

INTRODUCTION

One of the most dramatic, exciting stories in all the Bible was when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into the fiery furnace. I remember hearing the joke about the preacher who for the life of him couldn't ever remember the names of those Hebrew boys. So one Sunday when he was going to preach on this text, he wrote their names on a piece of paper and pinned it inside his suit coat. In the course of standing up, the paper fell out. He was preaching along and said, "And you know those three Hebrew boys who were thrown into the furnace?" and he opened his coat and said, "Hart, Shafner, and Marx." Well, they are three Hebrew boys, too, but not the ones in Daniel 3!

This story pulsates with drama, but it also is full of lessons for us. For while you may not be facing a literal fire like these boys, you often find yourself facing inflammable experiences or involved in inflammatory relationships. So today you are going to learn "How to keep your cool when the heat is on."

Years ago, I remember hearing a song about these three Hebrew boys. I can't remember the tune or even all the words, I just remember the words said, "They wouldn't bow; They wouldn't bend; They wouldn't burn." I don't think you can improve on that observation, so that's my outline this morning. They wouldn't bow, bend, or burn.

I. THEY WOULDN'T BOW (1-6, 12): THAT'S DEVOTION

Let's begin reading in verse 1-6:

"King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials (VIP's) to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. So the...[VIP's] assembled for the dedication of the image the King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.

Then the herald proclaimed, 'This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language; As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.'"

So the band started to play and everybody fell down to worship this image—all except three young men. Skip down to verse 12. Some of the advisors are tattle tales and they report to the king.

Verse 12, "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, O king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up."

Now picture what must have happened that day. Out on a massive plain is a huge golden statue, 90 feet tall, shimmering in the sunlight. Thousands of VIPs from the empire have gathered for this important occasion. Can't you just see the colorful clothes of the VIPs from different nations milling around waiting for it to start? *Good Morning Babylon* is there interviewing these people. There is an air of excitement and expectation.

The press secretary for the king gets everyone's attention. He says, "King Nebuchadnezzar has commanded that when you hear the orchestra begin, you must fall down on your face before this image." There are murmurs throughout the crowd. And the messenger continues, "And as an added incentive—Do you see that smelting furnace over there? If you don't bow down, you will be thrown alive into that fire! So get ready, here we go!"

Can't you see the people? They look at the golden statue and then they look over at the fiery furnace and it's not a tough decision—it's a matter of life and death. The air is full of the smell of the smoke and flames. Everyone is silent as they await the start of the music. I'm sure some of them thought, "I'll be the first one on my face, just watch." The conductor steps up to the music stand, taps his baton, and holds up his hand for the downbeat.

Now I don't know what song they played to get people to make a decision. We have an old invitation hymn entitled "Almost Persuaded." Maybe the Babylonian symphony played "Almost Cremated" or something like that. Whatever it was, when the music began, WHUMP! There was the sound of thousands of knees hitting the dirt. WHAP! There was the sound of half that many foreheads hitting the dirt. A cloud of dust arises from the sudden motion. When the dust clears, all across the plain, thousands of VIPs are bowing prostrate before the image—All except for three solitary figures. There stand three Hebrew teenagers. You might say they were outstanding in their field! Their arms were crossed, perhaps their faces upturned to worship the God of heaven rather than the Gold of earth.

Unlike some teenagers today, they didn't believe "all that glitters is gold." But they did believe "only shooting stars break the mold." They were willing to break the mold and be different than the crowd. You say, "Where was Daniel?" Obviously, he wasn't there because we know he wouldn't have bowed either. He must have been away on official business. Think about it. They wouldn't *bow*!

Let's think about that statue for a moment. Notice three things about it. First, it was an effort to:

1. Glorify Self

Nebuchadnezzar built this statue to show how great he was. We are going to see in the next chapter he was a very arrogant dictator. Do you remember his dream in Chapter 2? He was the head of gold, but the rest of the statue was comprised of different metals to symbolize other kingdoms that would take his place. Notice this statue was solid gold. It was as if Nebuchadnezzar was reacting to God's prophecy saying, "I am so powerful that the entire image is made of gold," not just the head.

