3994 Victoria Avenue Vineland, Ontario L0R 2C0

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Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego!

Overview

And they practice. They practice the songs that they lead us in on Sundays. They're here before any of us. Well, not all of us, but they're here very early Sunday mornings. Very, very faithful. And they'll never go to Florida or forsake us in any way. Well, maybe. They're good people.

I love them all. Well, I'm studying through the book of Daniel, really trying to get a grip on those kingdoms and the clay feet and all the rest of it. And I'm discovering, I'm discovering things that I never saw before. And I've heard many, many sermons on Daniel, but I'm going to present something to you this morning that I just found it just sitting with my Bible open the other morning. I want to share it with you. You know the story, so I'm going to read it anyway, because maybe there's people here who are not that familiar with scripture. And I don't want to just dive into the story and say, well, you know, because maybe not everyone knows. It's in the book of Daniel.

It's at chapter three. Daniel and three others have been taken hostage. The whole nation of Israel was ravaged by another group of people. And they were, they were taken, chained together and had to walk who knows how far to other nations. And so it's so interesting that when you don't have to read between the lines, it's very, very clear that Daniel was of royal lineage. I'm not sure how that all fits together, but it states it. That means he's of the lineage of King David. He's in there.

So he was called royalty. And so were these other three fellows who were also known as princes. So they were treated a little differently than all the rest of the peasants, the slaves. And they ended up in very prestigious situations because God had placed in Daniel a very unique gift of being able to interpret dreams. And that's too long a story to read to you this morning, but it's a very significant thing that Daniel, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was able to do. Whereupon the king recognized that in Daniel there was supernatural ability, supernatural power. And the king then therefore acknowledged this very openly and proclaimed it to his whole kingdom. And these are my words.

I'm just telling you what in essence he declared. We have many gods in this land, but there's no god like the God of Daniel. He is the super god. Now he had things all mixed up because there is only one god. There's all these little pieces of metal and carvings of wood and clay, but there's only one god. There's only one god. And his name is not Allah. Allah is not a name.

I think I've told you that. Allah is not a name. Allah, translated properly, is the word G-O-D. Allah means, it means God, but it's not a name. So the king Nebuchadnezzar experiences quite a lights-on moment when Daniel interprets a dream. And that dream says, oh king, you're going to be ever so powerful. You're going to be known all over the world. You're going to do this.

You're going to do that. And I won't waste time going through all of it. You need to read it for yourself. And king Nebuchadnezzar really believed this because it was Daniel, and Daniel was God's spokesman. So he got very excited about this, and so Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue 90 feet tall and wide. And he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. Babylon, Iraq. Babylon is Iraq.

It's the same ting. That was for my friend back in the corner. Same ting. Then he sent messages to his high officers, officials, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates, all the provincial officials, come to the dedication of the statue. The gold statue. It was supposed to be his statue in honor of him. All the officials came. They stood before the king, stood before the statue.

Then a herald shouted, people of all races, nations, languages, listen to the king's command. All nations. Because Babylon, you see, ruled the world at that time. When you hear the sound of a horn, a flute, a lyre, a harp, pipes, and any other musical instruments, bow to the ground to worship king Nebuchadnezzar. So here's Nebuchadnezzar saying, God is the most high God, but I'm a little God, and you need to honor me. How come I think I'm a little God? Did you hear for yourself what Daniel said about me? Like, I'm something else.

I think he was surrounded by mirrors. Anyone who refuses to obey will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace. So at the sound of the musical instruments, all the people, whatever their race, whatever their nation, whatever their language, bowed to the ground, worshipped the gold statue that king Nebuchadnezzar had set up. But some of the astrologers went to the king and informed on the Jews. They said, oh king, you issued a decree requiring that all the people would bow down, worship the gold statue. When they hear the sound of the horn, flute, and all those instruments, that decree also states that those who refuse to bow down will be thrown into a furnace. But there are some Jews, there are some Jews who refuse to bow down. They need to go into the fire king.

That decree also states that those who refuse to obey must be thrown into the blazing fire. There are some Jews, and they named them Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, whom you have put in charge of the province of Babylon. He'd already raised these guys up to very prominent situations. The king was now in a jam. He's made a decree, and you know, nobody, there were no exceptions. Absolutely every person on the planet, under their massive empire, had to bow down. So these rascals came and said, does this decree include absolutely every, like all of us, all of us, smart guy, all this? Oh yes, yes.

