"FAITH THROUGH THE FIRE"

Daniel 3:1-30
3-21-2021

INTRODUCTION: Verses 1-7

I. True Faith Will Always be <u>TESTED</u> by the World (v. 8-15)
(The <u>Test</u> of Faith)

II. True Faith Will Always be <u>OBEDIENT</u> to the Word (v. 16-23)
(The <u>Tenacity</u> of Faith)

III. True Faith Will Always be <u>REWARDED</u> by the Lord (v. 24-27, 30)
(The <u>Triumph</u> of Faith)

God rewards the <u>faithful</u> with:

A. His <u>Presence</u> (v. 24-25)

B. His <u>Protection</u> (v. 26-27)

C. His <u>Promotion</u> (v. 26-27)

IV. True Faith Will Always Bring <u>Glory</u> to God (v. 28-29)
(The <u>Testimony</u> of Faith)

CONCLUSION:

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INTRODUCTION: Verses 1-7

In the "Hall of Fame" - Hebrews 11 - among those heroes mentioned, God calls attention to these three men by saying that they "quenched the violence of fire" (Heb. 11:34)

"It all happened ten miles south of the capital city, in the plains of Dura. Here is the story of a powerful totalitarian government enforcing state religion." (Robert D. Foster, Daniel, "The Challenge", Colorado Springs, p. 14).

V. 1

"An image of gold" - a statue about 90 feet high by 9 feet wide overlaid with gold.

What prompted King Nebuchadnezzar to erect such an image?

1) Evidently He built it in response to his dream of the great image depicted in Dan. 2:31ff.

2) He had it overlaid with gold, no doubt, to honor himself - for in his dream he was depicted by the head of gold (2:32, 38)

His basic motivation was vain glory; pride (cp. Dan. 4) (the image probably resembled the king - cp. Rev. 13:14-15).

V. 2
The king ordered all of Babylon's dignitaries to come to the dedication ceremony of his image.

V. 4
Worship of Nebuchadnezzar's image was universal law.

V. 5
Music is very often connected to worship (whether true or false worship).

--True Worship -

Ex: When the ark was returned to Jerusalem (II Sam. 6:5, 15)

Ex: Solomon's dedication of the Temple (II Chron. 5:12-13)

Ex: Psalm 150

--False Worship -

Ex: The golden calf - Exod. 32:17-19

V. 6

The law was simple: "Bow or burn!"

V. 7

"Therefore" - Because of the serious consequences to anyone who did not bow, "when all the people heard. . ." they submitted.

It's amazing what fear and intimidation will cause people to do.

If, at the worship time, someone were to photograph the scene, in the middle of the picture you would see the glimmering, golden metal statue evidently in the form of a human; you would see an ocean of backs bowed toward the image. And in the midst of these worshippers you would notice three protrusions silhouetted against the background of the horizon -- three figures which stood out in nonconformity to the rest of the scene -- three men who would not so much as bend a muscle to give credence to Nebuchadnezzar's idol.

I. True Faith Will Always be TESTED by the World (v. 8-15)

(The Test of Faith)

V. 8

"Accused" = lit. "They ATE it up." With feelings of jealousy and anti-semitism, they happily devoured these Jews verbally.

"Accused the Jews" - God's chosen people have always been accused.

EX:Daniel accused before Darius (Dan. 6:12-13)
Israel accused before Artaxerxes (Ezr. 4:12-13)
Israel accused by Haman before Ahasuerus (Est. 3:8-10)
God's saints accused by Satan before God (Rev. 12:10; Ex: Job 1:9-11, 2:4-5)

V. 12

"There are certain Jews" - NOTE: Only a very small remnant (three men) refused to bow. God always has His faithful remnant.

Many times to do right, we have to be in the minority, among the few faithful.

"Whom Thou hast set over the affairs of...Babylon" -

The pressures of high position and fame and worldly dignity did not influence the three Hebrews into compromise.

"Because of their high position in the governmental structure, they probably were near the front of the crowd of worshippers where they could be easily seen" (Walton, RBP, Daniel, p. 27)

Rather than simply getting to the point of contention (namely, that the 3 Hebrews didn't worship the king's image), the accusers add on a couple more accusations to increase the wrath of the king toward them.

"Not regarded thee" - a false accusation. Not to bow before the king's idol does not mean that they did not respect the king.

V. 13

"In his rage and fury" - It is amazing how hurt pride (v. 12) can alter the emotions.

Nebuchadnezzar was not know for self-control over his spirit (cp. his rage in 2:12).

