

A Faith Equal to or Greater than the Fiery Furnace

Written by Dr. Harold R. Carpenter - Last Updated Sunday, 07 August 2011 14:30



Dr. Harold & Myrna

Carpenter **TEXT:**Daniel 3:8-18

8 For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews. 9 They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: "O king, live forever! 10 "You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music, is to fall down and worship the golden image. 11 "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire. 12 "There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, {namely} Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up." 13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? 15 "Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe, and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, very well. But if you will not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?" 16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. 17 "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. 18 "But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up" (Daniel 3:8-18, NASB). **INTRODUCTION:**

Frequently when a person is going through a difficult moment or a fiery trial other well-intentioned people quote from the old poem that says, "I complained because I had no shoes, but then I met a man who had no feet." It is hoped that this comparative illustration will help the person passing through the trial by showing him or her that there are other people going through even greater trials.

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I have come to the conclusion that this is not really a help to the hurting person. It does not make his or her suffering less. In fact it may just add to his suffering by adding a burden of guilt to his already overwhelming burden.

God does not always deliver us from the fiery furnace of suffering. But he does give us grace to withstand the suffering.

Remember that 10 of the 12 Apostles suffered a martyr's death.

I. WALKING IN THE FURNACE

A. A kingdom gone bad

1. The history of the last days of the Kingdom is a sad tale of spiritual failure.
2. There was no moral leadership or example for disillusioned young people

B. It was a kingdom built around a tower of rebellion and a confused tongue.

1. Babylon's beginning centers around the tower of Babel.
2. Babylon as a kingdom existed only 70 years (606-536 b.C.).

C. From Jerusalem to Babylon

1. Daniel and the three Hebrew children were the best of the best in a kingdom gone bad (Daniel 1:4)
2. They lived among pagans and idols.

D. From bad to worse or (from the frying pan into the fire):

1. What more could go wrong?
2. Nebuchadnezzar command was an unacceptable demand.
3. They had an uncompromising faith.

D. Walking in the furnace

1. God did not keep them out of the flame.
2. God walked with them in the flame.
3. Their faith was demonstrated in the flame.
4. Remember that it was Nebuchadnezzar who threw them into the furnace who also brought them out of the furnace!

II. A PROPHET IN EXILE

A. Daniel was a teen when he went to Babylon.

B. Daniel never saw Jerusalem again.

C. His faith was tested by the lions' den.

1. This was after 70 years of captivity (see 5:30-31 and 6:1).

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2. God's counsel to Daniel:

13 "But as for you, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age" (Daniel 12:13, NASB). D. God did not deliver him from the lions' den; he simply stopped the mouths of the lions in the den.

E. Again it was not God who brought him out of the den, but the very king who placed him there.

F. God's purpose was greater than Daniel's circumstances. **III. A PREACHER IN PRISON**

A. Paul was a prisoner in Rome.

8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, 9 for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. 10 For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory (2 Timothy 2:8-10, NASB). B. Why not another Philippian-type deliverance?

C. Paul's concern was not with being delivered from prison, rather what he could do while in the prison.

D. Attitude and faith make all the difference in the world.

1. He was a prisoner of Jesus Christ--Philemon 1:1
2. He was ambassador in chains--Ephesians 6:20.
3. He did not ask for deliverance, but for boldness and utterance!

19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak (Ephesians 6:19-20, NASB).

1. His testimony:

11 "...for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am."

13 "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

22 All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household (Philippians 4:11,13,22, NASB). **CONCLUSI**

ON:

I don't know that I can say that our congregation has more than its share of suffering; but I do know that it has a great deal of it:

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- We are not exempt from broken marriages.
- We are not exempt from broken down lines of communication between parents and children.
- We are not exempt from the afflictions of physical illness.
- We are not exempt from financial needs.
- We are not exempt from emotional upheavals and depressions.
- We are not exempt from the pangs of death.
- We are not exempt from the heartache of lost loved ones.

God has not promised to keep us from all trials and tribulations. He has promised to keep us through them. And he has promised a crown of life to those who remain faithful in the midst of tribulation.

Peter--who was crucified for his faith--gives us these words of encouragement:

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. 14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. 15 By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; 16 but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God. 17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? 19 Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right
(1 Peter 4:12-19, NASB)

James 5:16 tells us that we should pray for one another.

Paul in Ephesians 6:2 tells us to bear one another's burdens.

I want us to do just that tonight. If you are passing through a seemingly impossible trial or feel that you are bearing an unbearable burden I want you to come tonight and kneel here at the altar. Then I want your brothers and sisters in Christ who love you to come and pray with you and for you that you will be able to stand tall in the midst of the fiery furnace of trials.

Our battle is a spiritual battle and it must be fought with spiritual weapons of prayer, faith, God's Word, and the Holy Spirit:

Eph. 6:11 Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be

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able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one (Ephesians 6:11-16, NASB).

Closing choruses:

"Got Any Rivers You Think Are Uncrossable"

"I Know The Lord Will Make A Way For Me"

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This is the outline of the sermon Dr. Harold Carpenter preached 05 December 2002 in the p.m. service. Dr. Carpenter and his wife served as missionaries for twenty years. Dr. Carpenter also taught missions for twenty years at Central Bible College. He now serves as Pastor of Fair Grove Assembly of God, Fair Grove MO.

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