And what about somebody who's a magistrate? He's included. What about somebody who runs a province? Aha, we've got it now. These three devils have refused to bow down and worship you.
They have to go in the fire. The challenge was that these guys owned the CBC, the CTV, the Toronto Star. They were putting their money in to support the CBC, and therefore the CBC had to report whatever was told.

So the thing was, the king was trapped. If he lets these guys off, he loses face. But if he does put them in the fire, he also loses a sense of face because he made such a fuss over these guys. And these guys, he had raised up to a certain level because they were best friends with Daniel. And Daniel was a spokesman for the high God, the true great God. So the king was in straights. If I don't do what I decreed to do, I show that I'm weak. If I do what I have decreed, I'm also weak.

Was I right then and I'm wrong now? Or what I'm wrong now? Was I right then? He was in a jam. And because of the jam he was in, he threw into a rage. I think that the rage was an act. I think it was a drama. Because you see, he was doing what he knew he should not do.

So he plays the game. He plays to the audience. He flies to Brussels and says, I'm here on behalf of you. How did that get in there? So they were brought in. Nebuchadnezzar said, is it true Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue that I've set up? I'll give you one more chance to bow down. And under his breath, he's saying, please, please, please, please do this.

I like you guys. I like you guys. I appreciate. But you've put me in an awkward. Why don't you just bow? Just just just bow down. Pretend you don't even have to worship. Just pretend.

Just bow down. Play the game with me. I can let you off. Pilate gave that kind of a condition to Jesus. I could get you out of here. You know, you know, these people want to kill you, but I have the power to release you. Come on, cooperate. I'll give you one more chance.

When you hear the musical instruments, you have to do it. But if you refuse, you leave me no options. You'll be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. And then what will your God do to rescue you when you're in the furnace? You're gone. These three fellows reply. Oh, King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves. If we're thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able.

To save us. He will rescue us from your power. Your Majesty. But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you. Your Majesty. They weren't mocking him. They were saying, Sir, we acknowledge you. Your Majesty.

That we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you've set up. Nebuchadnezzar now was furious. He is angry. He gave him a chance and they wasted it. He's thinking, how stupid can you be? How how dumb can you be? He was so angry, it says. His face was distorted by his anger.

He commanded the Sir that the furnace be heated seven times hotter. He ordered some of the strongest men of his army to bind them. Bind them. How? They usually use chains. They could have used leather. I'm going to tell you what it wasn't loose. Bind them and throw them in.

They tied them and threw them into the furnace fully dressed in trousers, turbans, robes, and other garments. And because the king in his anger had demanded such a hot fire furnace, the flames killed the Sir soldiers who threw them in. I like that word. They didn't escort the men. They threw the men. They were afraid of those flames. But they had to do it right. They couldn't just throw them partway in.

These guys had to learn, they had to land on top of the burning wood. Whatever was on fire, they weren't at the edge. They were thrown into the hottest, hottest position in those flames. And it says they fell into the roaring flames. They're bound and now they're down on the ground. Have you ever tried to get up on your feet with your hands tied behind your back and your ankles tied together? Of course you haven't. I think it would be a mean trick.

They weren't supposed to be set free. There was to be no, no, no possibility. But suddenly the king jumped off of his chair wherever he's seated and he calls his advisors, hey get over here. How many men did we throw in there? Well three, sir. That's what you told us to do. Didn't you tie them up tightly? We did, sir.

We did everything you told us to. He says, well look, I see four men, not tied, not bound, walking. This is what gripped me this week as I sat and I mused on this. Thrown in, fully clothed, bound, unable to stabilize themselves as they were released and thrown in. They land on the ground, but when the king sees them, they're walking. And where are they walking? Not into a stand-up refrigerator. They're walking among the flames.

And I stopped and I wrote down on a piece of paper, walking in the flames, walking in the fire. And I said, that'll preach. Walking in the fire. Nebuchadnezzar says, whoa, that's in the New King James. Nebuchadnezzar comes a little closer and he shouts, hey you guys, servants of the most high God, come out of there. Come here now. Then he came as close as he could possibly come to the door of the furnace shouting, get out, come here. So it says they stepped out of the fire.

The high officials, officials, governors, advisors crowded around them. People love fire. Houses on fire, the fire trucks can't get near the flames for all the people who want to. Mama says to the kids, get the marshmallows, this is great. Everybody loves to watch a fire. And as they examined them, they noticed the flames had not touched them. Not a hair on their head was singed. Their clothing was not scorched.

