

## “Biblical Stories: Daniel... all ‘Fired’ Up!”

2018: The Year of the Winner

### Scripture:

### Daniel 3 (NIV)

King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide,<sup>[a]</sup> and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. <sup>2</sup> He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up ... .. Then the herald loudly proclaimed, “Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: <sup>5</sup> As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. <sup>6</sup> Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.” ... <sup>12</sup> But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.” ... ..

<sup>16</sup> Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us<sup>[c]</sup> from Your Majesty’s hand. <sup>18</sup> But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.” ... .. <sup>19</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual <sup>20</sup> and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. <sup>21</sup> So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. <sup>22</sup> The king’s command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, <sup>23</sup> and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

<sup>24</sup> Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, “Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?” They replied, “Certainly, Your Majesty.”<sup>25</sup> He said, “Look! I see four men walking

*around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”*

**Subject Question:** In Daniel’s account in Chapter three concerning His three friends who refused to obey a royal decree and thus were sent to their supposed demise in the fiery furnace, what three lessons concerning the testing of our “faith” does Daniel teach His readers including you and me?

**Compliment answer:** With Faith always comes: Tribulations (Vs.1-15), With Faith always comes: Trials (Vs.16-23) and with Faith always, always comes: Triumph (Vs.16-20).

**Big Idea:** In Daniel’s account in Chapter three concerning His three friends who refused to obey a royal decree and thus were sent to their supposed demise in the fiery furnace, the three lessons concerning the testing of our “faith” that Daniel teaches His readers including you and me are: With Faith always comes: Tribulations (Vs.1-15), With Faith always comes: Trials (Vs.16-23) and With Faith always, always comes: Triumph (Vs.16-20).

**Homiletical Idea:** “Burnt Offerings....”

**Purpose:** I want the congregation to consider the trials and tribulations that we all have as people of faith. Not only from our point of view but God’s... and how he rewards those who dare to walk a life with Him.

**Ground Work:** Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

Da 3:1-30. Nebuchadnezzar's Idolatrous Image; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego Are Delivered from the Furnace.

Between the vision of Nebuchadnezzar in the second chapter and that of Daniel in the seventh, four narratives of Daniel's and his friends' personal history are introduced. As the second and seventh chapters go together, so the third and sixth chapters (the deliverance from the lions' den), and the fourth and fifth chapters. Of these last two pairs, the former shows God's nearness to save His saints when faithful to Him, at the very time they seem to be crushed by the world power. The second pair shows, in the case of the two kings of the

first monarchy, how God can suddenly humble the world power in the height of its insolence. The latter advances from mere self-glorification, in the fourth chapter, to open opposition to God in the fifth. Nebuchadnezzar demands homage to be paid to his image (Da 3:1-6), and boasts of his power (Da 4:1-18). But Belshazzar goes further, blaspheming God by polluting His holy vessels. There is a similar progression in the conduct of God's people. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego refuse positive homage to the image of the world power (Da 3:12); Daniel will not yield it even a negative homage, by omitting for a time the worship of God (Da 6:10). Jehovah's power manifested for the saints against the world in individual histories (the third through sixth chapters) is exhibited in the second and seventh chapters, in world-wide prophetic pictures; the former heightening the effect of the latter. The miracles wrought in behalf of Daniel and his friends were a manifestation of God's glory in Daniel's person, as the representative of the theocracy before the Babylonian king, who deemed himself almighty, at a time when God could not manifest it in His people as a body. They tended also to secure, by their impressive character, that respect for the covenant-people on the part of the heathen powers which issued in Cyrus' decree, not only restoring the Jews, but ascribing honor to the God of heaven, and commanding the building of the temple (Ezr 1:1-4) [Auberlen].