This statue was just one of many great building projects of Nebuchadnezzar. It stood 90 feet tall. To give you a perspective, the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor is 130 feet from head to toe. This statue, built twenty-six centuries ago was almost as tall! Nebuchadnezzar was saying, “I am Babylon. Look what I have done.” He forgot Daniel had told him he served as king only because the God of heaven had placed him on the throne. He will get a rude reminder of that in Chapter 4.

Today, we often do the same thing. A man will look at a business he started and stand back with pride and say, “Look what I have done.” Sir, or madam, you’d better be careful you don’t forget that any success you’ve gained in this life is because of the Hand of God.

It was also an attempt to:

2. Deify Man

We aren’t told here the statue was an image of a man, but the LXX tells us it was an image of a man. It represented the best of industrial and scientific technology of that day. Like the mighty pyramids in Egypt, it was an attempt to say, “Look what a *man* can do if he has enough money and enough slaves.”

Do you recall the story of the Tower of Babel? (Genesis 11) It was man’s attempt to build his own way to God. God confused their speech. To the best of our knowledge, this image of Nebuchadnezzar was built in the exact same place (Babel later became Babylon).

Both the tower of Babel and Nebuchadnezzar’s statue represent what we call *humanism*. Humanism is the philosophy that dethrones God and enthrones man. The official religion of America is humanism.

Listen to what the Humanist Manifesto states and then try to tell me this isn’t taught in American classrooms:

1. Humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created.
2. Man is a part of nature and he has emerged as a result of a continuous process.
3. Traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species.
4. We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience.
5. Intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical cultures, unduly repress sexual conduct ... short of harming others or compelling them to do likewise, individuals should be permitted to express their sexual proclivities and pursue their lifestyle as they desire.

(“Humanist Manifesto II” published in *The Humanist Magazine*, 1973)

Sadly, there are millions of Americans today who are worshiping at the altar of humanism. It’s the most popular religion in America today.

3. Falsify Worship

Mandate: The third mistake of this image is Nebuchadnezzar used it to try to force people to worship. True worship can never be coerced. Nebuchadnezzar's threat of the fiery furnace for any foolish non-conformist is the indicator that blows the cover on the whole Babylonian system. No one was gathering on the plain of Dura voluntarily. Not one person fell down before the statue because they had an atom of love in their hearts for the idol. Nebuchadnezzar had a beautiful city, with hanging gardens and an orchestra, and now another icon, an impressive golden statue, but the king had to force people to fall and worship with the threat of the furnace if they declined.

Nebuchadnezzar was a monster. The roaring furnace belching out its smoke was a symbol of this despot, while all through the vast crowd his secret police, the so-called "astrologers" (3:8), were scattered checking out on who might be sort-of crouching, but not actually falling down flat.

You can't force worship. Any worship that is compulsory is false. It's true here this morning. If your parents forced you to come to church (which is a good idea), you really won't worship. If you are one of those husbands whom your wife drags to church (good for her) you probably won't worship a lick. Why? Worship comes from the heart, and you can't force it.

Notice also Nebuchadnezzar used music to further induce this worship. We would all agree music is a powerful tool. It can either lift a heart toward God, or drag a soul to hell. Why do we have a music ministry? Because the Bible has a lot say about the importance of music in worship. Music was created in order to honor and glorify God. But as is true of many of God's creations, the devil has taken it and recreated it as a tool of evil.

That's why it really *is* important to choose the music you listen to. Some music is uplifting, and some music is innocuous. But some music is harmful. And may God give you, and especially our teenagers, the ability to judge. What makes music harmful? You judge music by two criteria: the lyrics: is the message a positive message about God? Or it may just be an innocent "pop" message about nothing. Or do the lyrics plant evil seeds in your mind?

So you want to be a millionaire? Okay, I'll play Regis and you be the contestant. Here's your million-dollar question, and it relates to music:

Q: Who made the following statement? "Let me write the music of a nation, and I will determine its morals."

- A. Bugs Bunny
- B. Marilyn Manson
- C. Mike Parks
- D. Adolph Hitler

What's your answer? Are you *sure* that's your answer? If you chose D. Adolph Hitler, you are correct. But if you are listening to the wrong kind of music, *you lose*.

