

The Ark
April 20, 2022
Furnace Facts

Stewardship

*Psalm 20: 3 May He remember all your offerings,
And accept your burnt sacrifice. Selah*

This psalm was probably prayed just before going into battle as they were praying for success and making sacrifices.

“Selah” means “stop and think about that”....

“May he remember your offering.”

Two things God remembers about your offering:

- Your motive in giving and
- your attitude.

“**May he accept your sacrifice**” today we don’t make an animal burnt sacrifice, we
*“Present our body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is our
reasonable spiritual worship (Romans 12:1). This is the acceptable sacrifice.*

LESSON

Furnace Facts

Often when we read the Bible we feel it just doesn’t apply to our lives today.

However, when you realize that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, it is a love letter from God and an instruction manual for life, written to help us live a

successful life and overcome obstacles, **you will begin to look for the instruction and information God is giving you in each chapter.**

Tonight I'm going to share a "Bible Story" with you and show you how to apply even the stories in the Old Testament to our daily lives....

This story is found in the third chapter of the book of Daniel. Hidden in this story are powerful facts that can give great insight into handling the problem situations of our life.

Although the book of Daniel basically is the account of Daniel's encounters with God during the Babylonian captivity, there are three other young captives mentioned; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Hebrew names Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah).

- These young men were taken captive, along with Daniel:
- They were teens
- They were from upper-class families
- They were well educated,
- They were trained to serve the King.

We know they were elevated to positions of importance because of how they were referred to in the passages we are going to read.

***Daniel 3:1** King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide,^[a] and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. ² He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges,*

magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up.

Satraps were chief representatives of the king in the eras of King Nebuchadnezzar and King Darius. During the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego served as satraps.

Daniel 3: ⁴ *Then the herald loudly proclaimed, "Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: ⁵ As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. ⁶ Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace."*

Because Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were Jewish and knew the first commandment ... (*"Exodus 20:1-5a Thou shalt have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.*) **Therefore, they did not bow down to the golden image.**

Some of the other leaders reported their refusal to the King:

Daniel 3: ¹² *But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up."*

So they were brought before the King and he gave them another opportunity to bow before the idol of gold. Look at their response in verse 16:

Daniel 3:16 ¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, **we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.** ¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us^[c] from Your Majesty’s hand. ¹⁸ But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

The King’s Response:

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual²⁰ and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. ²¹ So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. 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, ²³ and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

Now let’s stop for a moment and look at some furnace facts:

1. **Everyone has furnaces.** Your furnace may not be burning with fire, but the bible assures us that trouble comes to all. Job assured us (*Job 14:1 Man that is born of woman is of few days and filled with trouble*). Jesus promised

(John 16:33 *In this world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*)

We always think no one has ever gone through anything as difficult as the situation we are facing. But that is not true. If you live long enough, you will face problems. The Bible does promise that what is happening to you is common to humanity and God is able to strengthen you and bring you to a place of rest and deliverance (1 Corinthians 10:13).

2. You are not in this furnace because you did something bad. (Psalm 34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivers him out of them all.) These young guys did everything right and still got into trouble.

- They refused to worship any other God but Jehovah.
- They were not bitter and angry because they had been taken into captivity and did not blame God for their situation.
- They continued to walk in faith toward their God, no matter what.

It's a fact of life that bad things happen to good people. There will always be things in life we do not understand, but we must continue to believe that God loves us and will be with us through all the difficulties of our life.

3. God does not build furnaces, neither does He throw you into them. In the case of these three young men a king built the furnace and threw them in, however I see several sources of furnaces in our lives:

- People cause problems in our lives;
- the devil causes trouble in our lives (John 10:10)...
- but in my case I usually build my own furnaces and then jump in.

While God does not build furnaces or throw us into them, he wastes nothing. God uses every situation of our life to make us stronger. What a wonderful truth our story reveals as the King beheld God with the three young men in the furnace. God will never leave us nor forsake us. Whatever the cause of your problem, God is well able and willing to deliver you.

4. **Your furnace will reveal your confidence (faith) in God or lack thereof.** We learn much about ourselves in the furnaces of our lives. Difficulty will cause you to turn to God or away from Him. Notice again how these young men responded to the King....

Daniel 3: ¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us^[c] from Your Majesty's hand. ¹⁸ But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

In every situation the Bible encourages us to simply "trust" God! Listen to Proverbs 3:5 *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; 6. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths.*

TRUSTING GOD IS A DECISION. It is often a difficult one, but never a foolish one.

Whatever is happening to you remember, **there is hope for your future if you can retain your trust in GOD!** In every furnace ask yourself...Am I

trusting myself; Am I trusting another human; Am I trusting my faith; or am I trusting God? Only trust in God will bring you to a safe place of escape.

5. You are not alone in your furnace. (*Daniel 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, Your Majesty."*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."*)

You can look at this story from two points of view...

