

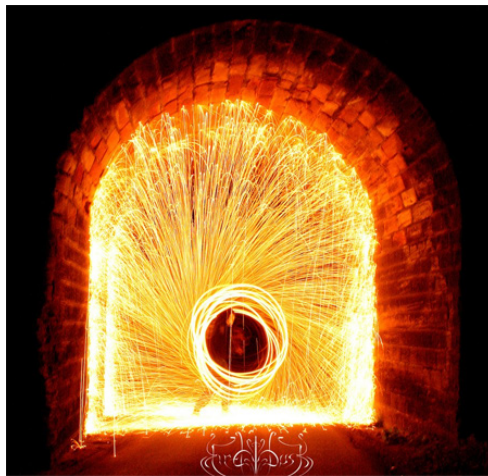
Ember Days
The Collect.

O ALMIGHTY God, who hast committed to the hands of men the ministry of reconciliation; We humbly beseech thee, by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, to put it into the hearts of many to offer themselves for this ministry; that thereby mankind may be drawn to thy blessed kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

The Collect.

KEEP, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy Church with thy perpetual mercy; and, because the frailty of man without thee cannot but fall, keep us ever by thy help from all things hurtful, and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*



For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her. (Zech 2:5)

And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people. (Exodus 13:21-22)

Let it be known from the outset that the Lord our God is a *consuming fire* (Hebrews 12:29) The same fire with which the Refiner purifies the believer is the same fire with which He shall destroy the wicked from upon the face of the earth. Fire consumes all materials of lesser thermal endurance strengths. Our good works, performed in Christ, will survive that consuming fire at the last day whereas those works of lesser quality performed through pride and pelf shall be burnt to a crisp.

It is true that God uses fire both as a light for His people and as a defense against the enemy of His people. When surrounded by the glorious fires of the Spirit, we are unafraid and are sure of our security. When the enemy of our souls approaches that fire-laden Wall of Fire, they are dismayed and traumatized by it. They are certain that they cannot penetrate it. That Pillar of Cloud by Day and Fire by Night was intended to give light to the Children of Israel as they journeyed on their way out of Egypt; but it

was also a barrier Wall against the pursuing armies of Pharaoh. That Pillar of Cloud by Day was a signal that God is near, and at night, like Christ, it led the way. Even in wilderness places today, men often build a wall of fire by night to protect against ravenous beasts. But man's fires are fueled by material components such as wood and hay; but God's fires are fueled by the Holy Ghost. Walls of fire are used in the wilderness to defend against roaring lions just as the Wall of Fire of Christ is used in the Wilderness of a sinful world to defend against that roaring lion, the Devil, who walks about seeking whom he may devour.

No matter the multitudes of evil beasts gathered without, a Wall of Fire offers perfect protection for those inside the Wall. No matter the multitudes of evil in this world, God's Wall of Fire is sufficient to protect from the prowling predator of our soul. The world is made blind to those who are behind God's protection.

Those who are encircled by that Wall of fire of Christ are kept warm from the piercing, freezing blasts of the world, and they are made all the more courageous through the certainty of that protection.

The safety and security offered by Christ to His people is the ONLY security that can be had against Satan and the world. To those who are the Elect, it is a comfort. To those who are cursed, it is a terror.

And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night. (Exodus 14:19-20)

Christ provides the Wall of Fire for His people against all comers. *Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go. (Neh 9:12)*

There is one significant way in which the Walls of Fires of men differ from the Wall of Fire of God: the fires made by men for their protection may go out for want of fuel, or extinguished by the rain waters of the storm; but the Wall of Fire provided by God in the lives of His Elect shall NEVER go out - the greater the threat, the more intense the fire and higher the wall. Christ is no half-way traveler: He is with us always, even unto the end. Can you feel His presence today?