

Series: Isaiah
Title: Chosen in the Furnace
Text: Isaiah 48: 10
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Isaiah 48: 10: Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

Every child whom God effectual, irresistibly calls by his grace, is called because they are an elect child whom Christ redeemed by his blood. And those whom God chose before the foundation of the world, God has chosen to refine—Not with the intense, destroying heat as silver is refined--**10: Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver;** But God has chosen to refine his children how?-- **I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.**

It is called a furnace because his chastening is hot like a furnace. Affliction is never pleasant. Suffering is contrary to our flesh. But the words we just sang tell us the purpose of the “furnace of affliction.”

Proposition: “When thru fiery trials, thy pathway shall lie, My grace, all-sufficient, shall be thy supply, The flame shall not hurt thee, I only design, Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.”

Everyone in this world suffers. We live in a world of sin and death, amongst sinners. But not everyone who suffers is a child of God. All God’s chosen shall suffer tribulation. But not all who suffer are chosen.

Illustration: Pruning tomato plant and cutting out weeds from the flower beds—both plants feel the cut—but I carefully pruned the tomato plant to bring forth fruit, we simply cut down the briars.

But all of God’s chosen children shall be refined in the furnace of affliction. God leads his people through the waste howling wilderness—it provides no lasting bread, no living water, no shade—only storms, scorching heat, much tribulation. We may encounter Cain OR we may have to leave our land and our family like Abraham. We may encounter those who mock us like Peter was mocked by the upper-echelon of religious men in his day. In our text, God turned the nation Israel into the hands of Babylon and it caused much affliction to his elect remnant in their midst.

But with every javelin, every firey dart, every pit dug by wicked hands, every net laid to entangle your feet, by every fire built to destroy us God teaches his child our utter helplessness to save ourselves. And God teaches us that Christ is our Shield and Defender. We may dwell with the poor like Elijah, but God makes his gospel, through his Spirit, to sustain us like a handful of meal and a little oil sustained them. We are not destroyed because our Intecessor prays, “Father, I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”

We do not learn we are kept by God any better place than when we are in the furnace of affliction.

I. AFFLICTION DOES NOT MEAN GOD HAS FORSAKEN US (Gen 15)

Sinful Since Chosen

Believer, have you ever experienced a trial where you felt God had forsaken you? Sometimes it may feel that way. But is shall never be for one of God’s elect.

Think of what has happened to us since God chose us from before the foundation of the world. We sinned and died in Adam. We came forth hating God and went astray as soon as we were born. Even after he redeemed us and called us by his grace we have sinned and strayed.

Yet, because God choose his elect based on his grace alone, because God is immutable, his choice of his elect changes not—not even when we are in the furnace

Deuteronomy 31: 8: And the LORD, he *it is* that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.

Everlasting Covenant our Assurance

We have God's everlasting covenant written in our heart to assure us. When God called Abraham and made his covenant in Abraham's heart

Genesis 15:17: And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. Genesis 18: In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

Those pieces pictured Christ slain in place of his people. Abraham stood in the midst of pieces of a bullock, a lamb, a ram, and a goat like as he stood in Christ when Christ was slain. It is only in the sacrifice of Christ that God enters into covenant with his chosen—a covenant God has fulfilled in his Son.

Notice, also, Abraham saw a smoking furnace and a burning lamp. Not a burning furnace, only a smoking furnace. The furnace was not burning, but the lamp was burning. God's covenant word to us is that the burning furnace of infinite justice has been quenched because Christ bore those flames for his people, satisfying justice so that the flames are extinguished and the smoke is a reminder, "It is finished."

The burning lamp—is Christ our Light and the Light of his gospel—the Light of the Spirit--which shall burn continually—leading us all our days.

Psalm 73: 24: Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me *to* glory.

Brethren, when God wrote his everlasting covenant of grace on our hearts he gave us faith to behold his testimony is sure by Christ's blood. In fact, choosing us in Christ, choosing Christ to suffer in our room and stead in the furnace of justice, is one sense in which God chose us in the furnace of affliction

So for you who are justified by Christ, to whom he has made this covenant through faith, please enter into this assurance: know and understand that God is in covenant bonds with you. His covenant of grace never can be broken. The sure mercies of David are your portion. "A new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them. They shall be my people, and I will be their God."

His covenant cannot be broken because God has given us his covenant word reaching through the blood of the Son of God, through the smoke rising up from the quenched flame of justice which Christ satisfied, through the everburning Lamp of the gospel of Light which is his truth and fidelity—he will guide us with his counsel all our days.

Faith says, "I believe the Lord, I believe his word to me, I believe is able to keep his promise to me." So first, remember that the affliction we suffer does not mean God has forsaken us—he never will forsake those he chose freely in his Son.

II. SO WHAT IS THE REASON FOR THE FURNACE OF AFFLICTION?

Trials of Affliction and Their Lessons

But with that covenant, God also showed Abraham that his children shall suffer trials and afflictions

Genesis 15:13: And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land *that is* not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; 14: And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. 15: And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

Our trials are as much a part of our blessedness as our justification by Christ. By delivering us from the trial—he always brings us out with great substance!

Hebrews 12: 10:...that we might be partakers of his holiness. 11: Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

First, God teaches us more about his unchanging love for us.

Malachi 3: 3: And he shall sit *as* a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness... 6: For I *am* the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

Secondly, our justification and God's love for us is made known to us more clearly by being joined and accompanied with great trial. The two are linked for us in scripture.

Romans 5:1: Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3: And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4: And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Thirdly, in the furnace we discover Christ is truly with us. Remember what John saw when he beheld Christ.

Revelation 1: 15: And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

Christ has extinguished the strong flames of angry justice walking through that furnace heated to perfection. Our sins were laid on Christ. We are justified by his blood. Saved from the curse. So in the smoking furnace, we learn better that Christ is our Strength and is continually with us, he says:

Isaiah 43: 2:... when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee....[back to the first half of the verse] I *will be* with thee;

Fourthly, through the furnace he makes us serve no other God but our God.

Daniels 3: 24: Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, *and* spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. 25: 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....27...saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. 28: *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.

Application: When we become acquainted with the man of sorrows who was acquainted with grief—we become strangers to this world so that we become men of sorrows, acquainted with grief for his sake. Still, we must continually be made to see our flesh, our wisdom, our way is all dross. That is why God sends the fire and Christ delivers us through it—that we might not serve nor worship any god, except our own God, that we might learn to trust our Father and to look to Christ his Son alone.

Fifthly, through the trial, God makes us living sacrifices—burnt offerings—upon Christ our Altar. What do you mean? Like the burnt-offering yielded up a sweet-smell to God, after we suffer the fire of affliction, after he turns us again to Christ our Holiness, the fire causes us to yield up sweet-smelling praises unto God, well-pleasing to God. We praise him for his faithfulness and goodness in keeping us from our polluted flesh. We thank our Father that he has delivered us from this world and gathered us to him. We praise him that he has chastened for Christ his name's sake—and not as our sins deserved.

Ezekiel 20: 41 I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen. 42 And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country *for* the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers. 43 And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed. 44 And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have wrought with you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.

LAST WORD

Sinner, those who are yet perishing in your sins, “the wrath of God abideth on you.” He that believeth not is condemned already.

John 3: 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

You are not in that condition simply because you have not believed—you were born in that condition. But it is because of your unbelief that you remain in that state. The only way to have no condemnation is to believe on Christ. Listen to the words of this song:

The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake.

Believer, after that we have suffered awhile, like a child thankful for his Father's correction, let's lift up the feeble hands that hang down and make straight paths to our Redeemer AND truly give ourselves to worship and serve him.

Romans 12: 1: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. 3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5 So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

Amen!