

# Psalm 12

We've been looking at Psalm 12, where David receives an answer to his cry to God. David has been seeking the LORD's intervention on behalf of the foundations of salvation. That's how he described the upright in heart in Psalm 11, as the foundations. Because in Psalm 10, as David was pleading with God to end the oppression and violence of the wicked, he realized that there was a reason that God hadn't delivered the oppressed yet. It was because their hearts weren't in the right place yet. He said that their hearts weren't prepared. They weren't ready to cry out to God alone to bring them deliverance from all oppression. And so that's why they hadn't received it.

And so the prepared in heart, the upright in heart, were the foundations of salvation. Because salvation could not come until all of the people, all of the oppressed of Israel, were crying out to God with a perfect heart for deliverance. And that's when the upright would be delivered, and the ungodly destroyed.

And the wicked, realizing that, came up with a plan. They decided to prevent salvation from ever coming, by preventing the hearts of the people from ever becoming all prepared. They decided to slay all of the upright in heart, destroy the foundations, and prevent the judgement of the oppressors.

But David had said, in Psalm 10, that God would prepare their hearts. And so David knows that it is God who is the true foundation of salvation, and so he cries out to him in Psalm 12 to uphold the upright, the foundations of salvation in the earth.

And God responds to David, not with condemnation, not by judging the oppressors, not by delivering every upright man from their persecutors. Instead God's response is to continuously take new bricks, and lay them on the foundations. So that even as the wicked pluck the bricks away, God continues to lay new ones. As the wicked slay the upright, God continues to take the righteous, and purify and try their hearts, and make them faithful and upright and godly, and prepare them for salvation.

And God does all of that, through his words. Not his words in the law, which administer condemnation, but his words in the psalms and prophets, which administer preservation. God opened up in response to David's request, a new dispensation of his words. So that through his pure words, the people would be purified. Through his tried words, the people would be tried. And within their hearts the words would work the gold of faith, and the people would be made upright and godly.

Last time we looked at how God chose to administer that trial of purification through his words, because his goal was preservation. He couldn't at that time purify them through a trial of judgement, because they weren't prepared for it yet. They were all becoming dross, that in such a trial would be destroyed. So instead, God tried and purified them through his words, which would remove the dross from their hearts, and replace it with the gold of faith. And thus would a godly seed, and the seed of the Messiah, be preserved.

## Verse 6

### FURNACE

This is the only time in scripture that it speaks of a "furnace of earth". So we have to do some background research to figure out exactly what that means. We've already looked at some different passages the last few weeks that talk about furnaces, so we might have some ideas but we need to see if we can find any more clues before we can be sure.

Now, the first time that the term “furnace” is used is in Genesis 15:  
By the way, the word furnace is used 30 times in scripture, and the word “furnaces” plural is used 2 times.

**Genesis 15:1** After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

2 And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

4 And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

7 And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.

8 And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

Now, it just said that Abraham believed in the LORD. And now Abraham is asking for a sign, some token from God, that what he said is going to come to pass.

And so Abraham believes the word of the LORD, and yet, he still wants to try it and prove God’s sincerity.

What Abraham wants from God here is not just his word, but a tried word. A word that God has proven to be sure unto Abraham and to his seed across the generations.

9 And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.

10 And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.

11 And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

So God tells Abraham to prepare a sacrifice, but he doesn’t tell Abraham to offer it. So Abraham gets it ready, and then just waits for God to come and accept it.

12 And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.

13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

Now, Abraham was asking for surety that his seed was going to inherit Canaan. And now God is assuring him that instead, they’re going to be afflicted in a strange nation. That’s the opposite of what he wants.

But this is important. This ties in with some other passages that we’re going to look at.

14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

So God doesn't tell Abraham in so many words that his children are going to inherit Canaan. But he doesn't have to, he's already told Abraham that, and Abraham believed him. Now he's just giving Abraham assurance that what the LORD has said will come to pass.

