

Bible Stories

DANIEL - A FURNACE OF FIRE

Daniel 3:16-18

May 27, 2023

Daniel had said that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold – GOOD – but he also said that Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom would come to an end – BAD. After a period of time, Nebuchadnezzar’s pride and arrogance got the better of him and he “forgot” the role the God of the Universe had played in his dream. He decided to concentrate all his efforts on the GOOD part of the story – that HE was the head of gold. He called the foundry and ordered a statue of himself 90 feet high and 9 feet wide – made entirely of gold. That would prove, once and for all, who was really large and in charge.

When the statue was completed, every important official in the vast empire was ordered to attend the unveiling. To demonstrate loyalty and fidelity to the king – to acknowledge his supreme place in their world – they would also be required to bow down to the statue.

So, the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. The herald rose to address the crowd.....

"Listen up everyone, when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Anyone who chooses not to fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace."

As the herald resumed his place a hush fell over the crowd. If pleasant music wasn’t incentive enough to fall to the ground, the furnaces over in the corner certainly were. You definitely didn’t want to be the guy caught standing!

The stage was set. The musicians were in place. The furnaces were hot. The crowd was nervous....

The music started and everyone hit the ground – except for (GASP!!!) 3 - Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

At this point a group of astrologers came before the king to denounce the Jews.

"O king, live forever! You have issued a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. There are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon -- Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego -- who pay no attention to you, O king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up."

Nebuchadnezzar was angry, but he must have thought highly of these 3 young men because He gave them a second chance:

"Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe, and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, very well. But if you will not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?"

The great golden statue stood neglected as every ear strained to hear their response.

They didn’t need time to think it over. Their loyalty to God could not be threatened or coerced or manipulated. It didn’t exist only when times were good and things were going their way, No!! It was constant, fierce and unshakable:

"Your majesty, we have no need to answer you on this matter. If there is a god who is able to save us from the blazing furnace, it is the God we serve; He will deliver us from your majesty’s power.... BUT IF NOT, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up."

In a flash Nebuchadnezzar’s countenance changed. Who did these three captives think they were? No body.... I mean NO BODY defied the king. He is Nebuchadnezzar and they are a conquered people!!

He ordered the furnace to be heated 7 times hotter than usual and commanded his strongest soldiers to bind Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego and throw them into the furnace.

As the soldiers, carrying the three, approached the mouth of the furnace, the flames and the heat were so intense that as Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were thrown in, the soldiers collapsed and died. And so, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, firmly tied, fell into the furnace.

At least they died quickly. Oh well, back to the statue.....

But wait! Nebuchadnezzar leapt to his feet. His voice shaking, he turned to his advisers and asked, ***"Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?"***

Advisers: *You are correct, O king.*

King: *Then why do I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed? And the fourth looks like a son of the gods.*

Nebuchadnezzar approached the mouth of the furnace and shouted, ***"Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!"***

Into the furnace they were thrown. Out of the furnace they walked. They were not burned. Their hair was not singed. Their clothing was not scorched. No smell of fire lingered on them.

Humbled, Nebuchadnezzar said,

"Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore, I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way."

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were promoted in the province of Babylon.

What do we do with this story?

At the heart of this story are 2 overarching words: Faith and Loyalty.

Faith is a verb. Oswald Chambers said it this way, ***"Faith is not intelligent understanding. Faith is deliberate commitment to a Person where I see no way out."***

They had faith in the faithfulness of God and in turn they were loyal, faithful, devoted and committed to Him.

We have the advantage of skipping to the end of the story to see how it all turns out - they did not have the same luxury. They did not know what the outcome would be, but they knew the One who would determine the outcome and they were unmovable in their faith.

God choosing to save them or not save them was not the issue for them. Remaining loyal to Him was the issue, which meant, **WE WILL NOT BOW. REGARDLESS. PERIOD.** What God chose to do after that was irrelevant.

That kind of faith/faithfulness is not born in crisis. It is developed over years of being in **RELATIONSHIP** with God.

What would your response have been? If someone were to read the story of your life, would they find you standing or tying your sandals?

When you stand for God you will stand out. It may be painful. It may not always have a happy ending. None of that matters. What matters is whether or not you **STAND.**

"Your majesty, we have no need to answer you on this matter. If there is a god who is able to save us from the blazing furnace, it is our GOD whom we serve; He will deliver us from your majesty's power.... then they added, BUT IF NOT, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up."