

*This simple book was written to shine the light on the lies that have destroyed many Christians' lives. Once the lies are exposed, we will be able to live as the Father has always intended us to live – as children begotten to bear His image and be after His likeness. To finally be conformed to the image of the Son of God.*

## **Fire Upon the Earth**

By C.L. Gray

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FIRE UPON  
THE EARTH



C.L. GRAY

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## CHAPTER ONE

Everything was wrong and that fact overloaded my senses. I glanced around trying to take in my surroundings with one glance, but I could barely grasp what I was seeing. I took a deep breath and closed my eyes. The cold dread that had started in the pit of my stomach seeped through my body.

“Get a hold of yourself.” I was stern. It wouldn’t do if I went to pieces. Not until I knew what I was dealing with. I opened my eyes and concentrated on just one thing.

That one thing was the silence. I was standing in the middle of a street in a large city. I should have been surrounded by sounds associated with that city: horns blaring, people walking by talking about whatever people talk about, street vendors selling their wares, and car engines idling at red lights. I had been to this city before, and the noise was a constant roar that was always present until the wee hours of the morning. But not now. The only thing I heard was my heart thumping in my chest.

The sun was brightly shining. I could feel its warmth on my skin. I noticed that the sunlight didn’t reflect off the tall buildings to my left or right. The light went straight in and disappeared into blackness. Curious as to why the light was being swallowed up, I took a step back for a better view and jumped when the sharp sound of breaking glass echoed down the street. I looked down and saw that there was glass everywhere. On the sidewalks and streets. Even the buildings’ canopies were covered with glass. There were no windows in any of the buildings. They were gone.

I started walking toward the river. As I went, my feet crunched on glass. City block after city block. No other noise. Just the sound of glass breaking over and over again.

I peered into the buildings as I hurried by. All I saw were black scorch marks and empty shelves. The outside of the buildings were

covered with vulgar graffiti. An angry mob must have passed through and scrawled their rage in a rainbow of spray paint. They had picked the stores clean of their products before they burned the buildings. They had moved on, leaving nothing but concrete and steel memorials to their anger.

I came to the city's center. The huge Confederate war memorial that had once graced the square had been pulled down. The base was filled with filthy scrawlings. The statue lay in the street, a jumble of twisted metal. I stared down at the lifeless face of the general, whose life I had studied, spoken about, and admired. There was a huge dent in his cheek from where he had impacted the street. The dent collected my tears as they fell.

History was recklessly being erased by ignorant fools. Cherished memories of ancestors held dear were being wiped away by the madness of the crowd. I wasn't angry because I knew this day had been coming for a long time. I just didn't expect it to arrive so abruptly. I felt sorry that future generations would never know the character and goodness of this man.

I wiped my tears from the face of the statue. "Men of renown, of decency, of character forged in fire dedicated this statue to you in the last days of their lives as a legacy for their children. Now those who know nothing of sacrifice have torn you from your place. You deserved better than this."

I cleared glass off a bench and collapsed. The sun beat down on me. It was getting hotter.

Like a thunderclap, it hit me. Where were the people? Where had the millions of people who lived here gone? I had no idea why I was just realizing that the city was devoid of people. Perhaps I had been overwhelmed by all the other sights that demanded my attention, but I was realizing it now. I had just walked twenty city blocks and hadn't seen one person.

My stomach dropped to my feet and I sobbed. Was I the only person left?

"You aren't the only person left."

Even though the voice that spoke was soft and tender, it sounded like cannon shot in my ears. I startled and leapt to my feet, ready to flee. Then I relaxed. I recognized the voice that was speaking to me.

“Holy Spirit, where are the people?”

“You will find them on the outskirts of the city.”

“Come with me.” I left unspoken the “please, please, please” I wanted to add to my request.

He smiled in that way that always made me feel loved beyond words. “I’ll see you there.” Before I could answer, He touched my heart and peace filled it. “Don’t be afraid.” Then He was gone.