Now, this seems like a strange way of doing that. Telling Abraham that his seed is going to be oppressed for four generations, and then inherit the land.

But we're going to understand why God did this in a little bit.

17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking **furnace**, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.

So then the LORD accepted Abraham's offering, and passed between the pieces as a smoking furnace, and burnt them.

18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

19 The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites,

20 And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims,

21 And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

Thus God made a covenant with Abraham, to give him the land of Canaan.

So through this God made a covenant, to make his word of promise sure in Abraham's sight.

So that we could say, that in this manner the sincerity and surety of God's word of promise was tried and proved to Abraham.

And this trial of God's word involved a furnace. What it called a furnace, that came and burnt up Abraham's sacrifice.

Now what was that bright fiery lamp or furnace?

It was the angel of the LORD.

It describes the presence of God in a similar manner in Exodus chapter 19, when he comes down on mount Sinai.

**Exodus 19:1** In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.

2 For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.

3 And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

He said that if they kept his words they'd be as a peculiar treasure, much as the faith produced by the word of God is likened unto pure gold.

7 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him.

8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

9 And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD.

So God is going to do something special, to strengthen the faith of the people. He's going to let them hear when he speaks with Moses. And so they will believe for ever that Moses is indeed his prophet.

You could say that what God is doing here is trying his word before them, and letting them see the proof that the things which Moses speaks in his name do indeed come from God.

10 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes,

11 And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.

12 And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death:

13 There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.

14 And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes.

15 And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives.

16 And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.

17 And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.

18 And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a **furnace**, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

So the presence of God there on mount Sinai caused the top of the mountain to smoke like a furnace.

19 And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.

We talked about the silver trumpets that God commanded Moses to make, and how they were a picture of his word.

Well here we see that God associated the sound of the trumpet with the giving of his word. So there is a clear connection there.

20 And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.

And so then God makes a covenant with them in the next chapters, and gives them the ten commandments. And the people hear his voice from the top of the mount.

So once again we see God making a covenant, and he proves the sincerity of his word by appearing as a burning and smoking furnace.

So that those who receive the covenant know indeed that it is the words of almighty God.

You know, that first time that it used the word furnace, when God made a covenant with Abraham, that was a covenant of promise, wasn't it? He promised to give Abraham's seed the land of Canaan.

And then when God made this covenant with the children of Israel, it was a covenant of the ten commandments, and of the law.

So you have the promise, tried by the furnace. And then the law, tried by the furnace.

And now in Psalm 12, we have another new dispensation opening up. A new dispensation of the words of the LORD, by his prophets. And once again, it is tried by the furnace.

It is only fitting that Psalm 12:6 is the eighth time that the word furnace is used in the Bible, as that just happens to be the number of new beginnings in scripture. And there is a new dispensation of God's word out of the furnace starting here.

The dispensation of the law began with the furnace, and the dispensation of prophecy does not begin without it either.

Because the words of the LORD that God is going to administer to them, are tried, and sure. As silver tried in a furnace.

But there is a difference this time, isn't there, from those first two times? Because the furnace isn't openly visible. The angel of the LORD isn't visibly appearing to David or to his prophets as a furnace of fire and smoke.

Because you see, this is a different furnace. Those prior dispensations of God's word, in the promises, and in the law, were an open furnace. They were from God directly.

This one is not. The Spirit of the LORD is not appearing in physical form and speaking to David or the people that they might audibly hear. Though that's what God did with Adam, with Noah, with Abraham, and with Moses.

But now it isn't an open furnace. Now God is instead placing his Holy Spirit within men, and they are the ones who speak his words. Now it is a furnace of earth.

The fire of the furnace isn't visible, but God places his Spirit within the earthen vessels of the bodies of men. And yet the fire is still there, just as in a furnace of earth, where the fire and smoke are contained and unseen.

And so though this dispensation of the words of the LORD is to be given through men, yet it is still to be tried and pure, and it is still through his Spirit.

