

Th122 Foundation Doctrines

Lesson Th122 – 16 Baptism: Baptized in Fire

John the Baptist was preaching to people who had come to the Jordan River to be baptized. He made this most remarkable statement, “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Matt 3:11). In this statement, we discover three aspects of baptism. Water baptism is the recognition that a person has repented. The baptism in the Holy Spirit fills the believer with power and boldness. What does it mean to be baptized with fire? This lesson will help you learn what baptism with fire means.

A certain gold miner went to the mountain in search of gold. He would dig rocks and dirt out of the mountainside and then dump a shovelful into his large flat pan. Pouring water into the pan, he would begin to rock the pan gently back and forth. The water would carry all of the soil and small rocks away, leaving behind the much heavier flakes of gold. This gold has great value, but still requires one more step. It must be refined. So, the gold is then placed into a small ceramic pot called a crucible. It is heated to temperatures of almost 1100 degrees Celsius (2000 degrees Fahrenheit). The extreme fire and heat melts the gold and burns off all of the impurities, resulting in the gold becoming pure.

The apostle Peter wrote this in a letter to Jewish exiles: “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed” (1Peter 1:6-7). Peter understood that just like gold is refined by fire, so also our faith in Christ will be tested and refined through various trials. Becoming a Christian does not mean that all of life’s difficulties and hardships will disappear.

One afternoon after the day of Pentecost, Peter and John were going up to the temple to pray. They came upon a man that was lame. He had been unable to walk since birth. Peter, being full of the Holy Spirit, reached down and took the man by the hand. As he helped him up, Peter commanded, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!” Immediately the man was healed and everyone around was amazed (Acts 3:1-10). Peter then preached a powerful sermon. As he was preaching the captain of the temple guard and some religious leaders seized both him and John. They dragged them off and threw them into jail.

It would be a long night for Peter and John. Being in prison and fearing what a judge might do to them would cause most men to become very humble and afraid. The next day, Peter and John were dragged out of jail and taken to stand before the most powerful religious leaders in all of Jerusalem. These men were not only religious leaders, but were empowered to be judges in religious matters. They were the very ones who had judged Jesus and sentenced him to death. It had been less than two months since Peter had stood outside in the courtyard of the high priest and had denied Jesus three times. Peter and John were in a very difficult situation. They now stood before men who had the power to destroy their lives.

“By what power or what name, did you do this?” They demanded an answer of Peter and John in regard to the miracle. How would Peter respond? Would he respond in fear? Would his faith fail him again? Would the fire of this trial burn his faith up or would it refine his faith?

Peter slowly turned to face his accusers and then said, “Rulers and elders of the people! If we are on trial today for an act of kindness shown to man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed!” (Acts 4:1-10).

The elders were shocked and perplexed. No one ever talked to them in such a manner. They knew that Peter and John were uneducated fisherman and yet, here they stood with such confidence. They ordered that Peter and John be taken outside while they conferred with one another. After discussion, they reached a conclusion. It was obvious that a very noteworthy miracle had happened, but they wanted to stop the growth of Christianity. They decided that they would have to use the weight and authority of the priesthood to silence them. Peter and John were brought back into the council. “You are commanded not to teach or preach anymore in the name of Jesus,” they insisted.

What would Peter do? Would this threat from the religious leaders overcome his faith? But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard!” (Acts 4:19-20). And after being threatened again, Peter and John were released and returned to their fellow disciples. Peter and John’s faith was tried by fire that day and they withstood the test.

The process of going through life’s trials and tests is very important for the believer. Such difficult times are the refining fire that purifies our faith and draws us closer to God. The fire of temptation helps us discover the areas of our lives that need to be purified and strengthened. The fire of physical sicknesses and diseases helps us learn to depend upon Christ and not our own physical strength. The fire of business difficulties can purify our motives and integrity. The fire of strained and broken relationships can help us refine our character and allow us to be more Christlike.

The apostle Paul wrote this: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God, that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:35-39).

This lesson is **important** because it teaches clearly that God often allows trials and hardships in the life of a Christian. These are for the purpose of strengthening and refining their faith, as by fire, and making them more like Christ.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that though baptism by fire comes your way, nothing can separate you from God's love and power. If you continue to put your faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit will give you the victory over any temptation or difficulty.

Here are a few questions to **review** this lesson:

1. Why were Peter and John arrested? [Pause 5 seconds]
 - A. If you said that Peter and John were arrested because of the healing of a lame man, then you are correct.
2. When Peter and John were on trial for healing the lame man, what did the religious leaders command them to do? [Pause 5 seconds]
 - A. If you said that they were commanded not to preach or teach in the name of Jesus, you are right.
3. What is the purpose of fire, that is, temptations and trials, in the Christian's life? [Pause 5 seconds]
 - A. If you said that these things refine and strengthen our faith, then you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is find someone who is going through a difficult trial and encourage them with this story and with prayer.