

## **20240804 Faith in the fire – Ps Bijoy**

Daniel 3:17- 27

“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. <sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>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.

<sup>19</sup>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. <sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>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. <sup>22</sup>Therefore, because the king’s command was <sup>[c]</sup>urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. <sup>23</sup>And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

<sup>24</sup>Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste *and* spoke, saying to his <sup>[c]</sup>counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?”

They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.”

<sup>25</sup>“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.”

<sup>26</sup>Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the <sup>[c]</sup>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. <sup>27</sup>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.”

What a sight it must have been! Grand enough to be an attraction of the empire, a gigantic golden statue is on display. The proportion of the width and height of the statue would have provided the spectators with an impression that it is piercing into the sky. Gold in colour, it would shine from near and far.

The royal mandate compels everyone to participate in paying homage to the king's image. The herald issues the command to "peoples, nations, and languages," underscoring that this ritual is designed to unify the empire. Non-compliance to the king's order will result in death. The public event makes three Jewish young people stand out, for they missed the ceremony. And they were accused of sedition. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were appointed to govern in the province of Babylon after Daniel interpreted the king's dream in chapter 2. The king charges these young men with two counts of offense, one religious ("you do not serve my gods," verse 14) and the other political (refusing what the king commanded). The accused (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) are given one last chance to correct their error. Refusal will result in execution by burning in the furnace. The king makes it clear that there is no other option for them.

The three young men reject the royal offer. They are not interested in getting out of the problem somehow. They present two possible scenarios. First, God can deliver them, making it unnecessary for them to find a way out by surrendering to the idol worship. Second, even if God does not come to their aid, they will not worship the golden statue that the king had built. The two scenarios not only show their commitment to God. They also hint at a time when the faithful faced the martyr's death without seeing God's miraculous intervention.

Verse 18 says, <sup>18</sup> 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." Here the "If not" is a very real possibility, especially in the short term. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego surrender their future to God, not to Nebuchadnezzar. In the process they do not tie God's hands. Death does not limit or end God's capacity to create a future.

If the three had known in advance that they would be spared from death in the furnace, they would be following a mere formula; the results would be in their control. God is not a vending machine into which we insert our faithfulness and out comes the reward we are seeking. In

the midst of persecution, the persecuted don't have a formula. As with their prayer in 2:17-18, they trust God but do not presume upon God.

In our day of compromise, we have a pattern of spiritual courage in Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego. Rather to submit to new age thinking of religion, they were prepared to give their lives. Their love for God was of greater importance than even their own lives. The king could kill their bodies, but their souls were secure with God.

Sometimes in this walk there may come times when we find ourselves in the fire, but we must not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened unto you: "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's suffering that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." And we need to affirm our faith as the hymnist has written: Standing on the promises that cannot fail, when the howling storms of doubt assail, By the living word of God I shall prevail, standing on the promises of God.

When we have convictions and stand for what we believe in people are drawn in. Use these three men as an example of the impact that we can have on people if we would only stand for the truth and not bow down and give in.

If you want to impact the world, stand up for what you believe in and live out your convictions.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego serve as great examples of the impact a completely dedicated Christian can have on the world. As we read other stories in the Bible we see the same thing. Those people who take a stand are people of influence, but we know nothing of those who gave in. They didn't impact people by giving in.

If you really truly with all your heart believe what is in God's Word than live it out with integrity and conviction, not willing to bow down or give in.

Shadrach Meshach and Abednego didn't bow they didn't bend, and they didn't burn and neither will those who stand for him today.