

## Of COURSE you're feeling the "heat"! – Part 2

Daniel 3:15-30



While we live in "Babylon," to say that the pressure to idolatry - to break the first two Commandments -- continues unabated would be a classic *understatement*. Last lesson we discovered: Living in a fallen world, the pressure to conform to ways other than Gods ways comes from four sources: 1) From **AUTHORITIES** in our lives [boss, super, board, government]; 2) From **PEERS** urging you to be a "team player" or "Are you on this team or not?" and "go along to get along," [Catholic church bowing before the altar. . . ; OK removing a Ten CC monument from the Courthouse to "keep the protestors @ bay".]; 3) From **RESENTERS**, people who are upset because you are committed to the Lord *and* successful [Tebow; ramp up criticism of Christians in the media], and; 4) From **INTIMIDATION** or the threat of force as the lesser "gods" try to bludgeon you into submission. A major intimidation in this story can be summarized in 3 words: "the fiery furnace".

We also discovered last lesson how we neutralize the pressure: 1) By considering how **ABSURD** it is for *anyone* to "play god" in your life by trying to get you to break the Commandments of the Living & True God; 2) By considering how **POMPOUS** it is for people to try to "impress" you into compromising your convictions [standard plot, impress and then the appeal to compromise; Vs "fading is the world's best treasure, all it's boastful pomp & show, solid joys & lasting pleasures none but Zion's Children know."], and; 3) By considering how **EMPTY** people with great power can be when they try to exercise power over you in an **ATTEMPT** to fill the God-shaped hole in their souls with their chosen "god" of "control". [Eternity in their hearts cannot be filled by anything finite.]

Now, we move on to the **2<sup>nd</sup> theme** of this chapter, which is this:

**\*\*\* Let's look and learn from the OBSTINATE OBEDIENCE believers offer to the LORD in the face of compromise. \*\*\***

## **1. Consider some reasons why we may compromise.**

- **The “Friends in High Places” argument.** [which is different from having “Friends in LOW places!”] [How can we help out our believing brethren if they have no allies in government? Exiled Judah needed such friends in high places, and if we're not there, some pagan scoundrels might take our place! We can't act as a buffer if we're burnt to a crisp! Crispy critters can't help Christians! So a little compromise won't be the end of the world! [In some denominations, people in high places stayed in the denomination to “help out the denomination” and “protect its members”. How did that work for them? Not very well...]
- **The “Don't look a gift horse in the mouth” argument.** There's a certain kindness in the King's anger. Why show ingratitude to the king by, as it were, spitting in his eye? [You have this job b/c of the kindness of your employer. Are you going to bite the hand that feeds you?!? My dog Oliver tries to bite my hand all the time and I do NOT appreciate it @ all!] In his own way, the King's throwing you a “rope”. Grab the rope and pull yourself out of this mess you're getting yourself into!
- **The “official verses personal” argument, the one a plethora of politicians use even today.** You know, “Personally, I'm against idolatry [or planned parenthood legalized abortions, or same-sex marriage], but in my official capacity, I am required by law to support what the government says and obey the dictates of my superiors, so I'll engage in a 'moment of silence' before Nebuchadnezzar's golden standing mummy. After all, I don't really mean what I'm doing. It's just an empty gesture on my part. If I WANT my beliefs, I can KEEP my beliefs. I just can't always ACT on them @ work - especially when THEIR beliefs are the law of the land!”

## **2. Consider the FOCUS of our stance AGAINST compromise.**

The FOCUS is on GOD! Even when WE take a stand, NOT about US!

- **The first part of the answer focuses on the ABILITY of God.**  
Here's a literal rendering of *Verse 17*, "*If our God exists whom we are serving, He is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace - and from your hand, O King, He can deliver us.*" SM&A are CERTAIN of God's ABILITY to save them from the flames / from the King. They KNOW nothing can bind the hands of a sovereign God. NOTHING can keep God out . . . or in. Rev, "*I have opened a door no man can shut*".
- **The second part of the answer focuses on the PURPOSE of God.**  
SM&A cannot speak for certain as to *God's purposeful (or decreed) will* for them in that particular circumstance (His Circumstantial will ... or weather they are delivered from the fire). That's up to God. But they are SURE of God's *revealed will*, namely, "You shall have no other gods before ME."
- **In other words, what ULTIMATELY matters to people of faith is not our DELIVERANCE FROM the potential negative consequences of what we do, but our own OBEDIENCE to God, regardless of the CONSEQUENCES!** The words for "worship" and "service" appear in this story no less than 16 times to hammer home the point: **\*\* What matters is not SECURITY, but WORSHIP, Vs 18! \*\***
- **Here is a fully-balanced picture of Faith:**
  - **Faith KNOWS the POWER of God, Vs 17,**
  - **Faith GUARDS the FREEDOM of God, Vs 18a, and**
  - **Faith HOLDS to the TRUTH of God, no matter what, Vs 18b.**

**Biblical Faith is NOT popular these days!** What's more popular these days is exuding CONFIDENCE about the DETAILS of how God IS going to work this situation out. God IS going to "come through" for ME (in the way I WANT God to come through)! The "name it and claim it" faith (little "f") of many today would say something like this:

"Nebby, we're going to CALL DOWN God's deliverance; we, O King, in the Name of JEEEEZUZ, are going to BIND the fire!"