The silver word that is spoken is still proceeding forth from the furnace of God's Spirit. So that it is still the words of the LORD, tried by the fire.

"The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."

Now, as we've gone through different passages that talk about trying, we've also come across a different furnace, the furnace of earthly trials. The furnace of God's wrath and judgment.

And you'll recall that we said that there were two different kinds of trials: the trials of trouble and judgment, and the trial by the words of the LORD.

And so likewise there are two different furnaces in scripture. The furnace of God's Spirit, and the furnace of trouble and affliction and of God's wrath.

And so the second time that the word furnace is used, in Genesis 19, it is talking about the furnace of God's wrath.

**Genesis 19:27** And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD:

28 And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a **furnace**.

29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.

So here we clearly see the furnace of God's wrath, poured out in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah.

And when God did that he burnt up all of the wicked, all of the abominable dross, and brought out the righteous man, such as he was, and he escaped.

So it was a furnace that purified the land and destroyed the wicked, so that only the righteous remained.

That's a big contrast with Genesis 15, the first time that it speaks of the furnace. There the furnace tried the word of the LORD and made it sure unto Abraham.

And at the same time Abraham's faith was increased wasn't it? Because through that experience he could have even greater confidence in his belief that God would perform his promise.

And so that furnace tried the word of the LORD, and tried and refined and increased Abraham's faith as well.

That's the trial that David is looking for, that the people need here in Psalm 12. They need God's tried words, that their faith can be purified and they can be made sure of God's salvation.

The trial of the other furnace would have been devastating, because the people were all becoming dross and would have been burnt up.

They needed a furnace that would try God's words and make them sure in their eyes, that their hearts might be purified and turned back to the LORD for salvation.

So there are two different furnaces in scripture.

It's only fitting then, that the first time that the word furnace is used it is speaking of the one, but the second time it is speaking of the other.

You see, two is the number of division in the Bible. That makes sense, right, because when you have two things they are divided one from the other.

And so it is fitting that the second time that the word furnace is used, it is not talking about that same furnace of the angle of the LORD, that appeared to Abraham, but the furnace of God's wrath that burnt up Sodom.

And so when we look at that second time that the word is used we see that clear division in the Bible, between these two different furnaces.

And this is a contrast that we see throughout scripture.

Deuteronomy 4 is one example:

**Deuteronomy 4:1** Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you.

2 Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

So Moses admonishes them to keep the words of the LORD. And if they do that, they will live and be blessed.

3 Your eyes have seen what the LORD did because of Baalpeor: for all the men that followed Baalpeor, the LORD thy God hath destroyed them from among you.

4 But ye that did cleave unto the LORD your God are alive every one of you this day.

So there you have the destruction of the wicked, and the preservation of the upright as gold brought safely through the fire.

This is a contrast that he's going to continue to make, to admonish them to keep the words of the LORD, and not depart from them.

5 Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.

6 Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

7 For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for?

8 And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

9 Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons;

10 Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.

11 And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness.

12 And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice.

13 And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.

So he calls to their mind the time that God made a covenant with them, and the word of the LORD was made sure and tried in their sight by them hearing the voice of God out of the midst of the furnace of fire and smoke.

He tells them to remember that and to be diligent to teach it to their children, so that they will keep the commandments of the LORD.

Now he's going to contrast this with another furnace. With the implication that they can choose between them. If they don't obey the voice out of the one furnace, they'll end up in the other.

14 And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it.  
15 Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire:  
16 Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female,  
17 The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air,  
18 The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth:  
19 And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.  
20 But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron **furnace**, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.

So he warns them against idolatry and departing from the commandments of the LORD. And then he talks about how God has brought them up out of Egypt. And he calls Egypt the iron furnace.

Now, why the “iron” furnace? Well, iron is strength and power. It’s complete and total domination, that nothing can stand against.

And so Egypt is the iron furnace, because Israel was in bondage in Egypt. The Egyptians had dominion over them.

So it was the iron furnace, the furnace of affliction and oppression and bondage.

