

Sermon Title: **The Fire That Does Not Burn**

Written: May 13, 2017

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Vessel: Russ LaFlamme

Scripture Reference: **Daniel 3:12-23**

Thesis: **Daniel's companion's faith is put to the test of fire;**

Purpose: **We can learn how to face the fiery furnace with courage when our faith is put to the test.**

Key Word: **"God's Almighty Power"**

I) Introduction:

Scripture Reading is: **Daniel 3:12-23**

A) The Setting:

- 1) **This is not a Mother's Day sermon per say; however, I would like to begin by pointing out that Daniel and his companions must have had godly mothers who taught them much about how to behave.**
 - (a) How to love God first . . .
 - (b) And then How to obey God's commandments.
 - (c) And most of all how to have faith in God's almighty power even when it seems like God has been defeated and turned His back on our young Israelites.
- 2) **Many Christian parents have raised their children in good homes only to see it undone when they went away to college.**
 - (a) Yet, our young Israelites didn't just go away;
 - (b) They were taken away by an army that defeated their homeland
- 3) **Thrown into a new culture, given a new name, taught a new language and placed in service to a foreign king with a foreign god.**
 - (a) And yet, Daniel and his companions had a strong conviction and a strong faith to face up to their captors.
 - (b) It is not that they were not willing to serve this new king; in fact, they served with distinction.
 - (c) That is until what they were asked to do was something in direct violation to the laws of their God.
- 4) **When it got tough and they had to take a stand they choose to serve God over their Babylonian king and trusted God to take care of them.**
 - (a) This was a testimony to their godly mother's influence.
 - (b) And the character of these young men.
- 5) **Truly these young men would have made any mother proud.**
 - (a) They were men of integrity.
 - (b) They were men of faith.
- 6) **Now last week we saw how God used Daniel to interpret the King's dream concerning the rest of history.**
 - (a) How the Babylonian King was represented by a shining gold head on a colossal statue.
 - (b) How the successive kingdoms were represented in this dream by the successive inferiority of the metals.
 - (c) Gold to silver, to bronze, to iron, and eventually to the iron mixed with clay.
- 7) **I am saddened to say that the clay represents the last days which is where we fall as remnants of the Iron Roman empire.**
 - (a) What came next depicted in the dream was the Rock of ages (uncut by human hands).
 - (b) Defeating all the remaining kingdoms of the world to establish God's kingdom which will last forever.
- 8) **The Bible has often referred to God as a rock; and Jesus is the cornerstone of God's coming kingdom.**
- 9) **However, Nebuchadnezzar missed the point of placing his faith in the Solid Rock and as we will see in Daniel Chapter 3 let the gold head of the statue go to his head.**

- (a) He orders that a gold statue be built that was 9 stories high and 9 feet wide.
 - (b) Then everyone in his service would be required to bow down to worship, pledging allegiance to their great king.
- 10) **Anyone refusing to follow the command of the king to bow and worship his statue would be thrown into a fiery furnace.**
- (a) What will our young men of integrity do?
 - (b) What would you do if faced with a fiery execution or the worship of a false idol?
- 11) **Well, let's find out by looking at our scripture reading for today in Daniel 3:12-23. (you can follow along in the pew Bible if you don't have one; in the:**
- (a) Black, it is on page 822.
 - (b) Red, it is on page 1008.

B) *Sermon Prayer*

C) (The Hook)

- 1) **The first question many scholars want to know is where is Daniel in this story?**
 - (a) Where's Daniel?
 - (b) Daniel is not present for any of this chapter and yet he is believed to be the author of the events of this chapter.
- 2) **Some speculate that Daniel who had been promoted to the second highest ranking man in the kingdom only answering to the king above him caved in and must have bowed down.**
 - (a) However, this does not seem likely to me; do you think he would watch his friends, whom he got promoted as well, go to a fiery furnace and not even say anything.
 - (b) That Daniel, who had been the leader of the group, would not stand up for God now?
- 3) **Others speculate that the King knew that Daniel would never bow and thus must have sent him away on a job to another part of the kingdom so he would not have to choose.**
 - (a) We really don't know; but we know what Daniel tells us about his 3 closest friends...
 - (b) They would not bend, they would not bow, they would not burn!
- 4) **When Daniel's companions have their faith put to the test of fire;**
 - (a) They stand tall and tell the King they will choose to obey their God even if it costs them their lives.
 - (b) We too can learn how to face the fiery furnace with courage when our faith is put to the test.

