

The Refiners Fire

by Phil Beach Jr.

God's refiner's fire is a purging process that removes impurities from our lives to make us holy and acceptable to Him.

Duration: 41:23

Scripture: Malachi 3:2

Topics: "Renewal", "Spiritual Refinement", "Humility in Relationships"

Description

Phil Beach Jr. emphasizes the necessity of allowing God to refine us through trials and challenges, likening this process to a silversmith purifying silver. He stresses that our loved ones are not our possessions, and we must seek God's guidance in our relationships and responsibilities. The sermon highlights the importance of humility and the willingness to let go of our pride and expectations, allowing God to reveal and remove impurities in our lives. Beach encourages the congregation to pray for clarity on God's calling and to embrace the refining process as a means of spiritual growth and transformation.

Transcript

You can turn it on now. Okay, praise the Lord. First of all, we have a special speaker this morning.

And this is a direct answer to a prayer that I prayed many months ago. And the Lord answers our prayers in very peculiar ways, doesn't he? As Colette just shared. Let me just say a few words about the testimony that Colette shared.

First of all, this whole issue that Colette shared has nothing to do with negating your responsibility as a husband. And I trust nobody is misinterpreting that. The beauty about this testimony is we all have to come together and we have to pray and we have to say, Lord, what are you saying about this particular situation? Now, let me say something, okay? It is the responsibility of every husband and every wife to learn how to communicate with each other on their knees before the Lord.

We have to be willing to give our mates over to the Lord. How many here know that our children or our mates are not our personal property? Now, this is a very, very important issue that needs attention. And the Holy Spirit will bring this into our lives as we ask Him to.

Your mate is not your personal property. It's good to look at your husband and say, Sweetheart, I love you, but you're not my personal property. And husbands, it's good for you to look to your wife and say, I love

you very much, but you're not my personal property.

You know, sometimes in the world that we live in, we get distorted. We really do. We need the light of God's presence to shine into our lives.

We have to continuously give back to God everything that God has given to us, lest we begin to use what God has given us for our own agenda. And that's a very deep, heart-searching principle that we have to have brought deeply in us. I have two sons, and I have experienced much grief and pain, more so several years ago, when I came to the Lord and confessed to the Lord that I wasn't going to be the father, the perfect father.

I can't be the perfect father. And men, we have to be willing to die to our pride and die to the expectations of other people. We have to be willing to lay our life before the Lord.

I prayed and I said, Lord, bring other men into my sons' lives who can teach them things that I can't teach them, things that you're not asking me to teach them. So you have to come before the Lord and learn what God is requiring of you. And then you have to be willing to focus on that.

If you don't, you're going to miss what God wants you to do. Everyone has a unique calling. Everyone has a unique word that God is speaking to them.

We need to pray. As our families, we need to pray before the Lord and ask the Lord to help us. So I had to be willing to pray and say, Father, I know what you have called me to do.

And I know within that perimeter what I can do. And I know what you have not called me to do. And I acknowledge that I am not super dad.

Colette has to acknowledge she's not super mom. That we have to be willing to let God make up our lack. If we don't, we're never going to find that unique calling.

Because we can't do everything. And so I had to pray that God would bring people into my son's life to teach him practical things. I had to pray that God would bring people into my family's life to help with the practical issues of the home.

And do you know what God has done? That very thing. And so as we come to understand the heart of the Lord more and more in our life, God requires us to begin to focus in on what He is saying. A lot of Christians don't even know what God is saying to them.

They're too busy listening to everyone else tell them what they think they should do. How many have experienced that? You're too busy, we're too busy listening to, and we're too busy fulfilling the expectations of everybody around about us. You remember when Jesus' friend Lazarus was sick and everybody came and said, you know, you need to go visit your friend.

He's sick. What did Jesus do? He didn't visit him. He disappointed the expectations of those that were near him, and He actually didn't visit him.

And then what happened to Lazarus? He died. Now could you imagine the talk? He was certainly irresponsible, wasn't he? Jesus was certainly not sensitive to the need of His friend. I'm sure that's what was said, but we know that wasn't true.

We know that Jesus learned to listen to the Father. Brothers and sisters, we're at the threshold of a measure of God's dealing in all of our lives, but not only are you and I at this threshold, but the whole body of Christ. And it is the threshold of Malachi 4. David mentioned this last week.

Then I'm going to introduce you to the special speaker. I want to encourage you to please... Here's what's going to happen today. I'm sure it's already begun to happen, but I hope you have a pencil and a paper, because what you're going to find is as I share this from the Lord's heart, you're going to hear the Lord speak to you.