If you are struggling or troubled, really not growing in your Christian life, try listening to only praise music for seven days. And I promise you will see a difference.

They wouldn't bow: that's devotion. By the way, have you wondered why they were so devoted to God? Here's an important observation:

They had the courage to stand alone because they were raised during a time of revival (2 Kings 22-23).

Sometime, go read it for yourself. A few years before the Babylonians overran Jerusalem a young king, Josiah, decided to clean out the Temple, literally and spiritually. The Temple Solomon had built had become full of pagan images and statues. In the process of cleaning it out, one of the priests found an old scroll. Do you know what it was? It was the Bible, the Word of God. When Josiah read it, he was blown away. He tore his clothes and fasted and prayed and led the whole nation in a time of repentance. He cleaned all the junk out of the temple and started worshiping God according to the Book. It was a time of national revival. So, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego knew the Bible. They knew God's word as written in the Ten Commandments. Number one: We've just begun. God should be first in our lives. Number two was the Idol Rule: Those graven images aren't nice. They knew the word of God and they knew the God of the Word.

We need a real spiritual awakening in this church, a real revival. That's the only hope for teenage drinking. That's the only hope for America, a revival like these three guys experienced in their youth.

II. THEY WOULDN'T BEND! (15-17): THAT'S DETERMINATION

Let's read verses 15 to 17:

"Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, 'Is it true Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made good. [Second chance] But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?'"

Good question. Let's see how these three boys replied to the most powerful man in the world "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, 'O, King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter (we don't need to think about what to say, our minds are made up beforehand). If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.'"

Now Nebuchadnezzar summoned them to give them a second chance. He called them by their Babylonian names (their Jewish names were Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah). It's like they were saying, "You can change our names, but you can't change our hearts." When the king threatened them with the fire notice the profession of faith they made in verse 17 and 18. We see two kinds of faith there.

1. FAULTY FAITH: "I'll trust God *IF* He delivers me"

This is sometimes called "foxhole religion." God IF you will get me through this battle, then I'll serve you. It can be called 911-FAITH. "God if you'll just heal me, or heal my family member, I'll be faithful." This is actually faulty faith, but it bargains with God and dares God to come through for you. That's not what the three guys said. They showed faith. "Our God is able, and we believe he will deliver us." But verse 18 describes what I call:

2. REAL FAITH: "Even if I die: I'll trust God"

They said, "But even if God doesn't come through, we will still be faithful to Him!" Wow! That's real faith. Do you have that kind of faith? "God if you give me a good husband or wife, I'll serve you." What are you going to do if He doesn't? "God if you give me a good job, or good health, or plenty of money, I'll serve you." What if He doesn't, what are you going to do? Frankly, I've known a lot of people who bailed out on God because they thought God let them down. There are people watching this on television who think they will never darken the doors of a church again. Why? You were hurt, or some terrible tragedy came into your life and you thought God failed you. So you are going to boycott heaven.

Listen friend, God is not some heavenly puppet, and your prayer is not some string you pull. God is the King of the Universe, and He always knows what's best. Why don't you stop running from Him? Why don't you change your faith to the faith of these three boys: God, I know you are able, but even if you don't, I'll still love you and serve you. That's the only kind of faith that will get you through the fire.

Our heroes were prepared to die! They could say, "Lord, even if I have to suffer, if my body ignites and my burning flesh fills the air with stench, I will go out trusting You. I will believe You, even if I don't get the answer to my prayer!"

Most of us don't have a faith that would use the daring words these men used, "But, if not..." I ask you: What will you do if you don't get your answer? Will you accuse God of failing you, of not loving you? What a tragedy to go into your furnace crying, "God, where are You? You've failed me!" Job had this kind of faith. (Job 13:15a), "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Some people don't have a relationship with God because they are trying to negotiate with Him. They say, "God, if you are real, do this, or don't do that, and I will believe in you." God never honors that because it isn't faith, it's sight.

Let's see what happened next. Let's read verses 19 –27:

Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his

attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. The king’s command was so urgent and the furnace was so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

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.” 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.” 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, and the [VIP’s] 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.”