1. image—Nebuchadnezzar's confession of God did not prevent him being a worshipper of idols, besides. Ancient idolaters thought that each nation had its own gods, and that, in addition to these, foreign gods might be worshipped. The Jewish religion was the only exclusive one that claimed all homage for Jehovah as the only true God. Men will in times of trouble confess God, if they are allowed to retain their favorite heart-idols. The image was that of Bel, the Babylonian tutelary god; or rather, Nebuchadnezzar himself, the personification and representative of the Babylonian empire, as suggested to him by the dream (Da 2:38), "Thou art this head of gold." The interval between the dream and the event here was about nineteen years. Nebuchadnezzar had just returned from finishing the Jewish and Syrian wars, the spoils of which would furnish the means of rearing such a colossal statue [Prideaux]. The colossal size makes it likely that the frame was wood, overlaid with gold. The "height," sixty cubits, is so out of proportion with the "breadth," exceeding it ten times, that it seems best to suppose the thickness from breast to back to be intended, which is exactly the right proportion of a well-formed man [Augustine, *The City of God*, 15.26]. Prideaux thinks the sixty cubits refer to the

image and pedestal together, the image being twenty-seven cubits high, or forty feet, the pedestal thirty-three cubits, or fifty feet. Herodotus [1.183] confirms this by mentioning a similar image, forty feet high, in the temple of Belus at Babylon. It was not the same image, for the one here was on the plain of Dura, not in the city. Nebuchadnezzar setting up an image commandeth all persons to worship it, [Daniel 3:1-7](#). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are accused of disobeying the command, [Daniel 3:8-12](#). The king threateneth them; their resolute answer, [Daniel 3:13-18](#). They are cast into the fiery furnace, [Daniel 3:19-23](#). God delivereth them unhurt out of it, which Nebuchadnezzar seeing blesseth God, and acknowledgeth his power, [Daniel 3:24-29](#). Their advancement, [Daniel 3:30](#).

This daring sin of Nebuchadnezzar was aggravated many ways, by the greatness of the kingdom and majesty God had given him, by the late discovery made to him when Daniel interpreted his dream, by his conviction and confession upon it of that great God and his sovereign power: this is the height of ingratitude, arguing his carriage before to be only a fit of astonishment, without the least change upon his heart.

The vast proportion of the statue, or idol, was to show his greatness by the height and bulk of it, and his pride and magnificence in the richness of it, seeing it was of gold, and to be a monument to posterity of his famous exploits. Some give this reason, that he might seem hereby to avert the fate of his empire, foretold by Daniel, and declare himself sole monarch of the world, or head of gold, because he made it of gold, whether massy, or plated, or gilded, matters not. Likewise that he might seem no ways to be inclined to the Jews, or their religion, whereof the Chaldeans might be jealous, seeing he had owned their God to be greatest, and had preferred Daniel and his friends to great honours. Nebuchadnezzar assured his wise men and nobles that he would still maintain the old established religion, without innovation or mixture: so Mald, Menochius, Geierus: that they had a spite against the Jews is clear, [Daniel 3:8,12](#).

### **Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary**

3:8-18 True devotion calms the spirit, quiets and softens it, but superstition and devotion to false gods inflame men's passions. The matter is put into a little compass, Turn, or burn. Proud men are still ready to say, as Nebuchadnezzar, Who is the Lord, that I should fear his power? Shadrach, Meshach, and

Abednego did not hesitate whether they should comply or not. Life or death were not to be considered. Those that would avoid sin, must not parley with temptation when that to which we are allured or affrighted is manifestly evil. Stand not to pause about it, but say, as Christ did, Get thee behind me, Satan. They did not contrive an evasive answer, when a direct answer was expected. Those who make their duty their main care, need not be anxious or fearful concerning the event. The faithful servants of God find him able to control and overrule all the powers armed against them. Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst. If He be for us, we need not fear what man can do unto us. God will deliver us, either from death or in death. They must obey God rather than man; they must rather suffer than sin; and must not do evil that good may come. Therefore none of these things moved them. The saving them from sinful compliance, was as great a miracle in the kingdom of grace, as the saving them out of the fiery furnace was in the kingdom of nature. Fear of man and love of the world, especially want of faith, make men yield to temptation, while a firm persuasion of the truth will deliver them from denying Christ, or being ashamed of him. We are to be meek in our replies, but we must be decided that we will obey God rather than man.

#### **Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers**

(17) **If it be so.**—The meaning becomes clearer by omitting the word “so.” The sentence will then stand as follows: “If our God is able to deliver us . . . then He will do so; but if He does not deliver us, be assured that we will not serve thy gods.” The three holy children are quite content to leave the whole matter in the hands of Providence. They know that the law of obedience is the first law of all, and this they are resolved to keep. There is not the slightest ground for supposing that they expected a miraculous deliverance. Their language implies no more than faithful obedience. (See [Isaiah 43:2](#).)

