

*We would rather not have to meet God in the furnace of life. But that is precisely where He has chosen to meet some of His children. This week we look at examples of God showing himself in the fires of life.*

**Monday, July 13. Read Exodus 13:17-18, 14:5-14.** After over 400 years of oppression, the Israelites feel that God has finally heard their prayers. They are leaving Egypt and because no one has a GPS, they don't realize their route leads them to the edge of the Red Sea. Perhaps they were thinking a day at the beach would be nice. But they soon realized an army was fast approaching. It was during this "furnace" experience they saw the power of God. First, the sea parted and they walked across on dry ground (Exodus 14:21-22). Second, as the Egyptians tried to follow, the sea came crashing down on them (Exodus 14:27-28). Only through God's grace and mercy were the Israelites able to find freedom from their oppression. Today, God's grace and mercy is available to deliver you from any enemy that may want to crush you.

**Tuesday, July 14. Read 1 Samuel 19:1-11.** David's rise to being the king of Israel took some unusual turns. He was anointed as King by Samuel (1 Samuel 16:13). He then served under King Saul by playing music. He also killed Goliath, single handedly given the Israelites victory over the Philistines. Not only was he God's choice to be King, it seems the people favored him also (1 Samuel 18:7). Saul was jealous and wanted him killed. This was a low point in David's life. He had to leave the comfort of courts of the King and live as a rebel, always on the run. For the rest of 1 Samuel, David is just trying to survive. This is one of his "furnaces" and God chooses to protect him and provide for him in some of the darkest days of his life. **Read Psalm 18** and reflect what God can do for you in your furnace.

**Wednesday, July 15. Read 1 Kings 19:1-4.** Elijah had just celebrated a great victory. 850 false prophets had been killed after God showed himself strong on the behalf of Elijah on Mt. Carmel. Now, Jezebel wanted Elijah to be killed and Elijah encounters his "furnace". But God came through and directly spoke to Elijah. **Read 1 Kings 19:9-18.** This was not a miraculous event. It was just God coming to Elijah in a down time for him. It was God reassuring him there were others like him – devoted to God. Elijah was strengthened when he realized he wasn't alone. Whatever you are going through, you aren't alone either. Allow God to speak to you, to encourage you and strengthen you by his Spirit.

**Thursday, July 16. Read John 8:1-11.** A woman is about to be stoned to death. The law of the day supported this type of execution. She was caught in adultery. (Why the man was not brought up on charges is a valid discussion, but the culture of the day dictated the woman was the one to be killed). Her demise is certain. She is in her "furnace." It was a choice she made and now she is facing the consequences. John doesn't give us a picture of her demeanor. He doesn't record any reaction from her at all until Jesus asks her a question. Perhaps she knew the law all too well and was resigned to her fate. There are times in our "furnaces" where we know we have to 'face the music' and we 'grin and bear it'. But by the grace of God, sometimes he chooses to relieve us of those consequences. Yes, we deserve harsh punishment, but because of His mercy, we don't get it. Have you been there? Have you been spared? Maybe you need to hear the words of Christ, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."

**Friday, July 17. Read Acts 6:8-15; 7:51-60.** We end this week with God meeting Stephen in his "furnace." Unfortunately for Stephen, God didn't choose to deliver him from death. But remember

our focus this week: It is God meeting His children in the furnace. Yes, God delivered the three men in Daniel 3 but Stephen, He didn't. We have all heard there are 2 things that are inevitable – Death and Taxes. We all will face death. Will we choose to recognize that God is with us during this time? Stephen did. He saw Jesus as he was preparing to die. As we take our next breath, we are closer to our last. Who are we looking for? Who are we reaching for as we prepare for life after death?