

# Daniel Chapter 3

## The Image of Gold and the Fiery Furnace

### Revision:

Last week we finished going through Chapter 2 where we saw a great example of effective prayer as Daniel and his three friends literally prayed for their lives, seeking for God to reveal Nebuchadnezzar's dream to Daniel. What are the keys to having God answer your prayers?

### 1. Live a pure or separated life.

Why? If you are living for yourself, then you will be focused on and asking for things that are not a part of God's will or plan. Selfish prayers will never be answered. What about Daniel?

Daniel lived a separated life. Others were drinking the king's wine, eating the king's meat, but Daniel had already purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the things of the world (1:8).

God is speaking. The problem is the wax of the world has plugged our spiritual ears. In Matthew 13, said that the cares of this world and the lust for riches choke out the Word of God. God is speaking. The question is, are we listening—or are our ears so plugged with the things of this world that we can't tune in to His frequency, that we are deaf to the still small voice of the Spirit?

"No partying for me, no seeking what I want," Daniel said. "I'm going to seek the Lord." And that's why he was in a position to hear from the Lord.

### 2. Expectation

"Give me a day," Daniel said, "and I will show you the interpretation." In other words, Daniel knew God would speak to him. When you ask the Lord for His guidance or His Word, separation is where it begins. Expectation or faith is the next step. You've got to believe the Lord is going to speak.

More about faith:

When God's people today face a crisis, they need to follow the example of Daniel and his friends and take the matter to the Lord in prayer. Faith is living without scheming, and faith brings glory to God. Daniel and his friends couldn't take credit for what happened because it came from the hand of God.

### 3. Cooperation

Daniel went to his friends and said, "Let's seek the Lord together." Over and over in His Word, the Lord teaches us that we are not to live in isolation but to live in cooperation. If you want to hear the Lord's voice, follow the example of Daniel who sought the Lord with his friends.

### 4. Desperation

Daniel and his friends knew that if the Lord didn't give them an answer, they were dead. We don't often seek the voice of the Lord because we don't think our situation could be classified as desperate. Are you a proud person? If you are not praying, you are proud. Why? Praying demonstrates our dependence on God.

## 5. Communication

Daniel was given an answer in order that he might pass it on to Nebuchadnezzar.

The ultimate Word concerning anything you need to know about life and eternity is found in listening to and learning of Jesus. It all starts there. Then, having been in touch with the living Word, you will be in position to receive the directive word concerning your specific situation.

Learn of Jesus. Listen for Him. Believe that He will speak to you—because the bible promises that He will.

## The Image of Gold and the Fiery Furnace

### Daniel 3:1-30 NKJV

**1** Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits *and* its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

**2** And King Nebuchadnezzar sent *word* to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counsellors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. **3** So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counsellors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. **4** Then a herald cried aloud: “To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, **5** that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; **6** and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

**7** So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, *and* lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down *and* worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

### *Daniel's Friends Disobey the King*

**8** Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. **9** They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! **10** You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image; **11** and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. **12** There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.”

**13** Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king.

**14** Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, “*Is it true*, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, *that* you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? **15** Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, *good!* But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who *is* the god who will deliver you from my hands?”

<sup>16</sup> Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

### ***Saved in Fiery Trial***

<sup>19</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. <sup>20</sup> And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who *were* in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, *and cast them* into the burning fiery furnace. <sup>21</sup> Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their *other* garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. <sup>22</sup> Therefore, because the king’s command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. <sup>23</sup> And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

<sup>24</sup> Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste *and* spoke, saying to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?”

They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.”

<sup>25</sup> “Look!” he answered, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”

### ***Nebuchadnezzar Praises God***

<sup>26</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace *and* spoke, saying, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come *here*.” Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. <sup>27</sup> And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

<sup>28</sup> Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! <sup>29</sup> Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this.”

<sup>30</sup> Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

## **Daniel Chapter 3**

In chapter 3, twenty years after he said to Daniel, “Your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings,” Nebuchadnezzar does something that reveals the true state of his heart...

### **Daniel 3:1 NKJV**

Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height *was* sixty cubits *and* its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

In recent years, archaeologists have excavated in the plain of Dura a pedestal forty feet high and twenty feet wide. They are convinced it is upon this pedestal that Nebuchadnezzar's ninety-foot-high statue of pure gold stood. In chapter 2, only the golden head of the image in his dream signified his empire. In the image he constructs here in chapter 3, however, the entire image is gold as if to say, "My empire will not be followed by another. It will last forever."

