But If Not

Daniel 3:8-18
8 Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews.
9 They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever.
10 Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image:
11 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.
12 There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.
13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king.
14 Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?
15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?
16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.
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.

INTRODUCTION

- I read a story once about a young lady
  - who’s father was teaching her to drive.
- Her father took her to the high school parking lot to practice
  - and, on this particular trip,
    - her three-year-old sister rode along in the backseat.
- It was one of those difficult days.
  - On the first lap, she ran up on the curb
    - while trying to negotiate a turn
  - A few moments later
    - she made the same mistake again.
  - Finally, after a near miss with a light pole
    - in the center of the parking lot
•she heard a small nervous voice begin to pray,  
  ■“God is great, God is good, let us thank him for our food.”

•The girl slammed on the brakes,  
  o turned around to the backseat  
    ■and asked her sister,  
      •“What are you talking about?”
  o Her little sister replied,  
    ■“Your scaring me,  
      •and I felt like I needed to pray  
        o but that’s the only prayer I know.”

•Sometimes from our limited point of view  
  o we don’t know how to pray.  
    ■The bible is very plain:  
      •God’s ways are above our ways.  
        oHis thoughts above our thoughts  
      •And, though he may well understand where we are  
        oAnd he may have a purpose in our pain  
      •We can’t always see his purpose.  
        oWe don’t always have understanding  
        oOr clarity about what we are going through.

•Paul said, in 1 Corinthians 13:12, that  
  o We see thru a glass darkly.  
    ■We only know in part.  
  o We don’t always understand  
    ■why things are happening  
    ■the way they are in our lives

•Like it or not our vision is limited  
  o We can’t see the broad scope of God’s plan  
    ■or God’s purpose  
  o Sometimes trial, trouble and problems come into our lives  
    ■And we pray diligently for some relief.  
    •We pray for healing.  
    •We pray for a the situation to change.  
    •We pray for the storm to go away.  
      oBut our prayers seem to go unanswered

•I want to ask you a difficult question this evening:  
  oWhat will you do if the answer comes and it is not what you so  
    desperately want?  
  oWhat if God says no?  
  oWhat if God chooses not to deliver?  
  oWhat if God does not deliver?

•Sometimes we become so conditioned
• to the belief that God will say yes
  ▪ that we don’t know what to do
  ▪ when He says no!

• I want to challenge your faith this evening:
  o Somebody needs to come to the understanding,
    ▪ I know God is ABLE
    ▪ I know God CAN heal,
    ▪ I know God CAN deliver,
    ▪ I know God CAN provide my financial need,
  o But if not:
    ▪ I will still love Him!
    ▪ I will still trust Him!
    ▪ I will still serve Him!
  o I know God can,
    ▪ but if He doesn’t,
      ▪ I will still trust him!

TRUSTING GOD
• You’ve heard the story of the three Hebrew children plenty of times.
  o Preachers have preached about the fourth man in the fire
    ▪ and the fact that He’s still in the furnace
      ▪ just waiting for us
        ▪ when we go through the trial.
  o And they have preached about
    ▪ these three courageous men
      ▪ who gained the favor of God
        ▪ because they refused
          ▪ to compromise their convictions.
  • Both of those points make for some fantastic preaching
    o but I feel led, tonight to focus on
      ▪ the three words,
        ▪ that I believe, speak the most
          ▪ about the faith of these three men.
• They said:
  o We know that God is able
    ▪ to deliver us out of the fiery furnace
  o We know that God could send an angel from heaven
    ▪ to deliver us from this persecution
  o We know that God could come to our defense
    ▪ And that he could,
      ▪ with the whisper of single command
        ▪ quench the fiery furnace
      ▪ or destroy the vain idol that these men are worshipping.
    ▪ God could, if he so desired,
      ▪ Bring the king and the whole nation
To their knees for the sake of his people.

- They said, we know that the same God
  - that opened up the depths of the Red Sea
    - so our forefathers could walk through
      - pass over on dry ground
        - can deliver us from this furnace!
  - They said, we know that our God
    - is able to deliver us,
      - Oh king,
  - But if he doesn’t,
    - If he chooses not to,
      - If God stays silent in the midst of our crisis.
  - But if not, we will still trust him!

