

“Bringing Christ into Your Crisis”

Daniel 3: 16-18

June 9, 2002

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. 17 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. 18 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."

(Dan 1:4-7) Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon invaded Judah, including Jerusalem and took the best of its people into captivity. He selected only strong, healthy, good-looking smart young men. Men gifted with knowledge, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah. The chief official renamed them with Babylonian names:

Daniel was called Belteshazzar.

Hananiah was called Shadrach.

Mishaël was called Meshach.

Azariah was called Abednego.

One time (Daniel 2) King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and he summoned his astrologers commanding them to tell him what the dream was and what it meant. The astrologers told him that if he told them what the dream was they could tell him what it meant but there was no man alive that could tell him what his dream was. However, Daniel was able to tell him what he dreamed and its meaning.

Because of this the king appointed Daniel to a high position. He made Daniel ruler over the whole province of Babylon, as well as chief over all his wise men. Then At Daniel's request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be in charge of all the affairs of the province of Babylon, while Daniel remained in the king's court. This, of course, did not make the astrologers very happy and they looked for ways to get rid of these Jews.

Nebuchadnezzar had this huge statue constructed to honor him and the gods who helped him win his victories. At the dedication ceremony of the monument all the important political leaders and dignitaries were there. People of all races, nationalities, and languages came to the event. When everyone had gathered a herald shouted out, "People of all races and nations and languages, listen to the king's command!" And the command was that whenever they heard the sound of certain music they were to stop what they were doing and bow to the ground to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue. Anyone who refused to obey would immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace. This would break the first commandment of the Jews and so Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would not do it (Daniel is not mentioned. Perhaps, having to be at the

ceremony, Nebuchadnezzar left Daniel to take care of some affairs. And so perhaps Daniel was not there at this dedication and / or not aware of this command of the king).

Well, I'm sure the astrologers thought, "Aha, now we got them." They went and told King Nebuchadnezzar, "there are some Jews--Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego--whom you have put in charge of the province of Babylon. They have defied Your Majesty by refusing to serve your gods or to worship the gold statue you have set up."

This put them in hot water and things were about to get hotter.

The king was furious with rage. He summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and asked them if the accusations were true. Then he gave them one more chance to hear the music (or face the music) and fall down to worship the image. If they did not worship it, they would be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. "Then" he said, "what god will be able to rescue you from my power?"

(vs. 16-18) Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. 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."

The king became so furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and his attitude changed toward them. As a matter of fact he was so enraged that he commanded the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. Then he ordered some of the strongest men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. They were tied up and thrown, fully clothed, into the furnace. The furnace was so hot that the intense heat killed the soldiers who threw the three men in! So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, securely tied, fell down into the roaring flames.

Would you say that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were in crisis? But you know the rest of the story.

As the king was watching he suddenly jumped to his feet in amazement and said, "Hey, didn't we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace? How come I see four men, unbound (their arms now free to rise in praise to bless the Lord) walking around in the fire. They aren't even hurt by the flames! And the fourth looks like (The Son of God or) the son of the gods!"

Then Nebuchadnezzar got as close as he could without being roasted to death himself and shouted into the door of the flaming furnace, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stepped out of the fire. And it was noticed that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn't even smell of smoke! Do you know why? Because the Son of God, Jesus Christ, was brought into their crisis. How can we bring Christ into our crisis situations? Let's look at Daniel and his friends and discover how.

Bring Christ into your crisis:

1. Commitment to Obey

In chapter one we read Dan 1:8 NLT

But Daniel *made up his mind* not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king.

Daniel and the others taken captive from Jerusalem were given royal treatment. They were going to serve the king in his palace. They received the best training; they were given the best food (including food they were forbidden to eat according to their laws and food that was offered to idols). Perhaps they were also offered other favors and pleasures forbidden by God but a strong temptation to young men. I picture Daniel and his friends coming into Babylon not as slaves but as extraordinary young men who quickly realized the special treatment that would be offered them. I'm sure they saw many of the young Jewish men give into these temptations. Perhaps Daniel gathering his friends warned them. I believe they became accountable to each other and made a vow to not break God's laws. For it says that Daniel *made up his mind*. That would imply that he made up his mind ahead of time to be faithful to obey God and not give into temptation. If you are going to be able to bring Christ into your crisis you must make up your mind now, before any crisis comes, before times of temptation come, that you will not defile yourself by giving into sin's pleasures or breaking God's commands. Of course it is assumed that you must know God's Word, the Bible to know God's commands and principles; to know what is sin and how to replace sinful behavior with right behavior. (Scripture not only tells you what to "put off" but also what to "put on." For example: put off falsehood and tell the truth; put off unwholesome words that cut up others and put on words that build others up; put off bitterness, wrath, anger, slander, malice and be tender hearted and forgiving; put off harsh words that stir up anger and give a gentle answer that turns away wrath; don't return evil for evil and insult for insult but give a blessing instead; do not imitate that which is evil but that which is good; stop living in the flesh for the lusts of men, but live for the will of God; do not get drunk but be filled with the Spirit; don't be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good; cease to do evil and learn to do good; flee from the love of money and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness fight the good fight of faith and hold on to eternal life; put off ungodliness and worldly desires and live sensibly righteously and godly, looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.)

Make up your mind that you will be committed to obey God. Dan 1:21 says: "And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus." The first year of King Cyrus came toward the end of Daniel's life when he was an old man. And so all his life he kept this commitment to turn from temptation and obey God. By doing this he was able to bring Christ into his crisis situations (his greatest crisis came when he was older, in a lion's den). If you are going to be able to bring Christ into your crisis first you need a commitment to obey. Second you need a...

2. Commitment to Pray

When the wise men of the king could not tell Nebuchadnezzar his dream, he decided to kill all the wise men. This included Daniel and his friends. Look what Daniel does in this crisis (Dan 2:17-18 NLT) "Then Daniel went home and told his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah what had happened. He urged them to *ask the God of heaven* to show them his mercy by telling them the secret, so they would not be executed along

with the other wise men of Babylon.” They prayed. They asked God for mercy and for wisdom. They were men of prayer. Look at another example

Dan 6:1-10 NLT

Darius the Mede decided to divide the kingdom into 120 provinces, and he appointed a prince to rule over each province. 2 The king also chose Daniel and two others as administrators to supervise the princes and to watch out for the king's interests. 3 Daniel soon proved himself more capable than all the other administrators and princes. Because of his great ability, the king made plans to place him over the entire empire. 4 Then the other administrators and princes began searching for some fault in the way Daniel was handling his affairs, but they couldn't find anything to criticize. He was faithful and honest and always responsible (after all he had made a commitment to obey). 5 So they concluded, "Our only chance of finding grounds for accusing Daniel will be in connection with the requirements of his religion."

6 So the administrators and princes went to the king and said, "Long live King Darius! 7 We administrators, prefects, princes, advisers, and other officials have unanimously agreed that Your Majesty should make a law that will be strictly enforced. Give orders that for the next thirty days anyone who prays to anyone, divine or human--except to Your Majesty--will be thrown to the lions. 8 And let Your Majesty issue and sign this law so it cannot be changed, a law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." 9 So King Darius signed the law.

10 But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. *He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God.*

He did not pray only when a crisis came his way. He spent time in prayer, seeking, worshipping and giving thanks to God every day, three times a day. He was able to bring Christ into his crisis because he was committed to prayer.

Certainly in times of crisis we ought to pray, but that isn't the time to first start or to learn to pray. We must be people of prayer at all times. Spend time with God everyday, three times a day, pray without ceasing all day. But take time to be alone with God just to be with Him. Worship, give thanks, confessing sin (Daniel was an example of this kind of prayer too: Dan 9:20 NLT "I went on praying and confessing my sin and the sins of my people, pleading with the LORD my God for Jerusalem, his holy mountain.") and ask God for mercy and wisdom and for help in times of trouble. If you are a person committed to prayer, when a crisis comes you will be able to bring Christ into it. The third requirement to bring Christ into your crisis is a ...

3. Commitment to Stay

Daniel 3: 16-18 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. 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."

These three young men were facing the worse possible crisis anyone could face. If God did not do a miracle to deliver them they were dead. What crisis do you currently face? Perhaps a physical affliction; maybe your marriage and / or family is in crisis. Maybe some other crisis that is beyond your ability to solve. If God doesn't do something nothing is going to get done. What will bring Christ into your crisis? He will come only if you are willing to make the same commitment that these young men made. Look at it again "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." In other words: "It looks hopeless. Unless God does a miracle we're dead. We believe that our great God is able to deliver us from this crisis. *But even if He doesn't* we will not turn from Him. Live or die, we will trust Him!" This is the kind of faith we need.

What brings Christ into our crisis is faith and trust in Him and the full confidence that He is able to rescue and deliver us out of any crisis. But, if He does not do a miracle, we will not doubt His existence or goodness and we will remain faithful. We will pray, "Lord, your ways are not my ways, your ways are higher than my ways. No matter what, Lord I will trust you."

This is what brings Christ into our crisis. It is the confidence that, no matter what comes our way, we are in His hands. Do you have the faith in your crisis to say, "God is able, but even if He doesn't..."? I know this is a hard teaching. But we must come to this place. What will you do if God does not give you the answer to the prayer you have been praying? Will you get angry with Him, accuse Him of not caring about you, accuse Him of failing you? This would have been a sad story if the three young men went kicking and screaming into the furnace crying out, "God where are you? You have failed us!" The reason they did not is because they had faith to say, "God can, but even if He doesn't..."

Commit your body, your marriage, your children, your finances your crisis into God's hands. Pray in faith believing He can deliver and answer your prayer, yet trust Him and His will completely. Pray, "Lord you are able but if not I will still believe! Just come and walk with me in this crisis." And He will!

Like the young men on our text:

Commit yourself to live a godly lifestyle in the midst of a wicked society (Obey).

Commit yourself to prayer. Become seekers after God (Pray).

Commit yourself to trust God completely – live or die! (Stay)

And Christ will come into your crisis.