

Scripture Reading

A Reading From the Book of Daniel (Dn 3:14-20, 24-25, 28)

King Nebuchadnezzar said: "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you will not serve my god, or worship the golden statue that I set up? Be ready now to fall down and worship the statue I had made, whenever you hear the sound of the trumpet, flute, lyre, harp, psaltery, bagpipe, and all the other musical instruments; otherwise, you shall be instantly cast into the white-hot furnace; and who is the God who can deliver you out of my hands?" Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered King Nebuchadnezzar, "There is no need for us to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If our God, whom we serve, can save us from the white-hot furnace and from your hands, O king, may he save us! But even if he will not, know, O king, that we will not serve your god or worship the golden statue that you set up."

King Nebuchadnezzar's face became livid with utter rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace to be heated seven times more than usual and had some of the strongest men in his army bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and cast them into the white-hot furnace.

Nebuchadnezzar rose in haste and asked his nobles, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" "Assuredly, O king," they answered. "But," he replied, "I see four men unfettered and unhurt, walking in the fire, and the fourth looks like a son of God." Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who sent his angel to deliver the servants who trusted in him; they disobeyed the royal command and yielded their bodies rather than serve or worship any god except their own God." The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection ~ Three Heroic Young Men

Is God worthy of my trust? Our trust in a person would not be based on shaky grounds if she/he has undoubted love for us and, just as importantly, is in a position to deliver her/his promises. Most of us had previous bitter experiences wherein we found ourselves at the receiving end of someone who loved us but was powerless to deliver what she/he had promised us. Abraham trusted God and obeyed God's command to offer Isaac, his only son as a sacrifice to God as he reasoned that God had the power to restore Isaac back to life even if he was dead. (cf Hebrews 11:19).

But even if he (God) will not (save us), know, O king, that we will not serve your god (Daniel 3:18). The actions of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not conditional on God saving them from death. On the contrary, the three young men placed their complete trust in God to do with them as He pleased. What they were concerned about was that they remained faithful to God whatever it cost them. The apparent solution to their problem would be divine intervention to keep them physically unharmed in the fiery furnace. But their trust in God was totally unconditional and they did not pray for God to take a certain line of action. Rather, they let God be God to do as He so pleased in His divine wisdom and power.

The Lord replied, 'If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you! (Luke 17:6). Abraham was coming to one hundred years and his wife ninety when God promised him that he would be ancestor to many nations. Abraham faced squarely the fact that his and his wife's bodies were as good as dead when it comes to reproductive ability. Still, he did not doubt but trusted in the power of God. And Almighty God delivered on His promise.

The Lord preserves the faithful (cf Psalm 31:23). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego never insisted God to protect them even as they risked their lives in order to remain faithful to Him. Nonetheless, God protected their lives, and their trust in God was never in vain.

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, how many times in the past have I been beset with problems and have limped my way through them, living with bouts of worry and fears. In the stress of the situation, I have forgotten Your love and power. As a result, I have not placed my trust in you. Yet, I know that if I were able to do so, I would have more peace in my heart, my reactions would have been different and the ensuing outcome would have been more attuned to Your will. Lord, help me to trust You like the courageous young men: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who trusted in You so completely that they allowed You to do whatever You so pleased in their situation. Mary, Protectress of the Faith, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.