

When You Have To Go Through It
(Daniel 3)
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Big idea- "When you can't get around it, God will get you through it."

Has life ever left you speechless? You know, stone cold frozen in place? Life has left me speechless, frozen like a statue.

I was driving down a busy road in Tustin, California when all of a sudden, I saw police lights in my rear-view mirror. I was on a major road and traffic was very heavy, so I turned onto a smaller, less busy road. I didn't want to create a traffic jam or put the officer in danger of being hit by another car.

This was a mistake. Just a few seconds after I pulled over, the officer was outside of his car, pistol drawn, and yelling instructions at me. I was shocked and frightened. I couldn't move. I could hear him speaking, but all I saw was the barrel of the pistol.

Turns out, a couple of guys had robbed a store, at gun point, and drove off in a small red compact car. He quickly realized I had not robbed the store.

All I could think, after he lowered his pistol, was really? In this car? I was driving a 1988 red Ford Fiesta. No laughing!!

Here's what it looked like. On our wedding day, my best man wrote in 3-4 inch block letters, "Econo Limo" on the back bumper. He used white shoe polish, and it never really came off. So I was wondering to myself, who would rob a store in this car? NO ONE!! Fortunately, I was polite, and innocent, and in the officer let me go.

It was completely unexpected. I was totally shocked. I didn't do anything to put myself in that situation, and I never want to stare down the wrong end of a pistol again. However, sometimes there is no way out of a situation, and you just have to go through it. When we find ourselves in these tough spots, we desperately need God's help. "When you can't go around it, God will get you through it."

Let's look at Daniel 3:17-18 and see what lessons we can learn about the difficult situations life throws at us. Daniel 3:17-18.

Please follow along as I read out loud.

Daniel 3:17-18

"If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.^a 18 But if not, be it known to

you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

Before we jump into our verses, it's helpful to have a little of the backstory. Daniel was written in 605 BC after the nation of Israel had split into two kingdoms, the northern and southern kingdoms. Jehoiakim was king of the southern kingdom, the kingdom of Judah, and he was an evil king. Due to the idolatry and sinful hearts of the kingdom of Judah, God allowed Jerusalem to be overthrown 3 separate times by Babylonian army. The book of Daniel is about Daniel and his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, who were taken, as slaves, back to Babylon in the first deportation.

Daniel and his friends were given the Babylonian names, Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. These names may be a little more familiar to you. Even though they were slaves, Daniel and his friends chose to be obedient to God. God was gracious and granted them favor in the king's court.

Daniel had a miraculous gift, from God, where he could interpret visions and dreams. In Daniel chapter 2, King Nebuchadnezzar makes a decree to kill all the wise men of Babylon unless someone could tell the king what his dream was about and what it meant. Daniel and his friends were wise men. Talk about being in a situation *outside of your control*. Daniel and his friends prayed to God, and God revealed the dream to Daniel. This led King Nebuchadnezzar to say this, in Daniel 2:47, “Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings...” King Nebuchadnezzar appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to rule over the province of Babylon and Daniel became the king's personal advisor.

Life is great. God has given us so many beautiful things to enjoy. Funnel cake, orchids, walking on barefoot on soft green grass, or even a good snow swim. Who doesn't love swimming in the snow? Or how about fresh baked chocolate chip cookies, hiking, beach sand between your toes, babies, or bacon. Who doesn't love bacon?

Life is great but life also just happens. John Lennon wrote a song about his son called Beautiful Boy. John wrote, “Before you cross the street, take my hand. Life is what happens to you while you're making other plans.”

Life can be great, but life can also be hard. Bam, something happens, unexpectedly, and takes you by surprise. Has life ever taken you by surprise?

Life can quickly escalate out of our control, just like when I was pulled over. I never thought I would have a gun pointed at me by a police officer. Now he was just doing his job. He didn't have anything personal against me, and I wasn't mad at him. All I could do was stare at the gun and pray to myself, God please do not let him pull the trigger. That situation was out of my control.

Life can take you by surprise. It can go up in flames in a matter of seconds. We all know it can, but for the most part, we don't think it will happen to us. Some of us have walked into work and received a pink slip. Downsized. Let go! A situation like that can knock the wind right out of sails.

Let's take a look at what Daniel's friends said when they found themselves in one of these types of situations. In verse 17, they have just gotten the wind knocked out of their sails in a big way. So Shadrach says, "If this be so . . ." *If this be so*. What is going on? Shadrach, I'll call him Shad for short, Shad and the boys were about to be thrown into a raging white-hot furnace. What?? Talk about taking you by surprise!! Who would see that one coming? Not me!!

Going back to verse 1 of chapter 3 we can see what was happening in their lives. Daniel Chapter 3:1-6 tells us that King Nebuchadnezzar had built a huge idol, 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide. It was placed on a plain in the province of Babylon, and the people were gathered around it. When the instruments played, everyone was supposed to bow down and worship the idol.

Can you imagine having a county meeting like that? The idol was huge, larger than Nebuchadnezzar's megalomaniac attitude. The musicians played, and bam!! Everyone bowed down.