- Here’s the thing...
  - They didn’t know, yet, what the outcome would be.
    - They weren’t certain that they were not going to their death.
      - 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:
  - 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 your 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 the next few minutes,
      - but let us just say
        - right here and right now
          - that we know God is able,
            - BUT IF NOT
              - we still worship HIM!

- I wish somebody in this place tonight
  - would come to that same conclusion in faith.
    - I wish you would settle the issue here and now.
  - God is able to deliver me,
    - God is able to help me out of this trial,
• God can do it...
  o But if not...

• I wish someone would go on record in your spirit today and say:
  o I don’t know what tomorrow holds!
  o I don’t know if God’s going to heal me or not!
  o I don’t know if God’s going to deliver me or not!
  o 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
  o to tell you this
    ▪ Let me say it one more time:
      ▪ I KNOW GOD IS ABLE,
        o BUT IF HE DOESN’T
          ▪ I WILL STILL WORSHIP HIM!
      ▪ I KNOW GOD CAN,
        o BUT IF NOT,
          ▪ I WILL STILL SERVE HIM!
  o 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 go on record now:
        o I will trust him
          ▪ No matter what tomorrow holds!
      • If my prayers go unanswered
        o I will trust him.
      • If I wake up tomorrow
        o and I’m still in this dilemma
          ▪ I will trust him.
      • When it defies all sense of rationality
        o still I will trust him.
      • Even unto death
        o I will trust him.
  o I know he can deliver
    ▪ But if not
      • I’m still gonna praise him!

JOB
• Job had to be
  o the most confused man in the world.
    ▪ I mean, here’s a man
      • who the Bible says
        o 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.

- 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 blessed
- That passage gives these promises to the faithful:
  - Blessed shalt thou be in the city,
    - and blessed shalt thou be in the field.
  - Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body,
    - and the fruit of thy ground,
    - and the fruit of thy cattle,
    - and the flocks of thy sheep.
  - Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store.
  - Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in,
    - and blessed shalt thou be
      - when thou goest out.
  - The LORD shall cause thine enemies
    - that rise up against thee
      - to be smitten before thy face:
    - they shall come out against thee one way,
      - and flee before thee seven ways.
  - The LORD shall command
    - the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses,
      - and in all that thou settest thine hand unto;
    - and he shall bless thee in the land
      - which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

- Job was all of that.
  - He was blessed on every front
    - because he loved the Lord
      - and obeyed his commandments!
  - But, all of a sudden 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,
  o he was still loving God and hating evil.
    ▪ But, without warning and without apology,
      ▪ without any explanation
        o his life was turned upside down.

• In one day:
  o Thieves stole his oxen
    ▪ Fire fell from heaven
      • and consumed his sheep
      ▪ The Chaldeans took his camels
  o A tornado destroyed the home
    ▪ Where all of his children
      • and their spouses were gathered
  o Then, on top of it all
    ▪ In the midst of his grief.
      • His health failed him
• Job must have wondered what was going on
  o I mean, this wasn’t in the brochure
    ▪ I’m supposed to be blessed...
      • blessed in the morning,
      • blessed in the evening,
      • blessed when I go out,
      • blessed when I come in
        ▪ I didn’t read anything there about adversity.
• Job must have been shocked
  o as his world fell to pieces.
    ▪ His wife turned against him
  o His friends tried to encourage him
    ▪ by asking what he’d done
      • to deserve all of this
• I’m sure Job would have loved to answer them,
  o but he really didn’t have a clue.
• I’m sure he was frustrated and confused,
  o Exasperated and puzzled
    ▪ He had no idea why.
    ▪ There was no explanation.
    ▪ He had no understanding.
  o But, in all of his trials one thing never changed.

• The Bible says that, in all of this,
  o Job sinned not,
    ▪ nor charged God foolishly.
• And, if that weren’t admirable enough,
  o this is what really amazes me
    ▪ about Job’s experience with God.
  o One day as he was sitting scraping his boils,
    ▪ searching deeply into his soul
      • to try and figure out:
        o Trying to reason out what happened
        o Why it happened
        o How long was it going to last
    ▪ his friends came by to comfort him.
      • If everyone had friends like Job
        o We wouldn’t need any enemies!

