

1. Last week I finished teaching the Doctrine of Faith Rest and Daniel chapter three verse eighteen, nineteen, twenty and twenty-one.

2. Before continuing let me give you an expanded translation of Daniel chapter three verses fourteen through twenty-one.

Dan 3:14 Nebuchadnezzar asked the three boys, "did you intentionally not bow down to worship my god? I hope you now realize that all of you are in serious trouble; the mere act of refusing to bow and worship, whether intentional or not is a serious offense.

Dan 3:15 If your actions were not deliberate then the next time you hear the music be sure you fall down and worship the image and if you do I will forget the whole thing; be certain however, if you do not obey, you will be thrown into the fiery furnace and I can assure there is no god anywhere powerful enough to save you.

Dan 3:16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not even have to consider our answer."

Dan 3:17 O King, supreme ruler of Babylon, if it is our God's desire to deliver us, He is infinitely able to rescue us from that fiery furnace; we know as a fact that our Jehovah God has the power to do whatever He chooses to do."

Dan 3:18 But even if Jehovah God doesn't choose to save us, we still won't worship your gods and the idolatrous image you have erected".

Dan 3:19 Nebuchadnezzar's face twisted with anger at the response from the three young men. He shouted an order "heat the furnace seven times hotter than it has ever been heated!"

Dan 3:20 The King obviously wanted his command carried out immediately; so he ordered the special body guards who stood by to bind the hands and feet of the young Jewish hostages and take the three of them to the furnace where they were to be cremated alive.

Dan 3:21 The special guard unit immediately complied with the King's order, they tied up the three Jews who were still dressed in their royal robes, trousers, jewelry and turbans; they were dragged to the furnace where they were to be thrown alive into the blazing inferno.

3. Now we will see how an ill thought order, permitting no time for planning, is hurriedly carried out to the demise of several of Babylon's bravest warriors.

KJV

Dan 3:22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

NIV

Dan 3:22 The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego,

1. From this verse we learn a principle: judgment should never be made in the heat of anger; time must elapse so that the decision might be an objective one.

2. This is true both personally and nationally.

2.1 A good example nationally is the perennial call to pass gun laws in the wake of an assassination of a president or a school shooting.

3. Again clear thinking is not possible when an individual is controlled or influenced by emotion.

4. Note that the circles of consequences resulting from the king's mental attitude sins are ever-widening; the brave and loyal soldiers who took the three prisoners to the furnace were dead.

5. What a tremendous blow this must have been to the morale of the military! Their commander-in-chief had caused the sacrifice of several members of his elite bodyguard because of a rash decision made in anger.

6. The fire had been stoked to such an extent that all of the excessive combustion forced the fire out of the furnace when one of the soldiers lifted the iron door.

6.1 It would seem the furnace was quite large with a large door; some have conjectured it must have been on top. It was certainly large enough to accommodate four men.

7. Before we find out what happened to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, let me provide an expanded translation of verse twenty-two:

Expanded Translation:

Dan 3:22 The furnace has been heated beyond prudence; the soldiers without proper planning, approached the large furnace, opened the door and the flames from inside blew out the open door engulfing and killing some number of the king's body guards.

8. Now for another of several miracles:

KJV

Dan 3:23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

NIV

Dan 3:23 and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

1. Amazingly enough, while the men who were ordered to cast Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into the furnace were slain when they opened the door to the furnace, the prisoners themselves were not harmed.
2. They were thrown into the red hot furnace, their hands and feet securely tied-but not for long!
3. Let me give you an expanded translation of verse twenty-three:

Expanded Translation:

Dan 3:23 A second squad mounted the furnace carrying Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego; they carefully opened the door to the furnace and threw each man headlong into the fire.

4. Now let's see Nebuchadnezzar's reaction to the events:

KJV

Dan 3:24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

NIV

Dan 3:24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" They replied, "Certainly, O king."

1. Nebuchadnezzar had earlier arrived and positioned himself where he could watch the execution or perhaps he had rushed to the scene when he heard of the demise of several of his elite body guards.
 - 1.1 Whatever the case he has at this point made his way to the door of the furnace where he curiously looked inside the giant "boiler".
 2. He no doubt expected to hear the screams of the condemned. Strangely enough, there were no screams!
 3. The king peered into the opening. Nebuchadnezzar was not "astonished"; he was shocked at what he saw: the condemned men were hale and hearty, unharmed by the flames.

4. The King must have thought "There is no way these guys could live in such temperatures!"

4.1 Perhaps this was the first time in his life that the king had faced such a bewildering situation.

4.2 What had gone wrong? In sheer amazement, he turned to his counsellors.

KJV

Dan 3:25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

NIV

Dan 3:25 He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

1. The term "four men loose" is a reference to Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and the Lord Jesus Christ!

1.1 The leather straps around their wrists and ankles were burned away; Nebuchadnezzar could see four people "walking in the midst of the fire."

2. Three had gone into the furnace tied most likely with leather straps. The only things the flames had consumed were their shackles-the very things which kept them from moving around.

3. Often God uses adversity to release us from the shackles of sin and evil. Both sin and evil immobilizes us as we try to walk the Christian life.

Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

3.1 When the shackles are broken, we are free to walk by means of the Spirit, a walk which can only successfully be accomplished when done by faith!

4. It is important to note the difference in the KJV and the NIV concerning the appearance and identification of the fourth member in the fire.

4.1 You and I know the identity of the fourth in the fire; it is the Lord Jesus Christ but Nebuchadnezzar does not identify Him as such.

4.2 In the best manuscripts we have "Dameh Lebad Elahin" and is therefore better as translated in the NIV "like a son of the gods".

4.3 The King at this point is not able to recognize Jesus as His Lord and Savior; this must await his conversion recorded and proclaimed in chapter four.

5. This historical event of four men in the fire illustrates a tremendous principle in the doctrine of suffering. God has designed human suffering for the blessing of the believer.

6. We receive maximum benefit from suffering only when there is a consistent daily intake of Bible doctrine.

7. Suffering helps us to move toward spiritual maturity and occupation with Christ.

8. The pattern of 1 Peter 1:7-8 which we are in the process of studying at the 11:00 hour ultimately results in fantastic blessing.

1Pe 1:7 "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

1Pe 3:8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

9. Remember the principle: if you are ever in the furnace of adversity, there is only one way to cope with that situation and that is by faith!

10. God will be with us in the midst of the fiery furnace, God guarantees not necessarily a deliverance from suffering, but out of the midst of suffering (1Co 10:13).

NIV

1Co 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

11. In other words, He may permit the suffering to continue; but you can ride it out in perfect peace and happiness by means of His provisions.

12. These three men had now reached their greatest moment in the midst of maximum pressure, Jesus Christ walked with them!

13. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego no doubt earlier suffered on their way to the furnace but in their deliverance, they were glorified and in addition, God Himself was also glorified in that deliverance.

14. Suffering is something we will all experience.

15. Suffering is physical and /or mental pain. Suffering might manifest itself in a loss of health, wealth, friends, family or guilt reaction, psychosis, etc.

16. Suffering is temporary or permanent loss of happiness or mental tranquility.

17. There are two general reasons for suffering:

- to get an unbeliever to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved
- to get a believer to move to the next level of spiritual maturity

18. Both the believer and unbeliever suffer in time but only the unbeliever suffers in eternity.

Rev 20:15 If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Rev 21:4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

19. Let's fast forward for a moment and look at suffering from the perspective of the unbelieving King.

20. Nebuchadnezzar in Chapters 2 and 3 had seen the power of God in action in the lives of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

21. Although he had seen miracles, he had apparently not passed the point of no return, i.e., he had not committed the unpardonable sin.

22. How faithful is God.

Rom 1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

23. God will continue to work with the great King and his salvation will come after loss of part of his Kingdom and after a bout with insanity.

24. Daniel chapter four is actually a gospel tract written by this King describing the depths to which he sank before he accepted Christ as his Savior.

25. Nebuchadnezzar's salvation tract.

25.1 Verses 1-4 is an introduction to his written historical message.

Dan 4:1 King Nebuchadnezzar, To the peoples, nations and men of every language, who live in all the world: May you prosper greatly!

Dan 4:2 It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.

Dan 4:3 How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.

Dan 4:4 I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at home in my palace, contented and prosperous.

25.2 Verses 5-9 describe his predicament, he had a dream and he wanted someone to interpret it.

Dan 4:5 I had a dream that made me afraid. As I was lying in my bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me.

Dan 4:6 So I commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me to interpret the dream for me.

Dan 4:7 When the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners came, I told them the dream, but they could not interpret it for me.

Dan 4:8 Finally, Daniel came into my presence and I told him the dream. (He is called Beltshazzar, after the name of my god Bel , and the spirit of the holy gods is in him.)

Dan 4:9 I said, "Beltshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery is too difficult for you. Here is my dream; interpret it for me.

25.3 Verses 10-12 describe the greatness of his Kingdom which began in about 620 B.C. when he took over from his dad.

Dan 4:10 These are the visions I saw while lying in my bed: I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous.

Dan 4:11 The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth.

Dan 4:12 Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it the beasts of the field found shelter, and the birds of the air lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed.

25.4 Verses 13-18 describes the demise of the King as he is likened to a felled tree but there is hope. In verse 15 (a) the tree is to be wrapped with iron and bronze, a technique in antiquity to keep the tree from splitting so it could grow again.

25.4.1 There is always hope for the unbeliever until that last sin unto death i.e. after God has done all things possible for him or her in order to motivate salvation faith.

Dan 4:13 "In the visions I saw while lying in my bed, I looked, and there before me was a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven.

Dan 4:14 He called in a loud voice: 'Cut down the tree and trim off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches.

Dan 4:15 But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field. "Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth.

Dan 4:16 Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him.

Dan 4:17 "The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.'

Dan 4:18 "This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, had. Now, Belteshazzar, tell me what it means, for none of the wise men in my kingdom can interpret it for me. But you can, because the spirit of the holy gods is in you."

25.5 Verses 19-27 Daniel interprets the dream making it clear the Lord was going to move mightily in the life of Nebuchadnezzar. The brave young Hebrew must tell the King the bad news.

Dan 4:19 Then Daniel (also called Belteshazzar) was greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him. So the king said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you." Belteshazzar answered, "My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries!

Dan 4:20 The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth,

Dan 4:21 with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the beasts of the field, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds of the air--

Dan 4:22 you, O king, are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth.

Dan 4:23 "You, O king, saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump, bound with iron and bronze, in the grass of the field, while its roots remain in the ground. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven; let him live like the wild animals, until seven times pass by for him.'

Dan 4:24 "This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king:

Dan 4:25 You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes.

Dan 4:26 The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your

kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules.

Dan 4:27 Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue."

End Lesson Taught 4-15-2001