**Is able.**—They did not question His power; they did not know whether He would will to exercise the use of it. (Comp. [Genesis 19:22](#).)

#### **Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary**

3:19-27 Let Nebuchadnezzar heat his furnace as hot as he can, a few minutes will finish the torment of those cast into it; but hell-fire tortures, and yet does not kill. Those who worshipped the beast and his image, have no rest, no pause, no moment free from pain, Re 14:10,11. Now was fulfilled in the letter that great promise, Isa 43:2, When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned. Leaving it to that God who preserved them in the fire, to bring

them out, they walked up and down in the midst, supported and encouraged by the presence of the Son of God. Those who suffer for Christ, have his presence in their sufferings, even in the fiery furnace, and in the valley of the shadow of death. Nebuchadnezzar owns them for servants of the most high God; a God able to deliver them out of his hand. It is our God only is the consuming fire, Heb 12:29. Could we but see into the eternal world, we should behold the persecuted believer safe from the malice of his foes, while they are exposed to the wrath of God, and tormented in unquenchable fires.

#### **Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible**

He answered and said, lo, I see four men loose,.... Not bound as the three were, when cast in; but quite at liberty in their hands and feet, and separate from one another. As this fiery furnace may be an emblem of the fiery trials and afflictive dispensations the children of God pass through in this world, being not joyous, but grievous to the flesh, though useful to purge and purify; so this and some other circumstances attending these good men in the furnace are applicable to the saints in such cases; for though afflictions are sometimes themselves called cords, with which men are said to be bound, yet by means of them they are loosed from other things from the power and prevalence of sin over them; from the world, and the things of it, they sometimes too much cleave and are glued unto; from a spirit of bondage, and from doubts and fears; their hearts under them being comforted and enlarged with the love of God; he knowing, visiting, and choosing them in the furnace of affliction; or making known himself to them, his love and choice of them; whereby their souls are set at liberty, and the graces of his Spirit are drawn forth into a lively exercise, through his love being shed abroad in them.

Walking in the midst of the fire; the furnace being large enough to walk in, and where they took their walks as in a garden; nor were they concerned to come out of it; nor uneasy at being in it; the violence of the fire being quenched, as the apostle says, referring to this instance, [Hebrews 11:34](#). Saadiah says, the angel Gabriel, who is over the hail, came and cooled the fire of the furnace. So afflictions are a path to walk in, the narrow way to eternal life, through which all must enter the kingdom of heaven, of which there will be an end. Walking in it supposes strength, which God gives his people at such seasons; and when they have his presence they are unconcerned; none of these things move them, nor can they separate them from the love of Christ; they walk on with pleasure and delight, sing the praises of God, as did Paul and Silas in a prison, and as many martyrs have done in the flames: conversing with Christ, and with

his people, they pass on, and pass through the more cheerfully, and are not anxious about their deliverance, but leave it with God to work it in his own time and way; nay, are ready to say with the disciples, it is good for them to be here; and indeed it was better for these good men to be with Christ in the fiery furnace, than to be with Nebuchadnezzar in his palace without him.

And they have no hurt; either in their bodies, or in their garments, neither of them being burnt; they suffered no pain in the one, nor loss in the other. Afflictions do no hurt to the people of God; not to their persons, which are safe in Christ, and to whom he is a hiding place and covert, as from the storm and tempest, so from the force of fire, that it shall not kindle upon them to hurt them; nor to their graces, which are tried, refined, and brightened hereby; faith is strengthened, hope is encouraged, and love made to abound. All the afflictions of the saints are in love, and are designed for good, and do work together for good to them that love God; they are sometimes for their temporal, and often for their spiritual good, and always work for them an exceeding weight of glory.