And while they were there, they were surrounded by idols, by idolatry, and wickedness.

And God says, “I’ve brought you out of the iron furnace, don’t go back after idols.” The implication being that if they do, they’ll be placed back into the furnace of affliction.

God is relating these two things together: idolatry and affliction.

And when you look at Israel’s history from there on up through Christ, that’s exactly what happened. Every time they went after idols, God put them in the furnace of affliction, and they were oppressed by their enemies.

But of course it didn’t have to be that way. Moses admonished them here to diligently teach their children about the other furnace. The one that they saw upon mount Sinai, out of which proceeded the voice of God. And if they did that they’d live long on the land and be blessed. They could either take heed to the silver of God’s word, which came out of that furnace, or else if they turned aside unto idols of silver and gold, they’d be placed in the other furnace, the furnace of affliction.

Later Solomon would pray at the dedication of the temple:

**1 Kings 8:46** If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near;

So if they forsake God and are delivered into the furnace of affliction, into captivity:

47 Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness;

48 And so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name:

And then if they cry out to him with perfect heart:

49 Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause,

50 And forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them:

51 For they be thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the **furnace** of iron:

So here it is clearly paralleling their sojourn in Egypt with their captivity in strange lands. And so he's asking God to hear them when they cry out to him in the furnace of affliction, and to bring them back from captivity, just as he brought them out of the furnace of iron, out of Egypt.

52 That thine eyes may be open unto the supplication of thy servant, and unto the supplication of thy people Israel, to hearken unto them in all that they call for unto thee.

53 For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be thine inheritance, as thou spakest by the hand of Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord GOD.

And so he asks that God would continue to sanctify his people, to separate them from the nations of their captivity and bring them out. As gold is brought out of the fire.

God had brought them out of Egypt, out of affliction in the iron furnace, to serve him. And so he would also bring them from the land of captivity, out of the furnace of affliction, to serve him, if they would return to him with all their heart.

And so here in Psalms God is once more giving his word out of the furnace, that he might prevent that furnace of affliction from coming upon them.

God is giving them his words, tried in the furnace, that will try and purify the hearts of the people, so that they won't need to be tried and purified by trials of earthly troubles.

And so there is a contrast between these two furnaces throughout scripture.

In fact, if you think back to Genesis 15 when Abraham first saw the furnace, there was actually a connection there between that and the furnace of iron.

You remember how Abraham believed God, but he wanted God to prove the sincerity of his word, by a covenant. And so God tried his word before Abraham by appearing in that furnace and making a covenant with him.

But the first thing that God said was kind of strange. Abraham asked God for assurance that his seed would inherit Canaan. And when God appeared to Abraham and made the covenant, the first thing that he said was:

"Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years."

Abraham was asking for assurance that they'd inherit Canaan, and God gave him assurance that first they'd be afflicted for four hundred years.

That seemed very strange.

But now we understand that what God was telling Abraham was that his seed would go through the furnace of iron. Just as Abraham was about to see this furnace, his seed would experience that furnace.

Normally, that's not a good thing, the furnace of affliction. But God had a purpose for it. The next verse says, "And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance."

So God said that in the end his seed would come out with great substance. And isn't that just exactly what you want to bring out of the furnace? Great substance. That precious substance of gold.

So in the end God was going to judge their persecutors, and through this experience he was going to demonstrate to them his power of deliverance, and the worthlessness of idols. All the idols of Egypt could not stand against the LORD.

And so through that, God was able to demonstrate his power to Israel, as well as the weakness and unprofitableness of idolatry.

And he was able to give them a picture of what would happen to them if they served idols. He was able to associate idolatry with the furnace of affliction, as a warning to them and future generations.

And so through this he would increase their faith, their faithfulness to God, that they might inherit the promised land.

And so by going through the iron furnace and being brought out of it in this way, that trial produced faith in them. At least it should have. And no doubt it did, most of them were just really stiffnecked, that's all.