I looked up at the street sign. I had about two miles to go before I reached the city’s outskirts. I started singing. I was no longer afraid because I was no longer alone.

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The buildings formed a steep canyon that sheltered me from the heat of the day. A cool breeze blew up from the harbor. I didn’t have much farther to go. One more step, and I would be out of the city.

I gasped at the sight. In past trips, I had stood on this very spot. Then it was a lush green park filled with tall trees that stood sentinel over the land for generations. There were paths for people to walk or jog on and playgrounds for both children and adults. All that had vanished. Now it was just brown – various shades of brown. The park had been transformed into a bleak, barren wilderness. If the people were here, and they were because the Holy Spirit said they were, where and how were they living? This weary land couldn’t sustain a small rodent let alone the entire population of the city.

My immediate challenge was the sand dunes that barred my way. There was nowhere to go except to go up and over. The climb was a struggle. For each step I took, I fell back three. I wiped sweat from my forehead but not fast enough. The sweat ran into my eyes, stinging them. I used my shirttail to rub my eyes until they stopped stinging. Frustrated, out of breath and strength, I grasped a root that jutted above my head and pulled myself up. Once on top, I flopped down and laid back. I had made it! I closed my eyes.

A tormented howl pierced the air. I bolted up to a sitting position. New howls joined the first. There were too many to count. I had never heard such sounds before. How to describe what I was hearing? Torment, anger, despair, and death all mingled together, but those adjectives really didn't do them justice. They were other worldly. It truly sounded as if Hell was in full voice.

From the top of the dune, I looked toward the source of the sounds, but I couldn't see anything. More tall dunes blocked my vantage point. I looked to the left and saw that the dunes directly in front of me came to an abrupt end not far from where I stood.

I scrambled down, half-running, half-falling, until I came to an unceremonious landing at the bottom. I collected myself and stood. If possible, the howls were even louder as they rebounded between the dunes. I started running toward the sounds.

I dashed out and came to an abrupt stop. No more than a football field length away, I saw a swarm of people. There had to be millions on top of millions of them. Not only had they come from the city, they must have come from the surrounding metropolitan area. They were terrified, and they were running as if they were fleeing some terrible monster.

The howlings came from behind the crowd. Large pitchforks jabbed the people and herded them together like livestock. When a pitchfork found its mark, the poor soul would fall to their knees and scream out in pain and torment. No one stopped to comfort the afflicted. Just the opposite. The people would hurl obscene insults at them as they ran past.

An elderly woman fell. The crowd stampeded over her, refusing her pleas for help. I turned my face away. I heard her scream one last time before she fell silent. I forced myself to look. No one moved her body out of the way. People just continued to run over her like she was a piece of garbage. I wanted to weep because she had died so needlessly, but she wasn't the last one trod underneath the feet of the routed crowd.

The throng was no longer human. The demons had reduced them to cattle that had been stampeded on purpose. One ran because those on their left and right ran. There were millions of souls running past

the point of exhaustion because of the pitchforks and because everyone else was running.

I walked toward them, careful not to get too close to the river of humanity rushing before me. I didn't want to slip and fall in. If that happened, I would be swept away.

As I drew nearer, I saw the river was flowing back upon itself. Some unseen barrier had constricted the river's flow. People rushed forward only to be pushed back. In desperation, they redoubled their efforts to get through, but found only frustration. They pushed and shoved, shouted and cursed as they surged forward. It was horrible to watch. The very young and very old were falling underfoot. They were crushed in the tumult of the river, which ebbed and flowed like a persistent and demented tide. No one listened to each other. No one helped another. It was every man for himself.