And I would just recommend that if you can't remember it, to jot it down somewhere. Because surely God will bring to pass everything that He's going to speak into your spirit today. Malachi.

So I just wanted to mention that, because this is part of the process of what each and every one of us are going to have to go through. And unless the Lord gives us a great measure of humility and meekness, we'll never come into this place. We'll never come into this place.

And so I praise the Lord for God's provision. And it's the responsibility of every member of the body of Christ, particularly families, to get on your knees and to pray. What is God saying? What is the Lord saying? And everyone who has a heart of humility will be able to hear what the Lord is saying.

Do you know how this is so wonderful and how it eliminates so many conflicts and so much confusion? If we'll just lay our hearts down before the Lord as families. What is God saying? What is God saying? What is God requiring of me? Malachi chapter 3. Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom you delight in.

Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. Now listen carefully. But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fuller soap.

And he shall sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver. And he shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. The Holy Spirit is preparing the body of Christ.

And in particular, those who have an ear to hear what the Spirit of God is saying, He is preparing us by imparting to us faith that comes from His heart, enabling us by faith to receive an aspect of the Lord's appearing. Now I'm not talking about His appearing in the heavens, but rather the Holy Spirit now is talking about His appearing in our midst, in our assembly, in our gathering, in our home. And He's not going to appear as the blesser, although He has.

He's not going to appear as the healer, although He has and is the healer. He's not going to appear as whatever it is that He has already appeared to you as. But He's going to be something very specific.

And I would ask that you would pray that God will open your heart to the faith to receive Him as the Lord who sits as a refiner and a purifier of silver and gold. Now, the special speaker this morning is Pastor Jim Cimbala from Brooklyn Tabernacle Church. A few days ago, I came across this book.

And at that time, this message was turning in my spirit. I have five, six, seven pages of notes. But I just felt like God was opening this revelation up to me, but I just didn't feel the liberty at then to be able to share what the Lord had given me.

Then the Lord brought this book my way. This is the second book that He has authored. The first book is called Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire.

I recommend you buy that book and I recommend you get this book. But as I got this book, I saw it in a magazine. I immediately sensed the Lord saying, Go get that book, son.

So I drove to Allentown and got it. And to my utter joy, I read through the pages with tears streaming down my eyes as I knew that this book was something God brought into my life at this time. And then in a particular chapter, I got to at the end of the book, the name of the chapter is called Addition by Subtraction.

The entire chapter is devoted to the ministry of the Lord when He sits as a refiner of silver and gold in the church. And as I read through this chapter, I said, Lord, this is great. And I felt as though the Lord said, Yes, and I want you to read it.

There's the special speaker. So God has been pleased in His sovereignty to move on this man to write this book. And God is speaking this into our lives right now.

So I'm going to take a few minutes. It's about seven pages, six pages. It won't be lengthy and it won't be boring.

And I pray that you will listen carefully as God speaks to us and as God confirms in your spirit what He is doing. This is what God is doing and this is what He's about to do in our lives and in our homes. This is chapter 12 from the book, Fresh Faith, authored by Jim Cimbala.

Listen carefully, please. When any of us goes to buy a piece of fine jewelry, we walk into an attractive store and well-dressed personnel are waiting to show us the various wares inside their glass cases. Everything about the surroundings is clean and sophisticated.

If we were to track that metal back to its origins, however, the opposite would be true. A silver mine is a dark, dirty, dangerous place. Men dreaming of fortunes have lost their lives in mines like Nevada's Comstock Lode during the 1859 silver rush, the Real de Monte y Paguca in Hidalgo, Mexico.

I'm sorry, I don't read Spanish very well. Nevada, which is the largest silver mine in the world, were the ancient sources of silver in Greece and Armenia during Bible times. When the ore is brought to the surface, the work is far from over.

The crushing, amalgamating, and smelting is still yet to be done. Silver does not melt until it reaches 960.5 degrees Celsius. Only then does it start to yield up its impurities.

Both King Solomon and Prophet Isaiah had all that in mind when they wrote about God's purging process, the purifying of our hearts and lives. Remove the dross from the silver, and out comes material for the silversmith. Remove the wicket from the king's presence, and his throne will be established through righteousness.

Proverbs 25, 4, and 5. While all of us want our fine jewelry to be of high quality, we do not often think about the need for a similar process in our own hearts. In fact, every year it is getting harder to talk about topics such as this one because our churches have become conditioned by the world. Feel good, keep it positive have become the operative slogans.

We tend to bristle at the idea of God wanting to make major changes in our lives. We like it well enough when God says things such as, I will never leave you nor forsake you. I will bless your coming in and your going out, and so forth.