TS: The first thing I want you to notice about these young men is they. . .

II) Body: (Key Points)

A) Key Point #1: **Don't Care if They Live or Die!**

- 1) **When it is reported to the king that they would not obey his command to worship his statue, they are brought before the king.**
 - (a) Probably thinking, I knew Daniel wouldn't do it; but, now I have three more.
 - (b) I have to make an example of them.
 - (c) Besides, they have embarrassed the king; but they are Daniel's friends.
- 2) **I said last week that I think the king liked Daniel and was friendly with him.**
 - (a) He appointed these friends of Daniel's to high positions.
 - (b) I am sure there was professional jealousy at play with those who had to answer to them.
 - (c) These foreign slaves have been put in charge of us.
 - (d) Now, they mock our gods and our king; here's our chance to get rid of them.

- 3) **But the king is willing to give them a second chance to do as he has commanded telling them if they will bow when the music starts he will spare them.**
 - (a) What is their response?
 - (b) We don't have to wait for the music to start O king.
 - (c) They tell the king, we will not bend or bow to your will.
- 4) **Then King Nebuchadnezzar is further embarrassed and enraged.**
 - (a) When the king asks who will save them from his wrath?
 - (b) They respond their God will.
 - (c) But then realizing that even if God does not come to their rescue they would rather die in the fire than disobey their God.
- 5) **You see it is a matter of perspective; the Apostle Paul said "For me to Live is Christ, and to die is gain!" (Philippians 1:21)**
 - (a) Paul meant that as long as he was in this life he had the opportunity to share Christ's message and live for HIM as a servant of the Lord.
 - (b) But if Paul's life came to end here on earth; he would gain life with Christ eternally in His Kingdom.
 - (c) These young men knew the same thing and therefore did not fear dying.
- 6) **Christians should never fear death; for what we lose leaving this world will be nothing in comparison to what we will gain living with Jesus in heaven.**

TS: **But we need to understand that it is not about our . . .**

B) Key Point #2: **Faith in Faith; but Faith in God.**

- 1) **What I mean by that is that it is not how much we believe that makes the difference.**
 - (a) It is not a matter of believing what we want to happen.
 - (b) It is a matter of believing that God will do whatever is in our best interest.
- 2) **In their book, "We Let Our Son Die", Larry and Lucy Parker recount the tragic story of a misguided faith.¹**
 - (a) In painful and painstaking detail, Larry and his wife paint the picture of how they had come to believe that if they just had enough faith, God would heal their diabetic son.
 - (b) Eventually, their son Wesley got ill and needed insulin.
 - (c) Believing that God would heal Wesley, they withheld the insulin and, predictably, Wesley lapsed into a diabetic coma.
- 3) **The Parkers, warned by some about the impropriety of not having enough faith, believed that God would heal Wesley.**
 - (a) Unfortunately, Wesley died; but even after Wesley's death, the Parkers, undaunted in their "faith," conducted a resurrection service rather than a funeral service.
 - (b) **In fact, for more than a year following his death,** they refused to abandon their firmly held faith that Wesley, like Jesus, would rise from the dead.
 - (c) Eventually, both Larry and Lucy were tried and convicted of manslaughter and child abuse.
- 4) **A tragic story? Yes, But even more tragic is that countless other stories like this could be painfully retold.**
 - (a) In each case the moral is the same: A flawed concept of faith that inevitably leads to shipwreck
 - (b) Sometimes spiritually, in other cases physically, and in still other scenarios, both.
- 5) **Many Christians believe that the Bible teaches that faith is confidence in a certain outcome.**

¹ What Is Faith? by Freddy Fritz, Presbyterian/Reformed, sermoncentral.com: May 2006

- (a) Christians look at the miraculous way God worked in the Bible and say, "Look at the great faith of those men and women in the Bible.
- (b) **Look at what happened because of their unwavering confidence in a certain outcome."**
- (c) Now, if this is your entire view of what biblical faith is; then Daniel chapter 3 will disturb you.
- 6) **We have to be careful not to place our faith in the outcome we desire.**
 - (a) Our faith is to be in God to act as He sees fit.
 - (b) And believe that God is acting in our best interest which is the promise we find in God's Word.
 - (c) **"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."** (Romans 8:28)
 - (d) When we are in God's will ALL THINGS work for our good.

