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INTRODUCTION:

Imagery for the Series: Fire

"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you." I Peter 4:12

The Hope

Facing the Furnace

"Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up?"

¹⁵ Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. ¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. ¹⁸ 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."

¹⁹ 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 ²⁰ and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. ²¹ So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. ²² 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, ²³ and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

²⁴ 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."

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²⁵ 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."

²⁶ Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!"

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, ²⁷ and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them. Daniel 3:14-27

I. THE CAUSE OF THE FURNACE

The Golden Image

Pluralistic Societies

The Example of Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego

"This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 'Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.'" Jeremiah 29:4-7

Application for Our Lives

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"In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." 2 Timothy 3:12

II. THE POWER OF OUR FAITH

"Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. ¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. ¹⁸ 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.'" (vss. 16-18)

- *"But even if he does not" (vs. 18)*

*"From heaven the Lord looks down
and sees all mankind;
from his dwelling place he watches
all who live on earth—
he who forms the hearts of all,
who considers everything they do."* Psalm 33:13-15

The Difference

Asking God and trusting Him with the outcome vs. Asking God and expecting a specific outcome

The Power of Faith in GOD Alone

*"God is able...He will...But even if he doesn't" (vss. 17-18)
"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."* Romans 8:28

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II. THE BENEFITS OF SUFFERING

Three Lessons from the Story

- Suffering is inevitable.

*"Yet man is born to trouble
as surely as sparks fly upward."* Job 5:7

"In this world you will experience trouble..." John 16:33

- Suffering will relate to us like fire relates to gold.

The fire that normally destroys will shape you, refine you, and strengthen you. It will benefit you rather than harm you.

a. It will help you discover who you are and what is important in life. It'll help you set better priorities and live with intentionality and purpose.

b. It will deepen your faith in God and enable you to face future trials.

c. It will make you more compassionate and gracious towards others.

d. It will make you wise and mature.

- Suffering will become redemption only if we walk with God through the furnace

*'When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.'* Isaiah 43:2

We Will Get Through This: “Facing the Furnace” Daniel 3:14-27

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“Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.” (vs. 25)

Who Better to Have with You Than Jesus