

Go with me to the plain of Dura near Babylon, where King Nebuchadnezzar had summoned every leader - governors, princes and sheriffs - from his far-flung empire. Imagine the sight - multitudes of people dressed in their various native garb, speaking many languages. And they all had gathered for one purpose - to honor the gods of the king!

Nebuchadnezzar had erected a huge, golden image ninety feet tall. And now these leaders, having made their way to the great plain of Dura, were to bow in worship as soon as the royal orchestra began playing. It was that or death!

But three Hebrew men - Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego - refused to bow. These men had been taken captive from Jerusalem by the Chaldeans and brought to the palace of Shushan. Here they had been trained in the language of the Chaldeans and, along with Daniel, had been appointed as leaders in the government. Now, all around them, men from other nations were bowing to the golden image, conforming to the king's decree. But they would not!

Jealous leaders reported this to Nebuchadnezzar - and when he heard of it, he flew into a rage. He thought, "How dare any member of my own government stand against me in disobedience!"

It was not unusual in those days to punish violators of the king's decrees by casting them into a burning oven. Jeremiah speaks of *"...Zedekiah and...Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire."* (JER 29:22). No doubt, Nebuchadnezzar was used to seeing bodies

Bringing Christ Into Your Crisis!

thrown into an open furnace - to see the instant flash of the burning bodies and smell the stench of burning flesh. Now he was in such a rage, he ordered his soldiers to stoke the furnace seven times hotter than usual!

When the guards brought the three Hebrew men before the king, Nebuchadnezzar bellowed, "So - you refused to bow before my god when the music sounded. Well, I'm going to let you try it again. You should know the fiery furnace is burning seven times hotter. And if you don't bow this time, you'll be thrown in and roasted!"

You can be sure these three men could feel the heat of the white-hot furnace from where they stood. And they probably saw the strong soldiers falling exhausted as they stoked the furnace, overcome by the intense heat.

These Hebrew men didn't want to die. They were human beings, like you and me. Anyone would be crazy to want to die roasting in a fire! Yet these men had an incredible faith placed in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. And so they replied to the king, "O king, we don't even have to think about our answer to you. We will not bow! Our God is able to deliver us. But even if He doesn't, we will not worship the image."

You know the rest of the story. Word probably spread about the great burning, and curious multitudes gathered the way crowds did for Old West hangings. People strained just to get a glimpse of these men who had dared to disobey the royal decree - and who would be roasted alive!

Soon the royal party arrived. The king took his seat - a safe distance from the heat, but close enough to witness the actual burning of the bodies. "Will these rebellious fools ever learn?" he probably thought to himself. "Shortly, three more rebels will be nothing but ashes!"

Then the three Hebrew men were brought in, bound hand and foot. The mightiest soldiers in the king's army had picked them up and were carrying them to the mouth of the furnace to cast them in. But the flames were so hot, the soldiers began to fall themselves, one after another - slain from the heat!

Somehow, the three Hebrews were finally cast into the oven. But the king was puzzled. There had been no sudden flash of roasting bodies, no smell of burning flesh. He peered into the fire - and he was astonished at what he saw!

The three Hebrew men were walking about on top of the coals - as if they were walking on rose petals! The fire had only burned their bonds - and now their hands

were raised, praising God. Nebuchadnezzar turned to one of his associates and said, "How many men did we throw in there?"

"Three, O King," came the answer.

"But I see four!" the king replied. "And none of them is burning. None is even hurt. And one of them has the appearance of the Son of God!" (see Daniel 3:24-25).

Now, how could a heathen king recognize the Son of God? It was because Christ's glory cannot be hidden! Whenever angels appear in Scripture, they are dressed in white and shine with a heavenly brightness. Yet this bright One was no seraphim; it was not Gabriel, nor Moses nor Elijah raised from the dead. This was Jesus Himself - and He was brighter than that seven-times-hot flame!

Beloved, this testimony came from heathen lips: **Christ appeared with the Hebrews in their crisis!** And talk about a life-or-death situation. This was the crisis of a lifetime - a hopeless circumstance according to the flesh, one that demanded a miracle. But Christ walked in beside these men, comforting them. He came into it with them to rescue and deliver them!

This Message Is All About How You, I and Every Believer Are to Bring Christ Into Our Crisis!

Jesus did not come into the Hebrews' crisis to impress the heathen king. He had already done that in a previous chapter. When Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the king had declared, *"...Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings..."* (DAN 2:47). But how soon he forgot this!

No, this was not an evangelistic visitation. God knew the heart of the vacillating king - and He knew that miracles impress heathen minds only for about three days. Rather, Jesus came into these men's crisis for one reason - for their sake alone! He came to comfort and rescue them because He loved them. The Lord of glory committed Himself to them in their hour of crisis - because they were totally committed to Him!