### **Daniel 3:2-6 NKJV**

**And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counsellors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. <sup>3</sup> So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counsellors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. <sup>4</sup> Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, <sup>5</sup> that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; <sup>6</sup> and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."**

Nebuchadnezzar commanded that, when the music was played, everyone would bow down to this ninety-foot-high image. Failure to do so would result in death.

### **Daniel 3:7 NKJV**

**So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down *and* worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.**

Music remains a powerful tool that can be used by both the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. Why is music so powerful? Because Satan is a musician. Before he fell, he led all of heaven in worship. God created music and ordained it as a means of praise. Therefore, music remains a constant battlefield that can either motivate us to worship with intensity or to fall into idolatry. Be oh, so wise as to what music you take in because there is always a Nebuchadnezzar striking up the band.

### **Daniel 3:8-12 NKJV**

**Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. <sup>9</sup> They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! <sup>10</sup> You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image; <sup>11</sup> and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. <sup>12</sup> There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up."**

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego said, "We're not going to give in. We're not going to go along. We're not going to bow down when the music starts playing."

### **Daniel 3:13 NKJV**

**Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king.**

Where was Daniel? Most commentators believe he was on government business out of the area.

### **Daniel 3:14-15 NKJV**

**Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? <sup>15</sup> Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?”**

Nebuchadnezzar conquered countries, looted riches, captured people, but he allowed people to worship their own gods. He was considered very liberal and generous in that regard. He let people worship their gods—but he also wanted them to worship his.

That’s always the way of the enemy. “You can go to church,” he says. “But on Friday night, you have to watch the movie, read that book, check out the bar scene, bow down to me. Then, on Sunday, you can go to church again.” The enemy will give you the freedom to worship God, hoping you’ll feel okay about bowing down to his idols. It’s a trade. That’s always his way.

### **Daniel 3:16-18 NKJV**

**Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”**

In the answer of these three godly men, we see a very important lesson. “God is able to deliver us,” they said. But then they added, “Even if He decides not to, we’re still not going to bow down.” They didn’t doubt God’s power to save them. But they submitted to His will concerning whether He intended to save them. They weren’t doubting God’s ability. They were submitting to His sovereignty.

Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Hebrews 11:33-34, By faith, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego “quenched the violence of fire.” In other words, because they had faith, they weren’t burned. But faith in what? They didn’t have faith in faith. They had faith in their Father. When we pour out our requests to God and say, “If You decide not to heal me, bring me that financial windfall, or save my business, it doesn’t matter. All I want is Your will”—that is true faith. How I pray we can learn this.

### **Daniel 3:19 NKJV**

**Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.**

The only thing hotter than the fiery furnace was Nebuchadnezzar’s anger.

### **Daniel 3:20–22 NKJV**

**And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. <sup>21</sup> Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. <sup>22</sup> Therefore, because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.**

The men that threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego into the fire were themselves burned in the process.

### **Daniel 3:23–25 (a) NKJV**

**<sup>23</sup> And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.**

**<sup>24</sup> Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?”**

**They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.”**

**<sup>25</sup> “Look!” he answered, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt...**

The ropes that bound Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were burned off by the fiery trial surrounding them. That is why Peter would tell us to rejoice in fiery trials (1 Peter 4:12, 13). They burn off the cords that would otherwise paralyze us.

### **1 Peter 4:12-13 NLT**

Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup> Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, **so that you will have the wonderful joy** of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world.

It's in the fiery trials that we better understand that Jesus is all we need because the other things in our lives that we were depending on have been taken away. I see trials as a loving act by a loving God to free us of the things that are God substitutes, things that rob us of our joy and bring us into bondage. They can be good things, like family or ministry, or sinful things like lust or materialism. Either way, they are idols which are keeping us from experiencing God's love to the full. There are many examples in history where people received greater revelation of God when going through trials. Consider John the apostle when he wrote revelation. Paul writing the prison epistles, John Bunyan writing "Pilgrims Progress" from a prison cell, separated from his family. All these people and more were in their own fiery furnace, and all experienced the presence of the Son of God with them. The same is true for us today.

### **Daniel 3:25 (b) NKJV**

**...and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.**

“How many men did we throw in the fire?” Nebuchadnezzar asked.

