

Daniel's Friends

“Ordinary Object, Extraordinary Meanings”



“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” John 15:13-15

Being a friend of Daniel may have sometimes seemed dangerous! But it also had great rewards. Being a friend of Christ could have the same consequences.

Daniel was among the Jews who were carried off into captivity in Babylon about 2600 years ago. He worked hard and God blessed him. Although he is the best known, we also know his friends whom he did not forget. After a three-year training period in Babylon, Daniel was found to be smarter than all of the skilled magicians and wise astrologers in Babylon, and was appointed as a counselor to King Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel stayed true to God and God gave him the power to interpret dreams, to see into the future, and God gave him a long life. When Nebuchadnezzar asked Daniel for some other good workers, Daniel suggested Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Nebuchadnezzar built an idol and required all the people to worship that idol, but Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused.

Some of the people, who were jealous of the men, told Nebuchadnezzar they were not worshipping as he had required. He called them, and they told him that they would not worship the idol. He told them that if they did not they would be pitched into a roaring furnace. They answered in defense of their God and told Nebuchadnezzar that if he chose to throw them into a roaring furnace they would be rescued by their God, and even if they weren't they still would not worship his idol.

Nebuchadnezzar ordered the fire to be seven times hotter than usual. Then he had the men tied and thrown into the furnace. But the flames from the furnace reached out and killed the men who had put the Jews in the furnace. When Nebuchadnezzar saw the men still alive walking around in the fire, he ordered that anyone who said anything against their God would be punished and their homes torn down.

We are not called to this kind of service, but we are called to defend our Lord and his teachings many times. Do we do it, or do we side step the question or comment? These

men were strong. They were willing to stand up for their lives to the king, Nebuchadnezzar, knowing it could mean their lives.

A traditional Negro Spiritual asks a good question.

“Didn’t my Lord deliver Daniel”

“Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel,
Deliver Daniel, deliver Daniel?
Didn't my lord deliver Daniel,
Then why not a every man?
He delivered Daniel
From the lion's den,
And Jonah from the belly of the whale,
And the Hebrew children
From the fiery furnace,
Then why not every man?”

A very familiar hymn “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” by Joseph Scriven and Charles Converse tells us about a wonderful friend we all have. It tells us that He knows our weakness and He will take us in His arms and shields us.

“What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

“What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged;
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness;
take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge;
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer!

In his arms he'll take and shield thee;
thou wilt find a solace there

Prayer: Dear God, we know that You are with us, but we sometimes are not as strong as we should be in defense of all that You have given us. You have not asked us to put our lives on the line, but You do ask us to seek out Your will, so that others may know of Your love and protection. Help us to follow wherever You lead and say what You want us to say. Amen.

How can we be called to defend our God today?

1. Does it depend on the company we are in? Should it?
2. Have you ever felt challenged not to go along with the crowd? To stand alone and be shunned?
3. Are we as strong as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?
4. How do the people mentioned in the Spiritual relate to Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?

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