

Bailey
10/12/58
ave

Washington 1/31/65

2nd
1956
A.M.

"Is Your Faith Fireproof"

Scripture Lesson:-

Text:- "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt." Daniel 3:25.

Introduction:- We put shatterproof windshields in our motorcars. That is a good thing. Many a face has been saved from disfigurement by it, many a life has been spared. Yet more important than shatterproof windshields is a shatterproof faith in God. We build fireproof structures. That too is very good. Many a hotel guest owes his life to such a building. But more important than fireproof buildings is a fireproof faith by which the soul is held steadfast amid the wreck of all things earthly.

Precisely such desperate and heroic faith flashes out from the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, better known as the "three Hebrew children". Actually, they were not children but young men whose ideals were not to be smudged and whose courage was never to flinch.

The supreme test hit them one day, and hit them hard. Here they were, exiles in a foreign land, Hebrews in Babylon. Still, they had won favor from Nebuchadnezzar, the powerful Oriental king, who ruled the Babylonians. He used them in his service. One day this testing a mass demonstration was being staged, at which every one was commanded to bow down before the great golden image which the king had caused to be erected. The young men, with no thought of giving worship to any other than the spiritual Creator of heaven and earth, refused to bow down.

For this they were bound and cast into an oven of seething flames. All the flames could do to them was to burn off their bonds. When the king, presumably from some vantage point of vision above the oven, looked into the fire, he declared that he saw not three figures but four. "And the form of the fourth", said he, in amazement, "is like the Son of God". Out from the super-

naturally neutralized fire they were brought, un-
harmmed and triumphant. their faith had stood the
final test. Before ever they had flung into the in-
ferno they had made their magnificent confession:
"Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from
the burning fiery furnace", they calmly declared,
looking the haughty tyrant full in the face. then
they added, still more magnificently, "But if not,
if no deliverance comes, if we have to perish in
the pitiless heat, be it known to unto thee, O king,
that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the
golden image which thou hast set up." (Vs 17, 18)

I.

Let us look, more closely, at what we may call the
dauntlessness of their faith. By that I mean, when
the faith of God's man rises to its highest and
best level, it stakes its final confidence upon no
human circumstance however favorable, upon no hu-
man force however powerful, upon no earthly secu-
rity however strong, but upon the naked fact of God
and his ability in the end to vindicate the trust
we have put in him. It was never more beautifully
declared than when Job cried, amid a whelming flood
of tears and troubles, "Though he slay me, yet will
I trust him." (Job 13: 15)

A pastor was once called to a Christian home. The
mother came in carrying her little infant. the
child had been the victim of a frightful disease.
the worst of the disease was over, but it had left
the little body deformed and useless for life. "I
tell you sir, said the mother, with tears blinding
her vision, " tell you, sir, sometimes I wonder
seriously over faith as I have to stand in this".
And then, said the pracher, she seemed to catch her
self, steadiness came into her voice, and she added,
"But I had a letter from father only today, and as
he closed his kind words, he said, "Don't forget to
trust God to the end".

That father knew, that there are times when faith
must cling to God without having any evidence of
God strewn around. God must be trusted just because
he is God. It is this kind of faith that Isaiah
speaks of with bold comfort to all tested souls,

"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light: let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God":

The dauntlessness of faith. Unforgettably portrayed in the young Hebrew exiles who submitted to the fiery furnace rather than break the confidence with God and their God-implanted convictions. Loyalty is more important than safety. "Our God is able to deliver us, but if not, we will not worship the golden image."

II.

The dauntlessness of faith would mean nothing if it were not for the difficulties which faith must face. Were it not for the trials of one sort or another no daring and desperate trust in God would be called out from the innermost depth of our souls.

Young people in particular need to take a good look at these young men who had fiber enough in their faith and iron enough in their courage to defy heathen custom in loyalty to the living God. It is not unkind or grumpy to today's young folks, to say to them that they present a curious contradiction. They take pride in being free, independent and unconventional. But actually they obey custom and conform to styles as if they were slaves:

See how they dress alike. If the current vogue for girls is blue jeans rolled half-way to the knee, the manufacturers have to step up their production and the local merchants can hardly keep up with the demand of ten million girls.

See how they sing alike. The "Hit Parade" helps to keep things uniform. One time it is "Pistol-Packing Mama". Another time it is "Old Buttermilk Sky" this is just another way young people have of running with the pack.

If it stopped there it would not be so serious. But it does not stop with trivialities. It asks more from her worshippers than conformity in

song hits or dress. I am thinking of drinking
and the problem it constitutes for an ever in-
creasing number of American young people.

Meanwhile the radio, the T. V's and the billboards
are glamorously trying to persuade that the door
to gracious living swings on hinges that are well
oiled with alcohol. Christian young people, adults,
will have to make decisions. Are they going to
worship at the shrine of King Alcohol or are they
willing, for conscience sake, to burn in the fiery
furnace of ridicule, or ostracism, or scorn.

The early Christians had to endure the hatred of
early Rome for their faith. They were sewed up
the skins of wild animals and torn to pieces by
savage dogs, they were thrust out into the arena
and were fed to the lions, they were covered with
pitch and chained to posts and then were ignited
to illuminate Nero's gardens. Theirs you see, was
a dauntless loyalty to Jesus Christ in the face
of the direst difficulties.

We may well sing,

"Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas:

Sure I must fight if I would reign,
Increase my courage Lord;
I'll bear the Cross, endure the pain,
Supported by thy Word.