Faith Tested by Fire

Zanesville, OH | July 28, 2019 | John Pollard | Sermon Notes

**Foundational Scripture:** Daniel 3:1-27

**Intro**:

* The story of Daniel 3 is one of the most commonly taught among social, familial and religious circles. It, of course, pertains to events surrounding the fiery furnace and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. These men had excelled in the affairs of the Babylonian kingdom along with Daniel, not because of anything they did in and of themselves but because of their faith and trust in God and His providence and guidance. Being in captivity was no small thing and neither was it an ideal situation, but these men showed that with God’s help all things can work together for good. Even so, their faith and their growth towards God would shortly be put to the test.

1. **True submission to God trumps fear of man**
   1. The king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, decided to construct a large statue that all in the kingdom were supposed to bow down and worship. He signed an edict stating that those who refused to follow his orders were to be thrown in the fiery furnace. Now, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, being in authority, were well aware of this edict but they did not flinch.
   2. When the time came for them to bow down and worship, they held their ground and stated that they would not compromise their faith and give in to the ridiculous demands of the king.
   3. Their trust and reliance upon God is overwhelming in these two verses. They knew that the consequence of refusing the king’s orders would land them in the fiery furnace but that did not deter them. Their faith was so strong and so firm to the point that they were willing to die for God.
2. **The saving power of God**
   1. Nebuchadnezzar filled with rage, ordered that the men be thrown into the furnace. Before that happened though, the furnace was heated seven times more than it was usually heated. The furnace was so hot and dangerous that the men who threw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the furnace were killed. But God saved them!
   2. YHWH has time and time again been with His people through thick and thin and He sympathizes and empathizes with what we go through every day. God does not separate Himself from these events but instead He seeks to put Himself in the middle of it.
   3. What a powerful demonstration of God’s power and deliverance for His faithful ones. It is indeed a story that we have heard many times and one we will not soon forget and we ought to appreciate such stories since they give us the boldness to keep being faithful ourselves.
3. **Jesus identifies with our difficulties**
   1. We said previously that we do not know for certain the identity of the fourth individual who was also in the furnace. While we may not know who he was, we do know one thing for certain: Jesus is the Son of Man who identifies with our trials and temptations today!
   2. We have a God and a Savior who is not afraid to get down in the dirt and the mud with us. We have an eternal friend who is no afraid to stoop down and give us a hand when we feel like we can’t get up.
   3. Jesus knows exactly what we all go through because He himself went through it. To borrow a popular phrase: Jesus had been there and done that. He is not separated from any of our problems or circumstances.
   4. Remember, Jesus was mocked, tortured, spat upon and crucified. When you think that you cannot get up and you feel discouraged to keep fighting, know that Jesus knows exactly how you feel and He wills you to keep going.

**Conclusion:** Consider this: what will you go back to if you should reject Jesus and deny Him? Is it really worth it to go back to a life of selfishness that will never satisfy you and only bring harm and pain to yourself and the ones whom you love? Yes, we suffer now and yes we still feel pain. But the pain we feel is the momentary light affliction that is pushing us towards the eternal weight of glory which awaits us in Heaven. Friends, your faith will be tested by fire and you will be tried. Will you be convicted like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego or will you fail like Nebuchadnezzar? Remember to trust in Jesus and rely on Him. He knows how you feel and He will help you to get through it and to overcome. Will you make it across the finish line or come up short?