

Exiled—A Study in the OT book of Daniel

Week 3: The Power To Resist

I. Introduction:

A. Do you have a story of rescue? Being saved out the fire? The fire could be literal or it could be metaphorical, standing for some desperate situation.

B. My rescue from the desert in a motorcycle accident.

- Growing up my family took weekend trips to El Mirage dry lake bed here in So. Cals high desert. The dry lake was perfect for riding motorcycles.
- My dad would help orient me in case I ever got lost though we were required to travel in pairs. I took a neighbor friend with us and when we went to go riding he gave me a pair of his riding goggles.
- I found myself riding alone and a small dust-devil whipped up upon the lake-bed. My eyes started to burn as the foam seal on the goggles was worn and dust came into my goggles. I closed my eyes for a moment to stop some of the burning. They were closed too long.
- El Mirage has many bumps and humps on the periphery of the lake. They are great fun to jump over and to use as obstacles while riding. But this time they acted as a wall. I unexpectedly slammed into one and went flying over the handle bars landing on my head. I was knocked out instantly while my helmet saved my life. I laid in the heat of the desert for an unknown amount of time.
- I didn't realize but my helmet visor had broken off and shaved the side of face, so I lay bleeding in the hot sun. A few times I woke to consciousness, recalling the words of my father. Trying to orient myself in the desert finding the mountain to locate my family's base camp. Trying to maintain focus amidst my confusion and concussion, I would fall back unconscious.
- I recall opening my eyes, hearing another motorcycle, and a lone rider hurriedly stopping before me as I lay there looking up from the desert floor. He place me on the back of his bike, drove me to a near by motor-home. As the owner of the motor-home began to tend to my wounds, they were to discern out of my confused instructions where my parents camp was located. The rider found my parent, they came to get retrieve me, and drove me to Kaiser Hospital in Fontana where I spent the night.
- I made a reasonably fast recover and was able to make it to my 6th grade graduation party.

C. In the fiery desert a lone man rescued me. Some of us have a story of rescue out of the fires of life. Arguably, one of the most famous stories of rescue out of the fire comes from the book of Daniel where **Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego** are thrown into the fiery furnace for their faith in Yahweh.

II. Review

A. **Historical Context:** After an agonizing siege Jerusalem was devastated in the summer of 587 B.C. by King Nebuchadnezzar and his superior forces from Babylon. The citizens of Judah are carted east in a relocation program and are forced to live as exiles in Babylonian cities. Recall that some Jews rise to high positions in public service for the king—Daniel and his companions are some of them.

B. **Over the last few weeks—*Faith Under Pressure*:**

1. **Daniel & friends are Resident Aliens/Strangers** (1 Peter 2:9-17)
2. **The God of wisdom is in control.**
3. **Faith is not opposed to suffering.**
4. **Daniel & friends must be winsome and wise living with a faith under pressure.**

C. Today it is Daniel's companions that find their faith under pressure.

III. **The Text: Daniel 3:1-30** (New International Version)

A. **Neby's new toy:**

1 King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

Commentary: After hearing the interpretation of a vision—from chapter 2—that the head of gold in a statue represents his kingdom, one wonders whether Neby attempts to defy God and prove that his kingdom will have no end. That he is not like the statue of mixed metals representing degrees of strength. Rather Neby's kingdom will be solid gold, pure, and unending.

Neby summons many dignitaries and official to come pay tribute to the image, which represents his kingdom, power, and reign.

4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed, “This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language: 5 As soon as 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. 6 Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.”

The music plays and the people fall down and worship. Yet there are three who march to a different drummer.

Servants of the king tattle to the king, **12 “But 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.”**

Furious with rage Neby says...**15 Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and**

worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

Neby with great rage orders the furnace heated up—*is he worried that it is not hot enough*—and the 3 men thrown into it. The soldiers are swallowed up by the flames as the 3 companions are hurled into the fire.

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" They replied, "Certainly, O king."

25 He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego come out of the fire...They see that the fire did not harm their bodies, nor was a hair of their head singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them. *If I BBQ I smell like smoke...*

28 Then 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. 29 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."

30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

IV. Bridging the Historical Contexts

A. **What do we learn about God? God is in control.** "The God we serve is able to save us," and if he chooses to do so "he will rescue us from your hand, O king."

B. **What do we learn about human nature?** We can think too highly of ourselves or we can think too lowly of ourselves—humility stands between these two extremes. Nebuchadnezzar fails to understand that he is established by God and that he is not made God.

C. What do we learn about people of faith?

1. They are informed and formed by the Scriptures.

D. God saves (rescue, recover, revive, resuscitate) them in the fire not from the fire. (John Calvin) God saves us in the fire not from the fire. God saves us in our trials not from our trials.

People of faith do not demand or expect God's immediate rescue in trials. They pray for it, they hope for it, they work for it but they leave the results to God himself.

- Noah was saved in the flood not from it.
- Jonah met God in the storm and in the fish but was not saved from it.
- Joseph and his family were saved in Egypt not from it.
- Moses and the Israelites are saved in the Red Sea not from it.

Pray that God saves, strengthens, rescues, recovers, revive, resuscitates, you in your "fire". Pray for rescue, hope for it, work for it but leave the results to God himself.

B. The young men are willing to die for their faith. The fourth man that "looks like the son of the gods" is in fact Jesus. Jesus is our rescuer. Jesus referring to the scare tactics of the Pharisees declares, **"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. 32 Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. 33 But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven."** (Matthew 10:28-32)

Hebrews 12:1 **"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."**