The truth is, our Lord does not commit Himself to every man's crisis. Scripture says when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, *"...many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and... knew what was in man."* (JN 2:23-25).

Jesus knows the deception that is in people's hearts. He knows many are willing to acknowledge Him as God - but are not willing to commit the keeping of their lives into His hands!

It is one thing to believe Jesus is God and Savior - but quite another to commit everything to Him. To commit means to "entrust or give charge." So, commitment to Christ is all about giving your life to Him completely - entrusting your whole being to His care. And, in turn, He commits Himself to those who are totally committed to Him!

We live in a society bogged down by one crisis after another. Whom do you know who is not facing a crisis or hasn't just come out of one? Personally, I know many Christians who are facing deep troubles that threaten to overwhelm and ruin them.

What kind of crisis are you facing? Is it spiritual, financial, mental, physical? Is it in your marriage, your job, your business? I am talking about circumstances so serious, only a miracle can get you out - a situation that looks hopeless! When you are in such a crisis, you need Jesus to come into it and walk through it with you. Only the Son of the Living God can solve your problem - can do the impossible - can rescue you out of your furnace of affliction!

You may answer, "Yes, I need Jesus to walk with me through this. I need Him to come into my crisis as He did for the Hebrew men. But how can I do that? How can I get Him to commit to my crisis?"

You can do it in the same way Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego brought Christ into their crisis. These men made three notable commitments:

1. They Committed Themselves to a Pure, undefiled Lifestyle in the Midst of a Wicked Society!

"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." (DAN 1:8).

The word defile here suggests "freeing through repudiation." Daniel was saying, in other words, "Any compromise of my standards will rob me of my freedom!"

So Daniel committed to eat only beans and drink only water for ten days. No filet mignon from the king's table - no expensive wine. When he told the prince of eunuchs this, the prince answered, "You're going to cost me my life! You'll look sickly at the end of ten days. Your cheeks will be sunken - and the king will surely notice! Here - eat just a little meat. You need the protein. Drink the wine to build up your blood. Eat some of these sweets to give you energy!"

As I studied this passage, I wondered: "Why did Daniel go on this kind of fast? These Hebrew men weren't vegetarians." The answer probably is that, before going to the king's table, the wine, meat and delicacies were blessed by idolatrous priests. Therefore the food was ceremonially unclean to the Jewish youths.

Yet I believe Daniel and these others had something more in mind - that their commitment went way beyond ceremonial uncleanness! What I am about to tell you didn't come from any commentary. I believe the Holy Spirit revealed it to me. Why did these four Hebrew men refuse to eat the king's food?

First, these men had been taken captive along with thousands of their countrymen. Now, the prophet Jeremiah had encouraged the Jewish captives to settle and build in Babylon for seventy years, until God would bring them back. But, in keeping with Israel's history of backsliding, the people likely were swept up with the covetousness rampant in that land. No doubt, Daniel and his friends saw how quickly and easily these early captives had compromised. The

fast life of Babylon had ensnared them!

These four men must have been shocked beyond belief at what they saw when they first arrived in Babylon. There were brazen harlots on the streets, pagan shrines and altars on every corner, open drunkenness and debauchery everywhere, officials and leaders staggering down streets, dim-witted and stupefied from wine and alcohol. It was a society so loose, immoral and full of cursing, these four men's spiritual sensibilities were assailed!

Now, Daniel was a student of the prophets. He had Jeremiah's writings with him, and those prophecies ultimately led him to conclude that Israel would be in captivity for seventy years. He knew they were living in an important time in history. So, sometime during their introduction to Babylon, Daniel and made a commitment with *"...the men that were with me..."* (DAN 10:7) - the three other Hebrews who stood with him both in body and in spirit.

I imagine them having a conference, sharing their grief over Israel's compromise. Then Daniel stands up and says:

"You saw what I saw on these streets! Yet, what seems so shocking to us now will soon be normal among our people, if we do not determine to live differently. It won't be long before our countrymen will look, talk and live like the Chaldeans. Everyone will be caught up in sensuality - our shepherds seeking ease and prosperity, our leaders settling for compromise. Our synagogues will be full of mixture, defilement, double standards. Everyone will hold to a form of faith, but will lose all power with God.

"We have to take a stand! God is going to need voices in this time of backsliding. We're going to have to lay our lives on the line - lest the light of Israel go out completely!"