It didn't even smell of nicotine. Do you remember when we used to go to Tim Hortons and the donuts were all out and the people were all sitting there sucking on their cigars and or whatever? And I remember going into the Hamilton Tim Hortons and saying to the lady, I'd like a dozen donuts. Okay, do you want to choose them? I said, no, you can choose them. She'd say, fine. I said, from the back room. And they'd say, what?
You choose any donuts. I want them from the back room. Why? I said, because I don't smoke and I don't eat nicotine. I said, every donut. She said, I've never smelled it. Do you smoke? Yes.

I said, you'll never smell it. People work in barns. They don't smell the cows anymore. They just don't notice. It stinks in here. I think it's fine. In the midst of a fire that was seven times, seven times as hot. And they didn't even smell bad.

Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego. He sent his angel to rescue his servants who trusted him. They defied the king's command. This is the king saying, they defied my orders. Willing to die rather than serve or worship any God except their God. Therefore, I make a new decree. If anybody, whatever their race, nation, language, speak a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, they will be torn limb from limb. Their houses will be turned into heaps of rubble.

There is no other God who can rescue like this. I like that line where they said, he can, we think he will, but if we're wrong, he's still right. Lo, we think, we have faith, we believe, but if we're wrong, he's still right. He's still right. The king promoted these three fellows to even higher positions in the empire, in the province of Babylon. These three guys became the rulers over the whole country we know as Iraq. I got musing in my head about the flames, walking in the fire, and then I showed up at a memorial service yesterday for the lady that I would think of as the darling of this congregation. And alone reading this story and thinking of that precious lady crippled, she spent her last days, weeks, months, I don't know.

She spent the rest of her life. She spent the last days of her life twisted like a pretzel. She lived in a chair. But that lady walked in the fire. That lady walked in the fire. She refused to give out. She refused to give in. Her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ was nothing short of incredible.

I was invited to speak ever so slightly because it was a very full program. I wasn't troubled by the fact that I was given such a short amount of time. It was enough time for me to say, if anybody asked her, do you believe in God? And I paused for a moment and I thought, how do you say this? How do you say this? To ask somebody, do you believe in God, is a cheap question. Everybody has a God. Everybody has a God.

People go to football games. If they get a flat tire on the way, they'll call a tow truck and say, take care of it. They'll order an Uber and get to the game. They have to get to that game, have to get to that game. They live for football. That's their God. People work hard for money. They will cheat, lie, do whatever it takes.

Some of them robbed me blind this week. I had to work my heart out to stop them from robbing me blind. Dirty wretches, refusing to work. Just take money from anywhere at which you can. Money is their God. Do you believe in God? Everybody does, honey. Everybody has their God.

If anybody ever said, do you believe in God? I know her. I knew her well enough to tell you how she would have replied. Oh, yes. I love Jesus. End of the question. Do you believe in God? Yeah.

Just let me adjust your question a little bit. Do I believe in Jesus? Yes, I do. Where's your Jesus now? He's with me in the night. He's with me in the day. He's with me when I'm in diabolical pain. She's with me when he's with me when I can't even lift my head.

The last time that I visited her to get down on my hands and knees and get down and try and find her face because she was so twisted and gnarled. When I got down and peered into her eyes and she recognized me, I think there was, I think she'd gone quite blind. I had to say, it's me. It's David. Pastor David. I'd see the most beautiful smile. She had an elegance about her that an emaciated body could not take away. That lady walked in the fire.

People who walk in the fire. I've been flogged five times. I've experienced the 39 lashes of the Roman guards 39 times. I've been beaten by the soldiers with their rods. I've been pummeled with rocks. I've been shipwrecked three times. I was immersed in the open sea for a whole night and then a whole day. I traveled hard year in, year out.

I've had to cross rivers when it was dangerous. I had to fight off robbers. I had to struggle with friends. I had to struggle with enemies. I've been at risk in the city. I've been at risk in the country. Endangered by the desert sun and by the sea's storm. Betrayed by those I thought who were my brothers.

Betrayal is a flame that no one can see and that many people who experience the flames of betrayal never whimper to another person about it. And why? Because they're walking in the flames and the fourth man is in the flames with them. Who was that fourth man? Somebody tell me. Who was the fourth man? I will never leave you. I'll never forsake you.