I saw what was constraining the river. A long chute had risen from the ground. It reminded me of the metal crowd control measures I used to zigzag through on the way to my favorite amusement park ride. The chute was not made of metal. It was flimsy and transparent. I could see right through it. If three or four people worked together, they could rip the chute apart with their hands. Nor was it tall. An adult could jump over the sides easily. Children could either be handed over or crawl underneath. But no one sought to escape the chute. Why not? The chute went on for miles until it disappeared over the horizon. I came closer.

Everyone spoke the same. They used the same words and employed the same emphasis. No one spoke a contrary word. No one offered a different opinion. The same phrases were heard over and over. PEACE! SAFETY! JUSTICE! EQUALITY! NO DISSENT! NO LAWS! I only had to listen for a few minutes before I realized that everyone had the same mind. It was this fact that made them feel safe. I heard them mentioning it over and over again. How safe they were because the people pressing them forward agreed with them.

A man jumped over the barrier. Good, I thought. Now, there will finally be a mass escape from this terrible chute. I recognized the man. He was a famous athlete from a championship team. He was universally respected and admired. I also knew he was a Christian. He



shouted at the crowd to stop. They weren't going the way to peace and safety. This wasn't the way to true justice.

Nothing prepared me for what happened next. The crowd took up the demonic howls until they drowned out the demons I had first heard. People began to throw vulgar and profane words at him. Each word hit him like a brick. He courageously stood his ground, but I could see he was wavering.

His wife implored the crowd to stop hurting her husband. She held out her hands in supplication and began to weep. "You're right," she cried, as tears streamed down her cheeks. "There is no peace, no safety, no justice, or equality because of people like us." She included her battered and bloody husband in her appeal. "We are to blame for the ills and wrongs you have suffered. We have had it so good for so long. We don't deserve what we have. We are sorry."

As one, the crowd rallied around her and commended her for finally seeing the truth. She *was* the one to blame. All the fury that had consumed the city was now laid at her feet, and she willingly accepted full responsibility. Her tears continued to flow as she begged the people surrounding her to forgive her for being privileged. When she confessed her privilege, a calm swept over the people. They opened their arms and welcomed her into their bosoms. As she fell into their arms, she was congratulated over and over for finally waking up and seeing the truth.

Her husband began to weep. He fell to his knees and apologized, his clasped hands held out to the crowd. His words had been misunderstood. He begged for forgiveness. He received it. Four or five of his teammates came and gathered him up. He was welcomed back into the fold.

To my disappointment, I saw popular ministers from television and the Internet. How did they wind up in the chute? That point didn't seem to be too important. They were there, so they could tell the people how to get out. They knew the way. They could save everyone if they just preached Jesus. Instead, they fell on their knees and began to mouth the same sentiments as the athlete's wife. Their sermons were meant to soothe their souls and not help those who were being forced down the chute into an uncertain future.

A large protest erupted. Like a rock thrown into the middle of a lake, the protests rippled and expanded up and down the chute. “How dare they?” The people railed as one. “Tear it down! Tear it down!” They had become a unified chorus singing from the same song page.

A bronze name plaque flew out of the chute and fell at my feet. On it was a name of one of the founding fathers, but he had owned slaves. It seemed he was suffering the same fate as the general in the city square. More plaques were tossed from the chute. More men maligned. The good forgotten; only the offense remained. It didn’t take long until large piles of plaques littered the landscape.

I was relieved when the rainstorm finally ended. Except the plaques were the calm before the storm. A small group of people turned on a popular comedian and began to rip him apart with their teeth. “You used homophobic slurs in your act!” The entertainer tried to explain that had been twenty years ago and everyone had laughed at the joke, but no one cared, as the crowd about him grew in size and frenzy.

Wasn’t anyone going to save him? He couldn’t last too much longer. No one came. The crowd consumed him. Emboldened, the people found another entertainer and ripped him apart for some perceived sin from his past. Anyone in the public eye who had committed anything that offended just one person, no matter how long ago, found themselves in the middle of the storm. It was a pogrom. It was a purge. No dissent was allowed to remain. All had to conform to the outraged decency of the crowd.

