



DEVOTIONAL TIME

04-06-2015 @ 0900

“What a Testimony! How Is Ours?”

Daniel 3:26-27

Stand Up! Stand Up for Jesus!

Stand up! Stand up for Jesus, you “soldiers of the cross”!
Lift high His royal Banner; it must not suffer loss!
From victory unto victory His Army shall He lead,
Till every foe is vanquished and Christ is Lord indeed!

Daniel 3:26-27

“So Nebuchadnezzar went up to the door of the blazing furnace and called out, ‘Shadrach! Meshach! Abednego! Servants of the Supreme God! Come out!’ And they came out at once. All ...gathered to look at the three men, who had not been harmed by the fire. Their hair was not singed, their clothes were not burned, and there was no smell of smoke on them.”

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you known genuine “believers” who faced overwhelming odds and awesome pressure to conform to the world, but took a stand for God anyway, and manifested an amazing victory?
- Did they “take the credit” or “give glory to God”? Did their testimony inspire you to firmer trust, or convict you in any way? Has your “hope in God” grown or shrunken since then?
- Can you remember a time you had an opportunity to make a committed stand for God? How did that go? Did you decide the Lord was “worth the risk”, or figure “the cost was too high”?

Like most major “challenges of faith”, you “never saw this coming”. All you wanted to do was “follow God’s lead”, take God’s Word seriously, and make known the Divine Presence, Power, and Purpose. Then, the “powers-that-be” came up with some scheme to cement their own power, suit their own pleasure, or advance their own agenda. You saw it as your duty to “take a stand for God”. You were sure your family and friends would understand, and your “fellowship of faith” would support you. Big surprise! All your “support” has evaporated, and now you feel abandoned, abused, and alone! Even those who professed a faith in God have left you, to go off in an easier, “safer” direction. Now you begin to wonder, “Did I miss something here?” Daniel’s three friends may well have felt the same way to some degree. One day God’s blessings were so tangible they were “set for life”, and on the next, they were facing the fiery maw of a furnace so fierce it devoured those who simply got too near, all because they insisted on believing the “God of Heaven” their ancestors had followed was the only Deity to worship. The very faith that had brought them wonderful results earlier was the “scandalous folly” that forced them to face the furnace. How about us? Does our faith ever impose some serious “inconvenience”? Have God’s ways ever seemed “a little difficult”? Does the Lord seem really “close” and “personal” at some point, only to feel far, far away as a crisis looms? Do you notice that the very people who welcomed and supported you at first are now the ones most “out to get you”? But it’s in these “twists of circumstance” that faith purifies, hope deepens, and love intensifies. God, grant us the Grace of Steadfast Witness. When we face the furnaces of persecution, keep our focus on You. When it would be “convenient” or “reasonable” to go the “way of the world”, remind us of the Blessings and Favors You have poured out upon us, and keep us faithful to the Covenant You have established with all who will trust You. As You’ve gone “all-out” for us, lead to go “all-in” for You!



DEVOTIONAL TIME

04-07-2015 @ 0900

“What A Genuine Testimony Can Do!”

Daniel 3:28-30

Stand Up! Stand Up for Jesus!

Stand up! Stand up for Jesus, you “soldiers of the cross”!
Lift high His royal Banner; it must not suffer loss!
From victory unto victory His Army shall He lead,
Till every foe is vanquished and Christ is Lord indeed!

Daniel 3:28-30

“The king said, ‘Praise the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent His Angel, and rescued these men who serve and trust Him! They disobeyed my orders and risked their lives rather than bow down and worship any god except their own. And now I command that if anyone of any nation, race, or language speaks disrespectfully of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, he is to be torn limb from limb, and his house is to be made a pile of ruins. There is no other god who can rescue like this!’ And the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to higher positions in the province of Babylon.”

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Were you ever “confused about your condition” as you endured an agonizing “time of trial”, especially when the accusation seemed unfair and unwarranted?
- Did you even “question God” about this situation as it went from bad to worse to downright disastrous? Were those “prayers” filled with faith, taut with terror, or a bit of both?
- As events unfolded further, have you then seen God “move” with an awesome Grace and an amazing Wisdom to enlighten the minds and change the hearts of others who witnessed it?

