

## **"One Fire"**

**(16<sup>th</sup> in our series, Jesus Everywhere)**

Daniel 3\*

Pastor Peter Hiett

May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012

*\*All scriptures are ESV unless otherwise noted.*

### **Opening and Prayer**

Video clip from movie *It's a Bug's Life*

Voice: *Hurry, no, don't look at the light.*

Different Voice: *I cannnnn'tttt help it. It's so beautiful.* [Bug zapper sound] Screaming and then silence.

*Zapped bug bounces down the stairs.*

And so we're attracted to Fire and burned by Fire.

God is Love and God is Fire and Love is Fire.

We're burned by Love because we're resistant to Love. The thing in us, that resists Love, is our Ego. That was last week's message.

Let's pray. *Lord God, we pray that you would help us this morning to trust you because Lord God, we are attracted to You and yet terrified of You because we're attracted to You like bugs are attracted to a bug zapper. And so Lord Jesus, this morning would You help us – would You help us to have Faith? In Your name we pray, Amen.*

### **Sermon**

Clip from Comedian on Show

Comedian: *I wore a "What Would Jesus Do?" bracelet in a movie theater once to see if it would work. A cell phone went off with, one of those obnoxious rings, where it's a song, and he didn't want to answer it because the good parts coming. And then he answers the phone in the theater.*

Cell phone person: *"What's going on? No, I'm in the movies."*

Comedian: *This is what I said, verbatim, (I'm not going to censor myself) "Hey buddy, get off the phone please." This is what he says to me,*

Cell phone person: *"Shut up, and mind your own business \_\_\_\_."*

Comedian: *Now there's trouble in River City. I'm a man. Not much of one but a man but I will choke you if you are younger, smaller and preferably white. I had my hands on his neck and then I saw my bracelet staring right back at me - "What Would Jesus Do?" So I lit him on fire and sent him to Hell.*

Is that what Jesus would do? Sometimes it seems like there are 2 Jesus's.

1. There's the Jesus that loves the little children, loves His enemies and turns the other cheek – Good Jesus.
2. Another Jesus – a Bad Jesus – a mean Jesus ... That casts people into an endless torment of Fire.

So "What Would Jesus Do?" "Set 'em on fire?" Maybe? But in Scripture there's like 2 kinds of fire:

Number 1 - Pentecost Fire. Remember Pentecost?

It was like the undoing of the Tower of Babel. All these different people and all these different tongues from all these different nations - They start loving the Lord, their God, with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength and their neighbors as themselves when

The Fire Falls

So #1, there's Good Fire and #2, Bad Fire.

Jesus talks about "Hell-Fire," literally "Gehenna Fire." That's the Fire that burns in the Valley outside the walls of Jerusalem and that must be like the Fire of Judgment – the Lake of Fire.

Well it seems that there are 2 kinds of Fire and 2 kinds of Jesus. And Jesus said *"If you've seen me, you've seen the Father."* So it seems there are 2 kinds of God, our Father. One like Mr. Rogers, and then another one like Hitler.

It's like there are

2 opposite Jesus's;  
2 opposite Fathers;  
2 opposite Fires;  
2 opposite Judgments.

It seems that God is 2 and not 1. And it's Him, that we're commanded to trust.

*"Faith quite simply is trust"* writes Donald McCullough.

Faith is trust. And the thing that most undermines trust is a perceived lack of integrity in the person you're trying to trust ... a suspicion that they're really not 1, but 2.

Children of Alcoholics deal with that their entire life – "Does Dad love me? Or despise me? Who will show up?"

So do we have a Heavenly Dad who A is Absolute Love for some, through no merit of their own? And B, Endless Torment for others? Whom He created for Endless Torture? You know even if they choose that torture, He would've created them, knowing they'd choose it.

So is our Father, Love and the exact opposite of Love? Is He 2 and not 1.