Yes, God did say all those things, but the spiritual realities are a little more complex than that. God deals with us as a responsible parent deals with a child. Sometimes you give a compliment or a pat on the back.

However, at other times you do what the apostle Paul told the young minister Timothy to do. Correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and careful instruction. We like certain parts of the verse but are not so thrilled about the rest.

We appreciate the encourage aspect and the part about great patience, but we are not so keen about the correcting and rebuking business. Pastors today are viewed as doing their jobs properly only when they are giving a kind word. How many sermons and counseling sessions contain inspired correcting or rebuking? In too many places the ministry have been reduced to hirelings, and they will only stay popular and employed if they keep giving messages that people want to hear.

But God's way in Scripture is far different from the ways of the American church culture. He knows the absolute necessity of removing the dross from our silver, of heating us up to an uncomfortable point where we can, as the New Living Translation puts it, skim off your slag. He is subtracting in order to add.

This is strange mathematics, I admit, but in reality in the spiritual realm, in God's math you sometimes get more by having less. I mentioned in my first book that when my wife and I came to the Brooklyn Tabernacle in 1972, the church was in disarray. Fewer than 20 people came to the services.

Within a month or two I realized that some of the major problems lie within the tiny group itself. A few did whatever popped into their heads during the services. It was both unbiblical and unedifying.

There were other problems with racial tensions and with people insisting upon lead positions. I was young and nervous to face this. I guess my predecessor had felt it was best to do nothing.

Any correction would probably drive someone away, and then the attendance, as well as the offerings, would even become smaller. But I knew in my heart that wouldn't work. I had played enough basketball to know that sometimes in order to win, you have to kick a guy off the team.

The problem player may be spoiling the rhythm of the rest. He may have better than average talent, but in the locker room and on the floor, he is a bad influence and destroys the cohesion of the team. If he won't change, he has to go.

Numerous college and professional teams have experienced this. One fewer player sometimes means a better team. I began to pray, Oh God, either change people or have them leave.

The Lord helped me to accept subtraction in order to start adding, and that is exactly what took place. If silver is contaminated with dross, it does no good just to add more ore to the pile. The silversmith will not be able to make something beautiful out of it, no matter how large the pile or how much effort is given.

Something has to be removed. As long as the impurities remain, the silver will not be shiny or smooth. We readily accept this truth in many areas, but spiritually, we often resist it.

Imagine someone who is 80 or 100 pounds overweight going to the doctor and saying, Please make me feel better. When I wake up in the morning, I'm just dragging. Give me some pills to pep me up.

The doctor would say, All the pills in the world aren't going to restore your energy. What you need to concentrate on is losing 50 pounds just for starters. What? Hey, I came here to your office to feel better.

I can't change my whole lifestyle. Just give me something to help me. The person will be healthier only by subtracting, not adding.

Imagine another patient with a cancerous gross who comes in wanting better aspirin to dull the pain. That won't work. The gross has to be cut out.

If the patient protests, Look, I didn't come here to lose part of my body, the doctor would reply, Well, you need to lose this particular part of your body. It's cancer. It's got to go.

You mean you care about me and you say you're my friend and you're going to cut me with a knife? Exactly. If I don't, you're simply going to die. Many of us are quick to shout Hallelujah and celebrate God's blessings.

Others of us have a sound intellectual grasp of Bible doctrine. That is all good, but we can easily avoid the fact that all the noise and knowledge in the world will take us nowhere if there is unremoved dross in our life. All the talking in the world won't produce a godly life without the Lord's intimate, ongoing, refining process in our hearts.

Some of us are overextended financially. Others of us have a calendar that is way too busy. The only way to get healthy is to reduce the indebtedness, to cut back the busyness.

Whatever clutters our walk with God becomes the target of His purging process. So many of us think that the more we do and the more we acquire, the happier we will be. So wrong.

This is why so many Christians do not see God's purposes worked out in their lives. They can quote the Bible verse about the peace of God that passes all understanding, but they have little experience of what it means. Because God loves you, He will always be direct with you.

He tells you the truth. He is absolutely ruthless in going after the things that spoil the flow of His grace and blessing into our lives. I want to read that one more time.

He is absolutely ruthless in going after the things that spoil the flow of His grace and blessing in our lives. His process is to subtract in order to add. He will never make a treaty with our secret pockets of sin.

That has to go, He will insist. You cannot go on with that in your life. I cannot make a beautiful silver vessel with that dross still present.

When Jesus began His public ministry, one of His stops, according to the gospel of John, was the cluttered temple. Did Jesus bring new paint colors and expensive furniture, add to the decor? No. He got rid of the things that didn't belong there and He kicked out the profiteering merchants.

