

Walking
GATE THROUGH THE FIRE

Daniel 3

INTRODUCTION:

Have you ever traveled through a fiery furnace. I've often stood next to heart-broken Christians as they have layed to rest their loved one. Or they have in agony stood by a sick child in the hospital. And there are always questions -- why does God allow this tribulation. Why is this fiery furnace

my lot.
Smithfield Bapt. ch - W. Dingle fire destroyed church -

This morning we want to speak about three men who were fire-proof. They walked through a fiery furnace.

I remember hearing some time ago, some man, who was going to preach a sermon on real estate.^{v.14} And he took his text from Daniel 3, concerning these three men. And here is the way he stated it. (Your shack, my shack, and a bungalow.) And from that he got his sermon on real estate.

Universality of the story - Man & Fire - that is life! all too soon we are thrust into fire - once the Garden was a sweet home, then desolate wilderness.

I. THEIR TEMPTATION

A new national (idol) had been set up - V. 3-5. And this was a temptation at the time because here was a gold image in the empire with the command to worship it. Now it was not left to worship at your own option. But the royal authorities said, you do this - the penalty is death for refusing.

This was the king's God.

V. 6 - The command was that within the (sound of the music) - if you did not worship the idol, you would be put to death in (one hour).

The death was a very terrible one, you were to be cast into a fiery furnace.

Multitudes bowed down at the power of the music and the superstition of idolatry like flocks of sheep to the strings of the music they fell down to worship, this golden image that was about 100 feet high. Just like today the church filled with cheap, pretenders, they do not believe in faith.

They were tempted first to (save their situation). They had been (set over the affairs of the providence of Babylon. Chapter 2:49). As (government officials, they had a high (social position). Now they were tempted. 2 Tim. 4:10 - Demus forsook Paul when worldly advantage was to be gained.

V. 12 - Tempted to (sacrifice their conscience). This would effect their relationship with God. Of course, the king demanded conformity, to (do what everyone else was doing is the thing of religions today. People deny Christ in order to take up some new religion.

II. THEIR TESTIMONY - V. (17-18)

V. 17 - Our God whom we serve is (able to deliver us). We will not serve thy God.

Now the (accusation had been brought against them and these men had envy against them. And their (testimony is very unique and very firm, very meek, and very faithful.

V. (13-18) testified - the choice they made. They knew their duty and they would

V. 18 - (rather their body be consumed in the furnace and their spirit taken on to God's paradise. It was better a thousand times to die with God's favor upon them than to

live without it. They felt it was better to go to a fiery furnace than to go to a fiery Hell, with a guilty conscience.

Faith is in the power of God. If so be, our God is able, they testified. Those who are serving God daily are not likely to be cast down suddenly. Their service is given to stability of character in time of trial.

- *Self-preservation is the law most follow*

16 B

Submission to the (will) of God. V. 18. But if not, we will not. They would rather burn than turn. *We do not have to discuss it - we are ready to reply at this moment - we will not bow down!*

Like Job - though he slay me, yet will I trust. Acts 4:19-20.

They were in Babylon, but they didn't want to be a part of it.

They knew the consequences that they would be bound and tied, and put into this furnace. And so they testified as to what they would do. That was their testimony.

III. THE TRIAL

V. 19

The strongest men in the army - V. 19-23, were used and employed to (bind) the three youth. This sounds very much like those that try to prevent the resurrection of Jesus, by sealing his tomb with a stone and setting a guard over it.

V. 20-21

And the king also had them bound in their ordinary (clothes). This naturally would not enable them to escape.

V. 27 So great was the heat of the furnace and the haste of the king, that death actually overtook their executioners, who were carrying out this cruel work.

What a trial, what a test to be put through.

V. 27 Have you ever had the test of a fiery furnace. Now the Bible tells us what happened during this trial. It says the clothes that these men had on were not effected by the fire. It tells us that the hair of their heads was not singed. It tells us that they did not even smell like they had been in a fire, there was no smoke odor upon them. And the Bible tells us that they walked through the fire. And they were not hurt.

Have you ever stood there and walked through a fiery furnace. I remember the days that I have walked through a fiery furnace. Why me? Well, I consider myself a servant of God, of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has called me into the believed and into his kingdom. And why would God ask me to walk through a fiery furnace.

God always sends his choicest into the fire. And as I think of this in the book of Daniel, I really never thought of this before. But I would like to remind you this morning, that it is not the wicked who were thrown in the fiery furnace. But instead, God's choicest servants. Three of those who had faith.

Now I do not consider myself God's choicest servant. But somehow, that opens our eyes and it kind of melts my heart to a new dimension of God's will.