Could you think of any idea that would more greatly undermine Trust? Undermine Faith? And we're saved by "Grace through Faith." See? If we thought God was 2 and not 1:

- We might say *"We trust,"* but only because *"We don't trust."*
- We might honor Him with our lips, but our hearts would be far from Him.
- We would say *"We trust Him to save us"* but we'd mean *"We trust ourselves, to save us, from Him."*
- We'd trust our judgment to save us from His Judgment.

In other words, we'd take knowledge from the Tree because we didn't trust that He had already given His Life on the Tree. We'd invent Religion because we had no Faith; because we believed our Father was 2 and not 1 ... 2 and not 1 ... and therefore could not be trusted.

Clip from *South Park*

Preacher: *Today we are going to talk about Hell. (sinister music) Hell is not a very nice place – burning, searing, flames, screaming, torture – for eternity. Once you’re in Hell, you cannot escape. You live forever in horrible pain, in burning agony – all sinners are there in misery, dying over and over and over. If you be cast down into this black bog of stench, then woe is thou for Satan has made it the most miserable place in the Universe. And He will be your ruler, your ruler of pain and agony.*

[People in Hell singing a Luau song – “Hukilau.”]

So it seems that Hell is this fiery place where Satan is throwing a party and we suffer forever without end.

Clip from *South Park*

Preacher: *A place of everlasting agony and pain awaits all sinners and all who do not accept Christ. Children in this town have not been attending Sunday School after Mass and adults have not been coming into Confession. If this does not change, I promise you, you will all be thrown into the black pit of Satan’s world. That is all. Peace be with you.*

Dad: *Well that was quite an uplifting sermon.*

Mom: *Yeah.*

Child: *Mom, we’re staying for Sunday School. We have to go to Sunday School.*

Mom: *What?*

Child: *We have to go to Sunday School so we don’t burn. Yeah, I’ll see you later Mom.*

Fear of Hell like that is a good way to get people to do what you want them to do, but not a good way to get them to trust you, to save them, from God, but not a good way to get them to trust God for Salvation.

Clip from *South Park*

[Lady walks giggling out of the Confessional.]

Preacher: *Ah kids...*

Kids: *You’re a sinner. You’re doing unnatural things in the eyes of God.*

Preacher: *Oh, ah. Oh forgive me Heavenly Father. I have sinned against you.*

Kids: *This guy is so gonna burn.*

Preacher: *Mrs. Donovan is a temptress from Hell.*

Kids: *Dude, if this guy is going to Hell, who is gonna save us? Well it looks like we’re going to have to save Kenny, Collin and everyone else in this town from the angry hand of God ourselves.*

And so the Boys in *South Park* invent their own religion to save themselves from God who might “set them on fire and send them to Hell.”

So WWJD – “What Would Jesus Do?” “What does God do?” “Can we trust Him?”  
Some people ask, “Why does this topic matter?” Well nothing matters more than Trust ... in Who God is; nothing matters more than Faith in Grace. Faith in Grace walks through Fire – ‘cause it is Fire.

In Daniel chapter 3, the Jews are in exile in Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar (King of Babylon) has constructed an idol. It’s 100 feet high and covered in gold. It’s either an image of himself or an image of his god – whatever the case; it’s tied to his ego. People from all over the world are gathered on the plains of Babylon as if once again we’re building the Tower of Babel. Nebuchadnezzar has invented a religion and listen to how he gets people to do what he wants.

*3<sup>4</sup>And the herald proclaimed aloud, “You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, 5that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. 6And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace?”*  
Daniel 3:4-6

He threatens them with a lake of Fire. And make no mistake ... There is a Lake of Fire. But Nebuchadnezzar has no idea what that Fire is. Well he threatens all with fire and it works ... Except for 3 young Jews who have faith.

*8Therefore at that time certain Chaldean [Babylonians] came forward and maliciously accused the Jews... [They go to King Nebuchadnezzar and recite the Law in great detail and then say:] 12There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.” 13Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king.*  
Daniel 3: 8, 12-13

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were young Jewish men who had been appointed to govern the affairs of Babylon at the request of their friend Daniel. In the last chapter, Daniel interprets a dream for Nebuchadnezzar that none of his Wise Men could interpret. Nebuchadnezzar knows it’s true for Daniel tells him the dream before he tells Daniel. In the dream, he sees a great image – a statue representing the empires of this world and Babylon is the Golden Head. Then he sees a rock, hewn by no human hand, which falls from heaven, striking the image and growing into an endless kingdom that fills the whole Earth. Well now Nebuchadnezzar has actually built a great golden image and it appears the Rock is already striking his image ... striking his image, in the form of relentless Faith in 3 young men.