The situation was out of their control. I'm sure they were overwhelmed and afraid. There was nowhere for them to hide. Even though they were afraid, their fear did not control them. They were *courageous*. Courageous has been defined as doing the right thing, even when you're afraid.

I wonder if they were thinking, "God, enough already!" First, Jerusalem was overthrown and they were taken back to Babylon to be slaves. Can you imagine how scary that would be? Second, when they were living in the palace of King Nebie, the Babylonians tried to force their diet on them. Third, they were almost killed because of the King's dream. Now the monstrous idol and a molten furnace. I would have been thinking, "Enough is enough!"

But Shad and the boys refused to bow down. Think about it? Thousands of people bowing down and there they were, standing up, sticking out like sore thumbs. What would you have done? Would you have bowed or stayed standing? Would you have tried to be sly, maybe dropped your papyrus and bent down to pick it up right when everyone else was on their knees?

"When you can't go around it, God will get you through it."

Not only can life take you by surprise, but no one is exempt. Everyone goes through life's surprises. Whether you are rich or poor, successful or unsuccessful, Christian or non-Christian, life happens and everyone goes through it. There are no free passes.

Life was going great for Shad and the boys, in spite of their captivity. They worked hard, stayed in shape, and until now, they had been rewarded for standing for their faith.

The king put them in charge of the province of Babylon. It was like they were on the county board, making choices that could really impact the province. Can you imagine how angry the Babylonian wise men were?

Dan 3:8 reads, "...certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews." In verse 12 it says, "There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." Three Jewish slaves were promoted above them. No wonder they were angry. The term Chaldean denotes a specific group of people who lived in southern Babylon. The King who was Chaldean put Jewish men in charge over his fellow Chaldeans.

Please understand, life happens to all of us. None of us are exempt. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's position as governmental leaders did not give them a get-out-of-jail-free card, nor did their previous choices to trust God. "When you can't go around it, God will get you through it."

Not only can life take you by surprise, but life can be overwhelming, beyond our control. Church, please hear me, Life can be more than we can handle. Verse 17 says, "our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace." These young men knew what they were facing. They could probably feel the heat from the flames. They did not know how their story was going to end. They had not read the next chapter. You will go through circumstances you cannot control, circumstances that stop you in your tracks, and it will be hard.

During hard times, when life is overwhelming and we lose control, we need each other. Let's admit it.

Years ago, Beth was driving that same red compact "Econo Limo" when life happened to her. She was trying to cross a busy street when she was t-boned. Life became overwhelming, and she needed help. She was hit so hard, the front driver's side tire was knocked parallel to the ground. How much force did it take to knock a tire so it was parallel to the ground? There were no cell phones then, so the hospital had to call my duty station to let me know about the accident. As we drove past the car, I could see a lot of blood. I was afraid, but there was nothing I could do. "When you can't go around it, God will get you through it."

What I didn't know when I saw the car was that Beth had not been wearing her seatbelt, and she had been thrown across the inside of the car. Her head completely took out the passenger side window. Now don't get worried, it wasn't her head that

was bleeding all over the car, it just was one little cut on her thumb that had bled a *lot*. Once I found that out, I thought, “Her pretty little head did that? Man, I better not get her mad, she’s tough!!”

Beth needed help in that situation. She needed the paramedics to get her to the hospital. She needed the hospital worker to call me and let me know she was in an accident. She needed the doctors to check her out and fix her up. I needed a friend to drive me to the hospital to be with her, because our only one car had been totaled.

Shad had the support of his two buddies, Meshach and Abednego. They stood together and were there for each other. Have you ever noticed how much easier it is to go through hard times when you have people you can trust standing beside you? Who can you turn to when life’s situations are overwhelming? We were made to live in community, but many of us do not have a support network. If you do not have a support network to call when life happens, please join one of our growth groups, either a Sunday or weekday group so you can grow in community and have support.

When life gets overwhelming, we need people, but more importantly, we need God. We say it all the time. I need God. I trust in God. But do we really trust Him and Him alone? Sometimes when life happens, I run around furiously trying to take care of the situation by myself. I can forget about God. Am I alone in this? No, I didn’t think so.

You talk about being taken by surprise. A megalomaniac despot was about to throw them in a fiery furnace. There was no way they could talk their way out of it, there was nothing anyone could do. They needed God! “When you can’t go around it, God will get you through it.”

Let’s decide today to run to God and seek His help. Shad said, “...our God can deliver us from the fiery furnace.” This Aramaic word “deliver” means to rescue, set-free, or save from peril. Shad was acknowledging God was all-powerful and able to rescue them from this situation. Psalm 32:17 says, “Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.”

Not only is God all-powerful, God is good. God is not erratic, unpredictable or deceptive. He is always good, every moment of every day. Psalm 31:19 “Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind!” Everything about God is good. It’s part of who He is.

