

How do you fight fire? Some of you will say, “with water.” But others of you will say, “you fight fire with fire.” This is how wildfires are sometimes contained when they are out of control. A fire is started to be used against the wildfire. It is a controlled fire. It burns an area so that, when the wildfire reaches that area, there is nothing left there to burn.

Is there any wildfire more deadly than the fires of hell? These flames are out of control. They are devouring large portions of our world, being spread by the hot winds that blow out of the mouth of the devil. His lies have engulfed much of the population of this earth. And he will not stop spreading his deadly lies until the whole world is in flames.

But God is a master of fighting fire with fire. On the Day of Pentecost fire appears. But it is not the fire of hell. It is the fire of the Holy Spirit. Flames of fire in the form of tongues appear to Jesus’ disciples and rest upon them. How do you fight the devil’s lies? With the truth. And thus, He who is the Spirit of Truth fills the disciples, and with their mouths they speak, and the flames of hell are held back as the good news of Jesus is proclaimed.

What God did on Pentecost He is doing today. The reason why the fires of hell have not consumed you is because God is keeping that deadly fire away from you, fighting against it with the fire of the Holy Spirit.

“*Were not our hearts burning within us?*” The disciples from Emmaus said this after the Risen Jesus had spoken with them on the road. He opened the Scriptures for the Holy Spirit to burn within their hearts, keeping them safe from the devil’s fire: his vicious lies. The Spirit of Truth burned within their hearts so that there was nothing left there for the devil to burn.

This very Spirit of Truth has been at work in your heart. Is not your heart, also, aflame with the conviction that Jesus is your living Lord who saves you from every hellish fire? The devil’s lies cannot consume you, not when He who is the truth lives in your heart.

His promise in our text is also for you: “*The Helper, the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father...I will send to you...He will bear witness about Me.*” He is the Helper and He is the Spirit of Truth, says Jesus. These two ways of describing the Holy Spirit are very comforting to us who live in the midst of this troubled world.

You know that when an actual wildfire is threatening the towns in a region, the one word all the people say together is: Help! How grateful they are when help comes and the fires that were threatening their homes and their lives are held back from devouring them.

You and I need such help. Do you think the flames of hell are only in other parts of the world where false gods are openly worshiped? Think again. There is hellfire all around us. The deadly lies of the evil one are on television, on the internet, in books that we read, even in the mouths of many who teach and who preach, and in the lifestyles of some we call our friends. And no one is immune to these fires, especially not our children who are exposed to the devil’s lies on a daily basis.

But you have a helper. One who fights the fires of hell with holy fire. He is the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father. And Jesus gives Him to you and to your children. As He opened the Scriptures to the Emmaus disciples, so also, through those same pages, Jesus sends His Spirit to you, and the truth of God burns in your heart so that the flames of hell cannot hurt you.

Satan's most vicious lies attack us in regard to sin and salvation. He knows our sins. In his hellish book he has them all written down. And thus, he is able to terrorize us using the sins we have committed. He even drags up sins from years and decades ago. Sins we had forgotten. But he brings them back to mind to strike terror in our hearts. That terror can cause us to doubt our salvation. The devil lies to us, telling us that our sins are too hideous to be forgiven. They are too many in number. And since we keep doing the same sins over and over, God is tired of forgiving those sins. Indeed, He will not forgive us, says the devil, and so, we have no hope of being saved.

But listen to this. Satan's lies cannot burn where the fire of the Holy Spirit is already burning. And the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. As He spoke through the mouths of the disciples on Pentecost, so He speaks today through the mouth of your pastor the very words that keep the devil's lies from consuming you.

Friend, Jesus on the cross was consumed by the fires of hell in your place. He bore your sins in His own body. Not just some of them; all of them. Jesus bore every sin you have ever done, even the most hideous of them. There is no sin that Jesus refused to bear. And he suffered on the cross for all of them.

There is nothing left in you to burn. The flames of hell cannot devour you because there is no sin left in you that is not forgiven. They are all forgiven. Every one of them.

God fights fire with fire, the fire of the Spirit of Truth against the fire of the devil's lies. And God also fights fire with water: the water of your baptism into Christ Jesus. That water was not only sprinkled on you the day you were baptized. Friend, you live in that water. It is your daily bath. It is your cleansing in the blood of Jesus. Your baptism is Jesus' salvation signed, sealed, and delivered to you.

Take comfort in your baptism. It extinguishes the fires of the evil one because your baptism is Jesus' truth that you belong to Him, that you are His forgiven child, and that you remain safe from the fires of hell within the water of your baptism.

The fires of hell are all around us. Be warned. Do not go near them. Do not embrace the devil's lies, nor even entertain them in your head. The Spirit of Truth is the holy fire that fights for you. If your Bible remains mostly closed, open it. Let it burn within your heart and consume you. Through its holy words, and through the holy water and holy food of the Sacraments, the Spirit of Truth bears witness to Jesus, and you will be and remain safe in Him. Amen.