*14Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? 15Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?” 16Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17If this be so, our God, whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. 18But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you set up.” 19Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, [The word means “hot” – as if the Faith of these young men was literally burning King*

Nebuchadnezzar's Ego.] *and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.* Daniel 3:14-19

For they had Faith and Faith is Trust in the character of a person. They even say it: *"He is able and He will deliver; but even if He isn't able or doesn't choose to deliver; we will still worship Him – we will trust Him."* Why? – He is Good.

They didn't have knowledge of the Good. They trusted that He is Good.

They didn't know exactly WHAT He would do; but they had Faith in WHO He is.

Folks often come to church 'cause they want knowledge so that they won't need Faith. Folks like me want the Knowledge of God so they can control God and won't have to Trust God. Most folks come to church to take the "Knowledge of Good and Evil," and Religion is happy to oblige and the Pastor thinks it's his job is to oblige. And so he'll tell you what's Good and tell you what's Evil and then explain why:

*"Studies indicate that divorce is detrimental to children ... Yada, Yada ... And fornication can give you VD, etc. etc. So don't fornicate for we have judged that God's Advice is Good Advice. And so you really ought to take this advice; take this knowledge and make yourself like God so He'll love you and not set you on fire and send you to Hell."*

See most folks come to church to get the "Knowledge of Good and Evil" in order to save themselves from God ... who really can't be trusted and they call that Faith.

Well if you have Faith – real Faith – in someone – you trust that someone and you don't need stuff explained. If they say, *"Don't lie, don't murder, don't divorce, don't fornicate, forgive everyone, love everyone, pick up a cross and follow."* Well you don't need it explained. You trust their advice 'cause you trust their character and that's called Faith.

People come for the "Knowledge of Good and Evil" but what God gives is the "Testimony of Grace" 'cause that's how we have Faith. Faith is a Gift but Faith is also a sacrifice. Faith is a Sacrifice – a sacrifice of your "knowledge." (That's not at all illogical – but can be very logical.) You sacrifice your Judgment to another's Judgment. You sacrifice your "Knowledge of the Good" to another's "Knowledge of the Good" because you come to trust that they are Good. In other words, you sacrifice your Ego.

And Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego literally presented themselves a Living Sacrifices – to be received by Fire. Faith is a sacrifice and Faith is a miracle. Faith comes from beyond you as a gift to You. Not knowledge you take but a testimony you receive. You come to trust a person when you encounter a person in a situation, which reveals their character, which reveals that they will be one even if the whole world demands that they be two; a situation ... which reveals they will be faithful, and even if the entire World be faithless. That they will Love when the entire world is consumed with Rage.

<sup>19</sup>*Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression on his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. [7 times – This isn't just Nebuchadnezzar's Fire. 7 is God's number. This is Holy Fire.]* <sup>20</sup>*And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.* <sup>21</sup>*Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace.* <sup>22</sup>*Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of*

*the fire killed those men who took p Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. [These fellows aren't endlessly tormented, they're consumed – destroyed. You know Sodom suffered the punishment of "Destruction by Eternal Fire," but Sodom isn't still burning. The Fire is eternal but the pain is temporal. And after Sodom is destroyed (in Ezekiel 16), God promises to make Sodom new along with Jerusalem and Samaria – destroyed, made new, and filled with Glory that is Fire ... Well ...]*

*<sup>23</sup>And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace. <sup>24</sup>Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." <sup>25</sup>He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."*

Daniel 3:19-25

Well, that's a Miracle and Faith is a Miracle; the fourth man in the Fire.

