

the **NORTHBOUND NORTHCUTTS**

servicing in Arctic Siberia

A Personal Testimony from the Fire

by Matt Northcutt

I wanted to take a moment and share what the Lord has done and is doing in my life since the fire. This letter is not a cry of despair or a plea for help — this is simply a chance to praise and glorify my God for the love and care that He has shown to me personally since the fire occurred. All praise, honor and glory belong to Him because He truly is a great God, a loving Father and what is more - He is ***my God!***

It goes without saying, first of all, that the fire was an incredible shock for all of us. For about a week after the event we all were still more or less going through life like a deer in the headlights - dazed, confused and just not sure of what to do. When we left the house that Saturday night, the day of the fire, there was still a small glimmer of hope that the firemen would successfully extinguish the blaze and that we would be able to go back through our house and salvage more belongings. When we arrived back on the scene Sunday morning and saw the building completely burned to the ground, that is when reality hit us like runaway freight train — we were never returning to this building again. Words cannot really describe the feeling of loss and emptiness that overwhelmed us at that moment. That was the hardest moment for Katie — seeing everything completely gone and most of the day was spent in tears as the reality of the loss set in.

I, on the other hand, was trying to be the strong, stable support for everyone at this time, so my feelings got boxed up and put in the farthest darkest corner of my mind so that I would not dwell on it and could just press on with what needed to be done at the time. I consoled everyone as best as possible; we discussed the fire and the events of the day, and every time the feelings of loss, grief and sadness started to rise, I pushed them back down and refused to dwell on them. In my mind I knew that God allowed it for a reason and I wasn't questioning "***Why?***". So I thought that by keeping these emotions and thoughts locked away deep inside that I was doing the right thing — moving on and just taking the next step as the Lord led. What was unknown to me at the time was just how deeply and how much I was really hurting in the depths of my soul.

For about three weeks after the fire this process continued — feelings and emotions would try to surface and I squelched them before they could affect me. During this period of time, I knew that I needed to turn to God for help, for comfort, for refuge, but I simply didn't know where to turn or how to comfort myself in the Lord, and the pain in my soul continued to grow and I continued to suppress it. I had no problem talking about the fire with everyone who asked about it and asked how we were doing. I could give the right answers — that God has a plan, He will work

through this situation, etc. Yet my soul was in turmoil and hurting. The consolation that we were getting from others that God would bless us greater through this and provide a better place to live did nothing to soothe the pain and hurt in my soul. I knew these things. I wasn't questioning God or His plan, yet there was pain unlike anything I had ever known before. James Dean (*our coworker in Vanavara*) was in America at the time of the fire and brought back new Bibles for all of us since we lost ours in the fire, but when I got mine, the first thought I had was that I didn't like the color or the cover design. I didn't even want to open it and read it. That was just a small indication of the degree to which my soul was hurting.

During this time of recovering from the fire, I also was dealing with trying to get our vehicle shipped down to Krasnoyarsk for repairs and get it repaired in time so that I could drive it back up to Vanavara before the winter road closed. That added to the stress and turmoil of my soul. Finally I was able to ship it down on a flatbed and got it to the shop; but what was supposed to be an easy head gasket replacement turned into a major overhaul of the engine. I flew down to the city to pick up the truck based on the timeframe that the mechanic had given me initially, only to find out when I arrived that they had not even started the repairs that were needed. They had diagnosed the problem, but had not started the repairs. Because of this, what was supposed to be a quick 5-day trip to the city turned into a 2-week wait for the truck to be finished. Unbeknownst to me, this was all part of God's master plan.

As I waited in the city, the pain in my soul intensified and inwardly I was spiraling downward more and more. The fellowship with the church people at Krasnoyarsk Baptist Church and the other missionaries didn't help and only seemed to intensify the emptiness and

pain in my soul. I could not find comfort anywhere and did not know what to do. Job 23:8-9 summarizes perfectly the condition that I found myself in at this time:

Job 23:8 ¶ Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him:

Job 23:9 On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him:

I knew in my mind that I needed to flee to God, to find rest and comfort in Him, but I could not see Him to know where to run. The pain and emptiness in my soul had been bottled up for so long and was so great that it clouded my view of everything, including my view of God. I didn't know what to do, but I was hurting in a very real way that I had never experienced before and I simply could not see through the pain and emptiness of my soul. I was in a black and dark pit with no way out it seemed.