RECAP:

III. THEY WOULDN’T BURN! (19-27): THAT’S DELIVERANCE

Okay, so picture this: The king is so furious, that *he* is the one burning. He orders the furnace to be heated super hot. The only way to get a fire hotter is to introduce more oxygen, so they probably had some kind of air bellows that started pumping more air to the fire. The sparks are flying; the flames are roaring the smoke so it is billowing out of the top.

Most archeologists agree this was a brick furnace shaped somewhat like an old milk bottle, wider at the bottom with an opening through which metals could be inserted to heat them up. Then there would be an opening somewhere halfway up where fuel could be added to fire by standing on some kind of scaffold, and then there was an opening at the top to allow the smoke to escape. The fire was so hot; the strong soldiers who dropped them from the platform succumbed to the heat and smoke and died themselves. But they managed to drop our three friends into the fire. The LXX says they were “singing” as they were thrown into the fire. Wow! What do you think they were singing? I don’t think it was “hunka-hunka burning love” or “we’ll have a hot time in the old town tonight.” They were probably singing, “God is good, all the time...” Folks if you sing through the fire you won’t be singed.

Then Nebuchadnezzar is amazed because he sees FOUR men walking around. Their bonds are burned off, but other than that they are unharmed. Nebuchadnezzar observes in his pagan language, “The fourth one looks like a son of the gods.” In verse 28, he calls the fourth man an angel. Who was the fourth man? There is a lot of debate about this. Let me read to you what Dr. Stephen Miller, professor of Old Testament at Mid-America Seminary writes:

“The majority of Jewish scholars have identified this person as an angel. The Talmud asserts that it was the angel Gabriel. However, the expression ‘a son of the gods’ ascribes

deity to the being, since an offspring of the gods partakes of the divine nature. The King believed he saw no less than a God in the flames with the Hebrews. From a Christian perspective, we know the preincarnate Christ did appear to individuals in the Old Testament. Most likely the fourth man in the fire was the Lord God Himself, in the person of His son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is sometimes called the Angel of the Lord.”

Without being dogmatic, we know it was God’s man, and I believe it was one of those rare visits of Jesus to earth before Bethlehem. This is an Old Testament appearance of the Son of God coming down from heaven in bodily form. He stood up from His heavenly throne, stepped across the battlements of heaven, walked down the starry staircase, walked into the blazing furnace and said to the flames, “Cool it!” And they did. And He was waiting for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fire, and said, “Chill out, dudes.” And they did. Only the ropes around their hands and feet were incinerated. Selective heat. That’s the first microwave oven in history. I still don’t understand why the water gets hot but the Styrofoam cup stays cool!

This is a good time to say if you have a problem believing the miracles of the Bible, you’ll never really be able to know God. Some so-called “enlightened scholars” have tried to go through the Bible and remove the miracles and just make it a book of moral lessons. They claim this story and the other miracles are just like the stories of Cinderella and Goldilocks and the Three Bears. One well-known intellectual has been quoted as saying, “To believe the miracles in the Bible, you must commit intellectual suicide.” Well, all I’ve got to say is for some us “intellectual suicide” wouldn’t be any great loss. Some of us are pretty close to being brain dead anyway! But there is some truth to that.

The scriptures say, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.” So much of the Bible can’t be explained reasonably and logically. The Bible is not irrational it is supra rational. Folks, if you can handle Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...” You can handle the rest of it. But if you try to lean on your own understanding and you stumble over the miracles of the Bible, you’ll have a hard time knowing God.

To me a good definition of a miracle is “when Jesus shows up.” Well, He showed up here and there was a miracle. And when Nebuchadnezzar called these three young men out of the furnace, their clothes didn’t smell like smoke, their hair wasn’t burned and Nebuchadnezzar started to praise the God of Israel. Don’t be fooled, though. Nebuchadnezzar had a long way to go as we will see in the next chapter.

At this point I want us to stop and ask, “So what? What does this story mean to me?” As we finish, I want us to learn:

FOUR LIFE LESSONS LEARNED IN THE FURNACE

1) PERSECUTION: Facing the fire deepens your commitment

When you dare to be different, when you dare to stand up for God and refuse to bow down to the idols of this world you will suffer persecution. 2 Timothy 3:12, "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus *will* be persecuted."