- Nebuchadnezzar says, *"He looks like a God – a son of God."*
- The Angel of Yahweh is referred to as God and as a Man – a God-Man and throughout the Old Testament He appears in Fire.
- You know Jesus appears as Fire or on Fire
  - On the Mount of Transfiguration
  - To Paul on the Damascus Road
  - To John in the Revelation

He is the First Man – fully on Fire and our God is Fire.

*<sup>26</sup>Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. <sup>27</sup>And the straps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men.*

Daniel 3:26-27

Remember the Bug Zapper? And my car battery and the jumper cables last week? Maybe these guys weren't burned by the Fire 'cause they weren't resistant to the Fire. Maybe they had Faith in the Fire. Or perhaps Faith in the Man of Fire or Faith through the Man of Fire – this 4<sup>th</sup> Man in the Fire. Faith in the Fire and so they sacrificed their Ego to the Fire. No longer burned by Fire – but at home in the Fire. Our God is Fire and Our God is Love.

*The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. <sup>28</sup>Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.*

Daniel 3:26-28

Hey. Here's an interesting question:

Were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego saved from the fire?

OR

Were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego saved by the fire?

They were saved by the Fire and through the Fire – the same Fire that consumed the guards.

THERE WAS ONE FIRE

2 effects – 1 Fire

I mean there wasn't an evil Fire and a good Fire; there wasn't Satan's Fire and God's Fire; there wasn't a Consuming Fire and a Saving Fire.

There was 1 Fire and 2 effects.

1 Fire and 2 kinds of people:

Faith-less people and faith-full people, but 1 Fire.

I've been chewing on this for about 15 years and in all the Bible I think there's only one Fire and it doesn't belong to Satan. And He doesn't party there – while people suffer. but maybe we'll party there and He'll suffer there - One Fire

Scripture tells us that God is Fire (in several places) and His Word like Fire (Jeremiah 23:29). His Breath – His Spirit is Fire. One day all Creation will be flooded and filled with that Fire – One Fire.

- In Genesis, He appears to Abraham as Fire. And it's His Fire that consumes Sodom.
- In Exodus, He is the Fire and His Angel appears in Fire. In Leviticus, He consumes the sacrifices with Fire – Eternal Fire.
- He judges with Fire and He answers Elijah and David with Fire.
- He's called "the God who answers with Fire." [I bet Satan would like you to think he controls that Fire.]
- In Kings and Chronicles, He fills the temple with Fire.
- Isaiah says "Israel will walk through Fire and not be burned (Isaiah 43:2). And yet their bodies are burned in the Valley of Gehenna (Isaiah 66). And yet Gehenna is set ablaze by the breath of God *"Like a stream of brimstone it is kindled."* (Isaiah 30:33)

Throughout the Prophets, God appears as fire and Malachi says the Messiah will be like a "refiner's fire." John the Baptist says He'll baptize with fire. In Luke, Jesus says he came to cast fire on the earth and how He is constrained until it is kindled.

At the Cross, it's kindled and at Pentecost the fire begins to fall ... the Church is filled with fire. It's like the undoing of the Tower of Babel – people of all nations, praising God, filled with Fire. And yet in 40 years, as Jesus said, Jerusalem is consumed by Fire; but it's God's Judgment and God's Fire and One Fire.

St. Paul writes that when you're kind to your enemy, you burn 'em with Fire.

The Revelation is full of Fire and I think it's all God's Fire ...

Jesus is Fire – His blood is Fire – God's Judgment is Fire.

Even when the Beast from the land, calls down fire, it has to get permission – it's God's Fire. And in the Revelation, there is a Lake of Fire. Hell itself is thrown into this Fire and Death is no more. It's the death of Death. It's the 2<sup>nd</sup> Death – It's called the Lake of Fire and Brimstone.

In the Old Testament, brimstone comes from the mouth of God, like a Word. In the New Testament, the Greek word for brimstone is Theion. It comes from the Greek word Theos – which means God. Theion from Theos – Theos speaks Theion like a Word. Theion can even be translated as a substantive adjective – "divinity" or "divine substance."