And the form of the fourth is like the Son of God; like one of the angels, who are called the sons of God; so Jarchi, Saadiah, and Jacchiades; but many of the ancient Christian writers interpret it of Christ the Son of God, whom Nebuchadnezzar, though a Heathen prince, might have some knowledge of from Daniel and other Jews in his court, of whom he had heard them speak as a glorious Person; and this being such an one, he might conclude it was he, or one like to him; and it is highly probable it was he, since it was not unusual for him to appear in a human form, and to be present with his people, as he often is with them, and even in the furnace of affliction; see [Isaiah 43:2](#), to sympathize with them; to revive and comfort them; to bear them up and support them; to teach and instruct them, and at last to deliver them out of their afflictions.

### **Book of Daniel**

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<https://www.gotquestions.org/Book-of-Daniel.html>

**Author:** The Book of Daniel identifies the Prophet Daniel as its author ([Daniel 9:2](#); [10:2](#)). Jesus mentions Daniel as the author as well ([Matthew 24:15](#)).

**Date of Writing:** The Book of Daniel was likely written between 540 and 530 B.C.

**Purpose of Writing:** In 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon had conquered Judah and deported many of its inhabitants to Babylon – Daniel included. Daniel served in the royal court of Nebuchadnezzar and several rulers who followed Nebuchadnezzar. The Book of Daniel records the actions, prophecies, and visions of the Prophet Daniel.

**Key Verses:** [Daniel 1:19-20](#), “The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.”

[Daniel 2:31](#), “You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue - an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance.”

[Daniel 3:17-18](#), “If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

[Daniel 4:34-35](#), “His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: ‘What have you done?’”

[Daniel 9:25-27](#), “Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an

abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”

**Brief Summary:** Chapter 1 describes the conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Along with many others, Daniel and his three friends were deported to Babylon and because of their courage and the obvious blessings of God upon them, they were “promoted” in the king’s service ([Daniel 1:17-20](#)).

Chapters 2-4 record Nebuchadnezzar having a dream that only Daniel could correctly interpret. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a great statue represented the kingdoms that would arise in the future. Nebuchadnezzar made a great statue of himself and forced everyone to worship it. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused and were miraculously spared by God despite being thrown into a fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar is judged by God for his pride, but later restored once he recognized and admitted God’s sovereignty.

Daniel chapter 5 records Nebuchadnezzar’s son Belshazzar misusing the items taken from the Temple in Jerusalem and receiving a message from God, written into the wall, in response. Only Daniel could interpret the writing, a message of coming judgment from God. Daniel is thrown into the lions’ den for refusing to pray to the emperor, but was miraculously spared. In chapter 7, God gave Daniel a vision of four beasts. The four beasts represented the kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

Chapters 8-12 contain a vision involving a ram, a goat, and several horns – also referring to future kingdoms and their rulers. Daniel chapter 9 records Daniel’s “seventy weeks” prophecy. God gave Daniel the precise timeline of when the Messiah would come and be cut off. The prophecy also mentions a future ruler who will make a seven-year covenant with Israel and break it after three and a half years, followed shortly thereafter by the great judgment and consummation of all things. Daniel is visited and strengthened by an angel after this great vision, and the angel explains the vision to Daniel in great detail.

**Fore-shadowings:** We see in the stories of the fiery furnace and Daniel in the lions’ den a foreshadowing of the salvation provided by Christ. The three men declare that God is a saving God who can provide a way of escape from the fire ([Daniel 3:17](#)). In the same way, by sending Jesus to die for our sins, God has

provided an escape from the fires of hell ([1 Peter 3:18](#)). In Daniel's case, God provided an angel to shut the lions' mouths and saved Daniel from death. Jesus Christ is our provision from the dangers of the sin that threatens to consume us.

Daniel's vision of the end times depicts Israel's Messiah by whom many will be made pure and holy ([Daniel 12:10](#)). He is our righteousness ([1 Peter 5:21](#)) by whom our sins, though blood-red, will be washed away and we will be as white as snow ([Isaiah 1:18](#)).

**Practical Application:** Like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, we should always stand for what we know is right. God is greater than any punishment that could come upon us. Whether God chooses to deliver us or not, He is always worthy of our trust. God knows what is best, and He honors those who trust and obey Him.

God has a plan, and His plan is down to the intricate detail. God knows and is in control of the future. Everything that God has predicted has come true exactly as He predicted. Therefore, we should believe and trust that the things He has predicted for the future will one day occur exactly as God has declared.

