

It's a Matter of Trust

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I remember one of the first calls I received when I became a Park Ranger. We had received a call about a male subject who had a vehicle fall on top of him. As I was driving, I was trying to figure out how could a vehicle fall on top of someone in a park. When I came on scene, a group of people were around a vehicle by a pavilion. It was a group of young men with those little loud sport cars that had met at the pavilion and were showing off their cars. The young man was pulled from under his vehicle. All of the young men had got together and lifted the vehicle off the victim. He had blood coming out of his ears, mouth, and nose. As I was getting information as the young man was getting put into the ambulance, one of the witnesses told me the victim was trying find what was causing a rattle under his vehicle, so he got a regular car jack out and jacked the vehicle up. He then crawled under and while he was doing that, he either kicked the jack or the jack was not in a secured position. The witness stated, "the guy should not have trusted that jack. He should've had car jack stands as well under the vehicle". After having to deal with this incident, I have never trusted a car jack by itself. We live in a world where it's hard to trust anything anymore. We don't trust car salesmen, auto insurance salesmen, mechanics, weathermen, news people, government officials, those in the medical field, and the list can go on and on. When people lose trust in people, this helps to create a dark world. It's not fun living in a world where you can't trust people. Maybe this is part of the reason we live in an individualistic culture. Many people even don't trust the Church anymore after all the scandals that have been going on within the Church. When we lose trust with people, it's hard to trust anything. As we live in a dark world, we have to realize we need something to trust in to survive. You can't go through life not trusting in anything. I don't even trust flashlights. When we have to do search and rescue for lost people at night at the park, I always carry two flashlights with me in case one stops working. We even have trouble at times trusting God. When we're going through a dark period in our lives, this is when our trust in God is tested. Unfortunately, many people buckle under the pressure

of darkness and turn away from the Lord. This is not good. We need to remember examples of people who trusted the Lord during their darkest periods of life.

Last week, we talked about integrity dealing with Daniel and His friends in the dark days of the New Testament. We'll continue with this group and let's turn to Daniel 3 where we read this story about the example of trust: **3** King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits¹ and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. **2** Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. **3** Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. **4** And the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, **5** that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. **6** And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace." **7** Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

The Fiery Furnace

8 Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. **9** They declared² to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! **10** You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. **11** And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. **12** There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. **14** Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? **15** Now if you are

ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good.¹⁶ But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?"

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.¹⁸ ¹⁸ But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. ²⁰ And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. ²¹ Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics,¹⁹ their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. ²² Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. ²³ And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.

²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." ²⁵ He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

²⁶ Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. ²⁷ And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. ²⁸ Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside²⁰ the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. ²⁹ Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way." ³⁰ Then the king

promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon. (EVS From Bible Gateway).

Here we have the king of Babylon who had a gold statue and all people of his kingdom was told to worship that idol. There were some who informed on the Jews that did not worship the statue and the Jews were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. We don't know how many others didn't worship the idol, but these men are singled out. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were men of integrity. We had read about them last week (Hebrew names last week) with Daniel who would not allow themselves to eat food that would dishonor God. Here is another example that they set for us. They are living in a strange land where most people would say just follow the customs of the pagan Babylon empire. They would not eat food that would defile them, now they won't bow down and worship a false idol. If someone was caught not obeying this command from the king of Babylon, they would be thrown into a blazing furnace. In other words, death would be the result of not obeying the king's command. These three Jews had a choice to make. Live the simple life and do as the Romans do (an old saying) or put God first in their life and face death. To these men, it was a simple choice – obey their God first. In fact, we see in Scripture that they did not sugar coat their message to the king in verses 16 – 18. More on this a little later. What we do see here is how these men refused to cave into the culture they were forced to live in. They would only allow themselves to worship God and nothing else. Sometimes it scares me a little bit. I love America and I'm so thankful that the Lord has allowed me to be born here. However, there are many people who worship this country and we have to be careful we don't do the same. We were once a great country because God allowed us to be. When one studies Revelation, one can't find America mentioned during the end of times event. Makes you wonder where America fits in during the end of times. Human kingdoms only last for so long. We can make idols out of anything besides a great nation. AI will become something that can be worshipped when people finally understand what it is. People worship power or money. Everyone worships something. These three Jews refused to worship anything besides their God. They would not buckle under the pressure of their culture. The question we have to ask is why didn't they buckle under the pressure of their culture?

While Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are in front of the king and they have to answer their reason for disobeying the earthly king, we read this, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up. (ESV)" We now have come to the reason why or maybe we can say is the reason for strength that these Jewish men had

for not buckling under the pressure of the culture. We see that even when they are in front of the Babylonian king who had the earthly power to have them executed, they stood up boldly for God. They didn't waver under the pressure. They knew they could be thrown into a blazing furnace and they say so in verse 17. They tell the king that the God they serve "is able" to deliver them from the furnace, but even if He does not, they will not serve the king's false gods. The Hebrew term for "able" is "ykil" which means: to be able; could (Strong's Concordance). In other words, God could rescue them if He wants to, but if He decides not to, that's ok as well, we still won't worship your false gods. This is my paraphrase of verse 17. We can narrow this further and say these three men had put "complete" trust in God. We can say in more modern terms, they trusted in God's Will for their life even if it meant death. This is why they didn't buckle under the pressure. Their faith in God had grown so strong that they had complete trust in God and His plan. God is more than able to rescue them and they knew that. However, they knew God's plan is best, so if God's plan was for them to die in that furnace, they were ready to do so. There are times that God delivers people through death. Jesus tells the church this in Revelation 2: 10, "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown" (NIV). This takes total trust in God that He knows what is best for us. These three men would continue trusting God even while being thrown into the raging fires which will happen. For Christians to survive living in darkness, we need the type of trust these three men had for God. These men had upper tier faith and trust in God. This is not Joel Olstein faith where if you have real faith, everything will be peaches and cream. Real faith and trust is wanting God's will in one's life and is satisfied with that. We are called to trust the Lord. King David wrote this in Psalm 7:1, "O Lord my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me. (KJV)" King David states the same thing in Psalm 11. Paul tells Timothy this in 1 Timothy 4: 10, "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. (KJV)" The Greek term used for "trust" is "elpizo" which means: put hope in, trust, expect (Strong's Concordance). Paul not only put his hope in God, he expected God to do His will in his life and the life of the Church. Trust in God just isn't wanting to be blessed by God or wanting everything to be pain free. Even Jesus had to suffer and die on the cross because Jesus wanted the will of His Father to be done, not His own will. When we trust God to the point as Paul did or as Daniel's three friends did, then we'll realize what faith really is. It is something that needs to grow in our daily life where we do get to the point we totally trust God and want God's Will to be done.

Now, we like the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego because it has a good ending. A fourth person (many think it's Jesus) is with the young men in the blazing furnace and they are delivered from death. Their trust and faith in God had been awarded. We have to understand that trusting God and having faith that His will be

done may lead to suffering and death as well. In Revelation where Jesus shows John what is going to happen, we read how Jesus gives the Church a warning in Revelation 2: 10, "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown. (NIV)" Also, Paul tells Timothy in his second letter that he knows his death is approaching and he gives Timothy advice. Paul knows part of God's will is that he will die for the sake of Jesus. Paul will be executed for his faith in Jesus and Paul expected it to happen because he trusted God and he wanted God's will done. This is real faith just like the three young men in the blazing furnace had. They knew God could change things, but they were ok with whatever God did. That is high level faith. This faith is becoming rarer in the Church today. We look for quick help books to help us make decisions in the church or help us to do some new crazy thing. How can we make our trust in God grow to the level these men we've talked about had?

Paul tells us this in Colossians 2: 6, "And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to live in obedience to him. Let your roots grow down into him and draw up nourishment from him, so you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught. Let your lives overflow with thanksgiving for all he has done. (NLT)" Our faith needs to grow so that our trust in God grows. If not, we'll buckle under the pressure of the culture around us. James tells us this through the Spirit in James 1: 2, "Dear brothers and sisters, whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything.(NLT)" When this happens, your trust in the Lord grows and you come to the point you want His Will to be done even if it means death itself. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had this high level of trust and faith in God. Do we? Maybe we need to start asking the Lord to make our faith to grow so our endurance can grow and then we'll be able to handle the spiritual battles we must face here on this earth. We need to trust Him more than our culture. The Holy Spirit can make our faith and trust grow. Just ask Jesus for help in prayer and trust Him to answer.

The Strongest Strong's Concordance. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001