Why does God allow his own to pass through the fires of troubles and trials.

Why do wicked men prosper and some suffer as saints. Why does this happen.

I don't know. As you lie on a hospital bed, extremely sick with the thought in mind that you may not see the outside again. You wonder about this. But you sort of win a victory when you think of this - these are trying days in Christian experience, in which God sends his choicest through the fire.

Paul, God's choice preacher, looked back and he saw himself as the chief of sinners. But Paul also said that he had a thorn in the flesh. That God used to bring him to a greater degree of dedication and self-denial.

Now we Christians do not have the answer - every answer to grief, disappointment, or discouragement. But here is the fact of the trial.

Now this lesson is a very comforting one to every believer here. All who will take a firm stand and give a testimony to their faith in God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, they are going to be promised persecution. It has ever been so. No saint in any age of history has never been popular with the world. If you and I are going to stand and believe the truth of God and refuse to yield at any cost, you're going to be put in the furnace. The Christian is a (stranger) here. He is just a (pilgrim) going through.

The (more Godly) your life is, the less (fellowship) you are going to have with the world. The less you'll (fit into the world). And the longer I preach, the more I believe this. The (things) of the world not only will not attract you but they are repulsive to you. The things of the world - that the world loves - you will hate. And they will hate the things that you love. And the more we realize the fact that we have little in common with this world and its program - the more we will be considered odd and will be ridiculed and hated. The (closer) you walk with God, the

more you'll understand the song - "I'm a stranger here, within a foreign land." My home is far away, upon a golden strand. Ambassador to be of realms beyond the sea. I'm here on business for my king."

God have mercy on the Christian who is popular with the world. Jesus said in the world you are going to have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome.

If you doubt this fact, then remember James - "the friendship of the world is emnity with God." If you want to test this truth, then take a stand like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and you'll soon find out.

Go out tomorrow among those unbelievers who like lude jokes and speak up for Christ. Go into the presence of some of those people tomorrow who curse and swear. And give your testimony for Christ in their presence. Refuse tomorrow to enter into some sinful, worldly indulgence with others. When people tempt you, say I belong to Christ, I cannot enter into this. Go out tomorrow when somebody offers to pass the drinks around and you say I belong to Christ, I don't drink. Go out tomorrow and somebody wants to gamble and you say, I'm sorry, I don't take part in that. I don't live a shady life. Now see how quick your friends will drop you and avoid you, when you go all the way with Christ. When you get on fire for Christ. The trouble with most Christians is they get along too well with the world. They compromise - they hide their light under a bushel.

If you dare to be true as these three men, you are going to be cast into the fiery furnace.

And you look at the record and you'll discover that they made that furnace hot for those three men.

that the crematory, where they burn the dead - James Lotter

V, 19

IV. THEIR TRIUMPH

We've talked about their temptation, their testimony, and their trial - now let's think about their triumph. They were cast into the furnace. Because they would not conform - V. 26-30 - but the fire had no power over them. The sufferings brought them as they walked through that fiery furnace - many, many things took place.

V. 25 First, there was a new sense of freedom. Lo, I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire. They had liberty - they could walk in that furnace, that was a new experience. They could glory in their affliction. Now they were not saved from the fire but they were saved in the fire. Now the peace of God in a man's heart is indestructible. That a fiery trial cannot reach, the world cannot take your peace away. No matter how it may treat you, how it may abuse you, they had a new sense of freedom.

King Arthur, the story is told, put extreme care in the choice of a right weapon. He would take each sword and strike it against the hard rock. The sword that stood best the test was deemed worthy for any encounter.

Likewise, with the Christian and these three men, I imagine the crowds were attracted to hear these men of God talk about how they walked through the fire and in that sense of freedom. Did they not bulge, they did not bow, and they would not burn.

There are many of you who are going to have illness, economic problems, you are going to weep. The fiery furnace may be around you. Now you can be defeated or you can triumph as these three men came out of that furnace and right in the midst of the trial, they were able to move.

V. 25 ✓

Second, a new source of fellowship. There was a fourth in the fire like the

son of God. Being cast out (by men), they still had sweet communion with the Lord Jesus, the son of God.

Precious fellowship "Walking with God - "I WALK with the King, Hallelujah - I walk with the King, Praise His Name!"

And so it was with Paul and Silas as they were cast into the jail - Acts 16.

There are multitudes of others who have suffered for Christ and have found a real source of fellowship. Christ is present with his suffering servants and I think

he must have said, "fear not, for I am with you." "When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee. And through the flood they shall not overflow thee.

