

Rebuilding the Opera House

Fire is a gift of warmth, light, beauty and utility. Nothing beats a crackling fire on a cold, late fall or winter night. And who hasn't enjoyed roasting marshmallows over an open fire?

Fire also can be an enemy. Sometimes it destroys the things we love.



On Jan. 29, 1996, a blaze consumed one of Venice's most treasured buildings: the 204-year-old opera house, La Fenice – one of the most famous and renowned landmarks in the history of Italian theater. Hundreds of Venetians stood and watched as the building went up in flames.

Cause for sadness? Definitely. Cause for despair? Absolutely not.

The construction of La Fenice had been delayed by fire in 1792. Another fire in 1836 had forced the Venetians to rebuild. And after the fire in 1996, Venetians once again faced the task of rebuilding their opera house, which they did, and it reopened in 2004.

Interestingly, La Fenice means “the phoenix,” referring to the mythological Egyptian bird that died in a fiery nest, only to emerge from the ashes as a brand-new bird. It is in that spirit the Venetians rebuild again and again.

We can sometimes restore what the fires in our lives destroy. If we desire to rebuild and we truly believe it is what the Lord would have us do, we put our full effort into the task.

At other times when the Lord brings us through a fire, He desires the old to be left in ashes so something entirely different can be constructed on the site. This is true not only in the physical world in which we live, but also in the interior world of our souls, when our inner mettle is “tried by fire.”



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In those cases when we can't or shouldn't rebuild, remember Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They were thrown into Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace for refusing to bow to an idol (Daniel, chapter 3). Like them, we can emerge stronger and better after the test. We can see our lives touch and inspire others by standing up for what we believe.

If you are facing calamity or disaster today, the Bible tells you to quickly put it behind you by rebuilding or building something new. Whichever God desires, you will become stronger and better than before if you press on!

Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13-14 NIV).

– Beecher Hunter