I've known drudgery. I've known hard labor. I've experienced many a long lonely night and could not sleep. I've missed many meals. I've been blasted by the cold. I've been naked to the weather. This is Paul the apostle and he says that's not the half of it. When you throw in the daily pressures and the anxieties of the churches, when someone gets to the end of his rope, I feel the desperation in my bones.

When someone is duped into sin, an anger, angry fire burns in my gut. If I have to brag about myself, I'll brag about the humiliations that make me like Jesus. Those young men who were thrown in the fire that day should all be thought of as our heroes. They were thrown in as honest men, men of faith, men of honor, men of stubbornness, but when they came out they were better men than the men that were thrown in. The fire made them powerful and their testimony coming out of those flames shook a whole kingdom. And Nebuchadnezzar said, aha, I knew it all along. There's no God like your God. I want to be like you, the eternal and blessed God and father of our master Lord Jesus.

Paul said, no, I am not telling you lies. In 2nd Corinthians as well in the fourth chapter he wrote, we have this treasure. Sweetheart, when you gave your life to Jesus a few Sundays ago, he gave you a treasure. He gave you a treasure. He gave you a spiritual treasure that now you own. That treasure's in you and you're still a frail little person. You're just made of clay. He said, we have this glorious treasure that we care in these earth and clay, mud, vessels.

God chooses to put his treasure in clay vessels, clay vessels that can't handle the fire, but when the treasure's there, you can walk in the fire. You can withstand any wind, you can withstand any flood, you can withstand any fire, you can withstand any repudiation, you can stand tall because you have a treasure that makes you strong within. And when the pressures come against you, the pressures of mocking, the pressures of you're one of those stupid Christian people. You know what? There was a pastor in this town looked at me and he mocked me because I am a conservative Christian who stands for truth and righteousness. I don't believe that a rooster can lay an egg and I don't believe that a man can give birth to a baby. There's where I take my stand and I am being ridiculed in this town for it. I take it like a man, spit on me, I'll wear it like a badge.

I don't want to walk in the fire. I fear the fire. There's no manliness that would say, go ahead, light a match between my toes. That's not a man of God. A woman of God, a man of God says by his power, by his anointing, I can run through the midst of the troops of my enemies. I can shine in the darkness and I can make the sun look dull because his glory shines from within me. We have a treasure in this earthen vessel. God's word.

Who can put this any better? This isn't poetry. This is divine truth. We have this treasure in clay vessels. So that, why did God choose to put the treasure in a clay mud? Fragile, withering, soon to die and turn into dust. Why did he put this treasure in this clay weak vessel? So that the power may be of God and not us.

Don't brag, honey. That clay vessel that you are needs a little bit of soap and a little scrubbing now again. We're all weak. We're all weak. We're all frail. We're all tempted in so many ways. The word says he was tempted like all of us. I never tempted pastor.

No, you're tempted to tell me a lie now. We're all weak. We're all frail. But that treasure that's within you is a powerful treasure. And it turns you into a different person. You're already a different person. You're already a different person. The power is not of us.

It's of God. He said, we're hard pressed on every side, but we're not crushed. Why? Because God has put this power within that when the enemy comes and rams a spear, the point of the spear cannot penetrate because the power within is greater than the power that is without. Greater is he that is in you than any weapon formed against you. No weapon formed against you by any enemy can destroy you and take your life away. You are precious to him. He loves you.

And yes, you may experience fire, but you have this promise. He'll walk with you. We used to sing, we don't sing these kinds of songs anymore. Some through the water, some through the flood, some through the fire, but all through the blood, some through great sorrow.
But God gives me a song. In the night seasons and all the day long. Those hymns are so old and stupid. They're kind of rusty. Dear God, nobody writes songs like that anymore. Is that an indication of the depth? Is that an indication of how great the treasures within? I trust not. Come on, sing it. Can you come? Cheryl, I'm springing this on you, but I would do it to any beautiful lady who could even sit at that keyboard and do it. And what key is it in?

It's in that skeleton key. I guess I'm done.

Pastor, why do you put a time limit?

Because some people depend upon the hour that we quit.

If somebody's coming to pick, Ali's daughter at times comes to pick her up.

I can't go on until 1230 quarter to one.

Her daughter comes to pick her up.

I think you're going to go in a fast moving Mustang, though, today, aren't you?