We do not know for sure what this furnace was used for, but I wonder if it wasn’t the furnace used to build the idol. Imagine the irony, the very furnace used to build the statue would be the furnace anyone who disobeyed the king’s command would be thrown into. My guess would be King Nebuchadnezzar and his sick personality

would find this funny. Just my guess, there is no verifiable proof, but it makes me wonder.

The king's orders would be followed completely and without hesitation. No human could stop this from happening. Their punishment for standing firm on their faith, was to be thrown into the furnace. Their fate was sealed unless God intervened. Not only can life surprise us, it can quickly become overwhelming. During those overwhelming times, we need friends and we need God. "When you can't go around it, God will get you through it."

Now we come to the most amazing part of this story. This is the part we all need to commit to memory. We can choose to trust God, no matter what. Life is full of situations outside of our control. Some situations we have to go through, whether we want to or not. We cannot control what happens in life. But we can control how we *respond* to life. We can have a good attitude. We can choose to trust God always.

Verse 18 reminds us why we need to know this, "BUT IF NOT, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." Shadrach and his friends chose to trust God as they stared at the fiery furnace, NOT KNOWING WHETHER OR NOT GOD WOULD SAVE THEM FROM THE FIRE. Whether or not their lives were spared had no bearing on the amount of faith and trust they placed in him.

"But if not" Church, God doesn't always save us from the circumstances that Life throws at us. That's a hard truth to hear. We know it, even though we do not like to admit it. God didn't save me from having to stare down the barrel of a police officer's pistol. God saved me through it by giving me the grace to sit still and obey the officer's commands. God didn't save Beth from the car crash either. God saved her through it. Was I afraid during those situations? You bet I was, but God gave me the courage to do the right thing when I was afraid, and I trusted Him.

Psalms 56:3-4 says, "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?" This is exactly how Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego acted. They didn't let their fear of dying in a fiery furnace stop them. They chose to obey God and not worship the idol, in spite of their fear.

Check this out. King Nebbie became furious. He had the furnace heated seven times hotter than normal. He ordered some of his soldiers to tie up Shad and the boys and throw them in the furnace. The fire was so hot, the guards who threw them in caught on fire and died. Imagine how they felt as they heard the king tell them to heat the furnace seven times hotter. What was going through their minds as they were bound and carried to the furnace? I wonder how they responded as the guards, who carried them to the furnace, were killed by the flames? We're not sure what they thought, but we know this, "When you can't go around it, God will get you through it."

God could have saved them from the furnace. God could have struck the king dead. He could have made the guards go stark-raving mad and start acting like wild animals so they couldn't throw them into the furnace. But He did not. Remember, "When you can't go around it, or over it, or under it, or around it, God will get you through it."

God doesn't always save us from our circumstances, and circumstances do not always turn out the way we want them to. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego trusted God whether he chose to deliver them or not. They knew they were in his hands, and that he would be with them even if that meant certain death. Trust God regardless of the outcome, no matter what happens. There will be situations we cannot handle, but there will never be anything that happens to you or me that God cannot handle. Edgewood, "When you can't go around it, God will get you through it."

Verses 24-25 reads, "Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, 'Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?' They answered and said to the king, 'True, O king.'" ²⁵ He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

God was with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fire just like He was with other people in their situations. In Joshua 1:5, God said, "Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you." In Judges 6:15 God told Gideon, "But I will be with you".

Here are some eternal truths about believers today. Jesus closes the great commission with these words, "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Colossians 1:27 reads, "To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory." The apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 1:13, "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit," God will go with you through whatever circumstances life throws at you. Since we are created in His image, God has given us the dignity of choice. Let's choose to have a good attitude and trust Him, even in the "BUT IF NOT."

What are our next steps?

1. Admit that life has its ups and downs. Life can be great, and it can be incredibly challenging. Has life surprised you? What are you going through that is out of your control?
2. Everyone goes through *difficult* circumstances. Beware of false theologies that promise you a life full of ease and happiness. Do you struggle with this? Did you think your faith would exclude you from going through hard times?
3. You need people to support and encourage you, and other people need you too. Especially when life gets overwhelming. If you have not joined one of our Growth

Groups, would you consider joining one? Our Growth Groups meet on Sunday, from 9:30-10:25, and on week days. If you'd like more information about our Growth Groups, just write the key words Growth Groups in the comment section of your paper or electronic connection card.

4. Choose to trust God no matter what. That's the key to this passage. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego trusted God knowing their choice to obey God would get them thrown in the fire. Remember, God is good always. They knew God was good if he saved them from the fire, and they knew He was good if they never walked out of the furnace. Do you believe God is good when things do not turn out the way you want?

5. Start your relationship with God today. "When you can't get around it, God will get you through it." What a great statement to remember. Would you like God to go through your circumstances with you? Start your relationship with him today.

Believe and Receive = Saving Faith. Believe Jesus died as your Sin Substitute. God sent Jesus to die for our sins, in our place. Trust it completely. Then receive God's free gift salvation, by faith. It's simple, yet profound. Jesus did for us, what we could never do for ourselves. There is nothing you can do to earn your way into heaven. It is finished. The price has been paid. Romans 5:1 says, Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Pray-