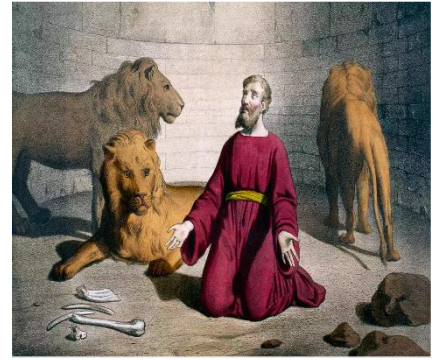




The faith of Daniel and his friends



STUDY TWO – STEADFAST FAITH

Read: Daniel 2:46-49

Following on from the interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, we read that he acknowledged that Daniel's God truly was *"the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you (Daniel), could reveal this secret"*. (*Chapter 2: 47*). He then promoted Daniel to be ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon.

- What does verse 49 tell us about the character of Daniel?

Read: Chapter 3

Apparently, Nebuchadnezzar suffered from something of a short-term memory. He soon forgot his acknowledgment that Daniel's God was the God of gods.

- Before becoming too judgemental, we need to look at our own lives. Have we forgotten the things we told others of God's promises, or watered down what was once a firm belief in God's word?

Making a gold image, 90 feet high (about 27.5 meters), was making a statement. We don't know if the image was that of Nebuchadnezzar or *Bel*, his chief idol or demon-god. Either way, it was a rebuttal of his statement in verse 47 of chapter 2.

- We should always remember what it says in Galatians 6:7: *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap."* Or in a more modern translation: *"Don't be misled: No one makes a fool of God"*.
- The Bible doesn't pull its punches and we should be careful to follow its instructions. Proverbs 9:10 says: *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."* (NIV)

This statue was set up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon, ensuring it could be seen without any hindrance. The visual impact was enhanced by the message of the

King's herald: *"People of all races and nations and languages, listen to the king's command! When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and other instruments, bow to the ground to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue. Anyone who refuses to obey will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace."*

There are always 'snitches', whether it is in the family, in the classroom, in the workplace, or even in our churches! Verse 12 indicates the basic reason for this appeal to the king: *There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon* Jealousy is so often the real cause for complaint, but what followed should be an inspiration and example to all Christians today.

What an opportunity to stand up and be counted! Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were brought before the king. Having reminded them of his edict, Nebuchadnezzar made the mistake that many in a position of power have done in the past, and still do: *"What God will be able to rescue you from my hand?"*

Just to bring this up to date, the organization *Open Doors* recently published a horrifying statistic: **In 2020, 5621 Christians around the world were murdered for their faith.** Sometimes it takes martyrdom to bring home the message of *"no turning back, no turning back"*.

However, God had not finished with these three young men, he still had work for them to do and to show what his power could accomplish. Let us read their response:

'Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, your Majesty. But even if he doesn't, Your Majesty can be sure that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."

Those 5621 martyred Christians obviously shared this confidence in God – they would never compromise their faith.

- How do you respond to that?
- We don't know, not having been in that situation, but I wonder how many of us would have the courage and faith to stand up for God?

Remember Stephen in Acts 7, who, as he was being stoned prayed: *"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. ... Lord don't charge them with this sin! And with that, he died."*

- How do we develop that resolve to be totally committed to God?

You might say that the three young men did themselves no favours by such a challenge because the king ordered that the furnace be made seven times hotter than normal!

It is important to remember that in all things, God is sovereign. He makes decisions based on things we never can see. God is – he knows the end from the beginning and sees it all before him.

- What brought the king to his senses?

Read again verses 25-30

- Have there been occasions in our lives when we realised that it was God who has brought us to our senses?
- The absolute faith of these young men was vindicated by God's preservation.
- How could anyone NOT believe in God, having witnessed this miracle?

Of course, this raises the question as to why deliverance comes to some but not to others. All we can say is that God knows the beginning from the end, and HE ALWAYS HAS OUR BEST INTERESTS AT HEART. He is not capricious, whatever he does is part of his long-term plan for all our lives.



And here is what it looks like!



Prayer:

Father God help us to have confidence in your love, your plans for our lives, and may we trust you every step of the way.