On Saturday night, March 18, 2017, I hit the critical breaking point. After having supper together, Kevin Jones (*our coworker when we were in Krasnoyarsk*) came up to my hotel room with me and shared his testimony of a recent trial that God had just brought him through and what God did to bring him through. After sharing his testimony and some verses that God used to comfort his hurting soul, he asked me a very pointed question — ***“What is the hurt that you feel in your soul?”***

It was the question I had been avoiding for so long, but at that moment I had to face it, and it was at that very moment that I broke. I cannot quite explain what happened then, but Kevin helped me give a voice to my hurt, to my pain and I realized then that the hurt wasn't because we lost our possessions, it wasn't because of all

the hours that we had put into remodeling the apartment — it was because we had lost our **home**. Not our house, but our **home**. The place of security, comfort and rest for my family. My family lost their **home**.

When I audibly voiced that, I broke and my soul grieved like it has never done before. All of the pent-up grief, sorrow and emotions came flooding to the surface and I couldn't keep them back any longer. I was done. There was no more strength or desire to fight it. Voicing the hurt was a start, but it wasn't the cure for the pain in my soul. I needed something more.

Still hurting in my soul, Kevin and I knelt to pray together and again, I broke. I was poured out like water from a pitcher and there was absolutely nothing left — the pain in my soul was so severe that all I could do was cry out, ***“God I can't do it! You do it!”***. At that moment, when I poured myself out to the Lord, a tremendous burden rolled off of my shoulders and the peace of God which passes all understanding began to soothe my aching soul. I could now see that God was there, and His presence was a comfort to my soul.

David described that moment more perfectly than I can in Psalm 40:1-3:

Psalm 40:1 ¶ I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

Psalm 40:2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

Psalm 40:3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.

This is exactly where I had been — in that horrible pit and in the miry clay — but God brought me out and established my goings with a new song of praise and joy, and a new understanding of God's presence in my life.

God made Himself real to me that night in a way that I had never experienced before. In my pain and hurt, I didn't need hope, I needed to feel the presence of God in a real and tangible way. And He gave me that. I needed Him to restore my soul. And He did.

That night was the beginning of a new journey with my God. As a Master Potter breaks a flawed vessel in order to remake into a thing of beauty, so God had done with me. In the days to follow, He began to restore my soul as I spent time alone with Him, reading in the Psalms and learning to rest in Him and live in His presence. That process has continued and is continuing to this day. I have enjoyed such sweet and intimate times with my Lord in a depth that I never knew before. He is restoring my soul and molding me into the man He desires me to be. I am a new man in every way — God has so completely changed me, and I am enjoying the process of just letting Him shape, mold and direct. I don't have to do it — He will! And, what is more, I no longer want to try to do it on my own or in my own strength.

At this point, you may be wondering why I am sharing all of this. Why not just keep it short and say, ***“Praise God, He used the fire to bring about a change in my life!”***?

Psalm 44:8 clearly states,

“In God we boast all the day long, and praise Thy name forever. Selah.”

Psalm 52:9 I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name; for it is good before thy saints.

During the healing process of my soul, when I was reading and meditating in the Psalms, the Lord made it very clear to me that I must give testimony of what He has done! I must boast in God and praise Him before the saints all the day long! This is not something that I can keep bottled up inside of me — this is what I would have done in the past. Emotion and feelings were to be kept private and a “*public persona*” maintained — in the past. I am not that same person anymore, and neither do I wish to be.

As I have continued in this new journey with my Lord, He has filled me with a desire to serve and minister to others like never before. There is a new longing of my soul now — an overwhelming desire to live in the presence of my God and help others in any way possible. God has given me a depth of compassion and understanding of what it means to truly hurt and agonize in my soul which I never would have had, had I not gone through the fire. Through this, He has prepared me to minister to others in a way that never would have been possible without the fire. God is truly good, and learning to rest in Him and understanding that ***He is enough*** has been the greatest benefit since the fire.

Now, from the depths of my soul, I can honestly thank God for loving me enough to allow me to go through the fire. He alone deserves the glory and praise for any and everything that has happened in my life. Have I arrived? By no means. Am I fully the man that God wants me to be? Not yet, but He is continuing to mold and shape me, and I am enjoying the process of simply letting Him work.

There are many verses in the Psalms with which I could close out this testimony, but two in particular summarize my current joy and satisfaction that I find God and what He is continuing to do in my life.

Psalm 92:4 For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands.

Psalm 13:6 I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.