

January 26, 2022

The Lord wants you to experience real and abundant life:

2 Thess. 3:3 *But the LORD is faithful, and He will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.* (NIV)

There are two facets of real and abundant life in today's scripture. Paul writes to the church in Thessalonica and encourages them because even in the midst of persecution and suffering, we have a Father Who will walk through the fire with us. And in the midst of our trials, He will *strengthen* you and *protect* you. Take for an example the way the LORD provided for Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. You may be wondering who these three are, but they are better known by the names given to them by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar. You may recognize the names, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. These young teenagers were taken into captivity when Jerusalem was overrun by the Babylonians and they were forced into service for the King. As time went by the king made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide (approx. 90 feet high and 9 feet wide). That is a lot of gold! He then made this decree: **Dan. 3:4-6** *Then the herald loudly proclaimed, "Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace."* (NIV) Well, as the scripture states, these three young men were not going to bow to an idol when they knew the real and only true God. Listen to what the King says to them - **vv. 14-15** *and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"* (NIV) Look at that last sentence. There is only one God and He is surely able to rescue. Now Who do you think gave these young men the courage to respond? Listen to their reply: **vv. 16-18** *Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and He will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if He does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."* (NIV) And the rest is history. They were thrown into the fire where the LORD strengthen them and protected them; and He even joined them in the midst of the fire! And He will do the same for you.

Dear LORD, thank You that You strengthen us to face the attacks of this world and the evil one and You strengthen us to face whatever may come our way. You are the Mighty One! In Jesus Name, Amen