the Refining FIRE

Within moments, what began as a spark, an ember, just a crackle, suddenly swallowed everything in its vicinity. It was as if it had a pulse of its own alive inside; a breathing, vibrant, active, thriving inferno immediately devouring anything in its path. The blaze consumed the air; the glow incinerated the darkness as if day had climbed suddenly out of night. An intense heat ignited what chill clung to the edges of sleep. In no time, what remained of the fiery travesty was a conclusion of charred nothingness, just a thought of what might have been left in the rubble of what was. What survived was an unfortunate memory and the telltale whisper of tragedy melted and embedded in the landscape of recollection. The ash of what once mattered was the only existing scrap of somethingness.

A fire is not a respecter of persons. It takes hostages. It often leaves little behind. But, on that night, it left a beautiful imprint of God's grace, a miracle save. It chewed right up to the doorstep; it licked around the windows and breathed embers at the eaves. **But God!** God silenced that tongue of fire. God sprinkled His living water over that fortress, leaving it unscathed, as if He were saving it for His use, using it for His purpose and testimony. The damage, extensive and everlasting, like a memory seared forever; a thought of how quick and easy the singe devastates, how final the scorching is.

Why didn't the fire destroy everything of importance that night? It should have. It burned everything surrounding what truly mattered. *And left it untouched!* But His whisper lingered deep inside. He was quiet, but He murmured loud enough just so He could be heard, "Child, when I put you through the fire, the refining fire, the process matters. Everything unnecessary, of little use, not purposeful to Me, is incinerated; therefore, only what lasts truly matters. That which endures I intend to use for others' good and for My glory. You are safe now. You are valuable to Me. You remain. I am simply refining what I can use."

There were three boys thrown in the fire on that day. I imagine the heat inside the furnace where they landed at the orders from the king singed even the very thought of the enemy: intense, murderous, consuming. Surely, a fear glowed inside them, but even greater, was a burning belief in the God Who wastes nothing. Not even fire. Not even ash. Even the irreverent skepticism of a worldly king was scorched on that day as he watched a fourth man come to life and dance amongst the glowing embers and the unyielding faith of the three boys who took a stand with their God. The greatest outcome: the purification of a refining fire.

Daniel 3:25 "'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.'" (NKJV)