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| Topic | What To Do When You Are Facing The Furnace |
| Reference | Daniel 3:12-25 |
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During my seminary I have learned a lot of subjects. One of the most difficult subjects that I had in seminary to spiritual warfare in evangelism. It was really top class. Why it was so difficult is because I have to go out and I have to share the gospel every week with somebody and it was a course over 10 days and broken over three weeks though. My lecturer put up this verse at the beginning of our class,

Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.

It was rather scary but we went through some spiritual warfare and he says you can expect when you go out and share the gospel, you will have spiritual warfare.

It is truly a verse that explains the passage today. I think it captures the essence of what I am going to speak about today. Do not be afraid when you are about to suffer. How do we act in the light of furnaces and fires and suffering and who do we put our trust in and to what extent is our faith going to go?

There are few things that we can learn as we pass through the furnace:

* Before The furnace
* In the furnace
* After The furnace

**Before the Furnace**:

King Nebuchadnezzar created these idols of gold and he asked everybody to worship them. So it was a nation where they tolerated a different kind of religion. So everybody was free to worship their own god as long as they also worship Nebuchadnezzar’s idol. Now he said every time the music plays, so everybody has to fall down but there were three Hebrew guys who refused to bow down and worship the idol. Now it was very easy for them at the beginning because nobody was there and nobody noticed, so they could just not worship. They didn’t make a big deal about it. They were quite but something happened there were people who were jealous of them and that’s where the story picks up, these jealous people complained to king about them not worshipping the king’s idol. The reaction of them is very interesting because when laws are made and luckily we live in a country where we are still able to worship our God the way we want to, but when laws are made in the foreign distant they doesn’t really touch us but when something really gets personal then our faith is tested. When something affects us directly and people tell on us, when things get personal with us and these three guys they had the choice to may be worship the idol or not worship the idol and they could have thought of many different excuses. There could be couple of excuses that could have been okay because they have used **situational ethics**. Sometimes we use situational ethics to justify us not obeying God’s word. They could have said, “Well I believe that God is good and I don’t believe that God wants me to die. So in this situation I think it should be okay if I just bow down in front of the idols and worship the idols because in this situation the ethics, the morals they change”.

**Culture**: They could have used culture. They might say well in this culture that we are in it is a custom to worship different gods. They are not going to understand us. They are not going to understand why we do not want to worship. They will not understand our laws, so maybe we can just bow down and worship this god because culture is different.

**Excuse of Forgiveness**: God is a good God. They might have said God is going to forgive us. We can just bow down once or once in a while and worship the idols and God is truly going to forgive us.

**Silent Protest**: It is just my body that bows down but my heart is not worshiping those idols.

They could have used any of those excuses. We use those excuses a lot.

**Situational Ethics**: May be when it comes that we are caught by police we think that it is okay for me to bribe.

**Culture**: In Malaysia we have a culture of watching pirated DVDs. People are not going to stand, why I should buy an original. So may be in this culture it is okay for me to not worship in the right way.

**Forgiveness**: When it comes to may be watching pornography. We think may be in this area God will forgive me because He is a good God.

**Silent Protest**: May be in our workplaces we see our bosses and they are behaving in such a way in ways to do not honor God and we use silent protest. We will not engage in bribery and we will not do it even though we see done somewhere else.

So we use a lot of these excuses a lot of time when it comes to obeying God’s laws but those three they did not use any of those excuses. They had strong faith. They believed in their God and it is really a matter of faith. The problem is that in the world that we live in right now faith has been made strange. We do not have what we know as biblical faith anymore. May be it is because of all the TV shows that we watch, may be The Voice. You know when people to say, I really believe that this chair will turn for me. We always believe that faith has been reduced to something as we have lots of it, the desires of your heart will be given to you, or you have the right quality of it then the desires of your heart will be given to you. It has been reduced to something of quality and quantity.

Faith is not about quality and faith is not about quantity. So many of us believe that if I can just muster up a lots of faith, if I just have this feeling and belief of faith in me right now then God will surely deliver me and he will give me the things that I want. It is more like witchcraft. We think we take a sprinkle of optimism, God will do this and we take a sprinkle of praise and a sprinkle of prayer and we put it into a whole pot of human desire and we will cook up this concession which come up with a portion which will make God do what we want him to do or maybe we think it is quality. If I just do the things that God wants me to do. If my faith is righteous faith, we believe that we must have righteous faith, faith that pleases God. If I want things that seem to be in line with scripture then God must surely deliver me and if my faith rubs God the right way then this jinnee will deliver what I want. Faith has been reduced to quality and quantity and that is not biblical faith. It is not about quality and it is not about quantity. We cannot control a sovereign God. It is not a computer game where you sit down and you level up, this is good faith, this is great faith and then after you have prayed a lot then you have got the God controlling faith. It does not work that way, we cannot muster up and we cannot direct our faith because we don’t truly know what God’s plans are. We don’t have the insight, we don’t know, so then what is good faith. Faith is all about trusting in a sovereign God. It is not trusting in an outcome, it is not believing that when I muster up enough faith things will happen my way or when I acquire a lots of faith things will happen my way. It is about putting your faith in a person. It is not trusting in an outcome; it is trusting in a person who determines the outcome.

