

BURN IT, BABY! By Laura Shaw

As a little girl growing up in the Midwest, I have memories of the smell of burning leaves. In the fall, people would rake their massive volume of leaves, sometimes multiple times a week, but instead of bagging them, they would put them into piles for burning. It was a unique odor that I will never forget...not a bad one, just distinct.

One day, I was going with my Mom to my aunt's house in "the country," and I smelled the most horrible odor. This was AFTER making it past all the OTHER odors that one survives as she drives through the rural areas of southern Illinois (something to do with cows). Anyway, it was something burning, but it wasn't leaves, and it stunk to high heaven! I pinched my nose and asked my mom what that hetrocious smell was as I gagged through the little air I allowed to come in through my mouth. She said, "Someone's burning trash!" I had no idea that people could burn trash, but she went on to let me know that this was a regular act for country folk.

This memory came to my mind as I was reading this morning, and you know what, the smell even came back with it! YUCK! I'm glad it did, though, because it gave me a tangible grasp on this passage of Scripture from The Message:

Matthew 3:11-12

"I'm (John the Baptist) baptizing you here in the river, turning your old life in for a kingdom life. The real action comes next: The Main Character in this drama—compared to Him I'm a mere stagehand—will ignite the kingdom life within you, a fire within you, the Holy Spirit within you, changing you from the inside out. He's going to clean house—make a clean sweep of your lives. He'll place everything true in its proper place before God; everything false He'll put out with the trash to be burned."

Imagine that! When we were saved, He lit a fire within our souls ...the Holy Spirit. His role was to change us from the inside out...so the flame lit inside of us shines brightly on "Christ in us" while burning the "trash" at the same time. He took up that stink, so that we would be clean before Him...Do we get that? Our souls are spotless before the Lord because He did some sweeping, raking and burning.

Now, our goal as Christians is to keep living in Him, in a deeper and brighter way each day. The salvation part is covered, but there is still sanctification to be done! The cool thing is that we have the perfect Source of life within us, and we have access to that Source as we keep ourselves plugged into it!

When the Lord is our starting place for energy, for purity, for holiness, for light, for joy, for peace, for fullness, for pleasure—when HE is the supply of all those things—THEN and ONLY then, will we have success at living the Kingdom life here on earth. There is absolutely no way to do it on our own. John 14:19 says, ***"Because I live, you will also live."*** Because He did not give way to sin or to death, HE LIVES! When we draw on His life, He gives us the ability to say "no" to sin and death for today. As we repent and submit, He takes out the trash in our hearts and minds and burns it, baby! And I'm sure it stinks to high heaven, literally! After the ashes comes His beauty as He reorganizes our priorities with His own. What a wonderful opportunity for us to recognize His work in us today, friends, and to praise Him...to fall down and worship Him...to submit to Him. I'm ready for the Main Character in my drama (*and there's always lots of it*) to do some igniting in me, how about you?

Let's go to our Starting Place:

LORD JESUS, YOU ARE OUR SOURCE, OUR PROVIDER, OUR HELP. WHEN WE'RE TIRED, YOU'RE OUR ENERGY. WHEN WE'RE WORRIED, YOU'RE OUR PEACE. WHEN WE'RE CONFUSED, YOU'RE OUR COUNSELOR. WHEN WE'RE ATTACKED, YOU'RE OUR DEFENDER. WHEN WE'RE WEAK,

*YOU'RE OUR **STRENGTH**. WHEN WE'RE ANGRY, YOU'RE OUR **CALM**. YOU AND YOU ALONE DO ALL
THESE THINGS IN US, AND YOU DO THEM WELL.
HELP US, FATHER, TO TRUST IN YOU TODAY, TO MAKE YOU OUR **SUFFIENCY**.
IN YOUR NAME WE PRAY, AMEN.*