



Shepherd's Path

A Shepherd's Personal Devotions Aliens in a Strange Land Series, Lesson 24

Lesson Title: The Fiery Furnace

Take Home Point: In fiery trials, trust God to rescue you.

Warm-Up:

Most of us know the accounts of how Christians were cruelly killed in the Coliseum in Rome by fire, starving beasts, or gladiators. But did you know that one man who took a stand for the Lord stopped the Coliseum persecution killings? One day as the "games" were underway, a man named Telemachus jumped from the stands and cried out for Caesar to stop it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. So shocked was everyone that all paused and turned to see what Caesar would do. Caesar gestured "thumbs down," and a gladiator killed Telemachus on the spot. Telemachus died as a result of the stand he took, but from that day on, the "sport" murder of Christians in the Coliseum stopped.

Read: Daniel 3; Isaiah 43:1b, 2b

Observation (What happened?):

What was everyone to do before the image of gold?

How did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego respond to Nebuchadnezzar's ultimatum?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

Why do you think Nebuchadnezzar so quickly forgot the lessons of the account in Daniel 1 & 2?

Who was the fourth person in the furnace with the other three?

Insight:

Unlike Telemachus, the three men in today's Bible account remained alive after their stand for God and against idolatry. Taking a genuine stand involves risk – risk of ridicule, persecution, even death. God doesn't always rescue everyone who takes a stand for him, not in either the Old or New Testaments, nor in the centuries since the Bible was written. For example, every one of the twelve disciples was martyred for standing for the true God. Peter was crucified. Andrew was crucified. James, son of Zebedee, was beheaded. James, son of Alphaeus, was martyred in Persia, means unknown. John was boiled in oil, but remained miraculously unharmed and died of old age. Bartholomew was crucified or flayed to death. Matthew was slain by the sword. Simon the Zealot was sawed in two. Philip was hanged. Thaddeus was slain by the sword. While Thomas was praying, he was pierced by a spear. In Daniel 3, God decided he would be glorified by humbling Nebuchadnezzar and keeping Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego alive. But there was no guarantee that would happen, as even they knew when they responded to the king's ultimatum. The same is true for us. We do not know how God will work, but we do know that no matter what happens, if we trust God with our circumstances and decisions, we can be assured that how we live will count for eternity.

Application (What does it mean to me?):

What circumstance are you facing in which you need to take a risk in standing for God?

How much are you willing to trust him to be with you in your fiery trial?

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