

## Dear Friends of the Foundation:

I recently heard someone, maybe on the radio or television, opine that God was a gentle, sustaining breeze wafting through his life.

It occurred to me that God is, instead, a holy, righteous, and all-consuming fire.

No, that is not everything we want to say about God. After all, the burning bush was *not* consumed. The pillar of fire by night was to give *light* to the people. And God did draw near to us in Jesus Christ in order to save us. Still, God is not to be trifled with.

The prophet wrote:

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd,  
against the man who stands next to me,"  
declares the LORD of hosts.  
"Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered;  
I will turn my hand against the little ones.  
In the whole land, declares the LORD,  
two thirds shall be cut off and perish,  
and one third shall be left alive.  
And I will put this third into the fire,  
and refine them as one refines silver,  
and test them as gold is tested.  
They will call upon my name,  
and I will answer them.  
I will say, 'They are my people';  
and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.' "  
Zechariah 13:7-9 (ESV)

That does not sound like a gentle breeze to me!

Perhaps the difference is this: the "gentle breeze" imagery tends toward the thought of those who want to reduce the grace of God to "unconditional love," while the "holy fire" imagery at least tends toward what I understand to be God's "**all-conditioning love.**"

To say that God "accepts us as we are" is hardly the point. It may be the beginning of the point, but that is all. Far more pertinent, far more exhilarating, and far more terrifying is the reality that God redeems, reclaims us, draws us near to himself, and purges us of all that is unworthy (even though for slow learners like me that seems to be taking a long, long time).

Thank God that he does not simply accept me as I am! I do not want to stay this way, no matter how tightly I cling to it.

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