But you see, what God was doing when he answered Abraham—Abraham was thinking, "God, I believe you are going to give the land to my seed, but would you please give me an assurance of the sincerity of your word, that you aren't going to change your mind after I'm dead and gone?"—and God is thinking, "Oh, my word is sincere, I'm going to give this land to your seed, I just don't know how I'm going not get them to go along with that."

And so in giving Abraham assurance, God said what he did, talked about them going through affliction, because the assurance he was giving wasn't just that he would perform the word, but that the seed would be made ready to keep his word, and receive their inheritance.

And so just as God was trying and proving his word in the furnace before Abraham, God was going to try and prove his word of promise before Abraham's seed, by delivering them out of the furnace of iron.

So through that furnace he was going to make the seed more faithful, and prove his own faithfulness and the faithfulness of his word, in bringing them deliverance out of it.

Just as the furnace that Abraham saw tried God's word before him, and made him ever more faithful to keep that word of promise.

And so God gave Israel a clear choice: keep the word of God which proceeded out of his furnace, or they would end up in the furnace of God's wrath, the furnace of affliction.

So they had to choose between the two. God and idols. His word tried in the furnace, or a trial of them in the furnace of affliction.

And as I said, there are quite a few passages that talk about that. We've actually already looked at some of them before. For example, last time we went through Ezekiel chapter 22. There it talked about how the city was full of abominations. And it says:

**Ezekiel 22:17** And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

18 Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the **furnace**; they are even the dross of silver.

19 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem.

20 As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the **furnace**, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you.

21 Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof.

22 As silver is melted in the midst of the **furnace**, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the LORD have poured out my fury upon you.

So that gives a clear picture of the furnace of affliction, the furnace of his wrath.

And it went on to talk about how there was a conspiracy among their prophets, and that's why they had all become abominable dross.

And so there again is the connection between forsaking the word of God, and being placed in the furnace of his wrath.

And yet God explained how there would be a remnant, and when he brought the furnace over them, he would place the silver of his word in the midst of them. And those who took heed to it would be delivered.

The only way to abide the trial was to be tried and refined by the word of God.

The only way to come through the furnace of affliction was to keep the words of the LORD that had come through the other furnace, out of the furnace of God's Spirit.

Isaiah 48 is another passage that talks about this:

**Isaiah 48:1** Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness.

2 For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; The LORD of hosts is his name.

3 I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass.

4 Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass;

5 I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them.

6 Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare it? I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them.

7 They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them.

So God has given and showed them his word. But they haven't been faithful to it. They have not kept it:

8 Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb.

They refused to open their ear and receive the words of the LORD.

9 For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off.

And God would just cut them all off, as dross.

Since their neck is an iron sinew, and their brow brass, he would discard them as brass and iron, the dross of silver in the midst of the furnace.

But for his name's sake he will refrain from cutting them off instantly in a moment. He tells us what he will do instead:

10 Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the **furnace** of affliction.

He's going to bring the furnace of affliction on them.

He's tried to refine them with the silver of his word. And they refused to hear. And so now he has no choice but to bring the furnace of affliction upon them, to attempt to try them and force them to amend their ways, so that he doesn't have to cut them off completely.

11 For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.

12 Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last.

13 Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together.

14 All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these things? The LORD hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans.

15 I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.

16 Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me.

17 Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.

18 O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:

19 Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me.

20 Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, The LORD hath redeemed his servant Jacob.

21 And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out.

And so God would like to just destroy them utterly in his anger. But for his name's sake he isn't going to do it. He's going to give them another chance. He's going to bring them into the furnace of affliction to see if there might be any gold there among the dross.

And so he's going to bring trouble upon them, and then declare his word to them once more, that they might hear it and turn to him.

And if they will finally hear the word, they will return to Zion with singing.

If they will take heed, those that hear the words of the LORD will be redeemed.