Have you discovered that sold-out Christians bug the average American? I mean, if you are a Sunday-only Christian, you fit in just great. But once you decide to be a 24/7 Christian, you become a religious fanatic. When you are at work in the coffee room and somebody tells a filthy, lewd joke, and you don't laugh, what do they do? They look at you like you are really weird. And heaven forbid, if you should ever have the nerve to politely ask someone to please not use your Savior's name as profanity. You are considered a kook! You say, "Well, I'm a Christian, and I'm not being persecuted." Look at that verse again. It could be your life is so worldly, so ungodly you don't qualify. If you aren't seeing some persecution it says something about your commitment level.

You never need to go around and try to stir up trouble. Just live for Jesus 24/7 and watch what happens. You'll be thrown into the furnace.

I've been through the fire a few times, and I expect I'll go through it again. I've found during the times of hottest persecution, I've been driven to my knees and my intimacy with Jesus has deepened. For that reason, I wouldn't trade the fiery furnace experiences I've gone through. Just think. If Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego hadn't been thrown in the fire, they wouldn't have had the chance to walk with Jesus.

2) PERSEVERANCE: Don't give in to peer pressure

Remember our story? They wouldn't bow. That's devotion. And then when they are given a second chance, they wouldn't bend. That's determination. In other words they had already determined beforehand they were going to be faithful to God.

By the way folks, you too, must determine *before* the crisis you will be faithful. If you haven't already made that decision, it's a tough one to make with the heat of the furnace warming your face. For instance, teenagers, you must determine in a moment of clarity you will remain sexually pure until marriage. If you wait until you are making out in some car with the windows fogged up to make that decision, you lose. You must decide *now* that you won't drink or smoke dope like the other kids. If you wait until a party or some concert, you lose.

Amy Grant used to sing a song that said,

*I have decided
Gonna live like a Believer
Turn my back on the Deceiver
Gonna live what I believe
I have decided
Being good is just a fable
I just can't
'Cause I'm not able*

Gonna leave it to the Lord

Now to do this, you must resist the temptation to be like everyone else. That's peer pressure. How do you think our three friends felt when everyone else around them was bowing down? They felt different. And no person likes the feeling of being different.

A few years ago, a major university worked with the television show "Candid Camera" to conduct some psychological experiments on the power of peer pressure. It was scientific study, but it was also very entertaining. In one episode, they put actors in the waiting room of a doctor's office and all of the actors were wearing only underwear. They wanted to see what unsuspecting patients would do when they walked in and saw everyone already undressed (after all, the doctor is going to tell you to take your clothes off). They were surprised that most of the unsuspecting patients walked in, signed the book, looked around and without a word, started taking their clothes off! That's the power of peer pressure.

In another experiment they put actors on an elevator and had all of them face the back of the elevator instead of the door, just to see what people would do. Most of the unsuspecting people got on, pushed their button, and turned with the crowd to face the back of the elevator. That's peer pressure. Listen, if you are going to dare to be a Daniel (or a Shadrach, Meshach or Abednego) you will have to stand alone. And while everyone around you is taking off his or her clothes, you keep on your robe of righteousness. While everyone else may be going a different direction, you face the door of heaven, Jesus. Yes, it's sometimes painful to be faithful. You have to endure the scorn and the ridicule thrown your way, but remember God will honor your endurance.

1 Peter 2:20 says, "But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God."

3) PRESENCE: Jesus will be with you in the fire

Here's a little math lesson. How many men were thrown *in* the fire? Three. How many men walked around in the fire? Four. How many men walked *out* of the fire? Three. So where is the fourth man? He's still *in* the fire, and you'll find Him when you have to walk through the fire.

Look at God's promise in Isaiah, (Isaiah 43: 2-3), "When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." Next verse, "Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you."

Notice it doesn't say God will keep you out of the fire. And it doesn't say, "*If* you walk through the fire..." It says, "*When* you walk through the fire..." While God didn't keep them from the fire, He did keep the fire from them! Do you know why not a hair of their head was burned? Because Jesus told us in the New Testament every hair of our heads is numbered.

