

Facing the Fire

Text: Daniel 3:19-30

Introduction:

1. This chapter again demonstrates the truth which is the central theme of the Book – God reigns! Note Nebuchadnezzar’s reference in Vs. 26 to “*the most high God*”
2. In our last lesson we studied the courageous, uncompromising stand of Daniel’s three friends they took against Nebuchadnezzar’s idolatrous statue. In this lesson we are faced with the consequences of the stand they took and how God miraculously brought them through the fiery furnace. Some wonderful principles to encourage us to endure the fiery trials God allows in our lives as believers (1 Peter 4:12-13)
3. Hugh Latimer was martyred along with Dr Nicholas Ridley in 1555 during the reign of bloody Queen Mary who viciously persecuted the protestant believers. As a lighted fagot was laid at Dr. Ridley’s feet, Hugh Latimer said, “Be of good comfort, Mr. Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle by God’s grace in England as I trust never shall be put out.” (Foxes Book of Martyrs)
4. Note three principles about the fiery trial these men went through

I. Their Placement in the Fire (Vs. 19-23)

Consider their placement in the fire from...

A. The Earthly Perspective (Vs. 19-23)

1. The King’s Fury (Vs. 19-21)
 - a. The ferocity of his countenance (Vs. 19a)
 - i. ‘visage’ = the face; the countenance or look of a person (Webster). His anger caused his face to be contorted and twisted with rage; his eyes flashed and the color in his cheeks rose.
 - ii. ‘against’ = his murderous intention against these men was etched into his face.
 - iii. Taking a stand against sin and compromise will provoke the fiercest of tempers, not just from the lost world but also from the compromised believer who has allowed the spirit of the world to take hold of his inner life.
 - b. The ferocity of his command (Vs. 19b-20)
 - i. Burning – furnace heated 7 times more than it was normally heated. “This was a furnace for baking bricks...Thousands of Nebuchadnezzar’s building bricks have been unearthed inscribed with his own name and many of them are in museums.” (Cloud) The more

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impossible the situation became, the more the stage was being set for the glory of God.

- ii. Binding – they are bound by Nebuchadnezzar’s elite soldiers to ensure no mistake was made!
2. The King’s Foolishness (Vs. 22-23)
 - a. His command was hasty (Vs. 22a)
 - i. Prov. 14:17 *“He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly...”*
 - ii. Prov. 19:2 *“...he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.”*
 - b. His command was costly (Vs. 22b)
 - i. He lost some of his best men to the fire he had intended to slay the three men.
 - ii. Anger always hurts and damages others!

B. The Heavenly Perspective (1 Peter 4:12-16)

1. High above Nebuchadnezzar, the earthly king, God was still on the throne. He Sovereignly allowed these men to go through this fiery trial so that an occasion would be made for His own glory and honor.
2. Job 23:10 *“But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”*
3. Illustration: Joseph recognized the sovereignty of God in his trial.
 - i. Gen. 45:5 *“Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for **God did send me before you to preserve life.**”*
 - ii. Gen. 50:19-20 *“And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but **God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.**”*

II. Their Preservation in the Fire (Vs. 24-27)

These men experienced...

A. Fellowship in the Fire (Vs. 24-25)

1. “Christ was with these men in the fiery furnace. He doesn’t always deliver His people from trials, but He always accompanies them in trials.” (Cloud)
2. They were unloosed - the only thing the fire consumed was the ropes or chains that had bound them. The Lord is able to direct the fire to deal with those things that bind us and hinder us from being all that we could be for him. Only God can take a fiery trial that would otherwise damage and even destroy the believer and make it work for his good (Rom. 8:28).
3. They were unhurt – the fire had no power over them. They experienced the fulfilment of God’s promise in Isaiah 43:1-2 *“But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have*

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*called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: **when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.***” These men “quenched the violence of fire” (Heb. 11:34)

4. Philippians 3:10 *“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and **the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;**”*
5. There is a certain depth of fellowship with Christ that can be only experienced in the furnace of affliction.
6. Illustration: Near to the Heart of God (1903) (Hymn)

Cleland B. McAfee was the chaplain and choir director of Park College in Missouri. When communion services came, he would write the words and music of a response which his choir could sing and which would fit into the theme of his sermon. One terrible week, just before a communion Sunday, the two little daughters of his brother Howard and sister in law Lucy died of diphtheria within 24 hours of each other. The college family and town were stricken with grief. Cleland sat long and late thinking of what could be said in word and song on the coming Sunday. He wrote a stirring hymn, the choir learned it at the regular Saturday night rehearsal, and afterward they went to the Howard McAfee’s home and sang it as they stood under the sky outside the darkened, quarantined house;

There is a place of quiet rest, Near to the heart of God; A place where sin cannot molest, Near to the heart of God. There is a place of comfort sweet, Near to the heart of God; A place where we our Saviour meet, Near to the heart of God. There is a place of full release, Near to the heart of God; A place where all is joy and peace, Near to the heart of God. O Jesus, blest Redeemer, sent from the heart of God, Hold us, who wait before Thee, Near to the heart of God.

B. Freedom from the Fire (Vs. 26-27)

1. The timing of their deliverance (Vs. 26) Note the word ‘then’. God will only allow us to remain in the fire for as long as is in His perfect will. In His time, He brings us out of it.
2. The testimony of their deliverance (Vs. 27)
 - a. Think of the impact this would have had on that vast audience of the key rulers from all over the empire.
 - b. So complete was God’s Divine protection of them that not one hair on their heads was singed, nor did they even have the smell of smoke upon them.
3. Read Romans 5:1-5 and discern the cycle of Christian growth that takes place in our trials (tribulation – patience – experience – hope)

III. Their Promotion after the Fire (Vs. 28-30)

There was a...

A. New Proclamation (Vs. 28-29)

1. “there is no other God that can deliver after this sort” – what a change in attitude from the words Nebuchadnezzar had uttered only a short time before (See Vs. 15)

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2. Belief in the One True God of Israel is now given protections by the king of Babylon. This would mean that the truth could be freely proclaimed throughout the whole empire. The decree was addressed to “every people, nation and language” and would have been published in the official languages of the empire. Through this situation, God gave light concerning Himself to multitudes of people. Now think how things would have been different if these men had compromised! Truly God’s eyes run to and fro seeking for such men and women through whom He can work mightily (2 Chr. 16:9)

B. A New Position (Vs. 30)

1. These men are a testimony to us again of the truth that when we honor God, He will honor us (1 Sam. 2:30). They were actually in a better position for having gone through the fire than if they had bowed the knee of compromise.
2. For you, God’s promotion of you will be unique, depending on what the nature of your trial is.
3. Note: If things had turned out for the worse on the human level and these men were martyred, God would still be wise and good and their promotion would be into glory. Either way, whether in life or death, the believer is victorious! Remember the ‘others’ mentioned in Hebrew’s Hall of Faith (Heb. 11:32-40)

Conclusion: How are you viewing your trials? Are you trusting and resting in God for His will and purpose to be accomplished? Will you say, “thy way is perfect” (Psalm 18:30 & 32) even if it doesn’t seem so from the human standpoint?

When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie

My grace all sufficient shall be thy supply

The flames shall not hurt thee, I only design

Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.