



"...BUT IF NOT..."

## Daniel 3:8-18

8 Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews. 9 They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever. 10 Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image: 11 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, *that* he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 12 There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. 13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in *his* rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, *Is it* true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? 15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; *well*: but 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? 16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we *are* not careful to answer thee in this matter. 17 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, O king. 18 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.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

I'm going to preach about something tonight that's not very popular.

In fact, when you hear my opening remarks, you might think that I'm questioning God's power, but please bear with me.

I'm concerned that we have heard so many messages about God's:

- Miracle working power
- Healing power
- Providing power
- Delivering power

That sometimes we just take for granted that God will:

- Heal every sickness
- Meet every financial need
- Open every prison door
- Put back together every broken marriage

But, sometimes God does not heal!

Sometimes God does **not** come through with a miracle!

Sometimes God does **not** repair the broken home!

Sometimes God does **not** provide financial relief!

And my question tonight is one that's not popular, and not often considered, but one that must be asked nonetheless:

- **WHAT WILL YOU DO IF THE ANSWER IS NO?**
- **WHAT WILL YOU DO IF GOD DOES NOT DELIVER?**
- **WHAT WILL YOU DO IF GOD DOES NOT HEAL?**

*Sometimes we become so conditioned to the fact that God will say yes that we don't know what to do when He says no!*

**But, tonight it may serve us well to take stock of our experience and say:**

- *I know God CAN heal,*
- *I know God CAN put my home back together,*
- *I know God CAN provide my financial need,*

**BUT IF NOT:**

- *I'll still love Him!*
- *I'll still trust Him!*
- *I'll still serve Him!*

**I KNOW GOD CAN, BUT IF HE DOESN'T I'LL STILL SERVE HIM!**

**I.) OUR TEXT THIS EVENING IS A VERY FAMILIAR ONE.**

You've heard this preached many times.

**I've preached about:**

- *The fourth man and the fact that He's still in the furnace just waiting for us when we go through the trial*
- *The courage of (3) men who gained the favor of God through separation*
- *The furnace designed to destroy actually delivered them*

But, as I was re-reading this passage some time ago, something jumped out at me that I'd never noticed before.

*It's a simple statement, one consisting of only (3) words, yet it speaks volumes about the character of these young men.*

**They said:**

- *We know that God is able to deliver us out of the fiery furnace*
- *We know that God can send angels from heaven to bear us up and out of this crowd*
- *We know that God could kill each and every one of our persecutors if He so chose*
- *We know that the same God that opened up the depths of the Red Sea so our forefathers could walk through on dry ground can also keep us from a measly furnace!*
- *We know that our God is able to deliver us, Oh king,*

## **BUT IF NOT, WE STILL TRUST HIM!**

And, this statement was made BEFORE they knew what the outcome would be!

- For all they knew, they were speaking their final words!
- For all they knew, they were writing their own death sentences!
- For all they knew, they would wake up in glory!

### **But, it's as if these men were saying:**

Oh king, just in case we die in this furnace and don't get a chance to tell you again, let us make ourselves crystal clear:

- We will never bow down to a graven image!
- We will never serve your gods
- We will never forsake our experience!
- We will never turn our backs on God!

We don't know what's going to happen in 5 minutes, but let us just say right now that we know God is able, BUT IF NOT we still worship HIM!

### **I wish somebody in this place would just stand up right now and say:**

- *I don't know what tomorrow holds!*
- *I don't know if God's going to heal me or not!*
- *I don't know if God's going to deliver me or not!*
- *I don't know if God's going to meet my financial need or not!*

### **But, devil, just in case I don't get another chance to tell you this let me say it one more time:**

**I KNOW GOD'S ABLE, BUT IF HE DOESN'T I STILL WORSHIP HIM!**

**I KNOW GOD CAN, BUT IF NOT, I STILL SERVE HIM!**

If I die in the furnace, that's okay, because I'll just wake up shouting on the hills of glory, so just in case let me tell you one more time:

**I WILL TRUST HIM NO MATTER WHAT TOMORROW HOLDS!**

## **II.) GOD, GIVE US THE DEDICATION OF JOB.**

Job had to be the most confused man in the world.