V. 15

"Now if ye be ready..." - The king offers them one more chance.

Bowing to the king's image would have been an easy thing to justify. After all:

1)Everyone else is doing it (v. 7)

2)Aren't we supposed to obey government?
(Yes, but not when government commands us to do something against our higher Authority - God's Word. Ex: Dan. 6; Acts 4:19-20, 5:29)

[NOTE: Standing up against the unjust demands of government seems to be a

major theme in the book of Daniel. EX:

Dan. 1 - the mean and wine
Dan. 3 - false worship
Dan. 6 - prohibited prayer
Dan. 7:25 - pressures by Antichrist
Dan. 8:24 - pressures by Antiochus Epiphanies]

3)Merely to bow is not so bad, if in my heart I do not bow. Is it?

It would be wrong on three counts:

a)It's hypocrisy (Everything about God's people should be sincere and genuine - Our heart should match our life)

b)It's a bad testimony (Because these 3 Hebrews remained true to the end, they no doubt had a tremendous impact on the pagans of Babylon)

c)It's disobedience (Sin is never justified. For them to bow was to violate the clearly stated commands of God)

Ex. 20:3-5b - "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them."

Cp. Deut. 6:13-15, 10:20

"Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" - Nebuchadnezzar in a mocking manner, full of pride, with feelings of unchallengeable power basically insults their God, saying: "How could your God deliver you out of my hands?"

"When I throw you into the scorching flames, there is no god in the universe that would be able to rescue you from my hand!"

Nebuchadnezzar had the audacity to say this because he did not know El Elyon - the Most High God!

"He did not realize that the God who gave the Jews into his hand (1:2) could also deliver from his hands." (Walton, p. 28).

Why does God allow trials? Basically: to test our heart (Deut. 8:2-3). All trials are essentially a test of our faith (James 1:2-3).

*Job 23:10 - "For He knoweth the way that I take; when He hath tried me I shall

come forth as gold."

It's easy to say we have "convictions" until they are tested.

A true conviction, however, is a belief you are willing to die for.

The test of a man's convictions is what he will compromise.

Whatever you compromise on is not a true conviction with you.

You may be intellectually convinced of some things, but until those convictions alter your life, actions, and reactions, etc., you are not truly convicted.

II. True Faith Will Always be OBEDIENT to the Word (v. 16-23)

(The Tenacity of Faith)

V. 16

"We are not carefully to answer thee" - We do not need to answer you about this matter of who God is and what He can do (v. 15); (He Himself will prove this to you).

V. 17

"If it be so" - If we are executed as you have said.

Ex: Hymn - "He is Able to Deliver Thee."

Can God deliver?

Job 5:19 - "He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee."

Ps. 27:1-2 - "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell."

Is. 26:3-4 - "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

Jer. 1:8 - "Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the

Lord."

Is. 43:2 - "When thou passesth 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."

"He will deliver us" - a confident statement of faith.

How did these three men have so much confidence in their God?

Answer:

1)They had seen His faithfulness in the past (Dan. 1:15, 17ff)

2)They had seen Him answer prayer in their lives (Dan. 2:17-19) (they had already experienced their God doing the impossible)

V. 18

"But if not" - they recognized that though God is fully able, it may not be His will.

They didn't question God's ability, only God's will; not His power but His purpose (perhaps God would not choose to deliver).

Their faith was anchored in God's person, not in His benefits.

"At that time of trial and pressure, it isn't a matter of questioning God's ability or power, but of His will. God can deliver, but if not? God can heal, but if not? God can do the impossible, but if not?" (Foster, p. 15).

"We will not" - a statement of firm conviction.

Their mind was made up; they were not wavering; they (like Daniel - 1:8) had purposed in their hearts not to bend, bow, or budge; but to burn if it was God's will.

These three men had enough character (conviction) not to bow down, even without their leader, Daniel, being present.

The same conviction is needed today:

--We will not give in to the pressures of society to conform to it.

--We will not bend on Bible principles to appease anyone.

--We will not disobey God so that we can obey man.

The same conviction will be needed in the future: When the image to the Antichrist is erected and the mark of the Beast is mandatory (Rev. 13:14-18, 14:9-12).

Too many of God's people lack backbone, persistence, stick-to-it-iveness, courage, grit, and guts.

It is good for you to be "strong-willed" if your will matches God's!

There is a time to be stubborn, a time to be narrow-minded, a time to be inflexible, a time to be "mule-ish."

"They did not attempt to make a deal with God - "God, if you deliver us now,w e will serve you later." (Walton, p. 29).