Crisis comes, even to the “Christ-like”! When we face a daunting challenge to the faith we claim, it’s so easy for us to rage against injustice, or philosophize about the “unfairness of life”. We may feel certain “we have been faithful in doing our part”...paying our tithes, attending our church regularly and faithfully, saying our prayers devoutly, doing our jobs cheerfully, keeping faith with our spouses, families, friends, coworkers, even foes...and life seems full of favor and promise. Suddenly, “for no reason we can fathom”, God allows life to “go haywire”, others to turn against us, and misfortune to punish us unjustly. If not “disinterested”, God seems “far, far away”! No one would blame Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to feel exactly this way. They had stood for God faithfully, obeyed His Commandments, and kept themselves ceremonially unstained by “forbidden food”. Why then should they have to face such a “trial by fire”, and endure its cruel punishment? Real faith is always tested to demonstrate its genuineness and glorify the God who empowers it! God’s promise to each of us is simple: “I will *never* leave you or forsake you”, no matter what. How can God portray this principle to the world without examples? How can we know that God is *real*, that his Word is *true*, and that we can *stand* on Divine Promise unless we receive some real-life examples and actual testimonies? God, grant us the Grace of Enduring Trust! Make us living, breathing, testifying witnesses to the Faithfulness by which You sustain Your People. Let the “worldly” praise You for the supernatural “miraculous” action on our behalf that enables *them* to know You are real! Then their lives become living testimonies to Your faithfulness, O God, so their testimony speaks to others today. When the “crisis times” come, and we “walk in fire”, keep us faithful, so all will know *You* are FAITHFUL!



DEVOTIONAL TIME

04-08-2015 @ 0900

"What A Genuine Testimony Can Do!" (Part 2)

Daniel 3:28-30

Stand Up! Stand Up for Jesus!

Stand up! Stand up for Jesus, you "soldiers of the cross"!
Lift high His royal Banner; it must not suffer loss!
From victory unto victory His Army shall He lead,
Till every foe is vanquished and Christ is Lord indeed!

Daniel 3:28-30

"The king said, 'Praise the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel and rescued these men who serve and trust him. They disobeyed my orders and risked their lives rather than bow down and worship any god except their own. And now I command that if anyone of any nation, race, or language speaks disrespectfully of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, he is to be torn limb from limb, and his house is to be made a pile of ruins. There is no other god who can rescue like this!' And the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to higher positions in the province of Babylon."

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever found yourself completely astounded by the way a "horrible", "terrible", "very bad" situation turned out to be "Glory's Gateway" to the biggest blessing you ever had?
- Were you ever utterly dumbfounded to note the "transformation" in a person who used to be your primary antagonist, but through "Divine Intervention" became an avid supporter?
- How big a role has "faith" played in such "conversion"? What difference did your "testimony" make in the "attitude adjustment" you detected in your "former foe"?

The king *promoted* them to higher positions...imagine that! This is the same king who was red-faced with anger towards them just a few verses earlier. What a dramatic "shift of situation"! But this shift is typical of testimony backed up by a life of commitment. It's another demonstration of the power of personal integrity in the face of crisis and challenge. These three devoted youths trained in the school of fervent prayer. Their faith was not in question, and they stood solidly on their trust in a God who had "delivered" before, a God who acted in power to redeem as only a "true God" could! The king had set them a deadly ultimatum, but they were convinced only God deserved the loyalty the king sought to command. Once they made their declaration, there was no doubt about Who had to deliver these men from the furnace. The guards who threw them into the "seven-fold inferno" died; it was that hot! Yet these three youths held a "camp meeting" in the midst of the flames, assisted and protected by a fourth person, who appeared "divine". When the king requested them to leave the furnace, they manifested complete protection from flame and smoke; only their bonds were burned! They demonstrated conclusively that the God they served was "in control", even of the environment within the furnace. Their "testimonial walk" changed the heart and mind of the king. As amazing as their faith was, the God in whom they put faith was downright astounding. It was a "win-win-win" solution: God received due glory, even from pagans; the Hebrew youths received promotions, and the king received life-changing insight. God, grant us the Grace of Transformational Testimony! As we face the challenges of witnessing to Your Grace and Glory in a "neo-pagan" environment, continue to stand by us so we may *stand* for You! Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego put their faith to a "trial by fire" we may never face, but when we must literally put it all on the line, make us that willing, too.



DEVOTIONAL TIME

04-09-2015 @ 0900

"Old Habits Die Hard"

Daniel 4:4-9

Stand Up! Stand Up for Jesus!

Stand up! Stand up for Jesus, you "soldiers of the cross!"
Lift high His royal Banner; it must not suffer loss!
From victory unto victory His Army shall He lead,
Till every foe is vanquished and Christ is Lord indeed!

Daniel 4:4-9

"I was living comfortably in my palace, enjoying great prosperity. But I had a frightening dream, and saw terrifying visions while I was asleep. I ordered all the royal advisers in Babylon to be brought to me so that they could tell me what the dream meant. Then all the fortunetellers, magicians, wizards, and astrologers were brought in, and I told them my dream, but they could not explain it to me. Then Daniel came in. (He is also called Belteshazzar, after the name of my god.) The spirit of the holy gods is in him, so I told him what I had dreamed. I said to him: 'Belteshazzar, chief of the fortunetellers, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that you understand all mysteries. This is my dream. Tell me what it means!'"