A popular music group began to scream for forgiveness. “We’re sorry! We thought we were naming our band after a style of architecture. We were insensitive. We will change our name. We will do whatever you want. Just forgive us and keep buying our records.” They were not alone.

When the crowd was finished liquidating the famous, a new purge began. It only took one person to be offended by what another said. No matter how innocent and no matter how long ago, the offender found himself at the mercy of a crowd who was in no mood to show mercy. Hundreds of thousands were devoured in this manner. The bloodlust continued.

Then something happened that absolutely caught me off guard. A picture was uncovered of a popular governor in blackface. I waited for the crowd to rend him. Instead, they turned on the accuser who had uncovered the picture. Unbelievable! They were defending the man. People whose offenses were not comparable to the governor's had been torn asunder with primal glee, but the crowd would not allow the stench of offense to cling to the governor. The people would have given their lives for him. His accuser disappeared underneath a wave of anger and outrage, but the governor was carried down the chute on the people's shoulders.

The ground cracked loudly. Schisms formed all around. What now? I saw a large fault form in front of the chute. How to describe it? It looked like a slide designed to break up the log jam that continually churned as people clawed their way into the chute. Now, people slipped, fell, and rolled in. There was no escape. Even if people did come to their senses, it was too late. This slide had closed the door.

The cracks and ruptures in the ground came near. I backed up slowly at first, not wanting to lose sight of the spectacle in front of me, but when a fracture opened up behind me, I knew it was time to leave.

I ran toward the dunes as fast as I could, barely keeping in front of the fault line forming on my left. I hugged the dunes to the right. The ground shook violently beneath me. I was going to be swallowed up. I started climbing, scratching, and clawing my way to the top of the nearest dune. I was almost there when I heard a loud crack. I closed my eyes and prayed for help. I was going to be devoured. I was going to be forced into the chute.

The ground beat against itself. I clung to the dune with strength I didn't know I had. The dune swayed as if it had been caught in a fierce wind. Sand blew into my mouth and eyes. I screamed in fear.

Everything suddenly stopped. I breathed a sigh of thanksgiving and relief. I opened my eyes. I was still above ground. Against all odds, the dune had survived the terrible shaking. I looked in front of me and saw the dunes on my left had been thrown down. I was no

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longer trapped. I could escape to the west. I needed to go quickly. The slide was growing. This dune would soon be its victim.

Where to now? I saw three large mountains in the far distance. There were hills in the shadow of the mountains. Were they strongholds that could offer me shelter and safety? I slid down and headed west.

## CHAPTER TWO

I ran to the closest mountain and climbed to the top as fast as I could. A large crowd populated the summit. Everybody was animated. They shouted at each other. They argued with each other, but they agreed even when they disagreed. They were men and women who were sure of their beliefs and sure that the course of action they advocated was the only way for the country to progress. I squeezed into the crowd to hear what the speakers were saying. A clutch of ministers invited the mountain leaders to come and speak in their pulpits.

How comfortable the candidates looked standing in front of enthusiastic congregations. The politicians began to speak. With their words, they constructed a golden future where equality, justice, and fairness became the new world order. A future that would lift those listening and nodding their heads in agreement out of back-breaking poverty and despair.

The message had wings that lifted it far above the earth. Who wouldn't want a future of peace, safety, justice, and economic equity? I couldn't blame the listeners for agreeing.

What I didn't understand is why the ministers would invite these candidates into their pulpits, for they were devils. They fought for a woman's right to kill her child in the womb. They savagely fought off anyone who stood for the life of the unborn. They were not above destroying reputations, lying, and creating false testimony to keep abortion the law of the land. The ministers had to know that. Still, they allowed the candidates to speak in their pulpits and to their congregations.

