

Increasing Our Resolve (Dan 3:1-30)

In order to overcome the tendency to be impulsive, obsessive or compulsive one needs greater resolve. A person with resolve decides firmly to do something regardless of surrounding circumstances.

People who increase in their resolve gain greater mental, emotional and spiritual determination to complete their commitments.

Illustration: Someone once asked Paul Harvey, the journalist and radio commentator, to reveal the secret of his success. "I get up when I fall down," said Harvey.

Bits & Pieces, March 3, 1994, p. 16.

Illustration: Everybody recognizes that Ludwig van Beethoven was a musical genius. But few realize the adversity he had to overcome to achieve greatness.

In his twenties, Beethoven began to lose his hearing. Because he couldn't feel the music as he once had, on one occasion he said his fingers became "thick." His hearing problems haunted him into the middle years of his life, but he kept it a guarded secret.

By the time he reached his fifties, Beethoven was completely deaf. But he refused to give up. He was once overheard shouting at the top of his voice, "I will take life by the throat!" Many of his biographers believe the only reason Beethoven remained productive for so long was this determination.

Beethoven was 53 years old and hadn't produced any major works in years when he penned his 9th symphony. Which is still today considered one of the greatest musical works of all time.

Today our scripture lesson tells the story of three men who personified what it means to have determination and resolve.

Here are a few guidelines to increasing our resolve that we can glean from the lives of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego when they faced the wrath of the King and the fiery furnace:

1. OBEDIENCE - The men determined that they would obey God rather than King Nebuchadnezzar even if it meant a painful death. They realized that to bow to an idol would mean disobeying the first of the ten commandments. They knew that they must obey God rather than men. Like the faith of Moses they "Chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." (Heb. 11:25)

Determine in advance to obey God regardless of the costs to your own perceived welfare. Jesus said, "He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me and I will love him and will manifest myself to him." (John 14:21) The greatest way you can demonstrate your love for God is through obedience. The deepest needs of your life are met when you obey God. Your greatest problems can be overcome as you obey God. Anything less than complete obedience will always leave you unfulfilled and regretful.

2. FEAR GOD MORE THAN PEOPLE - Jesus said, "I tell you friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear. Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you fear him." (Luke 12:4,5) When we fear God we will have no fear of men. David wrote, "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in His commands. He will not fear when the evil day comes because His heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord." (Psa 112:1,2)

3. PRAISE GOD FOR HIS SOVEREIGNTY - The men knew that God could deliver them, but they did not presume upon the Lord. Instead, they said, "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." (Dan. 3:17,18)

Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego totally relied on God's sovereign power to do whatever pleased Him. Like Job they realized, "Lord, you can do all things and no purpose of yours can be thwarted." (Job 42:1,2) We need to believe and act in a way that demonstrates our confidence in the fact that our Father knows what is best. God, surely will work all things together for good as we love Him and since we are called according to His plan. (Rom. 8:28)

4. OFFER NO EXCUSES - Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego could have offered many excuses and compromised with the king. They might have rationalized by saying, 'We will go through the motions of bowing down but not really worship the idol in our hearts.' One of them might have reasoned, 'We could bow down and simply ask God to forgive us later.' Like some people today, they might suggest that the king was given his power by God and so we must obey the governing authorities. Someone might have said, "When in Rome do as the Romans do." Others might have thought, 'We are not really hurting anybody in doing this and we want to be culturally contextually to enhance cross-cultural relationships. Or finally, they might have reasoned, 'If we get killed then some pagans are going to gain our positions of influence and use it for greater evil.'

All of these excuses are often used by people to their own hurt. When we use excuses to refuse to obey God with total resolution we forfeit our holiness, credibility and intimate fellowship with God.

5. PREPARE FOR TRIALS - Each man prepared their hearts to face trials as they realize that there is a continual battle going on between the powers of the kingdom of darkness and light. James wrote, "Count it all joy WHEN you encounter various trials, knowing that the trial of your faith works patience. Let patience have its perfect work that you may be perfect and complete not lacking anything." (James 1:2-5)

The men did not think it strange to undergo trials as they knew that all who lived godly would suffer persecution. Peter wrote, "Who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that

is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes, even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed." (I Pet 1:5-7)

6. GAIN GREAT STRENGTH IN GODLY FRIENDSHIPS -

Meschach, Shadrach and Abednego encouraged one another to stand determined to worship the Lord only despite the temptations to yield to the king's pressures. Proverbs says A friend loves at all times, but a brother or sister is born for times of adversity.

Eccl. 4:9,10 says, "Two are better than one for they have a good reward for their labor, but woe to the one who is alone for he has not another to help him up."

Ask the Lord to give you godly friends who will stand with you during times of trials, hardships and distress. These friendships will give you a degree of accountability that is necessary to withstand all the trials of life.

My friend Mike...

7. TRUST GOD EVEN WHEN THE OUTCOME IS UNCERTAIN -

Meschach, Shadrach and Abednego trusted God even though they were not sure if they would live or die. Paul wrote, "The righteous man will live by faith." (Rom. 1:17)

We walk by faith and not by sight, Paul wrote to the Corinthians. We need to plow ahead and be like the horse with the blinders on so that we do not look to the left or the right but proceed ahead in God's will knowing that His ways are perfect and all His ways are peace.

8. BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE POWER OF HIS

MIGHT - Be strong in the strength, authority and empowerment of God's word and Spirit. As God told Joshua, "Be strong and courageous

and act. Do not fear or be dismayed for the Lord God goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work of the house of God is completed." (Josh 1:9)

Too many people give into their fears, feelings of discouragement or anticipation of hurt. Soldiers of the Lord get wounded and may even die. Paul wrote, "Endure hardship with us as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs - he wants to please his commanding officer." (2 Tim. 3,4)

9. CONSIDER THE ALTERNATIVES TO BEING RESOLVED - If the three men would have caved in to the King's pressures, they would have lived with an eternity of regret.

One day many of Christ's disciples turned back and no longer followed him. Jesus turned to the twelve and said, "You do not want to leave too, do you? Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." (John 6:66-69)

Once we have established an abiding trust, obedience and knowledge of God there is no one we can turn to for life and there is no turning back. Resolve increases when we consider the pain, misery and eternal sense of regret we will have to live with for failing our Lord.

Illustration: D.L. Moody had a keen memory for names and faces. If one of his children was missing from Sunday school, he knew it, and he would do everything possible to find out why. One day he saw an absentee coming down the street, so he took off after her. She ran down the sidewalk, across the street, and through an alley into a saloon, up the stairs to a back apartment, into the bedroom, and then dived under the bed. Moody went after her, and just as he was claiming his prize, the mother showed up. Panting from the exertion, Moody simply explained, "I'm Moody," He said that he had missed the girl and would be happy if all the family could come to the services. Within a few weeks he had every child in the family in his school.

W. Wiersbe, *The Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching & Preachers*, p. 203.

Quote: Charles Swindoll, *Living Above the Level of Mediocrity*, p.93.

“Press on. Nothing in the world Can take the place of persistence.

Talent will not:

Nothing is more common Than unsuccessful men With talent.

Genius will not:

Unrewarded genius Is almost a proverb.

Education will not;

The world is full of Educated derelicts.

Persistence and determination Alone are important.”

Let us pray