TS: **But ultimately, the outcome is up to . . .**

C) Key Point #3: **God's Almighty Power**

- 1) **The King was so enraged that he ordered the furnace be made 7 times hotter than usual.**
 - (a) Now to understand the picture here we need a little description of the furnace.
 - (b) This is not some big boiler in the basement of the King's castle.
- 2) **No, this furnace is an outdoor fire pit.**
 - (a) Picture a dug-out pit in the side of a rock hill.
 - (b) So, we have an open pit on the bottom where the fuel can be stacked and ignited.
 - (c) On the top, we have a large opening which acts like a chimney.
- 3) **So, they stack this open furnace with wood; maybe cooking grease and whatever they can to make sure it burns hotter than ever.**
 - (a) They light it and let the fire get really going, flames are shooting up out of the hole in the roof.
 - (b) The opening at the top is where they have to drop in our victims.
- 4) **The fire is so intense with heat that as the palace guards attempt to escort our bound victims to the opening they get burned themselves.**
 - (a) But ordered to continue they push on until they succumb to the heat and fall dead.
 - (b) Probably as part of their dying act they get Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fiery furnace.
- 5) **The king and witnesses are watching from down below where they can see the men fall into the flames.**
 - (a) But much to their amazement what they see is that the only thing that gets burned is the ropes with which they were bound.
 - (b) The young men get up and begin to walk around in the fire.
- 6) **However, instead of 3, there are now 4 in the fire.**
 - (a) The fourth man is described as being in the appearance of God.
 - (b) God is right there with them protecting them in the fire.
- 7) **When the king gets as close as he can without getting burned; he squints, and says I thought we threw 3 man in the fire; but I see 4?**
 - (a) Our brave heroes answer the king from the fire, yes, it is true.
 - (b) The king calls them out and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego step right out of the flames with not even a hair of their heads singed.
- 8) **In fact, they don't even have the smell of smoke on them.**
 - (a) We sometimes like to have a campfire in my back yard on summer evenings.
 - (b) The only problem is that after we all need a shower because we get the smell of smoke in our hair and clothes.
 - (c) God not only protected them from being burned; but not even the smell of smoke could be found on them.

(d) What a God we serve!

TS: **So, what are the lessons we learn from our study this morning?**

III) Conclusion (Life Application)

A) **First, when our faith is put to the test, we need to remember who it is that we serve.**

- 1) We are God's people and at times we can expect times of testing.
- 2) Times when our faith is put to the test.
- 3) It is a time that God uses to grow our faith and teach us something about ourselves and Him.

B) **Second, we need to have Faith in God, not faith in what we want to believe.**

- 1) It is not a matter of believing enough in the outcome we desire.
- 2) But if we are being faithful to God in our actions; then God will be faithful to us.
- 3) **This does not mean we will get out of the fire unscathed unless that is what God is doing for us.**
 - (a) There are many who die as martyrs for their faith.
 - (b) As Christians, we should live as Paul, to live is Christ, to die is gain.
- 4) **It is not that we have a death wish; but we have faith to believe that God has our best interest at heart.**
- 5) If God is ready for us to move home; we gain the peace of life with God.
- 6) We step from this life into the next life which is eternal.

C) **Third, we, who are believer's in Christ, need to remember that when we are in the fires of life God is with us.**

- 1) God is always with us when we need him.
- 2) We may not always feel his presence; but God is there working out his rescue plan.
- 3) **That plan may be to take us home; or to save us in some miraculous fashion.**
- 4) You see you don't get burned serving God;
- 5) The fire that burns comes from not serving God.

D) **The question that remains is are you one of Christ's follows?**

- 1) Oh, I don't mean like some spectator watching the game from the sidelines.
- 2) But are you in the game ready to live or die for Jesus?
- 3) Are you cultivating the kind of life that these young men and Daniel share?
- 4) Life was not easy for them; especially when they had to stand on integrity and principle.
- 5) Remember, they served the King faithfully; until it meant compromising God's commands.
- 6) What we need is people of faith with integrity.
- 7) Have you made that depth of commitment to Jesus?

IV) Invitation: **Let us Pray!**