These candidates had made it clear in a thousand other speeches that the society they wanted to birth was contrary to God's Word. They championed same-sex marriage and booed when God was introduced at their nominating convention. They were against school

prayer and to them, freedom of religion meant freedom from religion. Christians were their enemies, and they were not shy in denouncing the Lord.

Their words, though, cast a spell of future possibilities, but I had heard these same words being shouted in the chute as people chewed each other up. I couldn't unhear them and the terrible results they had reaped. Nor could I unsee the trauma and the hopelessness of life in the inner cities. These same politicians, who painted a bright and glowing future, had presided over the complete collapse of America's finest cities. What were once beacons of financial prosperity for all had become the slums of today's generation. These candidates offered nothing of substance, but it didn't stop them from winning election after election.

I climbed back down the mountain. This was not the place to hide. In fact, I believed the epicenter at the chute would eventually swallow this stronghold whole.

I ran to the next mountain. It was as crowded as the one I had left. Everything was the same. People here were just as sure of their beliefs and future for the country. They believed in rugged individuality, evoked God's name frequently, and promised to end abortion.

There were ministers gathered here, and these ministers also invited the politicians into their pulpits. The congregations received the candidates as enthusiastically as the ones I had witnessed before. The candidates' language wasn't as lofty and heady as the candidates from the other mountain. No, this language was practical, sensible, and looked back toward our past as much as it looked forward to the future.

I climbed higher so I could hear better, but something jutting out of the mountain caught my attention. It was a pathway leading back to the valley. I saw these same candidates, who had just promised to represent the people and do the right thing, walk straight down that path and betray everything they had just said.

Why? It was the same spirit that ruled in the chute. Newly elected representatives made their bold stands, and the press bombarded them with names, false accusations, and denouncements.

They tried to stand, but the torrent of words became stones. The media threatened to destroy their lives; to bring forth everything from their past, twisting it to present it in the worst possible light. Forgetting their oaths, these politicians capitulated to the demands of the news anchors and the pundits. They begged forgiveness. They begged to be accepted. They were weighed in the balance and were found wanting. Power and influence became all that mattered. Their promises and the people they represented forgotten.

In reality, why should they remember the people? The people didn't hold them accountable. On either mountain. Both offered hope and change. Both failed to deliver. Both were bound by the same demonic powers that presided over the chute.

Disillusioned, I made my way slowly down the mountain. There was only one mountain left. It had to hold the answers.

## CHAPTER THREE

Minor tremors shook the ground. I lost my balance and fell to my knees. I wasn't hurt, but my heart increased its pace. The slide into the chute was growing. I looked back and saw parts of the first mountain begin to crumble. It wouldn't fall today, but, sooner rather than later, those who sought safety in that stronghold would find themselves running for their lives in the chute. Afraid, I began to run.

My heart was beating loudly, and my clothes were drenched with sweat. I didn't care. I was here. I didn't wait to recover my strength. Panting loudly, my legs shaking with fatigue, I began to climb.

At the top, there was a large building crafted entirely out of marble. It had a classical architecture, and sunlight bounced off the porch's round columns. "We the People" was engraved above the mahogany doors.

I flung open the door and walked down a long cool hallway. My feet thudded softly on the polished marble floor. Words were engraved here. I read as I walked: *We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.* Long ago, these words were read out every July 4th. Now, most of the population wouldn't recognize them.

I opened another set of doors and entered into a large chamber. Voices echoed all around. As they bounced hither and thither, they became louder and louder until they were deafening. I plugged my ears. I could still hear the words, but I could tolerate the volume now. The words and sentiments were all the same. One voice would speak, and the rest would repeat the words until the chamber filled with them. I liked what I heard: smaller government, less taxes, more



individual freedom, less regulation, life for the unborn, and border security.

But it was more than liking what I heard. I felt a kindred spirit with those filling the room. We had the same thoughts, the same mind, and the same worldview. There was safety in their presence for we were the same.

