

11-3-19 – STRONG BONES STAND FIRM WHEN TESTED --- THE LEGACY OF FAITH: Daniel 3 Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego

We continue our series “STRONG BONES” that is intended to help us identify those daily practices & attributes of Christian life that work to develop ‘strong bones’ of faith & trust in God.

It is important, even critical to do the following every day:

1. Read & Reflect Upon God’s Written Word – the Bible
2. Pray, Visit & Share with God
3. Good Spiritual Hygiene – expelling the bad & breathing in the good
4. Developing the Spirit of Generosity, Kindness & Grace
5. Developing the Spirit of Thanksgiving & Praise to God

We have seen this as we have:

- + Celebrated the history & lives of SHUMC that have gone before us
- + Studied the Life of Abram and the development of his faith as he learned to trust & respond to God’s direction & care
- + Studied the Life of Moses in the context of his “burning bush” encounter with God and Moses’ trusting response to God’s call

Today, as we continue our learning as we examine the faith & fidelity of Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego to the one true God of the Bible.

SYNOPSIS: Around 600 BC the mighty Babylonians captured all the remaining Israelites that were known as the tribes of Judah. Over a period of 3-5 years, King Nebuchadnezzar moved most all of the Israelites out of Israel and transplanted them into Babylonia. While the majority of the Israelites lived in segregated, Israeli conclaves ... some, especially talented Israelis were recruited and moved into significant leadership positions within King Nebuchadnezzar’s political administration. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were three such men. Daniel chapter 3 recounts one particular incident during their time of service to the King.

Setting the Stage --- Daniel 3:1-6

King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide (90 feet tall & 9 feet wide), and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. ² He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to **come to the dedication of the image he had set up.** ³ So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.

⁴ Then the herald loudly proclaimed, “**Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do:** ⁵ **As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold**

that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. ⁶ **Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.”**

The Problem – Daniel 3:12

“**There are some Jews** whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—**Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.**”

King Nebuchadnezzar’s Infuriated Response – Daniel 3:13-14

Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So, these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “**Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up?**

The Challenge & ‘Showdown’ – Daniel 3:15

Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, **if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. BUT IF YOU DO NOT** worship it, **YOU WILL BE THROWN IMMEDIATELY INTO A BLAZING FURNACE. Then what god WILL BE ABLE TO RESCUE YOU?”**

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego’s Response – Daniel 3:16-18

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, **we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.** If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, **the God we serve is able to deliver us from it**, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. **But even if he does not**, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that **WE WILL NOT** serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

Thrown Into the Furnace – Daniel 3:21-23

So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. The king’s command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

King Nebuchadnezzar’s Surprise! – Daniel 3:24-27

King Nebuchadnezzar **leaped to his feet** in amazement and asked his advisers, “Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?” ... He said, “**Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.**”

Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, **servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!**” So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. **They saw that the fire had not**

harmd their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

The King's Change of Heart -- HAPPY EVER AFTER -- Daniel 3:28-30

Then Nebuchadnezzar said, **"Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego**, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! **They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.** Therefore, I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, **for no other god can save in this way."**

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

REFLECTIONS, APPLICATIONS, AND INSPIRATIONS:

FIRST --- the most OBVIOUS LESSON --- we SHOULD NOT, we MUST NOT ALLOW 'other god's' to take the place of the one true GOD --- this includes **those people and things that we allow** to take ultimate priority on our lives; our indulgences; & our consumptions.

- WHAT DO WE THINK MOST ABOUT?
- WHAT CONSUMES US AND OUR MOTIVATIONS, PLEASURES, TIME & MONEY?
- WHAT MOST OCCUPIES OUR CONSUMING EMOTIONS, ATTITUDES, & PRIORITIES?

PRIMARY POINT: GOD --- MUST NOT BE USURPED DISPLACED, or DILUTED, ESPECIALLY BY THOSE WHO CALL THEMSELVES "CHILDREN OF GOD" OR "JESUS FOLLOWERS" --- WHO MAY INTENTIONALLY OR UNINTENTIONALLY ALLOW OR PLACE 'OTHER' PEOPLE, THINGS, or CONSUMING PRIORITIES INTO THEIR BODY, MIND OR SPIRIT.

NOW --- AN INSPIRATION & REFLECTION UPON DANIEL 3

EVERYDAY THE FAITH OF GOD'S CHILDREN ARE TESTED AND CHALLENGED. SOMETIMES IN BIG LIFE-CHANGING WAYS & SOMETIMES IN WAYS THAT ARE BARELY NOTICEABLE --- YET, STILL LIABLE TO DERAIL OUR CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE & OUR FAITH & TRUST IN GOD

SECONDARY POINT & INSPIRATION:

- FAITH IS GROWN
- FAITH IS REFINED & FAITH IS PERFECTED IN & THRU THE CHALLENGES & TRIALS OF LIFE

Today, with the inspiration of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego ... we reflect how their lives of FAITH & COMMITMENT may affect ours ...

Today, with the inspiration of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego ... we reflect and remember that in death or life ... God is with us ... that God

strengthens us in the trials of life ... the fires of life ... AND when the times comes ... We learn and we see that we are REFINED by the fires of life ...

AND THAT FAITH IS PERFECTED thru the FIRES and CHALLENGES OF LIFE ...

THEREFORE --- I CHALLENGE YOU ... & I CHALLENGE US

TO MAKE OURSELVES A VITAL PART OF THE "CYCLORAMA" of LIFE & FAITH

The impact & inspiration of the Gettysburg 'cyclorama' of Picket's last furious charge on July 3, 1863 ...

+ 377 feet long(1 & 1/3 football fields) & 42 feet tall (4 story building)

+ its details and vivid depictions of lives and challenges and battles ...

AND THEN --- Morgan Freeman's ***"Four score & seven years ago our forefather brought forth on their continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that ALL PEOPLE are created equal."***

We must never FORGET what they did and what they inspired ***"It is for us, RATHER, to be dedicated here to the UNFINISHED WORK WHICH THEY WHO FOUGHT HERE HAVE THUS FAR SO NOBLY ADVANCED ... from these honored dead we take increased devotion to the cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion ... "***

On this --- ALL SAINTS DAY ... MAY WE REMEMBER not only Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego ... BUT ALL OF THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US

- + FROM THE BIBLE ...
- + FROM CHRISTIAN-HISTORY ...
- + And FROM OUR OWN FAMILIES ...
- + And the FAMILIES of SOUTH HARBORCREEK UMC

LET US TAKE A STAND ...

LET US COMMIT NOT TO DILUTE GOD ... BUT TO KEEP GOD HIGH AND LIFTED UP

THAT WE TOO MAY BE: **BUILT UP BY THE THREAT OF FIRES REFINED BY THE FIRES & PERFECTED IN THE FIRES OF LIFE**

AS GOD'S LOVE & PROTECTION "UNBOUND" SHADRACH, MESHACH, & ABEDNEGO ... I PRAY THAT GOD'S LOVE & PROTECTION "UNBOUND" YOU AND YOUR FAITH

SO THAT YOU ARE NOT MARKED BY THE FIRES OF LIFE ... AND THAT, INDEED --- YOU DO NOT EVEN SMELL LIKE SMOKE !!!!

TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!