• Job’s friends wanted to lament
  o On how unfair the whole situation was.
    ▪ They said, Job, doesn’t it anger you
      • that God won’t speak to you?
    ▪ Doesn’t it just get your goat
      • that God won’t at least explain Himself
        o and His actions?
    ▪ Don’t you ever get upset and question God?

• Job answered his friends and said:
  o Gentlemen, I won’t lie to you,
    ▪ I’d love to speak to God
      • and ask Him some questions.
    ▪ I wish I could talk to Him!
      • I wish there were a daysman,
        o or a mediator that could come between us
          ▪ that I could take counsel with the Almighty.
  o But, I can’t do that,
    ▪ because He is not a man as I am
      • that we could sit and discuss things.

• But, you know, boys, I’ve been sitting here thinking,
  o and the only thing that could happen now
    ▪ that would be any worse
      • than what has already happened
  o would be if God:
    ▪ Personally stepped out of the heavens
      • Rode down here on his white horse
    ▪ Flaming sword in His hand
      • Looked me in the eyes
        o And drove that sword right through my heart!
• And, boys, just in case that’s about to happen,
  o just in case I don’t wake up
    ▪ to see the morning sun
    ▪ blazing over the eastern horizon,
  o let me just say this
    ▪ right here and right now
      ▪ for the record:
        o Though He slay me
          ▪ Yet will I trust him

• I know that God can
  o turn my situation around today
    ▪ if he so desires,
      • but if He doesn’t
        o I WILL STILL TRUST HIM!

• I feel like someone this evening
  o Needs to settle into that kind of determined faith
    ▪ – though he slay me,
      • yet I will trust him!
  o I don’t have to understand everything,
    ▪ I don’t have to know all the answers
      ▪ I don’t have to see the big picture
    o I’ve only got to trust him
      ▪ And come what may
        ▪ I will trust him!

JOHN THE BAPTIST

• John the Baptist was in prison.
  o He was the victim of a jealous woman
    ▪ with a Jezebel spirit.
• Sitting in a prison cell,
  o waiting to have his head removed
    ▪ and presented to Herod’s wife
      ▪ on a silver charger.
• This wasn’t what John expected.
  o On the one hand, he knew that Jesus was the messiah
  o But, on the other hand, he didn’t understand fully what that meant.
• John was like the disciples
  o They knew that the Messiah was going to deliver his people
  o They just didn’t understand that he wasn’t going to deliver them from Rome.
  o John never expected to die at the hands of a tyrannical government.
But If Not

- He thought Jesus would set up the kingdom of the Messiah.
- They expected him to rule and reign in the earth.
- They expected strength and political power.
- But Jesus came in meekness and humility.
- That didn’t make sense to John.

- So he sent some of his disciples
  - to go find Jesus, and ask him
    - “Are you really the Messiah,
      - or should I place my trust in someone else?”
  - What John was really asking was
    - Are you going to deliver me or not?!

- The response of Jesus is interesting,
  - because He doesn’t answer
    - with a yes or a no.

- **Here’s His response:**
  - He said 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 is most interesting is what Jesus DIDN’T say.
  - Jesus is quoting Isaiah 61,
    - which says that the Messiah is anointed
      - to *Preach the gospel to the poor*
      - *Heal the broken hearted*
      - *Comfort those who mourn*
      - *And Give the garment of praise*
        - for the spirit of heaviness
  - And, Jesus knew
    - that John was familiar with this passage.
  - And he knew he would recognize instantly that one phrase was left out.
  - Isaiah also said that
    - “.....he will open the prison doors
      - to them that are bound.”

- In essence, Jesus was saying to John,
  - “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
    o and not be offended.
- Blessed is he that can sit in his prison cell and say,
  - “I know that if Jesus so desired,
    o he could storm this prison and deliver me,
    ▪ BUT IF NOT,
      - I won’t be offended!”