It's the Lake of Fire and Divinity or Fire that is Divinity.

God is Fire and God is Love and God is One.

God is Light, God is Truth, God is Life, God is Grace.

Can you think of any worse punishment than for the Prince of Darkness than to be thrown into a Lake of Eternal Light?

Or for the Father of Lies than to be immersed in a Lake of Eternal Truth?

Or for Death itself than to die in a Lake of Eternal Life?

Or for the Accuser – King of Shame than to drown in a Sea of Grace?

Sin is Faith-lessness and the sea is a sea of Faith-fulness. It's fed by a river of blood that flows from a Cross.

In Revelation 15, John sees 7 angels with 7 bowls of Wrath. The Revelation makes it pretty clear that the Wrath is blood – the blood is Fire – it comes from that Lamb standing on a Throne.

Revelation 15:1, John hears an angel cry

*“with these the wrath of God is finished. [Wrath has a purpose.] And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire – and also those who had conquered ... standing beside the sea of glass... And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! ... For you alone are holy. All nations shall come and worship you...”*

Revelation 15:1-4

One morning several years ago (before I wrote a book on the Revelation) my wife woke me up early and said

*“Peter I had a vision; a vision of the Son coming out from behind dark clouds and before that I had the most vivid and amazing dream – I saw thousands of people descending a staircase. Like walking dead - there were demons harassing them and these people hardly even flinched – they were used to being dead.*

*And then I saw this woman; but her eyes weren't dead – she was alive. She kept protesting 'I'm not supposed to be here.' At the bottom of the staircase, there was a beast with 8 arms. It would take the walking dead and throw them into the Lake of Fire and they'd be consumed by the Fire. Then the Beast threw this woman into the Lake of Fire, but she wasn't consumed by the Lake of Fire.*

*Furious, the Beast kept pushing her down into the Lake and she kept popping up in the Lake 'protesting.' Gradually she floated out of the reach of the arms of the Beast. And then the scene began to shift, as she floated into cool, clear water (like a sea of glass). The shore was lush with vegetation and then I saw Him. I saw Jesus, He reached in, pulled her out, stood her next to Him and she was absolutely gorgeous; like 'refined spun gold.'*

*I don't even know what that is, but that's what I saw. Jesus looked at her and said 'Sweetheart, you were meant for here!'" Susan said "Peter what was that and who was that woman?"*

*And I said "Honey, I think that was Revelation 15 and the woman is us – the Bride of Christ – Mother of the Living – the Church."*

If we die with Christ and rise with Christ, the Second Death won't hurt us.

Well for now I'm just saying maybe there really is One Fire – One Judgment – One God – and One Jesus. Maybe God is One and we're Two. See? I assume that I am Judge, so I am One and then I judge God as Two. But Maybe God is One and God is Judge and I am Two.



And now I know some of you are stressed. You're thinkin' ... *Am I like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego OR one of those Babylonia guards? Am I like the woman made of gold OR one of the walking dead?*

Well... maybe you're both. Maybe you have an old man and a new man; a vessel of Wrath and a vessel of Mercy. I mean maybe you have a body of flesh that contains the Spirit of God; a body of Sin containing a seed of Faith – the Life of Christ.

In Matthew 25, Jesus describes the Judgment. He says He'll sit on His throne and divide the peoples. The sheep on his right and the goats on the left; the sheep inherit Eternal Life and the goats go into the Eternal Fire. The sheep are people, that at least once, loved another person *"I was sick in prison and you visited me,"* says Christ on His throne. The goats are people, that at least once, neglected to love another person *"I was sick and you didn't visit me,"* says Christ on His throne.

So, how many of you are sheep? All of you.

And how many of you are goats? All of you.

You see? we're not One – we're Two and God's not Two – He's One and that One is on the Throne. Well Jesus tells the story in Matthew 25, leaving everyone cut in Two – crying out *"God Save."* *"Yeshua."*

Next verse. Matthew 16:1 – He tells them He's the Lamb – the Passover Lamb. The Passover Lamb can be taken from the Sheep or the Goats and Jesus is the Sheep – the spotless offering – Faith in you is Him in you – He's the sheep. And He's the Goat – the Sin offering and Scapegoat that bores your sin to destruction. He's the Lamb sacrificed for the Sin of the World and enthroned on a Cross. When we come to the Cross - we come to Judgment.

