

We read in Luke 15 of the immense joy that is felt in heaven when a sinner turns to God. I don't feel, though, that we really appreciate what it means to God, who, after all, gave His Son to die in order to move us to respond to Him. He cares for us beyond all that we can imagine. And He is trying continuously, against our resistance for the most part, to motivate us into His service.

We also read that our God is a consuming fire, and as His children we ought to have some kind of spark within us. Are we a roaring fire or a dying ember? Or has He not been able to start a fire inside us at all? I get a glimpse of God's efforts to motivate us when I remember one time I had to light a fire on a winter camping trip. A good Scout was supposed to be able to need only two matches to start a fire, but this one took me two hours and I don't know how many matches to finally get going. All the available wood was soaked, the wind and rain were swirling around putting the matches out before they could even be applied, and my fingers were so cold that I could barely hold the matches. At times my fingers would be suddenly burnt working in such close quarters trying to shield the flame. There would be a momentary thrill when it looked as if it might start, then the flame would go out and there would be nothing but smoke. This happened again and again in a really frustrating experience.

It seems to me that God sometimes has the same experience with us. Picture Him inside our soul, bending down to start our fire while the storm of our doubts and desires rage against Him. Day after day he presents us with a spark which should ignite us, but we have dampened and quenched His Spirit. The things that should really touch our hearts, such as the crucifixion story have become old hat, and what we had rather be doing diverts our minds. We present a very hostile world to Him and from time to time He burns His fingers as we rebel against Him.

How long will we remain obstinate and opposed to his love and grace? Have we truly responded and is God basking in the comfortable flame of our love? I know that my response wavers dramatically from one hour to the next. We must open our hearts and still the storm in our soul so that the love of God can do its work. Think of the thrill in the mind of God as He sees us flicker into a growing flame. Won't you respond to His earnest pleading now as we stand and sing...