

Isaiah 64:8

But now, O LORD, You are our Father; We are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are the work of Your hand.

One of my wife's and my favorite new series is called "The Great Pottery Throw Down". We had watched all three seasons when we first discovered it several months ago, and now we found out that a 4th season has been added, so we are watching that one now.

What is the Great Potter Throwdown? It's U.K.'s best home potters who are in competition to see who is the best home potter in the U.K. They make all sorts of things each week, sometimes it's a toilet, or a water fountain, or a tea set, or a vase, all out of clay. What they make varies from week to week and they are given usually several hours to do these challenges each week.

Well, a few weeks ago they were to make a life size bust (Sculpture from the shoulders up) of a famous person (most of them musicians or movie stars), and they only had a picture of the famous person to do it from.

So they made these busts out of clay, molding each part, like the ears, nose, eyes, chin, etc. attaching them to the head that they had made, and most of them looked really great, until.... (Yeah, there always has to be an until.) They looked great until they were put in the kiln to harden. When these clay bust are made and put in the kiln, they are heated to around 1,000 degrees to harden like rock. Sounds simple until you realize that all these facial parts put on can actually fall off if not done right. The result for some of these busts that were created, was that some of them ended up looking great, and others ended up having no face at all, and it was all based upon how they were created and how they survived the extreme heat.

With all of that in mind, I thought about the master potter, GOD, and how He has created and formed each and every one of us.

† **Psalm 139:13** *For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb.*

Yet, unlike these potters, he has formed each and every one of us to withstand the heat of the kiln, or should I say the fiery trials that hit us.

† **1 Peter 4:12** *Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you.*

But you know what? Like those bust that were created and put into the same kiln, and were all heated to the same temperature (1,000 degrees), yet not all of them survived.

It's the same with us, just like the verse I just quoted in **1 Peter 4:12** *Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you.*

This tells us that we all go through the same trials. We have all lost jobs by being fired or laid off, we have all been sick, we all have had a loved one die, we have all had that one kid or sibling who did not turn out how we hoped he or she would. We have all been robbed or lost something valuable. Sad to say, a lot have experienced divorce by either getting a divorce or have come from a family that their parents divorced.

Simply we have all gone through fiery trials and we should realize that we are not the only one that has gone through such a thing. But the real question is not if you have gone through a fiery trial, but rather, how did you come out of it?

Think of our clay bust example again. Some of them came out of the kiln and looked fabulous, where as others came out, literally fallen apart. It was all the same clay, all the same kiln and temperature and even the same amount of time in the kiln. But the difference was in the actual potter and how that potter formed each bust.

Now, we know there is only one God and creator. I am not talking about your physical body created by God; but rather, who or what is forming you into the type or kind of person you are? For me, before I was 19 years old, I had the world molding me and making me into what I was at the time. When that happens, you go through trials, and usually your reaction to those trials could be, alcohol, bad relationships, bad advice and going down a wrong path in life. For some, maybe even jail, or worse case, suicide. Those are those busts that simply fell apart when the heat of the trial in the kiln hit.

But after I turned my life over to the Lord (At 19) I still had trials, and some were extremely bad over the years, yet I did not turn to the world's way of handling those trials, and the result was that I came out as a stronger, more solid Christian, just like the busts that survived the heat of the kiln. They not only looked good, but they were strong (Fired to be hard as a rock) as well, and that's how we as Christians should come through the trials, because just as James, the half brother of Jesus said, that we "will" not "might" but "will" go through trials.

But he also tells us the results that believers should have as we do, and that is to ***be perfect and complete, lacking nothing*** as we grow and mature in Christ Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit working in us. Those are those solid Christians, and once you make it through each trial with Jesus with you, you too will become a more solid Christian as well.

† ***James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.***

One final thing, we all should know the story of the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, in the book of Daniel, and we know that the fourth person is Jesus. But also realize that three went in, and that tells me that each one had strong believers as friends who would walk through the fiery furnace with them. Do you have those strong Christian friends to help you

when those fiery trials come? If not, ask the Lord to bring one or two along side of you to walk through life with, because there may be times when you need them, but there will be time when they need you too.

† **Daniel 3:23-25** *And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."*