He showed Himself to be a tough refiner that day because He deeply loved the purpose of the temple as a house of prayer for all nations and He wanted it to be restored. We have to face the fact, beloved, that in order to be what God wants us to be, He will have to take away things in our life that don't belong there. In

any life or ministry devoted to Him, we must stop and ask, are there attitudes here that grieve the Lord? Are there habits that need to be broken? What are the impurities that must go? How about the desire to be seen, that competitiveness, that seeking for glory and acclaim? What about the prejudice or judgmentalism toward others? We must be absolutely open in inviting God to thoroughly search us and take away anything He sees fit in our lives.

One Saturday night I was seeking God in preparation for the next day's meetings, just making a fresh consecration of my life and trying to draw nearer to the Lord when all of a sudden the names of three people came into my mind. None of them were nearby. They were scattered across the country.

In all three cases, my relationship with them was not what it should be. Nothing on the surface was wrong. I was on speaking terms with all of them, but it wasn't right before the God who is love.

I didn't feel I had actually sinned against them, but still. Jim, the Lord seemed to say, you know there's a wall between you and each of these people. Something isn't right.

Call them up. You need to repair the breach. I quickly defended myself.

Lord, I'm not the cause of these problems. I've honestly feel that they are the ones with wrong attitudes. Not me, God.

But God would not back off. Call them and repent of any hurt you've caused, whether you meant it or not. Within the next week, I made three phone calls.

The humbling was good for me, and I learned new insights into God's way of dealing in my life. What a blessing it turned out to be as I let God bring that slag to the surface and finally skim it off. Immediately afterwards, I studied, prayed, and preached with a new vigor and life.

Listen to the piercing prophecy by Malachi about Christ. But who can endure the day of His coming? Who can stand when He appears? For He will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver.

He will purify the Levites and refine them with gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord as in the days gone by. Does your theology include Jesus sitting on a refiner's stool, watching over a cauldron of liquid metal under which the fire is getting hotter and hotter? Can you see Him reaching down with a flat ladle from time to time to skim off the impurities that have bubbled to the surface? Is our faith deep enough to yield to the refiner's fire? Will we always be comfortable in this process? Of course not.

Is it pleasant? Not at all. But it is our Savior's method of getting rid of the junk in our lives, and His joy and peace will be felt immediately afterward, far deeper within us than we have ever known. If you are a parent, you might know what it is to see too much junk food going into your child's mouth and decide to do something about it.

Or maybe your child is being affected by some bad influences at school. When you take action, it doesn't exactly make you popular, but you do whatever you can do to subtract these things from your children's life. You're not trying to rain on your children's parade.

You do it because you love Him. The Bible says, The Lord disciplines those He loves. As a Father, the Son He delights in.

God's purpose for us is a lot deeper than just how we feel at the moment. He lovingly permits pressures and trials, lets the bottom fall out from time to time so that our wrong reactions come right to the surface. We see our lack of faith, our lack of love, and this is exactly His aim.

God intentionally places us in situations in which we are beyond our ability to cope. He permits difficulties to come with our children and we say, Why God? He is refining us. He is teaching us to trust Him.

He is drawing us away from our own strength. He knows exactly how much heat to allow in our lives. He will never scorch us, but if we jump out of the cauldron because it's too hot, He has others waiting.

The dross must be removed. Do you know how the ancient refiner... Do you know how the ancient refiner knew when he was finished and the heat could finally be turned down? It was when he looked into the cauldron and saw his own reflection in the shining silver. As long as the image was muddy and rippled with flags of slag, he knew he had to keep working.

When his face finally showed clearly, the silver had been purified. This is exactly how it is with our spiritual refining process. God's eternal plan is for us to be conformed to the likeness of His Son.

Jesus Christ continues today as the refiner and purifier of His people. As He carefully works on our lives, He keeps looking into us to see His own blessed reflection. Shall we not trust Christ and surrender to this process rather than fighting it? Remember that it is a process of love to bring beauty and growth and enlargement in our lives.

It is God's way of sanctifying us. And we must never forget that the holier the life, the more true happiness we experience within. It is the spiritual impurities that rob us of God's best.

Don't fight the process. Let us face the fact that God will never let us remain the way we are today. This is the reason for this refining process in our lives.

We are all under construction. Sometimes when I see all the major work still needed in my life, I feel like warning people to put on hard hats around me in case of falling debris. That's His testimony.

We only move ahead by losing some things. God still adds by subtraction. Communion with Him is our greatest need.

