

Talk #2 - Even faced with the worst circumstances –that look like the end of things- God is worthy to be trusted.

The story of the fiery furnace from the Book of Daniel is a memorable episode in the Old Testament. In summary, Nebuchadnezzar condemns three Jewish men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be burned alive by being thrown into a fiery furnace.

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. ³ So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.

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.”

⁷ Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the nations and peoples of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

At this time, the Jews were living in exile in Babylon. The Book of Daniel mentions four Jewish men in particular: Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Daniel himself. Being Jewish (and thus forbidden by the **Ten Commandments** to worship any ‘graven image’, because it was a form of idolatry), these men could not in good conscience kneel before the image of the Babylonian king, so they didn’t and just like in real life today, someone snitched on them.

Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, ¹⁴ 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? ¹⁵ Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. 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?”

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 three Jewish men know that God will save them from such a fate as burning to death in the fiery furnace:

Predictably, the king flies into a rage at this act of defiance:

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 ²⁰ and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. But Nebuchadnezzar is amazed to find that the three men are not consumed by the flames, but walk through the fire, unharmed..

The men are all unharmed, as are their clothes, when they step out of the fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar has witnessed a miracle, which proves that the Jewish men spoke truth when they told the king that their God would ‘deliver’ them from death in the fiery furnace:

Nebuchadnezzar doesn’t just take back his words, but he actually promotes the three Jewish men to higher office:

What they were saying was ‘you might break us, but we’re not turning our back on God!’

God knows everything we are going through at this very moment and everything we will go through in the future. He knows the best way to handle every situation, so we get the best possible outcome, and we need to trust him with that. We need to follow his path and trust that he knows best - because he does.

But this is hard, how do you trust God in all situations?

God is waiting for us to trust Him. All we need to do is believe, with no doubts nagging at the edge of our minds. “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5, 6)

Speaker should give examples of situations in his or her life when it looked impossible, but they trusted that God would do something amazing.

Discussion questions:

1. How do you trust God when it doesn't make sense?
2. What does that feel and look like?
3. Would knowing what God has done in the past help?
4. Do you have a story to tell about this same thing happening to you?

Prayer focus: Ask God to help you to trust Him no matter what – just like these three men did.