When we come to Christ we come to the Eternal Fire and Eternal Life

The Fire destroys my Old Man and His Life is my New Man.

The Fire consumes my Ego and frees me to Love.

The Fire devours faithlessness and is faithfulness.

The Fire consumes my flesh and becomes my spirit.

The Fire kills me and raises me from the dead.

The Fire frees me from the prison of myself.

The Fire is Christ himself – His Blood – His Life – it's Fire.

At the Cross I die to myself and the Second Death won't hurt me.

At the Cross God makes me One as He is One,

for at the Cross I see that God is One.

Judgment and Mercy are One – God is Grace.

At the Cross God reveals His character – He is One.

Jesus said *"This is the most important commandment: 'Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is one Lord.'"* (That's the commandment imperative tense – *"Hear that"* – Mark 12:29) *"And you will love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength."* (All – so you won't be divided.) *"And you will love your neighbor as yourself."*

When you see that God is One – You will be One – in His image.

We're saved when we see that God is One; when we see Christ and Him crucified. And yet to run from Christ and Him crucified is to hide in death; a living death; terrified of the Second Death – the death of Death in the Lake of Fire.

Well the Babylonian guards were consumed by the Fire. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were saved by the same Fire. And check this out – Nebuchadnezzar was both - consumed and saved by the Fire.

In verse 28, he blesses the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And by the end of the next chapter, after his ego has been destroyed and right before he dies, King Nebuchadnezzar writes one of the most beautiful Psalms of Faith that's ever been written. Just think about it:

He thought he conquered the God of Israel and the God of Israel conquered him.  
He thought he judged with Fire and the Fire judged him.  
His ego was consumed by Fire and he was saved by Fire – the same Fire.

And I bet that's because he saw the God-Man in the Fire.

The God-Man reveals –  
Our God can be trusted.  
Our Father can be trusted.  
For our Father is One.

When my son was about three, a man came to our home to fix our furnace. My son always wanted to be by my side, so together the three of us went down to the basement. I was occupied with questions about heating units, and the price of service calls, when I felt a tug on my shirt. I looked down to see my little boy in obvious distress. He pointed to the furnace. The cover had been removed, as the repairman checked the burner and fiddled with those white-hot flames. *"What's that?"* he asked. I said, *"Well, those flames heat the water in our house."* Actually, it was the furnace, not the water heater, but without thinking, that's what I said.

Over the next few days, we noticed that he started having "accidents," wetting his pants and dirtying his underwear. And then he refused to take a bath. When I inquired as to why, he told me: *"The flames will come up and burn me!"*

We tried explaining. Grandma even came over and put her hand in the toilet and said, *"Look Honey!"* But it didn't do any good. Terror had imprisoned my son in a lie. And believing the lie, he would hide in shame and hide his shame – The Evidence of Our Fallen Nature: POOP.

Well, I adore my son. And I actually didn't mind changing his diapers ... But, I really wanted him to trust me ... And, I really wanted him to go to high school, one day, without poop in his pants.

Finally, Susan and I sat down, had a conversation, and issued "judgment." That night when I could tell he was "loaded," when he chose to hide from me, I found him and I took him by the hand. Screaming and crying, I led him down the hall and I held him to the "flaming toilet of death." He wasn't burned by physical flames... but he felt burned by me. And I felt burned by me, cause he felt burned by me. His pain is my pain. I'm with him in pain.

Few times in my life have I witnessed expressions of such abject terror. But I held him to that toilet of fire until the deed was done. I burned his Judgment with my Judgment.

Karl Barth wrote God will “burn us right down to faith.” Scripture says, “Our faith is tested like gold – gold that’s refined by fire.” Because I loved him, we both suffered that fire – him and me together in fire.