22 There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked.

But except they repent, affliction will come upon them. And the wicked won't have peace. When Zion is redeemed, the wicked won't partake in that. Those who refuse to hear his word, even in the furnace of affliction, will be burnt up by it like dross, and will not abide the fire, but will be slain.

So once again, they could be tried with silver, or be tried in the furnace of affliction. And there are a few other such passages.

In fact this is a contrast between the two furnaces that continues even until the final judgement. In Isaiah it talks about how when Christ's kingdom comes the furnace of the LORD will once again appear. It talks about those who will dwell with the fire of the LORD, which will defend them from all their enemies. In Isaiah 31:9 it speaks of "the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem."

And so in the end the furnace of God's Spirit and glory will once again dwell with men. But then there is also the other fate, the fate of those who reject God and his word which came out of that furnace. They will experience a different furnace, the furnace of God's eternal wrath:

**Matthew 13:41** The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;  
42 And shall cast them into a **furnace** of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

And so only those who have been tried and purified by the word out of the furnace, will be able to abide with it forever. The rest will not, and will be damned to an eternal judgement in the furnace of hell.

There is a passage in Daniel that is a good picture of that. Remember how Daniel's three friends are thrown into a furnace, and it doesn't touch them.

**Daniel 3:14** Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?  
15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery **furnace**; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?

Now, it is interesting to consider how similar what Nebuchadnezzar was asking them to do is to the temple worship.

In the temple worship the Levites would play music. They'd play the psalms and the people would sing and worship the LORD.

But now they are being asked to listen for Nebuchadnezzar's music, and when they hear it to worship his golden idol.

So this is a counterfeit. He want's them to hear his music, instead of God's Psalms, and bow before his golden idol, instead of their hearts bowing before God in worship, and being purified and made as faithful gold, by hearing the words of the LORD.

And if they refuse to do as he commands, they are threatened with being thrown into a furnace. You know, sometimes that's what happens in this life. Those that are serving the LORD are threatened with man's furnace of affliction and persecution.

But we don't have to fear that, because we've been tried by the word of the LORD, which came out of the furnace of God, and when we are placed in the fire, we will come forth as gold. These guys have a really good answer for Nebuchadnezzar:

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

They knew that God could deliver them. But even if he didn't, they wouldn't forsake the LORD and accept the counterfeit.

And you know, that's how it is in this life. God is able to deliver us out of the furnace of persecution. But we don't know whether he will or not. That's not always the way that he upholds the foundations, as we have seen.

But we do know two things: that either way we will come forth as gold before God, having been tried by his word; and that one way or another, the godly seed will be preserved in this world.

The foundations will be upheld.

So these three guys aren't scared to answer the king, and go through the furnace, whether God delivers them or not.

19 Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.

So the king orders the fire to be heated seven times hotter.

And Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego don't mind that, they're following the words of the LORD that have already been tried in the furnace, purified seven times.

And so we know what happens. They are able to abide the fire, in the midst of the furnace, with the Son of God.

Just as all those who keep his word may do forever, dwelling with God and his Son, and be unharmed by the everlasting fire of his glory.

And so those that have kept the words of the LORD out of the fire of the furnace, need not fear the furnace of earthly trouble, inflicted by God or man; or even the furnace of hell. Because that word out of the furnace has worked the gold of faith in their hearts, that will abide every fire, and remain forever to reflect God's glory.

So here in Psalm 12, in this "furnace of earth," we see that God is taking that furnace, that fire of the glory of his Spirit; the same furnace that he used to try his word of promise before Abraham, and to try his word of the law before Moses and all Israel; and he's taking that furnace of his Spirit, and placing it within men, out of which will come a tried word of prophecy.

And so that word will be as silver tried in a furnace of earth. The prophets of God will be filled with his Spirit, and declare unto Israel the words of the LORD.

And that's a ministry that is going to prepare them for salvation, and work in their hearts the gold of faith, so that they won't have to go through the furnace of God's wrath, lest the godly seed, and the seed of the Messiah, be destroyed. But instead they will be preserved, forever.