Let me ask you a question. Would you rather stay out of the fire and miss Jesus or go through the fire and walk *with* Jesus? Some of you are so careful to avoid the fires you miss the blessing of

His presence with us. Problems are going to come. And it is during these times of fiery trials that we find the strength and grace of Jesus. But you say, "I don't like the fire. I'm afraid of the fire. Why doesn't God just keep me out of the fire in the first place?" Here's the answer. We must learn the lesson of:

4) PURIFICATION: God uses the fire to purify you

When the Lord showed me this, my heart turned a flip. I started laughing and crying and shouting at the same time. I hope I can share it with you without having a holy fit. Now if you will grab this too, it will change you and you'll be so excited about Jesus you'll run toward the furnace, because right now, some of you are facing a private, personal, painful furnace. You ask, "What is God doing? What am I going through this fire?" Here's the answer:

(Malachi 3:3) "He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites [priests] and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness." God is the Silversmith. You and I are silver. The silversmith places the silver in the crucible [that's your personal furnace]. The Silversmith heats the crucible until the silver becomes liquid. The liquid silver sinks to the bottom and the impurities rise to the top. Then the silversmith takes a skimmer and he skims off the impurities. He carefully regulates the heat so the silver is not damaged, just hot enough to remove the impurities, any substance that pollutes the purity of the silver. Is that what God is doing with you right now?

Now, do you know *how* the Silversmith knows *when* the silver has become pure? It's when he can see a clear reflection of his own face in the surface of the molten silver. Let me say that again. When the silversmith sees his face clearly reflected in the silver, he knows it's pure, and he removes the silver from the fire.

I can just see Jesus, looking into the eyes of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in furnace. What did He see? He saw a reflection of the time when He himself would endure the fire of hell on the cross for each one of us. And when He saw that kind of unselfish nature, He said, "You boys can leave the fire, now because you have been purified."

Let me ask you this morning: When Jesus, the Silversmith, looks into your face, does He see His own nature reflected: love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faithfulness, self-control? If not, thank Him for the fire He is using to purify you.

André Crouch used to sing,

*I've seen many tears and sorrows
I've had questions for tomorrow
There've been times I didn't know right from wrong
But if I'd never had a problem
I wouldn't know that God could solve them
I wouldn't know what faith in God could do*

Make up your mind. I won't bow. I won't bend. I won't burn. And when you do, God will deliver you through the fire!

OUTLINE

I. THEY WOULDN'T BOW! (1-6, 12): DEVOTION

This was an effort to:

1. Glorify self
2. Deify man
3. Falsify worship

They had the courage to stand alone because they were raised during a time of revival. *2 Kings 22-23*

II. THEY WOULDN'T BEND! (15-17): DETERMINATION

Faulty faith: "I'll trust God IF He delivers me."

Real faith: "Even if I die, I'll trust God."

Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. *Job 13:15a KJV*

III. THEY WOULDN'T BURN! (19-27): DELIVERANCE

Life lessons learned in the furnace:

1. Persecution

Facing the fire deepens your commitment

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. *2 Timothy 3:12*

2. Perseverance

Don't give in to peer pressure

But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. *1 Peter 2:20*

3. Presence

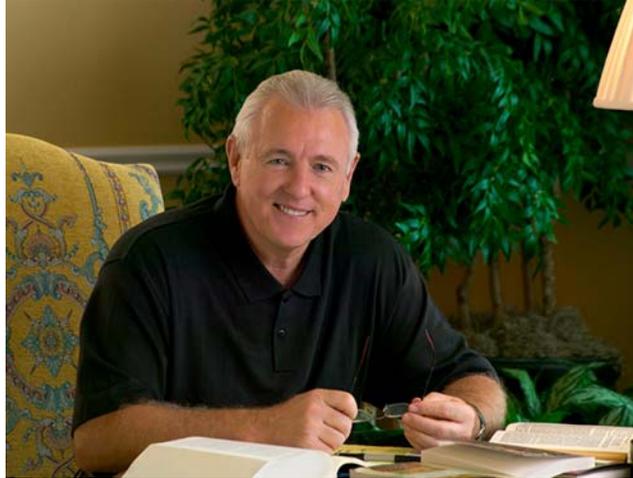
Jesus will be with you in the fire

"When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." *Isaiah 43:2b-3a*

4. Purification

God uses the fire to purify you

He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness.
Malachi 3:3



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes