

## No Fear of Fire

If you are saved you are like gold. You do not have to be afraid of trials, temptations, or persecution. Gold comes through fire as gold. It may lose its impurities, pollutions, or shape, but what goes in as gold comes out as gold.

Daniel 3:16-30, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counselors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counselors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose

bodies the fire had no power, nor was any hair of their head singed, neither were their costs changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon."

This is the account of the three thrown into the furnace of which the fire had no power. Now the king, a brilliant man and skilled politician, knew that this would kill. He was angry and he wanted these three killed so he had them thrown into the furnace. The problem was that the fire that should have destroyed, did not, but rather helped the men.

Your adversaries will try to put down, limit, handicap, destroy, and get rid of you, but there is a God in heaven. When you face the trials and fires of conflict and persecution, you do not need to be afraid of the worst that people can do to you. We need to lay hold on this and realize that there is more here than an entertaining story for children.

These three men went into the furnace hated and despised, and came out triumphant. The world can hate and despise you, but they are going to have to recognize that something besides you is involved when they touch God's person. God so identified with them in this situation that they had special fellowship with the Lord Jesus. While they thought they were destroying them, they were giving them a personal experience and opportunity that had not been had for almost a thousand years. In the Old Testament there are rare occasions of God walking personally with anyone.

Charles Spurgeon said that if he died and woke up in hell, he still

would have continual fellowship with Jesus, and it would not be bad. Think about that. Jesus said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Hebrews 13:5b) so He would have to go with us. Realize that the agonies that others design for you do not have to be agonies at all, but can be some of the sweetest fellowship that you have with Jesus.

They heated the furnace seven times hotter, and it was so hot that the men who threw the three fellows into the fire died from the heat. What killed those outside the furnace did not hurt those inside the furnace. These were the mightiest men of Nebuchadnezzar's army. He lost some great men that day, trying to be rid of those that he despised. The one that was persecuting received the loss, while those persecuted received a benefit. Some of you may be ready to volunteer for the fire here. The close comforting fellowship with the Lord is available in the fire, not outside of it.

When they came out they were going to have to walk by the dead bodies of their persecutors. God protects His people and punishes those who want to hurt His people. In the fire you may see His justice visited on them as what they intended to do to you. God can turn the tables.

When the king commanded them to come, the last thing they had heard from him was, "Burn 'em up !" Who wants to go back to a king in those circumstances? The flesh would say, "What do you mean, come out? I got away from you in here. Why should I return?"

The midst of the fire might not be the worst place. Those who have studied science may know that a burning candle is hot all around the flame, but in the middle the temperature is lower. They were not at the edges where they could get burned; God had them in the middle of the fire. They could breathe. They could walk. They had been tied up and bound, as if they were going to run. They were not going to run. If they had wanted to, they would have run long before. But when the king looked in later he saw them loose and walking. Their bonds fell off without a hair being singed, their clothes being affected, or so much as the smell of smoke about them, when most people would have

been killed by the heat.

God allows His saints to be in the fire, but He controls what the fire can do to His saints. It may be that God wants to put you through the fire to burn some ropes off that have been binding you. The control the king and his men had over them was gone. They were liberated. The fire of affliction may be the source of your liberation. The world may try to tie you down, but God will allow the fire to come along and free you of those ties so that you can walk with Jesus in the midst of the fire. Gold fears no fire. It may be melting, but fire cannot destroy gold.

Do you have things that have tied and hindered you? The fires of affliction might be your deliverance. Not just in the fellowship of Christ and judgment on those that oppose you, but for an opportunity to be released for furthering your walk with the Lord.

In a sense, the king had Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego bound in working for him, but when he had them thrown in the fire, they were released from that obligation. They did not have to go on with him. He had to realize that he was trying to destroy the best of his workers. It was not their loss; it was his.

Often we think about what people have done to us, when really they are to be pitied for what they are going to have to face for what they did.

These men had been promoted because they were efficient and hardworking, but there were those who were jealous of their positions. Wanting to move up the ladder themselves, they set out to find a way to have Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego destroyed. They also did this with their friend Daniel later. If you are one of God's children you can expect people to turn against you, turn you in, and set up situations to bring you down. God will use these situations to advance, liberate, and cleanse you. They think they are doing it to our harm, but we know it is to our good.

It will give you a new viewpoint about going into hard times and encourage you in the middle of hard times to know that God is still on

**the throne and can protect and promote His children.**

**In I Corinthians 3 we can read of a judgment that is coming by fire. Gold silver, and precious stones will be all right. Wood, hay, and stubble will go up in smoke. Much of what people have done will go up in smoke, and they will be left with a handful of ashes. Gold is worth so much that you could buy several truckloads of firewood with just one ounce--something that fits into the palm of your hand. But when the firewood is done it is just ashes. The gold is still gold.**

**How will you withstand God's judging fire? What will come through?**

**There is fire coming, and God has told us what will come through. After Noah and his family came out of the ark God promised that he would never destroy the whole earth with water again. Peter tells us that the world will be destroyed the next time with fire.**

**I Peter 1:7, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto the praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:"**

**If you are put through the fire, if the world tries to tear down your faith, we know that when Jesus comes it will be to the praise and honor of Him.**

**(v.8) "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:"**

**That is what you have to look forward to! They think they are going to tear you down. The devil who knows the Scripture, but does not believe it will find out that God was right. Your faith stands.**

**Nebuchadnezzar had to bow the knee of his heart. He told the people not to do anything against people who lived like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He saw for himself that it did not work out.**

**The faith God gives you is adequate for the difficulties you will**

**have to face. God does not short-change His children. He gave them all they needed, including the faith of Christ which is more than adequate for whatever the world may dump on us. We go through the trial to show how great He is, how faith survives, and how we are helped; and others have to recognize our God.**

**Matthew 3:11, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:"**

**John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, meaning that when they were baptized they identified and agreed with his message of repentance. Jesus is going to baptize us with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Being baptized with the Holy Ghost has to do with us being identified with Him and He with us.**

**But why would Jesus baptize His children with fire? Gold fears no fire. We do not have to worry about being burned or scarred. There will be fellowship, protection, safety, deliverance, and glory. We are beginning to see that the fire is not so bad. The world thinks it is the worst they can do to you, but we realize that it may be a help. Some people are tired to things that they cannot shake loose. God used a fire to loosen the ropes on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and He may use a baptism of fire to liberate and purge you from those things on your life.**

**The term "baptism of fire" is a Biblical term that the military has borrowed. In the military, recruits are brought in, sent through boot camp, trained, and in the time of war are sent out to the battle. In World War II we were caught off guard, unprepared and sent out many "green" soldiers who became "cannon fodder" until we could train more men better. They were called "cannon fodder" because they were inexperienced in war, but we just needed someone out there to hold the Germans back. The goal in the military is that once they have a group of men trained, they send them out in a part of a battle where real bullets shot by real people who want to kill them are flying around their heads. They are then pulled out and having been in a real**

battle, they have had their "baptism of fire." After this experience they will have found out if they have courageous, noble blood or "rabbit" blood---whether they will stand and fight or run away.

The same concept is true in our Christian life. When a new convert is trying to witness to someone in the world, they are likely to be asked many questions. That is a test for them--are they able to hold up under a stream of questioning from the world? Have you ever noticed that new converts often seem to have all the easy opportunities? That is the Lord allowing them to build some experience and encouragement. God puts them through a baptism of fire.

As you become an older Christian the trials may seem to be getting worse. Not really! God is making you better. God will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able to withstand. He will develop your level of operation to go higher and higher. He does not expect you to take on the whole world the first time around. You might have a passion to be a hero, but God knows the need of your heart.

He controls the temptations and persecutions that you will have to come under. He knows what is good for you and from what He needs to protect you. He can liberate you from your bondage and fears so that you can become what you never dreamed of becoming.

There is another encouragement to be drawn from this concept of baptism by fire. Baptism is not drowning. It is to be fully immersed, but not drowned. Your baptism of fire is not to your hurt; it is for your good. It is for a limited duration, and you will be allowed to breathe again. You will not be put in the fire and trapped there the rest of your life; although it may feel like that when you are in the fire. "Though I walk *through* the valley of the shadow of death..." You are not bound in it; you can walk out the other end.

The king intended to keep Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fire until they burned up, but it was not long before he changed his mind and wanted them to come out. According to I Peter, all that we go through we will come out of, and it will be to the glory of God.

**When you are in the fire being shot at, realize that wars might last for a while, but they do come to an end. We must understand that the baptism of fire is to help and prepare you for what is on the other side. If you try to run from the fire, you will miss all God had for you there.**

**You may be in the midst of the fire now, but I can assure you that if you are a child of God there will be a baptism of fire intended for your good. God works at a mental level much too high for us to comprehend. He knows what he is doing, and we can trust Him in whatever He does. The fires are good for us, because gold fears no fire.**