“Three,” came the answer.

“Then how come I see four—and the fourth is like the Son of God?”

This fiery trial was a testimony to a skeptical, angry unbeliever who saw Jesus in the fire along with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. There are neighbors and colleagues,

fellow students and coworkers watching you. And when you go through fiery trials, as they watch you, they will see Jesus with you.

We will come back to this later.

### **Daniel 3:26-27 NKJV**

**Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here.” Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. <sup>27</sup> And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.**

In addition to burning off the ropes that bound them, and letting others see Jesus, fiery trials are an opportunity for us to draw closer to the Lord than we would have otherwise. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego would have rather been in the fire with Jesus than out of the fire without Him. That is why they stayed there until Nebuchadnezzar ordered them to come out. When do we really see the Lord? More often than not, it’s when we’re in the midst of a fiery trial.

Prophetically, chapter 3 speaks of the time the Jews, represented by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, take a stand in the fiery trial of the Tribulation period. According to Revelation 17 and 18, in the end times, there will be a unified religious system and a unified economic system both called Babylon. Where are the Jews in Daniel 3? In Babylon.

Just as Nebuchadnezzar made an image and commanded the people to bow to it, in the Tribulation period, antichrist will make an image and command everyone to bow to it. Initially, Nebuchadnezzar treated Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego well. Antichrist will initially come as a man of peace. But his true colors will show when he makes an image of himself and sets it in the temple.

### **Revelation 13:15–18 NKJV**

<sup>15</sup> He was granted *power* to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. <sup>16</sup> He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, <sup>17</sup> and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

<sup>18</sup> Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number *is* 666.

The number of the image of the beast is 666. Nebuchadnezzar’s image was sixty cubits high, six cubits wide, and there were six kinds of instruments played. Thus, Nebuchadnezzar’s image could be considered a foreshadowing of the beast of the Tribulation period.

### **Daniel 3:28–30 NKJV**

**<sup>28</sup> Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! <sup>29</sup> Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of**

**Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this.”**

**<sup>30</sup> Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.**

When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego emerged from the furnace unharmed, Nebuchadnezzar was amazed, but still not converted. “There is no other God that can deliver after this sort,” he declared. He should have stopped with, “There is no other God.” And soon, he will.

## **HANDLING THE HEAT** **A Topical Study of** **DANIEL 3:8–25**

(Adapted from Jon Courson’s Application Commentary)

All believers feel they have gone through a trying time, a difficult experience, a hard trial at some time in their life. According to Peter, this should not come as a surprise to us...

1 Peter 4:12-13 NLT

<sup>12</sup> Dear friends, don’t be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup> Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, **so that you will have the wonderful joy** of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world.

Previously, Peter gave the reason for the inevitable trials we face...

1 Peter 1:7 NLT

*These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honour on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.*

To those living in Peter’s day, his analogy would mean more than it might to us, for they would be more familiar with the process used to refine gold. In huge furnaces, they would subject the gold to high enough temperatures to liquefy it. The smelter would then stir this molten gold until all impurities were gone. It took heat to make it pure. And the smelter would know the process was complete when he looked into the liquid gold and saw his own reflection—just as Jesus looks for the reflection of Himself in the gold of our faith as it is purified by fiery trials.

Consider with me three aspects concerning the fiery trial of these bold believers...

### **1. The Time of the Trial**

The trial did not come to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego when they were stumbling in sin but when they were standing strong for Him. It would have been so easy for them to back out, to make excuses.

They could have said to each other, “Sure, we’ll bow down to Nebuchadnezzar’s idol outwardly—but in our hearts, we’ll be bowing to the Lord. Surely, with all we’ve been through already, He’ll understand our situation.”

Or they could have said, “This isn’t that big a deal. So we bow to the idol? We can still live for the Lord.”

Or they could have said, “We’ll use this as an opportunity for even greater ministry. If we go along with Nebuchadnezzar’s order, he’ll leave us in positions of leadership and we can eventually impact more people for God.”

But they didn’t. They resisted all of those excuses and stood up when the trial came down.

We must understand that the Lord sends His trials most frequently not when we’re stumbling and struggling but when He sees that we’re doing well. Think about Job — he was God’s best example of someone who was obediently walking by faith.

