

FEASTING ON THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

Faithful to Work for Good

Daniel 3

INTRODUCTION: Welcome! Lots of new faces! Welcome back!

Still glad to have those worshipping online with us.

Lifecchange Groups

Today!

Kid Zone Live – K to 6th grade.

Youth Lifecchange Groups

Last week we saw how God was faithful to Daniel to develop his character to be a man that was humble, polite, hard-working, unassuming, and meek.

- As Daniel cooperated with God's development of his character, God was faithful to give him favor with those in authority.
- As Daniel made prayer a regular part of his life, God was faithful to answer his prayers.
- As Daniel was willing to work hard at his studies, most especially studying the Word of God, the Lord was faithful to give Daniel wisdom.

This morning, we are going to stay in the Book of Daniel, but I want us to look not at Daniel himself, but at his three friends, and the way God demonstrated His faithfulness in their lives. Surely we will be able to identify with these three men because we read about their lives during a time of trial. This is especially appropriate today as we look forward to July 4, the birthday of our country. For while we have the guarantee of religious liberty written into our Constitution in the Bill of Rights, that principle is very much under attack today. The Bible speaks of Babylon not only in the Old Testament but also in the New where it is associated with the antichrist. The spirit of Babylon is rising in our nation. We need to be prepared as these three men were.

We have been through, are still are going through, great times of trial, but I dare say that our trials are not as great as theirs was. Nonetheless, when we see, or when we remember how God showed His abundant faithfulness to these men, we will surely see how He can and will show us His faithfulness as well.

When the events of Daniel Chapter 2 came to an end, all was well with our four young men who had been captured and brought from Jerusalem to Babylon: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

- God had told Daniel the dream He sent to Nebuchadnezzar and its interpretation.
- They had all been made a part of the magi, the wise men of Babylon.
- All four of these young men had proven themselves as men of faith and prayer.
- They had also been instruments to demonstrate the great wisdom of the One True and Living God who not only created the world but who determines its destiny and the destiny of all who live upon it.

Following their revelation of King Nebuchadnezzar's startling dream and its interpretation,

- Daniel and his friends were all promoted.
- Daniel was made to be the head of the Magi and became a personal counselor to the king.
- Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, known in Babylon as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were given authority over the province of Babylon.
- Thus they served in the government of the powerful King Nebuchadnezzar for the next 24 years, all the while maintaining their faith in the one true God.

Later, and at a time when Daniel was apparently out of the city on a mission for the king, an event occurred which brought fear and trembling to the heart of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.

- Outside the city of Babylon, on the plain of Dura, a large circular plain often used for athletic events, an unusual construction project had begun.
- The pagan King Nebuchadnezzar had commanded his artisans to build a golden statue nine feet wide and 90 feet tall.
- As the colossus rose from the ground day by day during the construction, the rumor abounded that Nebuchadnezzar was building it so that everyone in the kingdom might worship the image in honor of Nebuchadnezzar and his pagan gods.

When the structure was finally complete, the worst fears of the trio were confirmed.

- Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed a day in which every government official would join him in a special place before the statue on the plain in the presence of all the people.

- Nebuchadnezzar had assembled the royal orchestra and before all the people had his heralds proclaim,

Daniel 3:4-6 NKJV 4 “To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, 5 that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, **you shall fall down and worship the gold image** that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; 6 and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

So when Nebuchadnezzar gave the signal and the royal orchestra played,

- all the people gathered on the vast plain before the imposing image and powerful king, bowed in worship of Nebuchadnezzar and his gods.
- That is all but three: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.
- They were summoned into the presence of the king.
- Remember, they were not just three men in a great crowd. They were leaders, officials over the whole province of Babylon.

Daniel 3:13-14 NKJV 13 Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, “*Is it true*, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, *that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?*”

A better translation of “is it true?” is “is it on purpose?” that you do not worship the gold image? Here was a chance to escape, to compromise. To say they did not understand or make some other excuse. Nebuchadnezzar continued,

Daniel 3:15 NKJV Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, *good!* But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who *is* the god who will deliver you from my hands?”

Everyone knew the furnace Nebuchadnezzar was talking about.

- It also was there on the plain of Dura and its customary use was for the making of bricks for the vast construction projects of the kingdom.
- But it had been used before as a chamber of execution, and the Babylonians were known for burning their prisoners to death.
- This was no idle threat but a very present danger, and the three men knew it well.

- Yet their response was calm and determined.

