

# God's Power

We live in a time where lies are often called truth, and sin is celebrated rather than mourned. Sometimes it seems like this has to be one of the most sinful times in history. But in my personal bible study this past week, I've spent time in the book of Daniel. The situation just prior to the fall of Jerusalem is reflective of the description above – Judea was honoring God with the lips, but sin was embraced and even celebrated. After Babylonian captivity, many Jews felt there were only two options. Revolt (and die), or give up and worship the gods of the Babylonians. However, Daniel and his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (who were renamed Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) found a third way. They closely followed the word of the Lord that came through Jeremiah.

*This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity*

*of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.....For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*

Daniel and his three friends did not compromise their faith, but at the same time they took important positions within the Babylonian kingdom. Their dedication to unwavering service to God resulted in two of the best children’s bible stories of all time – the fiery furnace and the lions’ den. In fact, one of the more famous quotes came from this trying period.

*King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.*

This last sentence is a poignant reminder to us – these men did NOT know what would come, but they knew God’s power, and what He was capable of doing. We can

take immense comfort and draw courage from the example they set some 2,600 years ago.

As Jesus instructed us in John just before His crucifixion,

*I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.*

As you live your life in this world, keep the example of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah in mind. Live your life to the fullest wherever you are, prosper, and lead rather than shrink. But never compromise your faith, and in this way stand out as a beacon of light and truth.

Grace and peace,

David Shaw