EX: of people who try to gain God's favor and help by making promises contingent upon His doing something good for them:

Faith obeys! Faith without works is not faith at all! (James 2:18-26)

V. 19

"The form of his visage was changed" -

Nebuchadnezzar went from being infuriated (v.f 13) to apparently cool and controlled (v. 14-18) and back to a red-faced, nose-flaring, salivating wild savage.

Heating the furnace seven times hotter actually accomplished nothing, except to kill the king's own mighty men (v. 22). Actually a cooler flame would have killed the 3 Hebrews more slowly and therefore have been more torturous.

V. 20
"Burning fiery furnace" - a kiln used for refining metal. Evidently, the same furnace used to refine the gold for Nebuchadnezzar's image, will now be used to refine the faith of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

V. 21
"Coats" = robes
"Hosen" = trousers (pants)
"Hats" = turbans
"Other garments" = other clothing

The king, not wasting any time, had them bound with their full attire on.
V. 22

Because the soldiers acted in haste (in hurried manner) to obey the orders of the king, and because the flames had now reached outside of the furnace itself, they themselves were killed by the fire.

V. 23

"The story mentioned eleven times "Fall down and worship." What do you do when there is no Plan B? They "fell down!" Not to worship the false god stretching 90 feet into the mideastern sky, but they "fell down bound tightly with ropes into the fiery inferno" (Foster, p. 16).

III. True Faith Will Always be REWARDED by the Lord (v. 24-27, 30)
(The Triumph of Faith)

God rewards the faithful with:

A. His Presence (v. 24-25)

V. 24

Our victory over the pressures of the world is our faith (I Jn. 5:4).

"These men were to be microwaved, roasted, grilled, fried, baked, barbecued, and burnt to a crisp" (Foster, p. 16) . . . but the king saw something totally different!

Nebuchadnezzar looking into the furnace's vents sees something unusual.

"Astonied" = astonished, startled, in shock.

V. 25

"Loose" = not bound

"Walking" = not burning

"The form of the fourth is like the Son of God" = the appearance of the fourth one in the furnace looked like a divine being.

To polytheistic Nebuchadnezzar, he thought he saw the Son of one of his gods. IN reality, the One he saw was Jesus Christ, the Son of God! A Christophany of pre-incarnate appearance of Christ.

The safest place in the universe (even in the midst of a fiery furnace), is in the presence of Jesus Christ. I would rather be in the fire with Him, than out of the fire without Him.

This One was . . . "deity in the form of an angelic being . . . This is the same One who walked with Enoch, feasted with Abraham, wrestled with Jacob, spoke to Moses from a burning bush, [provided water to Israel], and later appeared to Joshua as Captain of the Sovereign Host" (Foster, p. 16).

EX: the disciples had no need to worry when int he midst of a storm, for Jesus was sleeping in the lower deck of the ship (Mark 4:35-41).

Jesus says to His children: "I am with you always" (Mt 28:20).

As He said to John: "Fear not" (Rev. 1:17).

B.His Protection (v. 26-27)

V. 27

"the fire had no power" - Jesus Christ who controls the elements -- for He created the elements (Jn. 1:3, 10; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2 -- stripped the fire of its power to consume their flesh or cause a blister or even leave its effect on them -

--Not a hair was singed (the heat of the fire alone, under normal conditions, would have done this).

--Neither were their coats changed - their flammable robes were not scorched.

--Nor the smell of fire - they did not even have the scent of smoke.

The only thing that burned was the rope that bound them! (v. 25 - "loose").

C.His Promotion (v. 26-27)

V. 30 - The three Hebrews were promoted previously for their faith (Dan. 1:19, 2:49, 3:12); now they are exalted even more!

IV. True Faith Will Always Bring Glory to God (v. 28-29)

(The Testimony of Faith)

V. 28

Their unflinching faith and obedience gave God the opportunity to glorify Himself.

When God's children prove their faith in Him, He is glorified by the world (Mt. 5:16) in these ways:

1.He is praised - "blessed..." (v. 28)

a.He is praised for being a personal God ("the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego")

b.He is praised for being a powerful God ("delivered His servants")

"His angel" - lit. His messenger

c.He is praised for being a faithful God ("His servants that trusted in Him")

"changed the king's word" = They defied the king's command and reproved his mocking question (v. 15). The king, who previous said, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" now in humility is forced to say: "There is no other god that can deliver after this sort" (v. 29).

2.He is respected (v. 29)

"No other God" - still a polytheistic statement by the king.

CONCLUSION: