

"...BUT IF NOT..."

Daniel 3:8-18 - Daniel's Friends Disobey the King - ⁸Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. ⁹They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! ¹⁰You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image; ¹¹and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. ¹²There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up."

¹³Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, "*Is it true*, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, *that* you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? ¹⁵Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, *good!* But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who *is* the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. ¹⁸But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

INTRO: I'm going to preach about something this morning 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 today 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!

Today 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!

OUR TEXT THIS MORNING 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!

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 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:

Deuteronomy 28:3-9 - ³ "Blessed shall you be in the city, and lessed shall you be in the country.

⁴ "Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.

⁵ "Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

⁶ "Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

⁷ "The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways.

⁸ "The Lord will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

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.

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, asking what he'd done to deserve this***

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

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

In all of his trials one thing never changed - ***The Bible says that Job 1:22 - 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, 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?***
- ***Or God won't at least explain Himself and His actions?***
- ***Don't you ever get upset and question God?***

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

- *Men, I won't lie, I'd love to speak to God and ask Him some questions.*
- *I wish I could talk to Him!*

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

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

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.
- 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?"*

Jesus response 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.

What's 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**
- Jesus knew that John also knew this passage.
- 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."***

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."***

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!"*

HEBREWS 11 IS A PORTFOLIO OF THE FAITHFUL –

Hebrews 11:32-39 - ³² *What else can I say?* There isn't enough time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. ³³ Their faith helped them conquer kingdoms, and because they did right, God made promises to them. They closed the jaws of lions ³⁴ and put out raging fires and escaped from the swords of their enemies. Although they were weak, they were given the strength and power to chase foreign armies away. ³⁵ Some women received their loved ones back from death. Many of these people were tortured, but they refused to be released. They were sure that they would get a better reward when the dead are raised to life.

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:

³⁶ Others were made fun of and beaten with whips, and some were chained in jail. ³⁷ Still others were stoned to death or sawed in two or killed with swords. Some had nothing but sheep skins or goat skins to wear. They were poor, mistreated, and tortured. ³⁸ The world did not deserve these good people, who had to wander in deserts and on mountains and had to live in caves and holes in the ground. ³⁹ **All of them pleased God because of their faith!** But still they died without being given what had been promised.

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.

- 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, sometimes He chooses not to.**
- **God is able to turn the enemy to flight, sometimes He chooses not to.**

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!"

IN THE ABSENCE OF UNDERSTANDING ALL WE CAN DO IS TRUST GOD

Hebrews 11:6 - But *without faith it is impossible to please Him*, for he who comes to God *must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those* who diligently seek Him.

The word faith here is "pistis", Meaning: 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, and I'm trusting you through it, 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 - COMPLETELY, implicitly, unequivocally, absolutely and with no reservation!

CLOSE: Remember the opening questions?

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?

What is the costly act of Obedience in front of you?

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego -

They didn't make themselves fire proof, in obedience God showed up!

How do you need God to come through in your situation?

Could God be so good to show up in your Need, Mess, Hurt, Habit, brokenness,
Or your faithfulness, obedience, expectations, or what you have been longing for!

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