But there are an awful lot of hindrances to that, aren't there? Some folks know more about home improvement than God's process of spiritual improvement for their lives. They're more up to date on sports teams and heroes than on what the apostles and prophets taught in the name of the Lord. This is the last page, beloved.

Suffer a little longer here. We stagger at God's promises because our hearts are clogged with so many unedifying habits and unnecessary things. When someone stubbornly fights God's purifying process, things can get ugly.

When the dross and impurities are grasped tightly like some kind of treasure, the future turns dark and foreboding. It is a kind of spiritual self-destruction. We have had our share of spiritual shipwrecks at the Brooklyn Tabernacle.

Many years ago, I lost one of my closest associates who, unknown to me, had begun to spend far too much time with a married woman who was a new Christian. His wife slowly began to sense that something was wrong, but he cleverly justified his actions on spiritual grounds and blamed her for being judgmental. She didn't share her suspicions with anyone else.

The church was much smaller then, and this associate was known and loved by all the congregation. One day in his staff meeting, I asked him to lead us in prayer. He stumbled along for a while and then broke down emotionally.

Something was going on, some deep conflict of the soul. I regret to this day that I was not more discerning. I didn't confront him as a brother in Christ.

Within a few months, the spiritual infection grew stronger and more ominous. Suddenly, I received a phone call, while on vacation no less, that I should quickly come back to Brooklyn. My associate had disappeared along with his lady friend, leaving behind her two children and her husband, and they had taken \$10,000 from the church account.

They left behind a pitiful note assuring me that God understands what we are doing. What a tragedy. And how mightily sin can deceive.

Because this associate had been so visible, I faced the difficult task of breaking the news as best as I could to the entire congregation on Sunday. I broke down openly as I spoke. I can still remember the audible groans and anguished weeping throughout the church auditorium.

I have often thought how many times God must have dealt with my friend. How many times must he have been warned by the Holy Spirit? How many nights did he lie in bed fighting off the conviction of sin? We all know how persistent the Holy Spirit is when he tries to save us from the disaster of a shipwreck. I don't care how many millions around the world may have become fascinated with the story of the Titanic and the fateful night it sank into the cold waters of the North Atlantic.

It was child's play, beloved, compared with the spiritual tragedy of men and women who shunned the purging of the refiner's fire only to find themselves in cold and dark places they never imagined. Shall we pray? God, I ask you to cleanse and purify our hearts and lives. Melt the dross, remove the impurities, all of it, whether in deed, word, or thought.

Save us from ourselves and establish us in righteousness by your strong right hand. We ask this humbly, depending on you, in Jesus' name. Amen.

That was a message from our special speaker this morning. It was a message from the Holy Spirit. Are we prepared to receive into our midst, into our homes, into our lives, into our cars, into our bedrooms, into our fellowshiping the refining fire process that the Lord Jesus Christ is bringing into our lives? Are we prepared for the purging? We ought not, as the Scripture says, to think it strange concerning the fiery trial that shall try us, as though some strange thing has happened, but rather rejoice because God is revealing Himself as a refiner of silver and a refiner of gold.

You might be here this morning and you may have sensed that God has taken this word and has made it very real to you. You don't know what He's going to do. You don't even know what He's expecting you to do.

But you know that in your spirit there is a yay and amen reverberating. You know that this is a word from God to you. Then I ask you, what are you going to do? What should you do? Here is what you need to do.

You need to pray and make a faith transaction with your Father in Heaven. As we prayed before, we can pray now. A faith transaction.

Father, I have heard Your Word. I know that You are the great refiner of silver and gold. And I know that because You love me, You are going to surface in my life all the impurities, all the dross that need to be skimmed off so that I might be a reflection of Your beauty, of Your likeness.

Father, I come to You in faith now and I receive You into my home, into my life, into my family as the one who will refine me as silver and gold. I realize, Lord, that in praying this, I should expect impurities to surface in my life. Help me at that time not to despair and not to feel condemned or not to become discouraged.

But rather, Lord, at that time, help me to rejoice and recognize that these impurities that are surfacing in my life are the direct result of Your refining process. And help me at that time, Lord, to lay these impurities at Your feet, confess them, and allow Your power to cleanse me and deliver me from them, Lord. Grant me humility, Lord, and grace during this season that is upon me.

I pray in Jesus' name. I just want to invite each and every one to make a time now where you, before God, make sure that you respond to what He has spoken into your spirit this morning. If you want special prayer, I invite you to come forward and we'll pray together because the refiner is coming into our midst and into our homes.

This is a sure word from the Lord. The refiner is coming because He's preparing a people who will bear His glory. So let's receive Him now by faith.

In Jesus' name, Hallelujah to God.

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