At the front of the room sat four men in front of microphones. I knew them, for I listened to their radio programs whenever I could catch them. As they loudly pontificated their opinions, the crowd would take up their catchphrases and begin to repeat them until the room was filled with only one opinion.

I don't know how long I listened, but I caught a tone I didn't care for. Had these commentators always been this smug, this patronizing as they espoused their inflexible positions? Not only were they smug, they were filled with self-righteousness as they hectored us on how we should behave or what we should do.

Two men next to me started arguing, and the words they hurled back and forth matched the hatred and contempt I heard in the chute. The fight had to do with some obscure policy position that didn't affect day-to-day life. The first man had made light of the policy, and the second man, humiliated that his position had not been upheld, cast aspersions on the first man's conservative bona fides. The fight escalated as they were no longer arguing about policy, but who was the better conservative. The first man suddenly changed his opinion on the policy and lied that he had ever disagreed with the second man at all. Still there was no peace. The second man continued to shout calumnies about the man and his family until the first man crept away.

This wasn't the only fight. Like small brush fires, arguments erupted always over the same thing. Who was the better conservative? The echoes were now filled with hatred. I was being smothered under waves of smugness and self-righteousness. I knew I had to go. The arguments may have been different than the ones in the chute, but the spirit was the same. Smug, self-righteous, obdurate, poisonous, and, in the end, leading to destruction. I didn't want to be here when this mountain fell as it surely must.

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I didn't stop running until I reached the bottom. I sat down on a large boulder and began to weep. Fissures appeared next to my feet. The slide was approaching. I would be gobbled up because I had nowhere to go.

From behind me, a swell of power rolled over the landscape. The power was palpable and tangible. I jumped to my feet and looked into the setting sun. I didn't see anything. In my fear and grief was I just imagining things?

The Holy Spirit returned. Before I could speak, He pointed toward where the power was originating. "Go there."

I started running.

## CHAPTER FOUR

I dashed toward where the Holy Spirit had pointed. The power was growing and intensifying. Behind, I heard a loud crack followed by a low rumble. I didn't stop running to look behind. Lot's wife had done that and turned into a pillar of salt. I wasn't going to make the same mistake. By the clouds of dust encasing me, I knew the first mountain had fallen. It had happened quicker than I thought.

I drew up quickly. There were trees ahead. A thick forest! I smiled at the sight. How beautiful the trees looked against the ubiquitous brown landscape. The branches rustled. They were pushed out of the way. Something large was coming toward me.

Riders on white horses! The riders were dressed in the purest white I had ever seen. So white they shined like the sun. Every soldier had a golden crown on their head. The first line of riders was followed by lines and lines of the same. They burned with righteousness, purity, and holiness. At the sight of them, I raised my hands over my head. I wanted to explode in praise.

This was God's army taking the field. The whole of creation became silent. This moment of intense holiness should not be intruded on.

The Holy Spirit stood beside me. "This is the Kingdom of God." I turned wide eyes on Him and smiled.

"I have much to show you about what you have seen," the Holy Spirit said. "But before I do, there is someplace you must first go."

I was no longer watching the army march out of the trees. I found myself standing before the Lord. He was seated on His judgment throne. I intuitively knew it was time for Him to judge my life and give me His verdict.

"I am going to speak honestly with you," the Lord said kindly. "Even though your citizenship is in Heaven, you have not set up residence here. Instead, you have been satisfied to live in a world of

your making, in which you only allow Me in when it suits your interest. Because you have chosen to live for yourself instead of Me, you have been brought here, now, before the appointed time of judgment. I have applied the purging fire to your life to see how much of My life can be found in you. You have been found lacking. You have squandered your life.”

For a stunned moment, my mind couldn't process what the Lord had just spoken. I wanted to protest and give Him a list of things I had done in His name, but before I could begin, the truth of His judgment pierced my heart. He was right in what He had said. It was true. I had squandered my life. My heart shattered into pieces. I fell upon my face in the dust and wept.

