

## **The Fires of Affliction**

Refinement, Revival, Restoration and Redemption

### **Opening Prayer:**

Please take time to pray as a group. Pray for our church, for the kingdom, for one another, and for anything else that God lays on your heart. Also, ask God to open hearts and minds to His Word and guide your discussion.

### **Opening Question:**

Share a time when you went through a difficult experience that ultimately led to personal growth or positive change in your life.

### **Key Takeaways:**

1. God uses adversity to refine His people, removing impurities and strengthening faith.
2. Revival demands that we put away our idols and return to God.
3. God plans for restoration even before refinement is complete.
4. God's ultimate plan is redemption for all people, both Jew and Gentile.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. The sermon mentioned four key ideas: refinement, revival, restoration, and redemption. How do you see these concepts working together in a believer's life?
2. Isaiah 48:10 says, "I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction." How can viewing difficulties as a "refiner's fire" change our perspective on hardships?
3. The sermon highlighted modern-day idols like status, material possessions, and social media influence. What are some idols you've struggled with or see prevalent in today's society?
4. How does the story of God using Cyrus (a non-believer) to fulfill His purposes challenge or encourage your view of how God works in the world?
5. Pastor Joel mentioned that "adversity has the effect of getting us praying again." Have you experienced this in your own life? Share examples.
6. Discuss the statement: "Revival never comes until our idols fall." What might this look like practically in an individual's life or in a church community?
7. How does understanding God's long-term plan for Israel and the world (as outlined in Isaiah) impact your faith today?

**Practical Applications:**

1. Reflection Exercise: Take some time this week to prayerfully consider if there are any "idols" in your life that need to fall. Write them down and create an action plan to address them.
2. Gratitude Journal: Start a daily practice of writing down how God might be using current challenges in your life for refinement or growth.
3. Scripture Memorization: Choose one of the comforting verses from Isaiah mentioned in the sermon (e.g., Isaiah 41:10 or 43:5-7) to memorize this week.
4. Prayer Focus: Spend time praying for revival – in your own life, in your church, and in your community. Ask God to show you any areas where you need spiritual renewal.
5. Share Your Story: If you've experienced God's refinement, revival, restoration, or redemption in your life, consider sharing your testimony with someone this week to encourage them.

**Closing Prayer:**

Close the session by praying for each group member, asking God to reveal areas where He wants to bring refinement, revival, restoration, or redemption in their lives.