- I mean, here's a man who the Bible says loved God and eschewed, or hated evil.
- Here's a man who was well respected in his community, and beyond, in fact the Bible says that he was the greatest man in all the east.
- He was the poster child for a godly life.
- He was the man that pastors would love to point to when counseling their congregations on the benefits of godly living, and godly giving.

His was a life that was the perfect fulfillment of Deuteronomy 28, where God promised that if a person would hearken to His commandments and do them, they would be:

- *Blessed shalt thou be in the city,*

- *and blessed shalt thou be in the field. 4*
- *Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body,*
- *and the fruit of thy ground,*
- *and the fruit of thy cattle,*
- *and the flocks of thy sheep. 5*
- *Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. 6*
- *Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in,*
- *and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. 7*
- *The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face:*
- *they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. 8*
- *The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*

**Sounds great doesn't it?**

- But, in a few days time everything changed.
- Without provocation, without reason, without any change in Job's lifestyle.
- He didn't curse God, he didn't turn to false gods, he didn't backslide.

Job was just doing what was right, he was still loving God and hating evil.

**But, without warning, without apology, without explanation his life was turned upside down.**

**In one day:**

- The Sabeans took his oxen
- Fire fell from heaven and consumed his sheep
- The Chaldeans took his camels
- A tornado destroyed the home wherein sat all of his children and their spouses
- His health failed him
- His wife turned against him
- His friends tried to encourage him by asking what he'd done to deserve all of this

**And he would have loved to answer them, but he really didn't have a clue.**

**He was frustrated, confused, angry, sarcastic, petulant, and every other emotion you could expect from a man in his condition.**

**But, in all of his trials one thing never changed.**

The Bible says that **Job 1:22**

22 In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

And, if that weren't admirable enough, this is what really amazes me about Job's experience with God.

**One day as he was sitting scraping his boils, searching deeply into his soul to try and figure out:**

- *what had happened,*

- *and why it had happened,*
- *and how long it would last,*

his friends came by to comfort him.

**And, the general topic of their conversation was this:**

- *Job, doesn't it anger you that God won't speak to you?*
- *Doesn't it just get your goat that God won't at least explain Himself and His actions?*
- *Don't you ever get upset and question God?*

**And Job looked back at those friends seated in the circle, and this is what He said:**

- *Gentlemen, I won't lie to you, I'd love to speak to God and ask Him some questions.*
- *I wish I could talk to Him!*
- *I wish there were a daysman, or a mediator that could come between us and put his hand on our shoulders and I could take counsel with the Almighty.*

**But, I can't do that, because He is not a man as I am that we can discuss things.**

But, you know, boys, I've been sitting here thinking, and you know what the only thing is that I can imagine that would be any worse than what's already happened?

**That would be if God:**

- Personally stepped out of the heavens
- Rode down here on his white horse
- Flaming sword in His hand
- Looked me in the eye
- And drove that sword right through my heart!

**And, boys, just in case that's about to happen, and just in case I don't wake up to see the morning sun peeping over the eastern horizon, let me just say this right here and right now for the record:**

**THOUGH HE SLAY ME, YET WILL I TRUST HIM!**

I know that God can turn my situation around today if he desires, but if He doesn't I STILL TRUST HIM!

**III.) JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS IN PRISON.**

He was the victim of a jealous woman with a Jezebel spirit.

Sitting in a prison cell, waiting to have his head removed and presented to Herod's wife on a silver charger, this forerunner of Messiah had some questions.

I'm sure as he pondered his situation, he thought:

**"You know:**

- *I've done everything I could do for the Messiah,*
- *I've been the voice crying in the wilderness,*
- *I've submitted to Him and confessed that He's greater than me,*
- *I've done everything right,*

**Now surely he'll come and bust open these prison doors and deliver me!"**

And as he waited patiently – nothing happened.

