

Message #1063  
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"BEND, BOW, OR BURN"  
{Daniel 3}  
Trinity Presbyterian Church  
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#### INTRODUCTION

On August 31, 1997, Diana, Princess of Wales died as the result of a car accident in the Place de l'Alma Underpass in Paris. Six days later the unthinkable took place right in front of Buckingham Palace where Queen Elizabeth II viewed the funeral procession enroute to Westminster Abbey.

...there had been much speculation: how would the queen respond?

...Diana had been persona non grata among the royals since her divorce to Prince Charles

...rumors spread that the queen didn't even want her name mentioned in her presence

...the British royal family had undergone a week of incredible public pressure and public scrutiny

...as the flower draped casket passed immediately in front of her majesty, the queen bowed.

A British friend told me a short time later: "The queen bowed! The queen bowed! The queen bows to no one...but the queen bowed in respect to Diana! Amazing!"

Subjects bow to their sovereign; but, indeed, the monarch bows to no one!

#### NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S STATUE

Nebuchadnezzar was not satisfied to be just the "head of gold" as described by Daniel when interpreting his dream in the previous chapter. Now...

...he shows his vanity...his pride...his arrogance...his defiance

...he demonstrates that his commitment to Daniel's God was in word only

...he constructs a grotesque image made of pure gold

...strange proportions: 90 feet high; 9 feet wide

He demands that "all must fall down and worship the image of gold.

Whoever does not will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace..."

...and all bowed

...all but three Jews: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

These obviously recalled the commandments given to Moses-- "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME. YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FOR YOURSELF AN IDOL IN THE FORM OF ANYTHING in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. YOU SHALL NOT BOW DOWN TO THEM OR WORSHIP THEM; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but SHOWING LOVE TO THOUSANDS WHO LOVE ME AND KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS." {Exodus 20:2-6}

Nebuchadnezzar's word was law!

It was his command that all show bow to the image!

He expected conformity!

He demanded the allegiance of all residents of

Babylon--both citizens and foreigners

To refuse meant death by fire!

#### THE COMMITMENT OF THE THREE

"O 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 save us from it, and He will rescue us from your hand, O king.

But even IF He does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up!"

...they had made their commitment

...like Joshua, they had long before made a decision whom they would serve

...to bow to the image was not an option for them

...they had but one Master!

TO WHOM DO YOU BOW?

The God of the almighty dollar?

...what shall it profit you?

The God of conformity?

...stand for nothing and fall for everything?

You, too, must make a choice whom you will serve.

...to whom are you committed?

They make their position clear: "we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up!"

...note they say: "The God we serve!"

Oh that we would respond with such an affirmation when our faith is challenged and tested. To respond by saying...

"I have decided to follow Jesus. I have decided to follow Jesus!

I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back!

Tho' none go with me, still I will follow, tho' none go with me, still I will follow.

Tho' none go with me, still I will follow, no turning back, no turning back!" {602}

They did not fear Nebuchadnezzar and what he could/would do to them!

They did not fear the fire for their God would be with them.

...they KNEW that their God was able to deliver them.

...AND...EVEN IF HE DID NOT--they would not bow!

...they were confident of eternity!

WITH GOD...ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE...

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE!

I have used the 43rd chapter of Isaiah so many times when talking to one who is going through a time of trial...when their faith is being tested...

"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 when you pass through the fires, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God...you are precious and honored in My sight...I love you...Do not be afraid, for I am with you."

What words of comfort--

...fear not!

...I have called you by name

...you are precious and honored in My sight.

...I love you

...do not be afraid

...I am with you.

How could they be afraid?

"If God is for us...who can be against us?"

How can we be afraid when facing life's challenges?

CONCLUSION

"The furnace was so hot that the flames of the fire killed the men who took up

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

"Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, 'Wasn't it three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?'

"'Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, UNBOUND, and unharmed, and the fourth looks like the 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!'"

God had delivered them...faithful to His word!

Michael Sculley wrote...

"When you walk through the fire; You will not be burned;

...for I am with you; Yes, I am with you.

"When the waters and flood raise high; You will not drown;

...for I am with you; Yes, I am with you.

"Fear no harm, for I am with you

Fear no evil, for I am with you.

"When darkness surrounds you, like the shadow of death, ...fear no evil; for, I am with you."