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever tried to break a habit (smoking, cracking your knuckles, bad language, etc.)? Do you remember how it ever got started? What was its original "appeal"?
- In the event you were able to "initiate a change", how difficult did you find such challenge to be? What were the "speed bumps"/"set backs" you hit along the path?
- Have you found a "new way" yet? To whom do you turn when "the going gets rough"? How do you manage to "keep your eyes on the prize" 'til the new strategies/protocols take root?

Circumstances have forced the king to acknowledge *God* as God, but he is still a long way from any "total commitment" to this Deity. Oh, he is willing to assert God's greatness and power, but not quite ready to give up all other sources of "worship" or "insight" just yet. All his life to this point has trained him in pagan ways and pagan praise, so he has a "habit" of incorporating all forms of "religion", and incorporating all he finds "useful" into a "national cult". On the basis of "dream reading" and "fire insurance", he has declared that the Lord Daniel and his friends profess as God is the "greatest of all" but still "hedges his bets", reaching to all in times of need and dire stress. (Do we often do the same thing? In times of need, do we begin burning up the phone lines while running here, there, and everywhere? Do we go from professional to professional, looking for one who can give us "a magic bullet", or tell us what mystic technique we need to employ? Do we go to the "newest expert", or call everybody else we can think of for advice? If we do, are we any better than the king? It's easy to dismiss the king as "superstitious", or criticize his actions toward these captives, and his inability to see the Truth of God, but in reality, are we any better? How many "believers" sing God's praises on Sunday, and then spend the rest of the week ignoring His existence? Old habits die hard, don't they?) God, grant us the Grace of New Vision! In You, all things are new. We need the insight only You can provide, if we are to break the bonds of our old ways of thinking and living. Draw us in lives of fervent prayer, willing sacrifice, and generous service to a new faith, a deeper hope, and a more authentic love. As You have sustained Biblical heroes, empower us to live for You anew...TODAY!



DEVOTIONAL TIME

04-10-2015 @ 0900

“What Are Your Ambitions?”

Daniel 4:19-22

Stand Up! Stand Up for Jesus!

Stand up! Stand up for Jesus, you “soldiers of the cross”!
Lift high His royal Banner; it must not suffer loss!
From victory unto victory His Army shall He lead,
Till every foe is vanquished and Christ is Lord indeed!

Daniel 4:19-22

(Concerning King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream,) at this, Daniel, who is also called Belteshazaar, was so alarmed that he could not say anything. The king said to him, “Belteshazaar, don’t let the dream and its message alarm you.” Belteshazaar replied, “Your Majesty, I wish that the dream and its explanation applied to your enemies and not to you! The tree, so tall that it reached the sky, could be seen by everyone in the world. Its leaves were beautiful, and it had enough fruit on it to feed the whole world. Wild animals rested under it, and birds made their nests in its branches. Your Majesty, you are the tree, tall and strong. You have grown so great that you reach the sky, and your power extends over the whole world!”

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Do you know people so “full of themselves” they are always ready to tell you the newest story of their latest exploits, accomplishments, and awards?
- Have *you* ever “stood back to take stock” of all you have planned, initiated, labored over, and accomplished? Did *you* take “unjustified pride” in your amazing “talents”, “wisdom”, & “luck”?
- On the other hand, have you observed “humble believers” who “give glory to God” and “share the credit” for any achievement with “those whose support made it possible”?

Our culture glorifies “celebrity”, and encourages us constantly to “put our name in lights”. Its “siren song” is simple: “If you are not willing to blow your own horn, who is going to blow it for you?” Thus begins a ceaseless chase for “power”, “prestige”, and/or “pleasure” in the midst of a very egotistical society. We are taught to believe “It’s all about ‘me’”. In many job fields and career paths, we find continual expectation of inflated evaluations, (by ourselves or others,) in which our accomplishments and awards validate our value. (One may wonder how much “mileage” those evaluations would get if we simply asserted, “God did all the ‘heavy lifting’; I just followed His Spirit’s lead”.) But we really run into trouble when we begin to “believe our own press”. That’s just “cruisin’ for a bruisin’!” King Nebuchadnezzar honestly believed *he* had built his kingdom through all of his own creative genius, political skill, and military might. We shall soon see God give the king a serious “wake-up call”, thus revealing the truth about who actually makes kings and kingdoms. Now what about us? How many times a year do we announce all “we” have done? With Whom do all our ideas, plans, and missions really originate? Who is it who guides our efforts and ratifies our “successes” in this life? God, grant us the Grace of Proper Recognition. It is You who give us all the time and space, strength and wisdom, courage and goodness that we will ever have. You bless us with all people and material resources we need to achieve anything of worth. Empower us with a “holy ambition” that seeks Your Will first, and yearns to glorify You gladly in projects we engage in Your Name. Enable in us a spirit of generosity that invites participation and fosters teamwork. Engage us fully in the labors of love that beautify our world, bond us as family, and prepare us for ever more fruitful participation in Your Life!