Friends, Where's THAT in the Bible?!? True Faith does NOT try to manipulate or force God's hand, nor does Faith write a script for how God should act in any given situation and pray that script to Him. Nor does True Faith even try to PREDICT what God will do. True Faith simply HOLDS to God's Word (here *Exodus 20:3-4*), and then Faith OBEYS God's COMMANDS/ IMPERATIVES, regardless of the outcome! Iow, REGARDLESS of the potential outcome, I CHOOSE to OBEY the REVEALED WILL of God!

Here's a paraphrase of the response of FAITH in *Daniel 3*: *"O King, we don't KNOW what our God will do. You, O King, may turn us into puddles of carbon; but whether you do or not, it doesn't matter b/c the bottom line is, We are NOT going to serve your gods OR worship your image."* Friends, Faith's finest hour just may be when WE can stand up before the "powers that be" and counter their BEST PUNCH "the fiery furnace" with our HAYMAKER, "But if not"...still we choose to obey GOD'S commands over YOUR commands"!

**Actually, at this time, the REAL miracle of *Daniel 3* has already happened!** Just the fact that there's 3 men in Nebby's totalitarian state who take their stand WITH the Lord / refuse to worship a false God IN SPITE OF all the pressure AND the possibility of great personal LOSS - that fact alone is itself a miracle of God! Devoured by fire or not, these men's statement of FAITH in GOD is something only GOD can bring about in their lives, and in OUR lives, too!

### **3. Consider the FELLOWSHIP we have in the fire!**

*Vv 19-30* answers the King's question in *Vs 15*. The key word here is DELIVERANCE.

WHO is the "fourth man" in *Vs 28*? WHAT is He? The pagan king thinks He's a DIVINE BEING of some kind. But then again, we Believers

don't consider any pagan leader to be a reliable theological guide [like Obama & Pelosi quoting the Bible] anyway, do we?

Most reliable BIBLE scholars seem to think this "4<sup>th</sup> man" could be a manifestation of *"The Angel of YAHWEH"* - perhaps a pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ. Whoever He is, what we know for sure is that the "4<sup>th</sup> man" is both the PROTECTOR and COMPANION of His servants. And no barrier, even fire (or in the NT, a stormy sea), can keep this "4<sup>th</sup> man" from coming to these men in times of trouble! The LORD is a VERY *PRESENTHELP* in times of trouble! (*Psalm 46:1*) Even in the fire, the Lord does NOT abandon us, but comes TO us!

**We need to REMEMBER this:** [My observation . . . 7/11 and not smelling like smoke . . . by a fire or a grill . . . and this "grill" is turned WAY up!] This story is a SAMPLE of a way the Lord *PERSERVES* His people, but it's NOT a *GUARANTEE* of His dramatic *PHYSICAL DELIVERANCE* of us in every case. As Christians we need to remember:

***\*\* Jesus HAS ALREADY delivered us from the eternal FLAMES of Hell; but in order to deliver us from it, (from the flames of Hell), Jesus had to EXPERIENCE it (the flames of Hell) IN OUR PLACE, as our SUBSTITUTE, so that through His DEATH on the CROSS, we are DELIVERED forever from Hell's eternal flames! \*\****

**In this world, this side of Heaven, we WILL go dia "fiery trials". What does the Lord promise?** In this story, the Lord did NOT keep them OUT of the furnace; The Lord found them IN the furnace! The Lord does not always shield us from distress and danger, but He DOES come to us where you are in that place of distress and danger, and The Lord NEVER leaves your side! *Psalm 23:4; Isaiah 43:2-3*... Through valleys, waters, rivers, and fires - in battle fields & operating rooms, in classrooms in Oregon Community Colleges AND NWR & Brandon & every classroom, in funeral parlors and empty houses, The "4<sup>th</sup> man" ALWAYS finds His people! ALWAYS! & He'll find YOU in YOUR times of trials / distresses!

**\*\*\* ULTIMATELY, this story is about WORSHIP. It tells me that the only matter that matters is that I KEEP the FIRST COMMANDMENT - even if it KILLS me! \*\*\***

After all, for a XN, dying's not the worst thing that can happen to us! We don't go around ASKING to die, but we DO know that for a Xn only, to DIE is GAIN! (*cf Philipians 1:21*)

[In the former Soviet Union, the Communists would send KGB agents into underground churches to persuade church members to denounce Christ. In one Catholic Church, the KGB agents found an elderly lady kissing the feet of a life-size carving of Christ on the cross. "Babushka (Grandmother, sometimes just 'old lady'), are you also prepared to kiss the feet of the Beloved General Secretary of the Communist Party?" The lady shot back, "Why of COURSE I will...but ONLY if you CRUCIFY Him & then 3 days later He rises from the dead!"]

And so YOU & I can counter the challenge of 3 words "The FIREY FURNACE" with 4 WORDS: "THE OLD RUGGED CROSS." And, for that matter, w/3 words, "The Empty Tomb".