continue with a topical message entitled And now with today's study, here's Pastor Chuck.

The men in Jerusalem had come to that consciousness of God that the prophet and the Bible had been seeking to bring to the people. And that is the consciousness of God as fire. In chapter six, the beginning of Isaiah, when he talks about the beginning of his ministry.

It happened in the year that King Uzziah died. He said, I saw the Lord. He was high and lifted up.

He was sitting on the throne, and his glory filled the temple. And then said I, woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell amongst a people of unclean lips. And then he saw one of the angels, the seraphim, who came to the altar of God, took one of the glowing coals from off the altar.

And he flew down to Isaiah, and he touched Isaiah's lips with that glowing coal. And he said, Now are you cleansed from your wickedness? Then Isaiah heard the Lord saying, Who shall I send to speak to this

people? Who will go for us? And Isaiah responded, Here am I, Lord, send me. But picturing this cleansing fire of God, this glowing coal from the altar of God that cleansed.

In the last chapter of Isaiah, chapter sixty-six, he declares, Behold, Jehovah will come with fire, and his chariots will be like the whirlwind to render his anger and his fierceness and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire will the Lord execute judgment. And so there was that desire to bring to them this consciousness of God as fire.

All through the Bible we find this symbol being used. Way back in the book of Genesis, when Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden of Eden, we remember that God placed the cherubim with a flaming sword to protect the entrance to the garden. We remember that when God called Moses to go to the Pharaoh to demand the release of his people, that God appeared unto Moses in the burning bush, and he was attracted to this bush that burnt with fire and yet was not consumed.

And God spoke to Moses out of the fire. Later, when the children of Israel had come out of Egypt, and Moses had brought them to Mount Sinai, and he brought them around the mountain that they might have this encounter and meet God. That it says that God came down upon the mount, and it was all together on smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke ascended as the smoke of a furnace.

And so this, this idea of God as fire. In fact, the people were so terrified, they said to Moses, look, you go up and talk to God, and you tell us what he says. We don't want to get near him.

We're afraid. You know, that fire that they saw. When the Holy Spirit descended upon the church, there was that symbol of that power and presence of God by the flaming tongues of fire that sat upon each of them.

In the New Testament book of Hebrews, it says, our God is a consuming fire. And we read that when Christ returns, that he will be like the refiner's fire. He said that he came to cast fire upon the earth.

And in Revelation, he is described as having eyes like flames of fire. Now with this symbol of fire being used for God, what can we learn from it? There are three symbols in the New Testament for God. God is love, God is light, and God is a consuming fire.

Now the third of these three symbols is the greatest, because it encompasses the other two. You often speak of and hear of the heat of passion or the flames of passion. And we speak of love and the flames of passion of love.

God is love. And that's associated with heat, with fire. Light is associated with heat, because we know that you cannot have light without heat.

And light gives off heat. And so God is love. There is heat.

God is light. There is heat. And our God is a consuming fire.

But you need to drop the word consuming because that is a descriptive word because of the context in which it is used. And just coming down to the basic symbol, God is fire. There is that passion of love that burns in his heart for you and for me.

There is that light, the warmth of the light of his love that fills our life for our God is fire. And each of us are wrapped in the presence of God. You can't escape him.

Whether you are in heaven or you are in hell, there is that presence of God as fire. In heaven it is that purifying fire. In hell it is that consuming fire.

As David said, where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend into heaven, you are there. And if I make my bed in hell, you are there. And that fire that burns in hell is the fire of the presence of God that is destroying and consuming.

You see, fire has interesting qualities. It has that quality of consuming, but it also has the quality of transmitting into permanency. It all depends upon the material that is in the fire.

That same fire that consumes the wood, consumes the coal, is melting the pig iron in that open hearth furnace, heating it to 3,000 degrees Fahrenheit. And by that tremendous heat, removing the impurities from the pig iron, that it might become steel transmitted into a more permanent metal, harder. But what else can be said about fire? The scientists have a word, armochesis.

And that word means the slow process of burning the wood, the slow-burning fire of nature. That's what they, the slow-burning fire of nature, they refer to as armochesis. Now I look at the chrome on my car, and I see that it's getting little pits.

And those pits will grow as time goes by. They'll expose the steel that is under the chrome. And when it is exposed, then it will begin to get pits, and it'll begin to rust.

For slowly and gradually, that slow fire of nature is reducing that steel to rust. There is that disintegration that is taking place as the result of the slow-burning fire of nature. What can you say about it? It's everywhere, throughout the universe.

This whole universe is gradually being destroyed by this slow-burning fire of nature, gradually wearing down. In the fall, I see the trees as the leaves begin to color and drop to the ground. And I watch them as they lie there on the ground, how they begin to just sort of dissolve, and they become a part of the soil to nurture the next generation for the perpetuating of the tree and all.

But you see the leaves, they dissolve, they become mulch, they become a part of the soil. Slow-burning fire of nature, as it is burning out the feet and as preparing for the future. Your body, once your soul and spirit has moved out of it, that armochesis is going to take over, and your body will be slowly reduced to dust.

You can't escape that slow-burning fire of nature. It's throughout the universe. And it thus testifies to us of the omnipresence of God.

Who of us can dwell in the midst of this fire? God is everywhere. Now, this word dwell, though, is an interesting word in the Hebrew. There are three possible interpretations.

Now, you oftentimes hear people say concerning about, well, that's just their interpretation. And it is true in translating from one language to another. Oftentimes a word in one language has the possible meaning and has a dual meaning or even, as in the case of this word, a threefold meaning in the Hebrew.

And thus, whenever this word is used, there is often a different interpretation. For the word translated dwell does mean in the Hebrew to sojourn as a guest. But it also can mean to flee.

Or the same Hebrew word in its context could mean to be in conflict or to fight. Now, when you're translating the Hebrew, you usually translate the word according to the best usage in the context. But in this context, it's difficult then to properly translate.

What were they saying? When they said, who of us can dwell with this devouring fire? Were they talking about dwelling as a guest? Or were they saying, who of us can flee this devouring fire? They saw it had wiped out the Assyrians. Who of us can flee it? Or even the third, who of us can fight this devouring fire? Who am I that I can stand up against it? Who am I that I can fight it? And so you see, when they really came to the true consciousness of God, it was awesome. It was frightening.

They were terrified. They saw what the presence of God could do to this powerful Assyrian army. And they knew that they weren't right with God.

It was the sinners, the hypocrites who began to cry out, who among us can flee from this fire? Or who among us can fight this fire? Or who among us dare to try to dwell in this fire? If this fire is so capable of consuming, who am I that I can dwell in it? Now the truth of the matter is that you are dwelling in it. You cannot flee from God. You cannot escape the fire.

Paul, in talking about God to the philosophers in Athens, said, for in Him we live and move and have our being. I dwell in the fire. The question isn't really who of us can dwell in the fire.

The issue is I am dwelling in the fire. What is it doing to me? And that all depends on what you are. For this fire is either consuming the dross in your life as a refining fire, or you are gradually being destroyed and will ultimately be destroyed by this fire.

It is either destroying you or is transmitting you into permanency. And what it is doing to you is dependent completely upon your relationship with God. Now the Bible tells us that one day, as we stand before God, all of our works are going to be judged as by fire.

And many of our works are like wood, hay, and stubble. That's the composition of the work. And it will be burned.

You say, but Lord, I was in church Super Bowl Sunday. I even went to third service. Chance missing the kickoff.

And the Lord would say, well, you weren't really that interested because the Rams didn't make it anyhow. Poof. There goes the works.

A lot of the works that we seek to present to God are works that are done with improper motives. Jesus said, take care that you don't do your righteousness before men to be seen of men. That's an improper motive.

I want people to think I'm a great guy. I want people to think I'm a righteous guy. And so I do things in a public way with a lot of ostentation.

So people say, oh, wow, wonderful. But Jesus said, if you do that, you have your reward. Those kind of works, they're wood, hay, and stubble.

When you, when you come before the fire of God's judgment, those works will burn. They'll not endure. Those works that do endure the fire, the Bible says you will receive a reward for those.

I wonder when our works are all tested by fire, just how much will be left. The Bible speaks about we as Christians being tried by fire. Peter said, don't count it strange concerning the fiery trials, which are to try you.

And he speaks about the trial of your faith is more precious than gold that perish it though it be tried in the fire. And so there is that fire of God that does burn those impurities from our lives that we might be pleasing and acceptable in his sight. But here are those men in Jerusalem, those sinners, those hypocrites in Zion who are terrified.

They're trembling. They're asking who amongst us can dwell with these devouring burnings or flee from them or fight with them. And Isaiah answers them.

He said, he who walks righteously, he who speaks uprightly, he that despises ill gotten gains, he who refuses to accept bribes, he who is, who stops his ear from hearing slanderous things that destroy others. And he who shuts his eyes from seeing evil. And then of that man, he says, he shall dwell on high.

His eyes shall be on low. His defense is in the rock. His needs will be supplied and he shall see the king in his beauty.

As our lives are refined by that fire of God, as our lives are purified by that work of God's spirit within us and that fire that refines that fire that purifies. It is that fire having purified me through Jesus that qualifies me to dwell on high. As I find my defense in Jesus Christ, the rock of my salvation, as he so graciously provides for me one day, and I don't think it's very far off.

I'm going to see the king in his beauty and I shall behold that land, that heavenly land where he dwells. And having been purified by the work of God within my life, having been transmitted into permanency, I shall dwell with him forever. For this reason, the word for today we'd like to present a booklet by Pastor Chuck Smith entitled, how can a man be born again? And also an audio CD entitled why by Pastor Chuck that would be the perfect compliment for Christmas cards and gifts this year.

Both resources share the gospel of Jesus Christ and explain the true meaning of Christmas and why a man born 2000 years ago can still affect the world today. And best of all, they contain a message leading people to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and savior. And remember the word for today would like to assist you this Christmas in spreading the gospel of Jesus to your family, friends and coworkers.

Please call our customer service department to help you in finding that perfect gift that will reflect the true meaning of Christmas. And if you call right now and mention this radio ad, the word for today will give you a 20% discount on any resource carried by the word for today. So call the word for today at 1-800-272-WORD or write to us at P.O. Box 8000 Costa Mesa, California 92628.

Once again that number to call is 1-800-272-9673. And for those of you that would like to visit our website you can do so at [www.twft.com](http://www.twft.com) or if you would like to email us you can do so at [info@www.twft.com](mailto:info@www.twft.com). Well coming up next time on the word for today, Pastor Chuck will be continuing his fascinating study through the book of Isaiah. That's coming up next time on the word for today.

And now with a few closing comments, here's Pastor Chuck. We do desire that you would search us, our hearts. That you would trust us.

That you would try us, our thoughts. See if there be Lord some sin, impurity, hidden, lurking in our lives of which we ourselves are not even aware. Lord bring those tests and those trials by which it might be revealed so that we might know ourselves, so that we might commit ourselves fully and completely to the righteousness of Jesus Christ offered to us through faith.

Cleanse us O God. Make us like you. In Jesus name we pray.

Amen. Amen.

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