Bryan Chapell says it best, *“Biblical faith is not confidence in particular outcomes; it is confidence in a sovereign God. We trust that he knows what we cannot discern, plans what we cannot anticipate, and secures our eternity in ways beyond our fathoming. Our trust is not in the quantity or quality of our belief. Our trust in God is not built on insights we posses or wishes we manufacture. The bible does not teach us to look inward to discern what we should be trusting. Faith is not confidence in our belief but confidence in our God. Any other perspective will ultimately harm our faith.”*

If we believe that if we muster up enough faith God will give us the desire that we want that means that weeping crying, being disappointed or angry is sin, because it will just show what lack of faith you have. Because if you truly had right faith God would have given you the desires and you won’t be crying and you wouldn’t be upset and you wouldn’t be angry. So if you have any of those expressions in your life it would show that you have sinned, you have not mustered up enough faith. You have not mustered up the right quality of faith. Believing that if you muster up enough faith will leave you disappointed because if things do not happen it means two things. Either your faith is not good enough or God is not good enough and when things happen your way, you probably believe that it is because of your faith and we diminish God’s role in the area. Those three believed in God. What was their response?

Surely our God is able to deliver us but even if he doesn’t we will not worship your gods.

A lot of people say faith should have no buts, you must believe, you must be optimistic. They say but even if he does not we will trust in him. Because their faith was in their God not in an outcome and it reminds us of the words of Job. When he says, though you slay me yet I will trust you. So that’s the first thing that we can learn from those three. What is real faith? It is placing our trust in a sovereign God regardless of the circumstances that we are in, regardless of the outcomes. We put our faith in a God who determines the outcome.

**Being In The Furnace**:

While in the furnace an amazing thing happened. What happened was they refused to bow down and they were bound up and they were thrown into the fiery furnace that was heated up seven times hotter. The people who were actually bringing the three into the furnace they were burnt up and they died just because the furnace was so hot and an amazing thing happened in the furnace. God acted in the furnace and how did He act.

Daniel 3:24-25 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.” **25** He answered and said, “But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.”

An amazing thing happened, God sent somebody to be with them in the furnace. Now the question is who is that somebody and immediately all of us will say, it is Jesus but the text says it is an angel. There is a lot of controversy about who is that person. Ultimately we can agree that it is God sending his presence that is what is important. It is God reliving the theme that he has us given from the Old Testament that God is a God who is going to be with us. He sends his messenger; he sends his presence to people who are in the fiery furnaces in their lives. The ultimately embodiment of God’s presence, God with us is Immanuel. It is Jesus Christ. In this text we see the angel delivering those three and eventually delivering them out of the furnace. Of course we see Jesus coming into our lives and delivering us from the furnace of hell and how was Jesus able to do because he himself went into the furnace. He went onto the cross and it is through the cross that he delivers us from the furnace. He himself was on the cross and the amazing thing is that when he was on the cross he cried our “O Lord, O Lord, why have you forsaken me”. He was forsaken so that we will not be. All that forsaking that we deserve because we are sinful people was put on to Jesus. So that now we will not be forsaken. So now we can have the presence of God in our life because the presence of God was taken away from Jesus on the cross and of course we know that after he died the Holy Spirit came and now the Holy Spirit is with us and dwells with us and ministers to us. That’s the amazing thing that God meets us in the furnaces of our life that he comes to us and is with us but the great thing is that He is a God who understands because He himself was in trouble. He himself was in suffering. He understands pain, He himself was man. He is not a high God who does not understand, no, He is a high priest who can empathize with us, who knows how to minister to us because He himself was in a furnace. It is because of this that we can read scripture and it speaks to our heart. It says in 2-Corinthians 4:8-9

**8** We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; **9** persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

And the text continues to say, why are we that way because of the life and death of Jesus, because he ministers to us. He meets us in the furnace and many of you guys can testify to that. That it was in the trouble times in your life that you really experience the presence of God. Now every time we are in trouble, every time we are in pain what is the first thing that we get on our knees and we pray. Prayer brings us into the presence of God and Jesus can meet us there. My whole family came to Christ when we are in big furnaces in our lives.

One famous preacher said, “*You only realize that CHRIST is all you need when CHRIST is all you have”.*  It is in the fiery furnaces of our live that we meet Christ that you can be Christ. King David said, though I walk through the valley of shadow of death, I fear no evil for you are with me. God is a God that is with us. He ministers to us in the fiery situations of our lives.

**After the Furnace**:

King Nebuchadnezzar was just so amazed that he saw the four man and that they were walking around in the fire that he called them out. Then he called all the witnesses to be there. All the ones who saw that those three were not worshiping, all the ones who saw that they were put into the fire, he calls those three out of the fire and he said this.

Daniel 3:28 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.