And, so one day, John sent some of his disciples to find Jesus, and, I'm sure somewhat sarcastically, ask him "***Are you Messiah, or should I place my trust in someone else?***"

And the response of Jesus is interesting, because He doesn't answer with a yes or a no.

**Here's His response:**

Hang around with me for a while, and then when you go back, tell John that you've seen:

- The blind receive their sight,
- and the lame walk,
- the lepers are cleansed,
- and the deaf hear,
- the dead are raised up,
- and the poor have the gospel preached to them.[\[1\]](#)

What's is most interesting here, however, is what Jesus DIDN'T say.

**Because the passage to which Jesus is referring here is Isaiah 61, which said that His purpose was to**

- ***Preach the gospel to the poor***
- ***Heal the broken hearted***
- ***Comfort those who mourn***
- ***Give the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness***

And, Jesus knew that John also knew this passage.

And John knew that part of the Messiah's anointing as contained in this scripture was, "***.....he will open the prison doors to them that are bound.***"

And, in essence, Jesus was saying to John, through his disciples, "***John, you and I both know I CAN open the prison doors, but in your case I choose not to.***"

## **But, John, can you accept that and not be offended?**

Because, blessed is he that can take no for an answer and not be offended.

Blessed is he that can sit in his prison cell and say, "I know that if Jesus so desired, he could storm this prison like a one-man SWAT team and deliver me, BUT IF NOT, I won't be offended!"

### **IV.) HEBREWS 11 IS A PORTFOLIO OF THE FAITHFUL.**

#### **Hebrews 11:32-39**

32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: 33

- Who through faith subdued kingdoms,
- wrought righteousness,
- obtained promises,

- stopped the mouths of lions, 34
- Quenched the violence of fire,
- escaped the edge of the sword,
- out of weakness were made strong,
- waxed valiant in fight,
- turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35
- Women received their dead raised to life again:

**Now, it would be great if the list stopped there. We could all rejoice over those things.**

**But, without even pausing, without even beginning a new sentence, Paul says that within this same group of faithful Christians:**

- and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36
- And others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37
- They were stoned,
- they were sawn asunder,
- were tempted,
- were slain with the sword:
- they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute,
- afflicted,
- tormented; 38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:)
- they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth. 39

**And these ALL, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:**

**Notice that ALL of them were good Christians, they had all received a good report, they hadn't sinned, none were any less faithful.**

But, while some had the lions mouths shut up, others were stoned.

While some had their children brought back to life, others were tortured.

- God is able to quench the violence of fire, but sometimes He chooses not to.
- God is able to turn the enemy to flight, but sometimes He chooses not to.

**And, blessed are we who are not offended in HIM!**

**Blessed are we who say, "I know God can, BUT IF NOT, I still trust Him!"**

**V.) MANY TIMES IN THE ABSENCE OF UNDERSTANDING ALL WE CAN DO IS TRUST GOD.**

## **Hebrews 11:6**

6 But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

The word faith here is “**pistis**”, and one of its meanings is: CONFIDENCE, OR TRUST.

In order to please God, I must have complete trust and confidence in Him.

**It means saying:**

- *“God, I don’t necessarily like this valley, but I’m trusting you through it!”*
- *“God I don’t necessarily like this storm, but I’m trusting you through it!”*
- *“God I don’t like the trial I’m going through, but I’m trusting you through it, and I refuse to give up!”*

**That’s the kind of faith that pleases God!**

Not the prayer that says, “God take me out of the valley”, but as David prayed, “Yea, **THOUGH** I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.”

**I know if you wanted to, God, you could take me out of this:**

- *valley*
- *furnace*
- *prison cell*
- *trial*

**BUT IF NOT, I still trust you implicitly, unequivocally, absolutely and with no reservation!**

**CONCLUSION:**

Anyone want to come to this altar tonight and renew your trust in God?

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[\[1\]](#)*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.