Satan comes to us and says the reason we’re going through hard times is because the Lord’s angry with us. But that’s just not true. If one of my kids burned his or her hand on the stove when they were little, I wouldn’t need to punish them for it. They would learn quickly that they shouldn’t touch the stove because the repercussions of the sin itself taught them most convincingly. It was when my kids were already doing well that I would challenge them and exhort them because I wanted to see them do even better. And that’s what the Father does with us.

That is why James would tell us to count it all joy when we face various trials (1:2)—it means the Father sees something in us worth building upon and improving.

## 2. Peace in the Trial

We read in verse 24 that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego weren’t running around in the fire, trying to find a way out. They weren’t taking off their clothes and trying to snuff out the flames. They weren’t sitting down in a corner crying about their ordeal. They weren’t striving, complaining, or even seeking to get out. They were simply walking around.

When the going gets tough and the fires grow hot, we have a tendency to want to control the fire if not to put it out altogether — we want to change our circumstances, to cool things down, to make life easy again. But we must realize that, although we might be able to contain the fire for a season, it will only get hotter eventually. Therefore, we must learn to let the fire burn rather than trying to put it out or cover it up.

When people come down on you, when they don’t understand you, when things don’t seem to be working out, don’t defend yourself. Don’t stand up for your rights. Don’t try to control the fire. Instead, say, “Lord, let the fire burn. Because I know that only what is not of You will burn, the wood hay and stubble — the things in life that keep me from You. But what is valuable will be purified and made even more beautiful and valuable.”

## 3. Fellowship Through the Trial

“Didn’t we throw three men into the fire?” Nebuchadnezzar asked.

“Yes,” said his men.

“But I see four,” Nebuchadnezzar said. “And the fourth is like the Son of God.”

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego could walk around in the fire in peace and they could let it burn with confidence for one reason: the Lord was in there with them.

“I will never leave you nor forsake you,” Jesus said (Hebrews 13:5). That means He’s with us in whatever fiery trial that comes our way. ***And if we look for Him there, we’ll see Him in a way we never would have seen Him otherwise.*** We can talk esoterically about the Lord. We can discuss theologically His presence. But it’s not until we’re in the fire of trial that we truly know He’s alive, that He’s with us, that He’s *for* us.

That's what Stephen found. It was when he was being stoned that he looked up and saw the Son of Man welcoming him into the kingdom (Acts 7:56). That's what Paul discovered. It was most likely after he was stoned at Lystra and left for dead that he was caught up into heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2–4). That's what John learned. It was when he was banished to the island of Patmos that he heard a voice, turned around, and saw the Lord (Revelation 1:9–11).

When do people really see the Lord? Most often, it's not when they're cruising, but when they're cooking. And not only do we see the Lord in hot and hard times, but others are able to see Him as well. You see, the Nebuchadnezzars of this world are not impressed when they see us win Lotto. That only makes them jealous. They're impressed when they see us going through the fire of hard times without panicking or giving up. It is then they realize that Jesus must be in there with us.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego didn't come out of the fire until Nebuchadnezzar ordered them out. ***Maybe you're getting to the place in your walk where you would rather be in the fire of hard times with the Lord than cruising in the shade without an awareness of His presence.***

What about the wrath of God - Didn't Jesus save us from the fires of hell? Then why do I still experience the fires of trials?

Jesus went through a fire greater than anything you or I can comprehend when He went to the Cross to shield us from the fires of hell. Dr. Donald Barnhouse, tells a story of what happened to him when he was a boy living in the country. He tells of a large oak tree in front of the barn next to his house that, struck by lightning, lit up like a torch. Before the fire from the oak tree leaped to the roof of the barn, his family was able to move most of the barn animals to safety before it collapsed altogether. The next day, little Donald went out and began to kick around in the ashes. As he kicked one rather large clump, much to his surprise, four little chicks ran out in all directions. He later learned that the mother hen, trapped in the corner of the barn, did what mother hens instinctively do: She gathered her chicks under her wings, absorbed the heat herself, and died to save their lives.

On a hillside overlooking Jerusalem, Jesus cried and said, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, I would gather you under my wings as a mother hen gathers her chicks, but you would not" (see Matthew 23:37). The Lord died to insulate you from the fires of judgment. But He will not insulate us from the fires of trials. He'll allow them to come into our lives to reveal Himself both to us and to all the Nebuchadnezzars or unbelievers who are watching us.