It was amazing, whatever happened, the fact that God ministered to them in the fire that they were willing to give up their bodies, gave testimony to the king and say, while this must be the most high God. This must be the real God. There is only one God who can deliver in such a way. God uses our fiery furnaces experience. He uses them for testimony. We always put on the pulpit people who have gone through struggles and see how God can deliver and He is truly a God who can deliver. It is always an amazing thing when we see people who have struggles and have pain and they meet Christ and then they were able to get through that situation. God used the stories all the time. Actually, if we go through Hebrew 11 which is probably the Hallmark of faith, all the heroes of amazing stories of faith are mentioned probably in Hebrews 11 and they are all stories of deliverance, people who went through fiery furnace experiences and then came out of it.

Hebrews 11: 29-35 By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. **30** By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. **31** By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. **32** And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— **33** who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, **34** quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. **35** Women received back their dead by resurrection.

It is always through fiery furnace experiences, but the truth is this. Those three faith, what did it say. **It says whether he delivers us or not** and reality is that some of us fall into the category of not. Some of us are still in fiery furnace and we do not have a testimony. Hebrews 11 the next verse reads this

Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. **36**Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. **37** They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— **38** of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. **39** And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, **40** since God had provided something better for us.

We always think of deliverance only getting through to find us another deliverance and that is deliverance not for testimony but deliverance for glory. Some of us are to be taken to glory, some of us will pass away in the fire and that is a miracle too that God through his finished work on the cross can deliver us immediately into His presence because that is where we are ultimately wanting to be. God delivers us in two ways:

1. For testimony.
2. For glory.

When Jesus died on the cross he rose again **for testimony**. 50 days later he rose up into heavens **for glory**. It reminds me of the words of Paul who says, to live is Christ (testimony), to die is gain (glory).

If we are in fiery furnace of our lives today, the reality is that God is capable, he is able to deliver. God is good, he knows best. God will not leave you, do not lose heart. Christ will meet you and he will renew you day after day after day because these momentary light afflictions they are producing, they are creating, they are making glory for us. We are anticipating glory. Peter in his book 1-Peter says that, we must have joy when suffering comes our way because Glory is being prepared. So do not look at those momentary situations that we are in. For whatever happens now, the things which are seen they are transient, they are momentary, and they do not last they will pass but the things which are being prepared for you they are eternal. God is preparing you for eternity. He is preparing you for glory. God is creating glory in the midst of your affliction, have faith. He would deliver you for testimony today or for glory forever. In all of us one day we will pray a prayer that will not be answered. One day all of us will have health issues and he will bring us into glory. Brain Chapell tells a story of a tin miner who at a young age had an accident and was not able to work anymore and he was sitting in his window looking out day after day he saw his co-workers capable, working, and prospering. He looked out and he saw how they started buying houses. He looked out of the window and he started seeing them having children and grandchildren and what he saw in his own life. He saw his body withering away. His saw his house crumbling away. He saw his life wasting away and when he was already bedridden a young man came to him and asked him, “Old man I heard you have faith in God. I heard you believe that God is good and how can you believe that with all the things that happen in your life, how can you believe that God is good that God loves you. Don’t you ever have doubt?” The old man said, I do, in fact many-many times Satan sits on the edge of the bed where you are sitting now and he points out the window and he points out the window and he points to my co-workers and he points to them to those people who are capable and working and can do all the things which I cannot do and he points at them and says, does Jesus loves you and he points at their houses that they have and he ask again, does Jesus love you and he points at the grandchild of one of my friends who has everything I want, everything I don’t have and he waits until the tears drop from my cheek. He says does Jesus love you? So the young man asked the tin miner what do you say to Satan when he speaks to you in such a way. He says, at that moment I take Satan by his hand and in my mind I lead him to a hill called Calvary and I do point at the bloody bruise, I point at the nail pierce hands and the nail pierced feet, I point at a side which is pierced by a spear and I ask, doesn’t Jesus love me. That man understands that God is good in spite of circumstances. He knows that Christ will meet you in the midst of your pain and he is able to give testimony even though he has not been delivered.

In the Gospel of Mark constantly over and over people are asking who is that man, who is that Jesus and even though they recognize that this is Christ in chapter 8 the disciples look at it wrong. They still does not understand what Jesus has come for, what his purpose is. It is only in chapter 15 finally when a Roman solider looks upon the cross and detects this, it is amazing when he says how Jesus died. When the soldier saw how Jesus said he said this is truly son of God.

Nebuchadnezzar in the same way asked who is that God that is able to deliver. He asked the question but then he answered himself later on in the text. He said this is the God most high, no other person is able to deliver in such a way. It is only our God; it is only Jesus Christ that is able to deliver in such a way.

Nebuchadnezzar recognized that this is the God most high. He recognized that this is the only God who can deliver in such a way but then he stopped there.

Daniel 3:29-30 Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way.” **30** Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar recognized him God but he does not make God his God. He stopped there.

**Question:**

When you hear the testimony of those three today, when you hear that story. When you hear the story of Jesus who died on the cross for you, when you see how God is able to deliver and in the past, in the present, always in the same way by being God with us, by taking us through the furnace, how will you react.

Will you acknowledge that he is the God most high that He is only one that can deliver and will you stop there? What will you do?