**HEBREWS 11**

- **A Portfolio Of The Faithful.**

**Hebrews 11:32-39**
32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:
33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions.
34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.
35a Women received their dead raised to life again:

  - Now, it would be great if the list stopped there.
    o We could all rejoice over those things.
  - But, without even pausing,
    o without even beginning a new sentence,
      ▪ Paul says that within this same group
        - of faithful Christians:

35b and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:
36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scouragements, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:
37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;
38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.
39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

  - Notice that ALL of them were good Christians,
    o they had all received a good report,
• they hadn’t sinned,
  • none were any less faithful.
  o But, while some had the lions mouths shut up,
    • others were stoned.
  o While some had their children brought back to life,
    • others were tortured.
  o God is able to quench the violence of fire,
    • but sometimes He chooses not to.
  o God is able to turn the enemy to flight,
    • but sometimes He chooses not to.
• And, blessed are we who are not offended in HIM!
  o Blessed are we who say, "I know God can,
    • BUT IF NOT, I will still trust Him!

**Many times in the absence of understanding all we can do is trust God.**

*Hebrews 11:6* says that *without faith it is impossible to please [God]*.
• The word faith there means CONFIDENCE OR TRUST.
  o In order to please God, I must trust Him.
    • I must have confidence in Him.
• That means saying:
  o *God, I don’t necessarily like this valley,*
    • *but I’m trusting you through it!*
  o *God I don’t necessarily like this storm,*
    • *but I’m trusting you through it!*
  o *God I don’t like the trial I’m going through,*
    • *but I’m trusting you through it,*
      • *and I refuse to give up!*
• That’s the kind of faith that pleases God!
  o Not the prayer that says,
    • “God take me out of the valley”,
  o 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.”
  o I know if you wanted to, God,
    • you could take me out of this:
      • valley
  o BUT IF NOT,
    • I still trust you!
• That’s the kind of faith I’ve come to preach to you this evening:
  o Sometimes we don’t know the reasons why
    • Sometimes we can’t see the bigger picture
But If Not

• Sometimes we are like the little girl
  o in the backseat of the car,
    ▪ we don’t even know how to pray
  o It seems like the heavens are silent
    ▪ and God doesn’t hear our desperate cry

• But I come to tell you this evening,
  o that in those times,
    ▪ during the storms of our lives
    ▪ it is imperative that we trust him!

• Each of the individuals I’ve preached about this evening
  o had one thing in common:
    ▪ Quitting was not an option!

• The first thing the three Hebrew children did
  o was remove quitting as an option
    ▪ They totally took it off of the table
    ▪ Sink or swim,
      o I’m going to trust the lord until the bitter end!

• I think it’s high time you settled the issue for yourself!
  o I’ve come too far to turn back now
    ▪ I may get hurt but I’m not gonna quit
      ▪ I may get knocked down
      ▪ I may not understand everything
    ▪ I know God can deliver…
    ▪ BUT IF NOT
      o Still I will praise him
      o Still I will serve him

Close
• Somewhere between the front and back covers
  o of Habakkuk’s little book of prophecy,
    ▪ a great work was performed by God is his heart.

• Habakkuk opened his book with this lament:
  o O LORD, how long shall I cry,
    ▪ and thou wilt not hear!
      • even cry out unto thee of violence,
        o and thou wilt not save!

• But somewhere in between
  o the beginning and the end,
    ▪ it no longer mattered
      ▪ whether God answered or not.
  o Habakkuk closed his book
    ▪ with these words…
Habakkuk 3:17
17 Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:
18 Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.
19 The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.

• My God can heal.
  o He can deliver.
    ▪ He can answer my prayer.
    • He can meet my need.

• But if not...
  o I will trust Him.
  o I will rejoice in Him.
  o I will not quit!

• I believe that the three Hebrew children
  o set the stage for their deliverance
    ▪ when they made their declaration of faith.
  o God can deliver me.
    ▪ But if he doesn’t
      • I will still trust him!
  o I believe those words of faith
    ▪ were the precedent that set deliverance into motion

• I wonder what would happen in your life
  o if you stepped out on genuine faith
    ▪ and said I know God can
      • I know he is able
        o But if he doesn’t...