

Daniel was taken captive in 605 B.C. during the first wave of conquering when Babylon defeated the Jew. Daniel and three of his companions; Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were brought up to be servants or advisors to the King. They were all very young, but were also very strong in their faith and fearless in their devotion. It makes me wonder when we read of the accounts of Isiah and Jeremiah how the people were so wicked that they were told again and again to repent or they would be destroyed, among all the wickedness we had small families that remained faithful and righteous. Not all of the children of Israel were wicked. It was when most of them became wicked and the laws were changed to support evil that destruction became inevitable. I think we can learn two great lessons from this; first that we as a whole must choose God in order to avoid that wrath that is to come. And second, just because the world choses evil that doesn't mean that we have to participate in that. We can stay true to God and His word in our lives.

In the Book of Daniel we have several amazing stories about these youngmen who would prove to be incredible missionaries. But they were not missionaries that had been called to go preach to a people. They were missionaries that were captured and put into a situation that they didn't want to be in. It was how they lived their everyday lives that made them great missionaries. Let's look at a few examples: Daniel 1:3-20

In Daniel chapter one we see a situation where these 4 youngmen are commanded to eat of the King's meat and drink of his wine, both of which were contrary to their beliefs and felt as if they would be defiled if they partook of his offerings to them. So they ask the prince if they could just eat vegetables and drink water. After some conversation about how this would offend the King the prince agrees and after 10 days they were found to be stronger and healthier looking than all of their other counterparts.

In verse 12 it says:

12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.

16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.”

Sometimes we think missionary work is sharing some great truth with a non-believer. But here we see that just being a good example, abstaining from eating or drinking things that are bad for us can be a powerful missionary tool in God's work.

But we will see that at every turn, with every new King these youngmen will face new challenges. Most of them are an attempt to destroy them. In Chapter 3; Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego refuse to worship Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue that he had erected. It was this huge dedication that he planned to have all of his,

3“princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up;

4 Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages,

5 *That* at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp,...and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up:

6 And whoso falleth not down and worshipping shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

Here we find another situation where they are asked to do something that they feel is not according to God's will. And they are faced with a choice. Give in to the pressures of the world around them and not make any ripples, or do as God commands them and face what every consequence may come because of it. For these youngmen it wasn't a choice. They knew beforehand that they would always choose God no matter what the situation or consequence would bear.

“13 ¶ Then Nebuchadnezzar in *his* rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king.

14 Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, *Is it* true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?”

Do you think they were scared? I think I would be a bit nervous standing before the great King Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury. But I have a feeling that these men were not. They had seen death, they were taken from their homeland to dwell among their enemies. I'm sure this wasn't the first time they had to stand for something greater than them as a witness before God. I'm sure they thought that they were going to die. But I don't think they were scared; I believe they were full of faith and love for their God, knowing He would welcome them home gladly. But His plan for them wasn't over. He had a great miracle in store for them that would affect not only their lives but many of the idle worshiping babylonians.

They said to the King:

“17 If it be *so*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver *us* out of thine hand, O king.

18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

19 ¶ Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: *therefore* he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.”

22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, *and* spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no **hurt**; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

26 ¶ Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, *and* spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come *hither*. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, came forth of the midst of the fire.

27 And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the **fire** had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats **changed**, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

28 *Then* Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed *be* the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his **angel**, and delivered his servants that **trusted** in him, and **have** changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

Please take notice that there was no knocking on doors, no awkward invitations to come to church or an activity. Their greatest tool was their loyalty to God and His word. That's all the God required of them, He took care of the rest. This is sometimes overlooked in our society. The power that lies in an unwavering conviction to faith and righteousness.

Elder Uchtdorf in May 2019 General conference said this:

"I am not asking that you stand on a street corner with a megaphone and shout out Book of Mormon verses. What I am asking is that you always look for opportunities to bring up your faith in natural and normal ways with people—both in person as well as online. I am asking that you "stand as witnesses"¹² of the power of the gospel at all times—and when necessary, use words.¹³"

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/liahona/2019/05/14uchtdorf?lang=eng>

The world is changing and the way we share the gospel is changing. We must be willing to do those things necessary to be God's mouthpiece in His latter day work. In this last General conference in President Nelson's closing address in the Saturday morning session he reiterated his continued message about our day. He said:

“My dear brothers and sisters, so many wonderful things are ahead. In coming days, we will see the *greatest* manifestations of the Savior’s power that the world has *ever* seen. Between now and the time He returns “with power and great glory,”¹ He will bestow countless privileges, blessings, and miracles upon the faithful.”

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2022/10/47nelson?lang=eng>

If we ponder that message and take it to God, He will reveal to us what part He would like us to play His work in these last days. You can be sure that God didn't put you here just to glide through life and the easy road to His kingdom. You were saved for the last days to do something amazing! To see amazing things! And to become amazing!

Of this truth I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.