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I don't know how long I cried bitter tears of regret and repentance, but the Holy Spirit never left my side. His love made those dark minutes (that felt more like long, bleak months) bearable. I couldn't justify the self-centered interest that had poisoned everything in my life. It had even spread into the things of God. I was guilty of using God to advance an agenda of self-importance – to be seen and admired by men. Not once had I done anything with clean hands or a pure heart. If I had, something of His Life would have survived the fire.

I beat my fists on the ground in utter despair and hopelessness. How could I live every day like I had and deceive myself into believing I was living a life of great faithfulness? But I had. I had been wrong about everything.

My true self stood before me. I didn't have pity on her. I just wanted her to die and be buried in some forgotten place that I would never have to visit again. I wanted a new life to begin. Except I didn't know anything about Life in God despite all the sermons I had so confidently preached. My sobs increased. Was everything I had ever done in the Lord's name a lie?

“Please forgive me,” I cried from the depths of my broken soul. “Please forgive me all the wasted time. You are right. I am wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked, and I don't know what to do.”

In my heart, I heard the Holy Spirit. “You have seen your true condition. The depth of your sin and your utter hopelessness to do anything about it except to cry out to Me. In your tears, I have developed in you the need and desire for the Cross to be applied to all facets of your life. This is where you are now. The Cross is death to the old man – to everything you are in your natural strength and cunning. It is death to sin, to self, and to an old way of thinking and living.

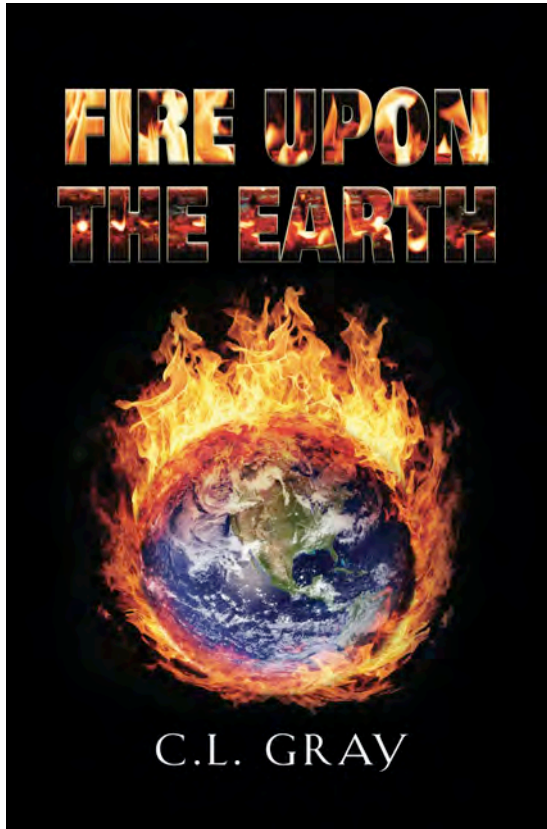
“Death brings with it despair, loss, grief, and anguish. You are despairing because the Cross looks so little and helpless against your sin. IT IS NOT! (That phrase thundered in my heart.) It is the most potent weapon in the universe, designed to bring a complete end to all that you have seen and despaired over. Let the Cross have its perfect work.

“There is a new phase you still have to enter. This is being alive to Me. To live by My Life. To see through My eyes; to think as I think; and live as I do. You do not know what it means that Christ lives in you as your hope of glory.

“Soon, you will learn of My Life in you, so you can begin to cry out that My Life alone becomes the source by which you live. Then I will begin to build in you the capacity to receive that Life and appropriate it, so you can really live. This is the phase you will enter starting now. The Cross has worked against your old nature, so you can see and choose a Life that is not your own. Now, stand up on your feet.”

I did what I was told. My legs were weak, but my heart felt as clean as the earth did after a rainstorm.

“Come with Me.”



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