So the four made a commitment. They told each other:

"We dare not compromise. We dare not adopt these moral standards. We dare not soil our spirits with pagan music, alcohol, a devilish lifestyle. We dare not let the

spirit of Babylon taint our faith. We will be separate. And we will be disciplined in our walk of faith!"

These four Hebrew men remained free by repudiating the Babylonian lifestyle. It was not merely an issue of food - it was something that encompassed their entire lifestyle. It was about having a hidden life of separation!

Yet these men did not go about preaching their way of life to others. They did not advertise their disciplined walk. It was strictly a matter between them and God.

I ask you: When God was ready to speak to that nation and its people, whom did He choose to be His mouthpiece? Who became the Lord's voice - His untainted testimony to a doomed empire? It was these four committed men!

As I look at our own doomed society, I see a nation disintegrating so fast it's appalling. And that includes the body of Christ! The church has been infiltrated by the Babylonian spirit - a message of mixture, with multitudes conforming to worldly standards. I cry out often in my secret closet, "Oh, God, where are Your voices in the land? Where are Your people who live separated lives - who'll stand up and speak a prophetic word? Where are Your unbending spokesmen?"

In this time when everything around us is crumbling, where are such voices? Where are the congregations, the believers who will step out and be a voice for God on their job, within their family, in their daily walk?

That is what the four Hebrew men asked themselves. And it is why they committed themselves to a pure lifestyle! Their bold decision - and their testimony of a holy walk - had to have made an incredible impact on little Ezra, Nehemiah and Zerubbabel. It may have been what inspired the 43,000 who later stood strong.

Yes, these four men's holy lives raised up a godly remnant! Beloved, you cannot be a voice for God unless you lead a separated, holy life! God cannot use you if your heart is soiled and tainted by this wicked age. It takes a decisive commitment!

I ask you: When you're in a crisis, do you cry out, "Lord, where are You when I need you? Aren't You committed to my deliverance?"

But what if the Lord should say to you, "Where are you when I need a voice? I need voices in these sinful times, pure vessels through whom I can speak. You say you want Me to come to you in your crisis - yet you remain a part of the wicked, worldly system. Tell Me - are you committed to My purposes?"

2. They Committed to Become Seekers After God - Men Who Pray!

"And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications... And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession... And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel..." (DAN 9:3-4,20).

Here is the proof - these were praying men!

You see, the first commitment they had made - to live a separated life - had to be backed up by a second commitment, to be seekers after God. Indeed, it is impossible to live a holy life without spending much time on your knees, seeking God for the power and authority to lead such a life.

Don't be mistaken - faithful praying will not keep you out of a crisis. On the contrary, it will most likely bring you to a fired-up furnace and a lion's den. But prayer will prepare you to face it all with trust - to become a living sacrifice for Jesus' sake!

Daniel's praying led him straight to the lion's den. And this test came years after that of the Hebrew men - when Daniel was in his eighties! This may frighten you, if you wonder how long it will be before you stop having crises. Perhaps you thought you'd learned all your "important" tests after a certain number of years in the Lord. Yet here God is allowing one of His greatest prayer warriors - a man of a quiet, tender spirit - to face the crisis of his life after decades of faithful intercession!

Beloved, the testing ends only when Jesus comes - or when you die in Christ! The time will never come when you no longer have to face a fiery furnace or a lion's den. That won't happen until you lay your head on His bosom!

This is why prayer is so important. You can make a commitment to live an undefiled life - but that commitment is impossible to fulfill without also having a commitment to seek God. All the convicting sermons, all the powerful books on holiness, all the exhortations in the world can't keep you committed to a separated, holy life. Everything will fail - unless you have committed yourself to be a dedicated seeker after God!

A few weeks ago I went to the Father asking, "Lord, why do You require prayer for everything? Why is it You won't do anything except by prayer?"

The Lord answered, "David, it is impossible to love Me without seeking Me. How can a child of Mine say he loves Me when he neglects Me for days on end? Prayer is the barometer of devotion to Me. True love will draw you to My presence!"

Of course, faith must be sparked by the Word of God; after all, faith comes by hearing. But once faith is sparked, prayer sets it aflame! It explodes our faith. Talk about a furnace turned up seven times hotter: Prayer turned up the faith of the four Hebrew men until it was hotter than the fiery flames!

When King Nebuchadnezzar called those men out of the furnace, he said:

"...Blessed be (your) God... who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him...and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God." (DAN 3:28).

Again, the testimony came from pagan lips: These men had yielded their bodies to God!

Yet they had done this long before they faced the furnace. You see, prayer is the process of yielding up our bodies to the Lord - of becoming a living sacrifice. And these men sacrificed daily in this way. They remained in prayer for days,

weeks, becoming intimate with the Lord. After a while, they understood that to die was gain. Death would only bring them closer to Him whom they so loved!