He’s a young man now, and I want you to know he’ll sit on the toilet for hours... at home in the fire (if you will). He’s free.

Well imagine if someone counseled him during that time saying:

*You’d better fear your daddy, because he will not let you live in your own poop. As long as you keep pooing your pants, your dad will come hold you to the toilet. You can’t escape his judgment. If you’re sixty years old, hiding in a cave in Alaska, but still pooing your pants, your eighty-seven-year-old daddy will hunt you down, find a toilet, and hold you to it! Fear him because he loves you, and his love will never change.*

Well that would be weird, but it would be good counsel.

But now imagine if someone else came along ... Someone whose only concern was cleaning up poop, but was not concerned with the heart of my son and they whispered something like this in my son’s ear:

*You’d better obey your daddy because one day his love may stop. His patience will run out, and then he’ll torment and torture you forever without end. And if you cry out for mercy, there will be no mercy. It’s too late – for His mercy has come to an end. (Indeed, as we speak your father has other children. He keeps them in a shed out back, and every night tortures them to death and resurrects them in the morning to torture them again.) Fear him because he is not only love, He is also unlove, unforgiveness and relentless rage. Not One, but Two.*

If someone said that to my son... my son might “Honor me with his lips, but his heart would be far from me.” He might say, “I trust,” but he’d be too terrified to trust and all my love would burn like fire; he’d be emotionally constipated, clean on the outside, full of crap on the inside. If someone said that to my son ... well, I can’t imagine anything more damaging to my son or more abhorrent to me.

And yet that’s what we say... I think it’s what Satan wants us to say.

Cause then we won’t trust... and it’s our trust in God that burns Satan like the hottest fire.

It is the hottest fire... and we trust because we see the man in the Fire.

Faith is the 4<sup>th</sup> man in the Fire.

Faith is Christ rising in you.

When the entire world is faith-less, He remains Faith-ful.

When every man is two, He remains One.

So what did Jesus do? “Set us on fire and send us to Hell?”

Actually, He set Himself on fire, and descended into our Hell.

### **Communion**

And so on the darkest night, when the entire world was faithless, the Light of the world took bread and He broke it saying, “This is my Body given to you. Take and eat and do it in remembrance of me.” And in the same way, after supper, having given thanks, He took the cup

and He said, *“This cup is the New Covenant in my Blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, and do it in remembrance of me.”*

This is the Fire (holding up the Communion cup) and you’re here to make a sacrifice. Well that’s a bit frightening at first, isn’t it? It’s a sacrifice of Faith and you can make it because you see it. He’s Good, so worship Him, trust Him. Don’t only stand next to the Fire, be filled with the Fire. In Jesus’ name, believe the Gospel. Amen.

### ***Benediction and Prayer***

So Lord God, you’re Holy and we surrender our Judgment to Your Judgment. We come before your throne and we confess to you our bad judgment – “we did this and we did that.” We kind of hate ourselves and we’re afraid and we’re filled with shame and then You whisper Your Judgment in our ear – *“I Love You and I will never change.”*

Lord God, we thank You for who You are and that we can Trust You for You have revealed Your character; You have revealed Your heart, hanging on a Tree, sitting on a Throne – the slaughtered Lamb standing, Our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ.

And You are One

You are Holy

You are Love

And You are Fire

And we are Your Temple

And You have destined us to be filled with Fire.

In Jesus’ name and Lord God we thank You, Amen.

If you ever wonder, what in the world was this sermon about? It’s just one point – Trust God because He’s trustworthy and we know that because of the testimony of Jesus. Scripture says that apart from Faith, it’s impossible to please Him. That always used to confuse me, you know, cause I thought Faith was like some answer to a test or something and I had to figure out through critical analysis. But Faith means Trust; that’s what it means and I’m a dad and some of you are mothers. I’m telling you, that’s all I want for my kids – is Trust; that they would trust me – who I am.

So, in the name of Jesus, trust the Lord God, your Father. In other words, believe the Gospel – Amen.

*Disclaimer: The author has not edited this document. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio or video version of the sermon on this website and don’t be shy about informing us of errors.*