

P501

Grace Notes Radio Program
SERIES: Why trials?
SET 01: The Refiner's fire
SONGS: GOD IS ABLE
He's still in the fire

**INTRO: In speaking to the Israelites in Isaiah 48:10 God said,
"I have refined you...I have tested you in the furnace of affliction."**

God often uses illustrations to help us better understand His truths.

Today, on Grace Notes, Barbara Sandbek begins a new series entitled 'Why trials?'. She'll take us through a detailed description of the refining process and show how God uses fiery trials to mold our character. So listen in as Barbara addresses the topic, 'The Refiner's Fire'.

In the Scriptures, God calls Himself the Great Refiner and us the precious metal (like silver or gold). I don't know about you, but I rarely feel like a precious metal, but that's how God sees His children – as what we can BECOME rather than what we currently are. Isn't that the best thing a parent could do for a child – to always see their potential?

Gold needs to be refined through a burning process to filter out the impurities. Our impurities are best removed under the fire of adversity. It took me a while to, first, understand this, then, to accept it. I remember a time when God revealed one of my character flaws to me. I raised my hand up to Him and said, "I've got it, Lord – You don't need to send a trial." But I soon realized that a trial is necessary to permanently affect the change, because once you're done with it, you conclude that you never want to be what you were before, because you never want to go through that struggle again.

Some years ago, a friend's brother was diagnosed with terminal cancer. He kept a diary during the days of his attempt to win the physical battle. He lost that battle, but gained a greater spiritual victory. Excerpts from his dairy were read at his funeral service.

One of his entries was...

“I thank You, Lord, for the gift of my THORN. Because of it, I’m not the man I was six months ago, and I never want to be that way again.”

Another point about the refining process is that the Refiner never lets the fire get too hot or the gold will be ruined. It is not God’s intention to render us useless, but rather to increase our faith, purify us, and mold us into beautiful vessels.

When my husband, Dale, was in apprenticeship school, he was required to learn how to weld. In order to prove that he had mastered the skill, the welded article was placed under pressure. If it held without cracking, he passed the test. Knowledge tested yields learning.

It’s through testing that our true colors show. In a test or trial, our inner feelings are revealed. Do we really love God? How do we know this unless we’re posed with a situation that makes us ask the question, "Should I love God in this?"

In some ways our spiritual growth is like the weaning process. More time elapses between faith feedings as we learn to grow on what we have...patiently. If we continue to pout over every seemingly disruptive event, we’ll never get past stage 1.

It's thrilling when our first response to a hard time is a Godly one. We can't manufacture that on our own. It comes from a willingness to trust and obey God, no matter what. Job succeeded. So can we.

My favorite, ‘it’s not going to get too tough’, verse is 1 Corinthians 10:13...

“There has no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man, but God is faithful Who will not permit you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

God is able to deliver us – we just need to ask Him.

***** GOD IS ABLE *****

During the refining process, the Refiner never leaves the gold while it's in the fire. That's His promise found in Hebrews 13:5b....

"I will never leave you nor forsake you."

A former pastor said, it's the same backwards as forwards.

"You forsake nor you leave....never will I."

If you take each word in this promise and think it through, you'll be encouraged...

"I" - Just think, the Great "I AM", the self existent One, is on your side.

"Will" - When God wills to do something, He keeps His promise. You can count on it!

"Never" - The word is never, not sometimes, or for the most part. This is an unconditional promise.

"Leave" - If He'll never leave, then He will ALWAYS stay by you.

"You" - This is personal. He's speaking directly to YOU. Who are we that we deserve this AWESOME God's presence with us – yet He has elected to do it.

Hear another of God's promises to you in Isaiah 43:2:

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers; they will not overflow you: When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; neither will the flame kindle upon you."

REFINER'S GOLD

by Barbara Sandbek

***Like gold refined I long my life to be
So that Your Glory all the world might see.
You promised You'd be there
To show me that You care
When you are working out the dross in me.***

***I may not fully comprehend Your plan
But I will place my life into Your hand
And when the fire is hot
It's purity You've sought
So help me trust when I don't understand.***

The final point to make about the refining process, and my favorite, is that the Refiner knows the process is finished, when he sees his face in it.

What a lesson. All wrapped up in a simple illustration.

Learning Scripture and sharing it is exciting, but needing to apply it to your life makes it truly come alive.

We gained a new perspective on the story we present in concert about Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego, the teenagers who were thrown in the fiery furnace and protected by the fourth man in there with them. One of the songs we present is called 'He's still in the fire'.

Let me set the stage for you. I had been studying about the power in the Name, Jesus. In His priestly prayer to His Father recorded in John 17, Jesus prayed,

"Father, protect them (your children) by the power of your Name, the Name you have given me from before the foundation of the earth."

I was impressed, and realized that I had only referred to the Name of Jesus at the end of my prayers, by using the familiar 'In Jesus Name I pray'.

On January 20, 1997, our garage caught on fire. It was like a fiery furnace with our ministry van parked right next to the fire source. My initial thought was to ask the Lord to help me react like Job, who had said,

**"The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away.
Blessed be the Name of the Lord."**

But I recalled my study about the power in the Name of the Lord and hollered, "Forget that Lord. Jesus, Jesus, I'm calling your Name and I need you now. Protect your van".

Other items surrounding the van were destroyed, but...you guessed it...the van was protected by none other than that same fourth man, Jesus. It was as if he had directed the fire with the command...

**"Excuse me, I have power over the elements.
Get on over that van!"**

Praise God! There is POWER in the Name of the Lord. He still works today like He did in Old Testament times, because Hebrews 13:8 says He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Here's what God taught me about myself, and Him, as I recorded in my diary entry for that day.

*Diary entry for 1/20/97
My garage caught on fire today.
Thank God I was home.
My walls are no longer white, they're gray.
Thank God it was just the garage.
You can't see the color of the van.
Praise God, it's not totaled.
My freezer will never freeze again.
I needed a new one anyway.
What was my immediate reaction?
I need you, dear God.
How refreshing to feel great satisfaction,
for my first thoughts were of You, Lord.*

**** HE'S STILL IN THE FIRE *****

*****□

Thanks for joining the program.

For more information about this ministry write to ...

**Sandbek Ministries
P.O. Box 581
Fallston, MD 21047**

or email us through our web site at sandbekministries.com.

If God leads you, please send along a gift to help us stay on the air.

Don't miss our next program – it's sure to be a blessing.

.....

.....