



PREACH THE
WORD
It's Still All About
Jesus

God Walks in the Fire

Daniel 3:1-30 Matthew 5:10-12

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The Bible teaches us that we are to *patiently endure* and *remain faithful* whenever we face trials, pain, suffering or persecution. These things **TEST YOUR FAITH**, proving that it's genuine. These things are meant to bring you closer to the Lord so that you rely on His Word and promises, and that you turn to Him in prayer. Ironically, it is in trials, pain, suffering, and persecution that you see *God's presence and mighty power most clearly at work in your life!*

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego could certainly confirm that for us today! They lived in Babylon during the exile. They were Israelite prisoners who were given positions of responsibility in the Babylonian government. The King of Babylon was Nebuchadnezzar, and he had built a 90-foot tall, 9-foot wide, gold plated idol that he wanted everyone in his kingdom to worship.

It was a big event! The King had planned for an elaborate, grand, and formal ceremony where **everyone who was anyone** would be in attendance. He brought in an orchestra of horns, pipes, lyres, harps, and bagpipes to celebrate the occasion. By worshipping the idol, the people would, in effect, be worshipping the King who made the idol. **When the ceremony was at its highest point, the music sounded, and all the people bowed down and worshipped the idol** → **except** **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego!**

How could they worship this idol? They knew the First Commandment: **Thou shall have no other gods before Me.** They knew that idolatry was a sin against the One, True, and Only God. There was no way they could fall down and worship this 90' tall idol.

THEY WERE BEING TEMPTED; THEIR FAITH WAS BEING TESTED!

Even though they must have been frightened to death, and they knew that certain death lay in front of them, **they remained faithful to God.** They

trusted in God and did not compromise their faith. They knew that faithfulness to God was more important than physical life! *There was no way they were going to bow down and worship this idol!*

King Nebuchadnezzar, on the other hand, was furious; he gave them a second chance to worship the idol, but they still refused to bow. So the King ordered that they be thrown into the fiery furnace. It was certain death for **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego!** The fire was so hot that their guards were even killed by the flames!

But this is where God gave **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego** --- and also King Nebuchadnezzar – a **theophany!** A Theophany is a “*God appearance*”. Specifically, it is the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, who appears on earth before His birth in Bethlehem¹. In a *theophany*, the Lord intervenes on behalf of His People. He is **saving** them, **helping** them, **guiding** them, or **protecting** them.

In this theophany, the Son of God walked in the fire with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and He protected them!

And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace. 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." 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."

Daniel 3:23-25

The *Son of God* had rescued **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego!** He protected them from the flames and fire! *Their hair was not singed, their clothes were not burned, and they did not even smell like smoke!* In this *theophany*, the **Son of God** walked in the fire with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego *and He protected them!*

¹ The Son of God is the “speaking God” – the *logos* – The “Word” of God who interacts with His People to save them. *Theophanies* are the *pre-incarnate* Son at work on behalf of His People. God the Father is never seen, only heard, as at Jesus’ Baptism and Transfiguration; and God the Holy Spirit is only seen in the form of a dove at Jesus’ Baptism; and tongues of fire at Pentecost. But the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, interacts with His People to save them! In the Old Testament, those times are called “theophanies”.

Like **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego**, we face **persecution** because of our faith in Christ. The world hates Christ, His Word, and His People. You can expect persecution if you intend to live a godly life. Think about a few current examples with me:

- ⇒ Try to stand up and *defend* **Godly and Biblical marriage**.
- ⇒ Try to say something *against* the **LGBTQ agenda**
- ⇒ Take a **pro-life** *stand* and proclaim that life begins with conception and that life is a gift from the Creator
- ⇒ Say that God **created the world in 6 days** and that evolution is a *lie and deception*
- ⇒ Tell your boyfriend or girlfriend that you are *not* engaging in **sexual activity** until you are married
- ⇒ Confess that **Jesus Christ is the only Savior of the world and the only hope of salvation**

These are a few of the obvious examples where you will meet immediate persecution. The world hates Christ, His Word, and His People. You can expect to face persecution when you live a Godly life and confess the truth of God's Holy Word. Your persecution puts you in the same exact spot as **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego**. Like them, remain faithful to God!

If you are not firm in faith,
you will not be firm at all.
Isaiah 7:9

When you are persecuted, you are not alone. The Son of God is right there with you; like He was **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego**. He gives you the strength and courage to do the right thing and remain faithful – regardless of the consequences! Jesus even says that you are **blessed** when you are persecuted!

"**Blessed** are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
"**Blessed** are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matthew 5:10-12

The only way to escape persecution is to *deny* Christ and His Word. The only way to escape persecution is to *downplay* your faith; to *minimize* it; to *hide* it; to *remain silent*. All of this is *compromise*, and in doing so, you have *denied* Christ and His Word. DON'T DO THAT! Rather, stand firm in your faith! The Lord Himself gives you strength, His presence and mighty power is at work in your life when you were persecuted. The Lord knows exactly what you are going through when you are persecuted. Remember, that He too faced persecution . . . But He did it for us! He was betrayed, and falsely accused. The Jews constantly hounded Him; the Romans would crucify

Him. He was our substitute in these things! His *persecution* took Him to a cross, where He died in our place. His resurrection from the dead on the third day sets you free from sin and brings you into His family. You are even forgiven for those times that you have floundered in persecution and maybe even denied your faith by your lack of words or lack of actions. The forgiveness of sins strengthens your faith and makes you bold in Christian living. One of the gifts of salvation is that the Son of God promises to always be with you – no matter what.

**In other words,
the Son of God walks with you
through any “fire” you may have to face . . .
including persecution!**

Like with *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego* the Son of God walks with you! His presence is powerful. His strength is found in His Word and in His Promises. Here are some examples:

But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." Isaiah 43:1-3

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9

The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; He delivers them from all their troubles. Psalm 34:17

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10

Like with *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego* the Son of God walks with you when you are persecuted, ridiculed or excluded because of your faith! His presence is powerful. When you are in the midst of the fire of persecution, then look to the Lord and His promises. Cling to the Word of God for strength and encouragement! The Son of God, your Savior Jesus Christ, promises to walk with you and strengthen you!

Ironically, it is in trials, pain, suffering, and persecution that you see *God's presence and mighty power most clearly at work in your life.* Amen!