Daniel 3:16-18 NKJV 16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. 18 But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

The Scripture says, Daniel 3:19-30 19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. 20 And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who *were* in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, *and cast them* into the burning fiery furnace. 21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their *other* garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22 Therefore, because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

24 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."

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.**"

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace *and* spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come *here*." Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. 27 And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

28 Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! 29 Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because **there is no other God who can deliver like this.**"

30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

And why did the Almighty God cause this account to be recorded in His Word? Certainly not merely for our entertainment like some short story to be read with amusement and forgotten. He has preserved it for us because it communicates a principle sorely needed by every man, woman,

teenager, boy, and girl on the face of the earth. We need it now, but we are going to need it more in times to come.

Here it is. Listen; write it down; memorize it; know it.

GOD PERMITS ADVERSITY IN THE LIVES OF HIS CHILDREN FOR THEIR GOOD AND HIS GLORY.

God permitted this trial by fire to come upon His children.

He could have prevented building of image.

He could have destroyed furnace.

He could have had them to be absent as was Daniel.

...but instead He permitted it!

God permitted it for the good of the three men.

Their faith was deepened and enlarged.

Their testimony was enhanced.

Their opportunity for service was increased (promoted).

God was glorified by their successfully going through the trial.

His presence was revealed.

His power was displayed.

His promises were proven true.

The same is true in our lives.

GOD WILL PERMIT ADVERSITY TO COME IN OUR LIVES FOR OUR GOOD AND HIS GLORY.

1 Peter 4:12-13 NKJV 12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

In Psalm 23, we are not promised a way around or over the valley but the sustaining companionship of the Good Shepherd through the valley.

The presence of adversity in our life is not an indication the God has abandoned us,

- but on the contrary that God wants to work even more actively in our lives,
- for our good,
- and His glory.

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR ALLOWING ADVERSITY IN OUR LIFE IS FOR OUR GOOD.

For purification of our lives from sin.

This does not seem to be the case with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. This is not always the reason for adversity.

The disciples of Jesus once ... asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. John 9:2-3 NKJV

But if there is unconfessed and unrepented sin in our lives, God certainly will use adversity for our good to motivate us to repent and confess that our lives may be pure.

Hebrews 12:6-7 NKJV *For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.* If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

When adversity comes, the first question we ought to ask is, "Is there unconfessed and unrepented sin in my life that the Lord in His desire to do good for me is motivating me to deal with?"

If the answer is yes then

1 John 1:9 NKJV If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If there is no unrepented sin in your life, there are other ways God wants to accomplish good in your life through adversity.

- **For the deepening and enlarging of your faith.**
- **God may use adversity to bring you to faith.**
- **For the enhancing of your testimony.**
- **For the increase of your opportunity for service.**

My strongest testimonies of God working in my life have come through the adversities I have been through.

My largest opportunities for service have come through adversities.

Illustration of Pat and Judith Murphey and illness of their daughter Kristin.

- God brought them to faith through the adversity.
- Later God enlarged and deepened their faith as medical science gave up and they were thrust into total dependence on the Lord alone.
- God enhanced their testimony and enlarged their service such that by the time Kristin went to be with Jesus, more than 60 individuals had been saved as others sought the source of strength and peace demonstrated in the Murphey's lives.

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR ADVERSITY IS THAT AS HIS GOAL FOR OUR GOOD IS ACCOMPLISHED, HE IS GLORIFIED - HE IS MADE KNOWN TO OTHERS.

A. His presence is shown.

B. His power is revealed.

C. His promises are proven true.

Have you been thinking, "If I could just get past this trouble, this difficulty, this adversity, then I could really serve the Lord and glorify Him."?

What we need to do is to glorify Him in the midst of the adversity rather than seeking an escape from it.

If we will honor Him in the midst of it, He will be glorified!

CONCLUSION: Many are in the midst of adversity right now in your life. Hurricane, COVID, Job, Family, other

- If you are lost, this is God's opportunity for you to come to Him in faith thru Christ.

If you are saved but you are aware of sin that is unrepented and unconfessed, God could be using these things to bring you to repentance.

- If saved and no known sin,
- then say with me,
 - Lord, I want You to use this painful period in my life for my good,
 - to deepen faith, to enhance my testimony, to enlarge my service,
 - to reveal Your presence, power, and promises in my life.

I want to cooperate in faith with You and for You to be glorified in me.

In Jesus' Name.