(1) Those on the outside looking in or

(2) Those on the inside of the furnace. Think how those three young men felt as they rose to their feet in that furnace and realized they were still alive and not in pain and standing there beside them was who I believe was the Lord Jesus Christ (remember God lives outside time). What a delightful surprise! **This wasn't the way they had planned their deliverance...** We must also remember that Jesus is with us (*Hebrews 13:5-6* *Let our conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have; for He has said I will never leave you or forsake you. So that we may boldly say "The Lord is my helper and I will not fear what man shall do to me."*).

OUR CONFESSION IS VERY IMPORTANT ESPECIALLY DURING TIMES OF CRISIS. THE BIBLE IS FILLED WITH PROMISES FOR US TO SPEAK DURING THESE TIMES. I LOVE THIS ONE IN HEBREWS... THINK ABOUT THIS PHRASE "HE HAS SAID...SO THAT WE MAY SAY... The promises of the Bible give us

the words with which to fill our mouths during times of difficulty. In Hebrews 13 that promise is “**I will never leave you nor forsake you**”. There have been times in my life when I could not feel Jesus. I felt alone and frightened, but that didn’t change the promise. I had to decide to believe, even when my mind and emotion failed to agree with my spirit that Jesus was with me....I’ve always found it to be true...Jesus is always with me, although sometimes silent.

6. **You can experience deliverance in your furnace.** (*Daniel 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.**”). The fire had freed these men of their bondage. They had been thrown in bound hand and foot, but now they were loosed and walking around, and a fourth man had joined them. **It’s difficult to realize that bad situations can bring positive results in your life, but it is true. Gold is purified by fire and so are we.** Crisis can cause us to turn to God and seek Him with all our energy. The result is greater spiritual awareness and freedom. God does not build furnaces, but neither does He waste them. During this time of crisis, allow God to remove all your bondage and totally set you free.*

7. **Your Furnace will change you.** I can honestly say every bad circumstance and crisis in my life has changed me. You decide what that change will be.

- Will this problem make you stronger?
- Will this problem make you bitter?
- Will this problem make you wiser?
- Will this problem make you more compassionate?

Your attitude during the problem will determine the change in your future.

I love steps of action but there was a time in my life when I faced a real furnace situation. I prayed for long hours and sought God concerning what course of action I should take.

I identified the problem and considered all the possible courses of action. Then one morning in prayer God spoke a scripture too me. It was not the scripture I wanted, but it was instruction from God: Exodus 14:14 ... *The Lord will fight for you and you will hold your peace....* This was contrary to everything I wanted to do... key word DO. But verse 13 of that chapter gave me the only action God wanted me to take:

“Fear not, stand still and see the salvation of God”

I had to step beyond fear, take a strong stand in the Word of God and watch God work in the situation. The promise was “The enemy you see today you will never see again.”

I confess it was not easy, I had to give up all control and totally trust God, but when I did the experience of allowing Him to do the work changed my life forever. Since that time trusting has become easier and the power of prayer more evident in my life. I had always had confidence in my faith, but after that experience my faith was not in my faith, but in the God of my faith. **YOUR FURNACE WILL CHANGE YOU.**

8. Your Furnace Will Not Destroy you. I’m sure these young men thought their life was over... but God had another plan. Satan will always bring the

promise of complete destruction to your mind. Only you can make the choice to rise against death and take hold of life through Jesus Christ. Life is difficult. It is a constant struggle. However, the moments of joy and contentment are well worth the struggle. **Don't allow Satan to convince you that death awaits you. God has promised you life. (John 10:10).**

9. **Your Furnace will end. You will walk out!** (Daniel 3:26 *Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, ²⁷ and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them*”).

Every problem has a limited life span. Every problem has a beginning and an ending. When trouble persists in our lives, it is easy to think it will never end. But listen to scripture:

Psalm 34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

2 Corinthians 4:18 NKJV While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary but the things which are not seen are eternal.

- Don't get comfortable in your furnace situations.
- Don't accept your situation as unchangeable and final.

- Ask yourself: “Does my conversation and confession reach beyond the boundary of my problem?”
- Plan for the time when your furnace will end.
- Always look beyond to the promise of God.

YOUR SITUATION CAN CHANGE! THIS FURNACE WILL END! YOU WILL WALK OUT OF THIS CRISIS!

10. **There’s promotion after the furnace** (*Daniel 3:28-30* Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. ²⁹ Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way.”

³⁰ **Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon).**

The Bible is filled with wonderful stories of men and women who experienced problems and the deliverance of a loving Heavenly Father. One thing most have in common is that after the furnace there was promotion. Be assured your faith will not fail during times of trouble and God has a promotion in mind for you also.

One final thought: When we consider the problems we face in life and compare them with the blessings, they are not worthy to be compared. I think of Joseph

who lived 110 years on earth. His years of trouble only last 13 years. His good years far exceeded the bad. I love what Paul wrote in the book of Romans:

Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us, and in us and for us and conferred on us.