3. They Made a Commitment to Wholly Trust God - Live or Die!

"Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them... if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" (DAN 3:14-15).

These men were facing the worst possible crisis any human could face. If God didn't come and deliver them by a miracle, they were dead!

And that's exactly the kind of crisis I'm talking about with you. Perhaps you have a severe physical affliction. Maybe your marriage is in a crisis beyond your power to solve or heal. You say, "I've prayed, I've fasted, I've done everything. If God doesn't come on the scene now, I won't make it!"

What will bring Christ into your crisis? He comes when you make the same commitment the three Hebrew children made:

"(They) ... said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand... But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." (DAN 3:16-18).

In other words: "It looks hopeless. Without God performing a miracle for us, we are dead. Yet our God is able to deliver us from this fiery crisis! But even if He doesn't, we still will not quit on Him. Live or die, we will trust Him!"

Beloved, this is the kind of faith that causes angels to rejoice and blesses the very heart of God. It is a faith that says, "Lord, I am convinced, fully persuaded, that You are able to deliver me. If You just speak a word, it will all be over.

"But, if not - I'm not going to run. I won't accuse You of abandoning

me. I will remain faithful and true. Your ways are higher than mine, Lord - and my life is in Your hands. Though You slay me, yet will I trust You!"

This is what brings Christ into our crisis - the full confidence that He is able to rescue and deliver us out of any crisis! It is a confidence that, no matter what comes, we are in His hands.

Please understand - God could have delivered these three men in any number of ways. He could have simply changed Nebuchadnezzar's mind. Or, He could have allowed them to escape. After all, Moses had escaped, as had Joseph and David.

Yet these three Hebrew men had a special kind of faith that the Lord responds to very quickly: **They had faith in the faithfulness of God!** They were persuaded He would do what was best for them and for His own glory.

That is why you do not see them "claiming their rights" as believers. Nor did they spend their time trying to build up each other's faith by quoting promises. No, they went with quiet dignity toward the furnace, saying, "God is able! But if not..."

Undoubtedly, this last phrase will make many people indignant. I can almost hear them saying: "Oh, no, pastor - that is negative! It leaves room for doubt. We should only say, 'God is able' - period!"

I believe with all my heart that the Lord is able. I believe He could speak a word and deliver anyone in a moment. Yet, consider this: If these Hebrew men had not been able to say, "But, if not..." - if they had not had such faith - what would they have done in their moment of crisis? Would they have begun protesting the closer they got to the fire? Would they have ended up crying, "God, You failed to keep Your Word. You let us down!"

No - they were prepared to die! They could say, "Lord, even if I have to suffer - if my body ignites and my burning flesh fills the air with stench - I will go out trusting You. I will believe You, even if I don't get the answer to my prayer!"

Most of us don't have a faith that would use the daring words these men used: "But, if not..." I ask you - what will you do if you don't get your answer? Will you accuse God of failing you, of not loving you? What a tragedy to go into your furnace crying, "God, where are You? You've failed me!"

The three Hebrew men went into the fire with their bodies already dead to the world. They were able to offer their bodies joyfully, as living sacrifices. And Jesus literally met them in their crisis! What an incredible reward - to have Christ walk with them through their most difficult time.

What do you think they said to Jesus when He showed up in the furnace? "Oh, thank You, Lord! Thank You for not letting us feel the pain. Thank You for giving us

another chance - for a few more years!"

No - never! I believe they said, "Lord, take us with You! Don't leave us here. We have touched the ecstasy, the glory - and we don't want to go back! Walk us home to be with You." They would have preferred to be with Him! Jesus knows this kind of heart - and it is to such that He commits Himself.

Are you able to say, "Lord, walk me home"? Perhaps you've never learned to commit your body, your business, your marriage, your crisis into God's hands. Yes, we are always to pray in faith, believing that God will answer; yet we are to trust Him completely with our situation, saying in our hearts, "But if not, Lord - I'm still going to trust You!"

Pray with me now: "Lord, You are able to deliver me from this fiery furnace. But if not - I will still believe! Even if I have to go on in this horrible trial - if I have to face more suffering, more testing - I commit everything to You. Just come and walk through it with Me!"

I promise you - Jesus Christ will come into your crisis. He will take you by your hand and lead you through the fire!

I consider the coming of Christ into my crisis to be the greatest answer to prayer possible - because when He comes, His presence lifts me above all my pain, all my hurt, all my confusion. When Jesus appears at your side, He takes you by the hand and makes you stand strong. **"Hallelujah!"**

by David Wilkerson
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