**Introduction:** To be a Christian is to be and to live out of step with the large majority of world and its systems and its philosophies and its desires. To follow Christ will always make one feel that they are, paradoxically, living right side up in an upside down environment—and it's hard. It's just the unique price and privilege of having a converted heart. It's a call, really, to see the world through God's eyes; and more, to live out our calling each and every day. And admittedly, it's can be, at times, a struggle. Especially when our "faith" walk drives to us to take a stand for what we know is right when seemingly others want us or expect us to act or behave in a manner contrary to the heart of Christ that we received at our conversion. The question for us then is, how do we deal with the oft times, fiery attitudes and actions of others who demand that we see things from their point of view and more, have to power or influence to make our lives miserable if we don't? It's always been an issue for us as Christians. Thankfully, There is much to be learned from our Biblical text today. And we do so with Jesus' insightful words from John 16:33 in mind— *I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you*

will have trouble. *But take heart! I have overcome the world.*” Let’s journey back three thousand years and learn modern lessons concerning our faith walks as we consider the realities: With Faith always comes: Tribulations (Vs.1-15), With Faith always comes: Trials (Vs.16-23) and with Faith always, always comes: Triumph (Vs.16-20). Always keeping in mind:

(Faith works both ways)

- A. With Faith always comes: Tribulations (Vs.1-15). *King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide,<sup>[a]</sup> and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. <sup>2</sup> He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up ... .. Then the herald loudly proclaimed, “Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: <sup>5</sup> As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. <sup>6</sup> Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace..” ... <sup>12</sup> But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.” ... ..*
- B. Admittedly, most of us will not have to endure the tribulations that these young people faced in their faith walks. But... having come to know Christ and to experience Christ is to have found a way of life and a condition of heart that, like Shadrach and friends, literally flies in the face of some people. The people whose angst we seemingly spark, are not, necessarily bad people, quite the contrary... nor mean people, not in the truest sense... vindictive people. Yet, there is just something about **your** life that they don’t understand, don’t get. And as such, they feel somehow exposed in a sense--and they don’t even realize what it is that about you that makes them feel that way. Subsequently, but sadly--As a Christian, you and I have to come to terms with the reality that I n this upside down world, there are always three unique “people” that we are going to struggle with you.

- C. The first are “others.” Others may be Bosses, like Nebuchadnezzar,-- who we work for... Or work mates, which we work with... or friends which we spend time with , or family members, or spouses, or kids, or grandkids: People who look at you and say things like, what’s happened to you? You seem different. You used to be so much fun? You used to like to be the life of the party! But now all you want to do is go to church. You just want to read that Bible. I mean come on—I’m just as religious as the next person, but don’t you think you’re carrying this religious thing a little far? They simply don’t realize the value of what you have found, or better yet, what has found you! If they only know... You have found not just religion but more than that---reality... a mind boggling, never thought it could be true, but it is---Jesus is real—God is really there... and with that discovery ---life—real life—something that is finally worth living for. Something that finally makes some sense. You have found the ultimate life altering piece of the puzzle that has finally allowed you to put yourself, your thought, your life somewhat, together. Then, the second person who you as a Christian are going to struggle with and have tribulations from is of course, the enemy. When Christ claimed you as His own---you became a danger to him and his kingdom and His agenda. Satan no longer sees you as one of the myriad of the world’s “sleepers,’ no more as one docilely going along with the crowd. And as such, he will use the actions and attitudes of guess who---others, to try to discourage you any way he can... He can’t have you, but for goodness sake, He’ll do anything to try to hinder you from influencing others. And of course, the last person who may be the author of more of your tribulations and trials than any other is that scoundrel called yourself.
- D. Paul understood this when He wrote in Romans--- *So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me.* <sup>22</sup> *For in my inner being I delight in God’s law;* <sup>23</sup> *but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.* <sup>24</sup> *What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?* <sup>25</sup> *Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature<sup>[d]</sup> a slave to the law of sin.* Keep in mind, however... tribulations... part of the Christian life---coming

in three directions, from the outside from others, from below, Satan, and from the inside, our selves. But keep in mind...

