

# Fire and Faith

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[ 0 : 00 ] Heavenly Father, we praise you and we thank you because all that you have and all that you are, you give to us because you are our God. We thank you for redeeming us, and we pray, Father, that by your grace, your power, and through your word that you will help us to worship you in all of our life, to yield our bodies to you for your glory.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Well, these three people, these three very young men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, show us the very important thing that I was telling the children, how to stand up for Jesus.

And these young men are very, they're beautiful figures for us to see because they're young men that were taken away from their parents when they were teenagers.

They were assimilated into the culture of Babylon so that they became leaders in that city. And through them, we see three guys that withstand strong pressure to give up on their God, to demote God from the first place in their life.

And they're very helpful to us. There's two pressures they withstand. And the first pressure was the pressure of seduction and attraction. Because as I told these children, this structure was an engineering marvel.

[ 1 : 29 ] It was beautiful. It had, it's something to be seen for miles and miles around the plain of Dura. And with this statue came great events.

So music would play, beautiful music, with all kinds of instruments. And it brought people of all religions and races together. And then everyone would bow down together.

It was a great festival. Every kind of person was there. It was the big new thing in this great empire. And everybody was about it.

It was the thing. If anyone really wanted to fit in, if they wanted to be successful, they were there.

And they needed to be involved. So how did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego withstand that kind of seduction, that kind of attraction to be unfaithful to God?

Well, when I think of these three guys, I think of icebergs. Strange thing to think about. I should call this fire and ice. Icebergs.

[ 2 : 36 ] Because as impressive as those floating icebergs are that you see, you know that 90% of the iceberg is below the water.

And you cannot see it. And this is the same with these three young men. Because when the king and the people of Babylon saw them in their impressive position, they were seeing just the tip of the iceberg.

What they didn't see about these men was much bigger than their leadership roles. They had a vital relationship with the living God.

And they were very clear about who he is. They're God. And they are his people. And they tended that relationship in their prayers and in their Bible reading from when they were young.

And in fact, thank God for their parents. Because that is how they were able to have that in their hearts when they went to Babylon. That relationship with God defined them.

[ 3 : 39 ] So that all that was happening in this hidden big part of the iceberg shaped their everyday life, their decisions, their ethics, and their hopes in their life.

They knew from his word that God is the living God who created all things. And he holds all cities and all kings in his hand.

So compared to this God, that incredible statue looked cheap and weak. And our idols do as well. So that was that first pressure. That's how they dealt with it. But the second pressure is equally difficult. It is a pressure that comes from fear and loss.

There's a pressure to be unfaithful to God. If they did not give in to this idol worship, they would not only lose their incredibly secure place in society, they would lose their life in a fiery furnace.

[ 4 : 40 ] And I'm sure there was real fear and anxiety that these guys experienced when they considered disobeying that king's order. It is a capital offense.

But again, they knew that there was something far better in their relationship with God. They knew from the Bible that real life was loving their God with all their heart, with all their mind, and with all their soul.

And that understanding was far more powerful than their fear, which was considerable, of loss and pain. It is the thinking that was in that massive hidden part of their iceberg.

So they did not bow down. And the result was not good in the short term for the three guys. King Nebuchadnezzar is furious, as we heard. He takes it personally and he vents his anger against them, which very easily can happen when you stand up for the things of God.

And at first, we see from the story that it seems like God is not going to deliver. They actually go into the fearsome flames. And here is our important application before the happy ending.

[ 5 : 55 ] And I want to close with this. Because all of us, all of you have experienced the fire of loss or deep suffering or profound disappointment in your life at some point.

And in those times, there are really powerful, difficult temptations to actually give up on God. We may say, I was faithful to God.

I prayed about this. He was able to deliver. I know that about him. But he did not. Why? And you've been very tempted to think God is not trustworthy.

He is weak because he did not do what you wanted to do, what wanted him to do in your way and according to your timing. But the witness of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego teach us something very different.

They were willing to accept that God may have a different plan and a very different timing for their lives. And they put themselves in God's hands knowing that that God will bring about their greatest good in the end.

[ 7 : 04 ] For them to love God completely and worship him alone was worth their loss. That's what they had come to decide. Even if they became powdered carbon in a furnace.

And Nebuchadnezzar said at the end, he said this about them. He said they yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any God except their own God.

And that's because they knew that whatever happened, the only real life, the real life was found in loving and worshiping and serving God.

And amazingly, they did this without that clear vision of eternal life that Jesus came to give us. So, brothers and sisters, Jesus calls each of us today, the one who has shown us eternal life and that he has loved us.

He calls us to yield our bodies to God today. That's the call of this chapter. Jesus gives you grace to be faithful, to love him and to worship him in that furnace.

[ 8 : 37 ] And in our everyday life. And what we see, the children drawing right now, that scene, should be etched in our minds. Because Nebuchadnezzar, as he watches the furnace, says, didn't we throw three people in there?

And of course, the right answer was, true, O king. And he answered them, but I see four men, unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt.

And the appearance of fourth is like a son of the gods. He came from heaven, probably an angel. But this is a great picture of the gospel for us.

Because it tells us that Jesus is God with us. That he comes to save us and to be with us amid our sin, amid our hardship and our pain.

Because he loves you. He loves me. He loves the world that he has created. God does not often rescue us from the fire. He rescues us inside of the fire.

[ 9 : 40 ] This is what it means that Jesus comes into our darkness and into our suffering in this world. He comes to be with us in our fire, making us his daughter and his son right there and then.

And he redeems us. Meaning that he powerfully takes what is hard and hurtful. And he brings his goodness to us. So as we leave this passage, there is great power for us here.

To be faithful, to worship him amid all the temptations, all the sufferings in our life. Jesus who died and rose from the dead, did it so that nothing in all creation, not any suffering, not any pain, not any temptation for affluence, can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ.

So may that be your great strength. As you put the living God in first place in your life, attend to this hidden part of the iceberg, the big part of who you are, your relationship with God. Because the real life, the life of blessing and all goodness and joy is to serve him and to worship him above all things. Because to Jesus be all honor, glory, and power, now and forever.  
[ 11 : 00 ] Amen.