

Chosen in the Furnace of Affliction

by Charles Mchatton

God chooses us in the furnace of affliction to refine and purify us, to reveal Himself to us in greater splendor and glory, and to fit us for higher ministry and testimony.

Scripture: Psalm 34:19, Psalm 66:10, Psalm 119:71, Isaiah 41:10, Isaiah 48:10, Daniel 3:25, Romans 5:3, Hebrews 12:11, James 1:2, 1 Peter 1:7

Topics: "Suffering And Refining", "Faithful Ministry"

Description

Charles Mchatton preaches about how God refines and chooses His children in the furnace of affliction, using trials, oppression, and humiliating experiences to purify their hearts and prepare them for higher ministry. Just like how automobiles are tested before being put on the market, God tests His children to reveal weaknesses and refine them. Through the examples of Moses, Joseph, and the three Hebrew children, it is evident that God chooses and refines His workers in times of distress and difficulty, enlarging them for effective ministry when they remain faithful in the midst of trials.

Transcript

"Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver (literally, not like silver): I have chosen thee (notice) in the furnace of affliction" (Isaiah 48:10) The word translated "affliction" here has been variously rendered as oppression and humiliation. God uses trial, oppression and humiliating experiences in our lives to refine us and to purify our hearts. "I have refined thee...I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction (in the place of oppression and humiliation)."

You may be going through trials and difficulties of life. Many people are saying that never in the history of their Christian life have they felt the oppression nor experienced the trials through which they are going in these days. Truly we can say that these are the days that try men's souls. These are the days when the enemy of our souls is endeavoring to wear out the saints of the most High. We should not despair in an hour like this, but we should realize that God has His hand and His eye on everything. And we should just leave ourselves in His hands, remembering that God can use and will use all of these trials, oppressions and humiliating experiences to refine us, purify us and fit us for better, richer and higher ministry.

"I HAVE CHOSEN THEE IN THE FURNACE OF AFFLICTION." He has chosen us not in the place of ease and tranquility of spirit, but in the furnace of affliction. "I have chosen you," God says, "when things were pretty hot, when it seemed that things could not get any worse," God says, "I chose you there." That becomes the proving ground of Christian life and experience.

The automobile companies, before sending out their new models, put them through severe tests. They have what they call their proving ground, and there these automobiles go through a punishing and grueling testing time. This is necessary because they do not want the automobiles to break down after they are in use by the purchasing public. Thus they seek to find out where the weaknesses are before they put them on the market.

God deals with His children in much the same way. Testing times do come and shall yet come to the people of God. We will find ourselves in the furnace of affliction, oppression and humiliation so that the weak spots may be revealed and God can deal with them. God chooses us as we prove ourselves faithful to Him in the hours of testing. These testings take different forms. Sometimes you will find it is the testing of monotonous, dull, daily routine.

Moses had that experience. He had been singled out by the Lord to be the deliverer of the children of Israel, and he felt this mighty ministry within him. He felt this high and holy calling. He knew that God wanted him to do much for the people of Israel. And in his own energy, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. But finally Moses had to flee in terror, for he had acted on the basis of the wisdom of self and the working of self. And all of the wisdom and all of the works of self will come to nought. For forty long years Moses was on the backside of the desert tending sheep. A daily, monotonous routine--going out every day under a blazing, blistering sun to tend sheep.

Moses could have well asked, "Is this work fitting a deliverer?" Yes, Moses, it is, for Moses, you will learn much as you tend these sheep for forty long years. You will learn much patience--waiting on God, waiting for God and waiting God's time. You will learn that one blow struck under the direction of the Holy Spirit and under the anointing of the Spirit of God is better than ten thousand blows struck in the premature energies of the flesh. Moses learned patience. He learned to wait God's time. And all of this was most helpful when finally he became the shepherd to lead the people of God out of Egyptian bondage into the land of Canaan. When God desires to use a person for a special task or ministry, He always puts him to the test. He refines him through trial. There is no way you can escape this.

We see this example again in the life of Joseph. He was also marked out to be a mighty deliverer. But long, weary, trying years passed by before Joseph finally reached that wonderful, exalted position next to Pharaoh on the throne. Look at him there in the dungeon. He has been slandered, maligned, afflicted and oppressed in many ways. You mean that this is to be the deliverer of the world?

Yes, the Bible tells us in one of the Psalms that as Joseph was going through these times of testing, his soul entered into iron, or literally, iron entered into his soul. There are some lessons which can never be learned until one gets into the furnace.

The furnace was a strange place that the Lord selected to rendezvous with His three Hebrew children. If we had been there as events were unfolding, we would have said something to this effect: "Look at those men! They have not bowed down before this idol. Certainly, God is going to come to their aid and assistance. Oh, I know they are heating up this furnace seven times hotter than it has ever been before, but I am still certain that God is going to intervene. God is not going to allow them to be thrown into the furnace. After all, they have been faithful to the Lord. God loves His children too much to allow such a thing as that to take place."

As you continue to watch, you see that these strong young men are taken bodily and thrown into that blazing, fiery furnace. Has God failed them? No, God has not failed them at all. He chose that blazing,

fiery furnace as His meeting place--the place where He was going to hold a sacred rendezvous with three of His faithful children. Thus we read in the book of Daniel that the King came near to the mouth of the furnace and looked in and said, "Did you not cast in three men bound? But I see four men loose and they are walking around, and the form of the fourth (notice) is like unto the Son of God."

When the times of testing come and you find yourself surrounded by a blazing furnace of oppression, realize that many times the Lord will use just such a place as that to reveal Himself to you in greater splendor and glory. And realize also that God has allowed you to be thrown into that time of testing or furnace of affliction so that certain bondage's might be burned away from your life. Realize that it can be true of you even as it was true of the three Hebrew children that God will choose you for a higher ministry and a higher place of effectiveness if you stand the test.

Yes, He chooses His children in the furnace of affliction. That is what happened in relation to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, the three Hebrew children. They were chosen in the furnace of affliction, and when they came out without even the smell of smoke upon them, they were exalted to a higher position than they had ever enjoyed before.

These trials that come your way are not the mere product of caprice and chance. You are not the victim of empty and vexatious circumstance. You are a child of the King! You belong to God! You are the clay on the potter's wheel. The pressure may come. You may feel that it is the pressure of circumstance and malice of misguided men, but I believe that there is no such thing as second cause, literally, in the life of the believer who is walking with the Lord. I believe that the Lord is the One who orders all things in the lives of His children.

It is true that He permits certain things to come upon us which would not come if we were living closer to the Lord. But since we are not living as close to the Lord as we should, these trials come our way. But nevertheless, God is the One who is permitting all of this. This is the testing time. However, you need to realize that it is not only the testing time, but it is also the choosing time, for God choose His workers and fits them for higher ministry in the times and in the places of distress and difficulty.

The Psalmist speaks concerning this. "Thou didst enlarge me when I was in distress." This is the testimony you will hear many times as you find out what preceded ministries that are effective for the glory of God. GOD ENLARGED ME WHEN I WAS IN DISTRESS. It is God who creates the blacksmith and the fire. And it is also God who creates the hammer that comes down seemingly mercilessly upon the life.

Everything is in the hands of God. Nothing comes to you by accident. You are not a victim. You are a child of the King! Remember that God is looking for individuals who will step into places of ministry and effective testimony, and to fit His workers properly, He often has to plunge them into the fires.

Even though it may be the dull, monotonous routine of daily living--BE FAITHFUL! Be faithful even though you may find yourself at this present moment surrounded by the flaming fiery furnace of heavy trial. God chooses His children for places of effective ministry and testimony in the furnace of affliction.

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