When thou walketh through the fire, thou shalt not be burned. Neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. Isaiah. So faith lays hold of yea thou I walk through

the valley of the shadow of death, Christ is ever present. And this was a triumph for these three.

A new source of fellowship with their God.

V. 30 ✓

Third, it brought a new opportunity for service. The Scriptures says the king

promoted them. Their usefulness was enlarged. And they had a greater experience of the power of God. What a testimony they had as men who had passed from death

into life. Who were dead but are now living in the power of the resurrection.

Every severe trial born for Christ's sake will bring a new revelation of divine possibilities that we may go back to live with a new force in our being.

The captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering. And the servant is not greater than his master.

There was power and preciousness in their faith. By faith, they quenched the violence of fire. How tremendous, that these men walked through fire.

Denying Christ, said the Roman governor to Polycarp, or thou shalt be thrown to the wild beasts. Call for them said the preacher - we have no mind to change for better or for worse. And if thou thinkest so lightly of wild beasts, I shall have a fire that will tame thee said the governor. You threaten me replied Polycarp with a fire that will burn for an hour, and then be extinguished. But remember not the fire of eternal damnation reserved for the punishment of the ungodly But why do you delay. Execute whatever you please. The emperor commands thee to worship him and Polycarp said I'm a Christian. Was his heroic reply. I cannot sacrifice to your Gods - do therefore whatever you are commanded to do with me.

*John Huss burned at the stake
Jerome "told him" to "kindle the fire before my eyes - He sang a hymn of praise"
He had a precious faith.*

V. 29 ✓

Fourth, the fiery furnace focused their eyes and our eyes upon eternity. God was glorified by the trials of his people. The fiery furnace was a platform to display the glory of God in that land. After their trials they came out safe and answered, to what God meant to them. And of course the king, Nebuchadnezzar had seen the fourth man in the fire and recognized him as the son of God. Now this is true of all of God's people who will be found faithful and refuse to bow before the god of this age. The Lord has not promised to keep us out of the fire of persecution and tribulation. But he has promised to be with us in trouble and to see us through. His promise is - I will be with them in trouble. In the world, ye have tribulations. But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

Are you passing through deep waters my friend. Are you hated and opposed. Are you persecuted, for your faithfulness to Christ. Do the members of your own family ridicule you. Do your friends forsake you because of your belief and your refusal to

go with them into the world.

Then take heart, the Lord is with you. Notice that the only thing which was burned in the fire were the ropes that tied them.

We are told in V. 21 - they were bound all in their clothes.

V. 21, 23, 25 - they were cast bound into the furnace. But they fell down bound. But when the king looked they were walking in the furnace. They were casting bound hand and foot, and then they were walking free. The only things that the fire touches was the bonds and ropes that held them. How wonderful. And to you that are also passing through fire because of your faith in Christ, remember the fire can't hurt you. "When through fiery trials, thy pathway shall lie, My grace all sufficient, shall be thy supply, the flames shall not hurt thee, I only design, thy dross, to consume, and thy gold to refine."

There were Not Wicked Men in the Fire! = God's Choice - not forsake -

Quite often my friends when people walk through the fire, they think about eternity. There was a little family that attended church some - not a great deal. They were pretty busy with their job. They had a lovely home. And they always put off the excuse for making a decision for Christ, that they would not get ready for the here-after. So after 10 years of married life, they had a little baby born in their home. And it was a joy to the parents.

One night when the child was 4 or 5 months old the father called Bob Barker, the preacher. Asked him to come immediately to the home. When he got there, he saw a lifeless body of the child in the father's arms. No sickness, no cough, no warning - the child had died, of what doctor's describe as (crib death) syndrome.

He conducted the funeral for that child and on Sunday morning during the invitation, both parents walked the aisle, giving their hearts to Jesus. The father asked that he might give a testimony. And in substance, this is what he said.

" I never had time for God, Christ, or Heaven. Until God saw fit to pluck my child out of this world. And take him home to Heaven. Now my interest is in Heaven and with all my heart, I trust Jesus as Saviour. "

What a glorious Christian he became.

Class depending on ourselves we learn to depend on God. we cry in our helplessness - "Lord you must deliver me, you must save me."

I'm not saying that everybody that passes through the fiery furnace are saved. But I am saying that trials, tribulations, and fiery furnaces - God may use them sometimes to get our eyes off the here and now. And set them upon the by and by.

The fiery furnace may come to you. It may be a burden - it may be a blessing. It depends on how you let the Lord use it. And as you go through, you will realize there is a triumph. Always remember the marvelous experience of these three children that had walked with the Lord before, and he walked with them through the furnace.