(Faith works both ways)

- A. With Faith always comes: Trials (Vs.16-23). <sup>16</sup> *Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us<sup>[c]</sup> from Your Majesty’s hand. <sup>18</sup> But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”... . <sup>19</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual <sup>20</sup> and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. <sup>21</sup> So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. <sup>22</sup> The king’s command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, <sup>23</sup> and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.*
- B. Not too many of us being thrown into the fiery furnace for our beliefs these days. PTL. But if we peer between the lines of our story today, we might find that the symbolism of the story is a pretty accurate description of “how” it feels as a child of God to not only face tribulations but also, have to endure our own unique trails that come in the midst of those tribulations. For instance, nothing burns our feelings of self-worth more than being the object of ridicule or being ostracized, or marginalized by others. Children aren’t the only ones that can be cruel, and say hateful and hurtful things to one another. More, the scriptures describes the Enemies attacks as “flaming arrows” shot our way, aimed not only at our hurting minds but our tender hearts. He would have you and I be consumed with self-pity, burnt up and burnt out. Dismayed and at times discouraged. And for what—we’re just trying to do the right things. We’re just trying to be good people. It seems almost unfair to be feeling, at times, so low... and yet, its part of

the trials of learning to feel the pain of the world like Jesus did... But perhaps the most burning and stinging wounds are always self-inflicted; The inability to truly forgive ourselves and others. The overwhelming reality of mistakes and actions of the past that we can't undo or more forget. The constant burning of temptations that seemingly won't let us go. The habits that we have found ourselves imprisoned to...

- C. If we were really honest, we'd have to admit that we all exist in a fiery furnace of some sort. Yet, yet... If only... If only we could step back and really see what all these fiery things are really about... what they are really accomplishing... beside the misery of curse. Listen child of God, no burning trail can ever, no, not ever, take away your place in in the precious family of the God who has claimed you and converted you. As Paul wrote in His response to being himself in the furnace of insipid temptation and extreme frustration—there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus—none! What then can we say---can famine, or nakedness, or persecution, can the fiery furnaces of hospital stays or bankruptcy, can the flames of sour investments or lives that unfolded in ways that we never dreamed that they would---nay none of these can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. And sometimes the Love of God is all that we have. But some times the Love of God is all that we realize that we need.
- D. I'm not saying that we should grasp in a masochistic way to the trials that come along... the tribulations that come to us, but even though we may not understand "why"...they have come, we can assure ourselves of at least two certainties. The first is that God has always had and ever will have our best in mind, from His point of view. The next time you find yourself in the furnace consider the work of the refiner. The refiner keeps the precious metal under a great fire in order that the dross, all the impurities, can little by little, rise to the top. There He scrapes off that dross and continues to heat the precious treasure. He purposely turns up the heat at times! He does this time and time again. He allows the heat to do its work...Until, He knows that the metal is pure when he can look down and not see the dross, but His own reflection... If there's some heat in your life, its God working on the dross... and although you may not see it, though the process he is getting a little better picture of

himself in your life.... That is a certainty...That is a fact. And the second certainty? We find in our last lesson. Remember...

(Faith works both ways)

- A. With Faith always, always comes: Triumph (Vs.16-20). <sup>24</sup> *Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" They replied, "Certainly, Your Majesty."*<sup>25</sup> He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."
- B. And Jesus said, *and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of time*. Do you know why Jesus had to ascend to heaven after His resurrection? The answer is found in an obscure passage in John 16: <sup>5</sup>*but now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'* <sup>6</sup>*Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things.* <sup>7</sup>*But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ... ..*<sup>12</sup>*"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear.* <sup>13</sup>*But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.*
- C. The answer to the question of why Jesus ascended is found in the answer, so that He, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Himself can be with you and me... a life companion that is always with us, a faithful friend that will never leave us. An ally who doesn't bring a fire extinguisher with Him to extinguish every fiery trial but who wraps us in His presence and takes our hands and walks with us through every heated event.
- D. The psalmist understood this when he wrote, yea, though I walk **through** the valley of the shadow of death, for thou art with me. Faith works both ways. Faith has allowed us to walk with Him but faith also, has allowed Him to walk with us. That is a certainty, That is a fact. Tribulation and trials will come. But with and by Him and for Him, we who are His, always, always will triumph. Amen.