

Don't Bend Under Pressure

by Ernie Albrecht

The sermon emphasizes the importance of not bending under pressure and living for God's glory, rather than our own desires and interests.

Duration: 35:41

Scripture: Romans 10:14

Topics: "Pressure"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the book of Daniel. These three individuals refused to worship the golden image set up by King Nebuchadnezzar and were threatened with death in a fiery furnace. However, they remained faithful to God and were miraculously protected in the midst of the fire. The preacher emphasizes that God takes care of his people and that all things work together for the good of those who love God. He encourages the listeners to live for Christ and serve him wholeheartedly, putting aside their own desires and priorities. The preacher also highlights the importance of preaching the gospel and being an example to others, regardless of one's age or circumstances.

Transcript

It's good to see everyone out here. I want to first thank everyone for staying around. I appreciate that very much.

And I want to also thank Oren and Dalton, David Dalton and Kevin for inviting me out. I appreciate that very much. Don't Bend Under Pressure is the title of my lesson.

It's an important thing because when we look at life itself, there's a lot of obstacles. In 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 12, it says, Wherefore, take heed where he stands. There is no temptation taking you, but such is common to man.

But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which ye are able, but with temptation also make a way to escape. Oftentimes when we look at our lives, though, we don't look for the way to escape. Often we're not looking for what really hits home to us.

What we live for, what we die for. When we look at the first three chapters of the book of Daniel, it is important that we see that these men are men that have gone into captivity. They have no hope.

They have already been told by the prophet Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 25 verse 11, The land will be desolate, an astonishment, and the nation shall serve the king of Babylon for seventy years. Scary.

To think that your whole life will be under the rule of Saddam Hussein. Scary to think that you might be faithful during that time. Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, there shall be a remnant saved.

Romans chapter 9 verse 27. I think that when we look at what the church is, we don't really see what the church is. When we look at who we are, we don't say, well, they're my brothers and sisters in Christ.

Because there are so many individuals that are not living in Christ. Baptism is something that puts you in Christ, but it doesn't necessarily keep you there. There's a great lesson we can learn from these three men.

And if we include Daniel, four men. And how they overcome the obstacles that are before them. And how they put up with a tyrannical king that is all about his own glory.

Whether therefore ye eat or drink, do all for the glory of God. First Corinthians chapter 10 verse 31. If you can't tell, I'm very nervous up here.

But when we think about our lives, our lives are for the glory of God. From the very beginning of birth to the time we die. Why we have children and why we die for a great cause.

So many men, so many women are not willing to pay the price or count the cost. We've got to look at these things. We've got to look at whether or not we are truly the remnant of God.

Or whether we just simply wear the name of Christ. It means much more than just being a Christian. It means living for Christ.

In Romans the 15th chapter in verse 4, just so we're on task here. It says, for whatsoever things are written aforetime are written for our learning. All scripture is given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction and righteousness.

That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. When we look at Old Testament scripture, we must understand that Old Testament scripture is profitable. It is beneficial.

It teaches us, it instructs us and enables us to live as faithful men in the Old Testament did. Some of those individuals in the Old Testament gave their lives for the cause. The same cause we give our lives for.

If you would, turn with me to Daniel the first chapter. Maybe if I do some reading I'll calm down a little bit. In the first chapter of Daniel, verse 3. It says, the king spake unto the master of the eunuchs that he should bring a certain of children of Israel.

And of the king's seed and of the princes. Sounds like a good lineage. Considering that they had just gone into captivity, of course they could not rely upon their parents.

And probably most of them would have been ungodly individuals not serving their lord. Look at the characteristics of these four men. The children in whom was no blemish.

But well favored, skillful in all wisdom, cunning in knowledge and understanding science. And such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace. And whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

He's not talking about Brian York. He's not talking about Aaron or Mark or anybody here. He's talking about these individuals that are beautiful.

But it didn't go to their heads. He's talking about individuals that were handsome. He's talking about individuals that were skilled, that were knowledgeable, that knew science.

Sorry. Nebuchadnezzar was a self-glorified king. He was all about serving himself.

You have the antithesis of what a godly individual is supposed to be in King Nebuchadnezzar. He's about glorification of self rather than glorification of God. On the other hand, these four individuals that stand the test are individuals that stand for the glory of God.

Every man that is called by my name, I have created him for my glory. I have formed him. Yea, I have made him.

Isaiah chapter 43 and verse 7. We have a task in life. A birth-given task in life. From the day we've been born to the day we've been born in Christ and until our death.

When we look at these individuals, let us consider some tasks that they had to overcome. Let us see if they stood the test of time. Look at verse 8. Daniel is one of the individuals that are with these men.

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat nor with the wine which he drank. It says in verse 6 that these individuals, the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were with them. These individuals were individuals that wanted to be holy.

We sing a song. We sing a song about more holiness give me. We ask God for more things.

To live for him. To be strong in him. To be fearless in him.

And I think at times we get sidetracked by our lives that we live for ourselves. Consider the time they went into exile. Before in about 629 B.C. we have King Josiah fighting against Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar his father.

And they go and they fight against the king of Babylon. And they lose. King Josiah dies.

In fact, in Josiah's death God grants mercy to King Josiah by letting him die. He had a hard task of overcoming. The mindset of the remnant from the kingdom of Judah in comparison to the kingdom of Israel was quite different.

The kingdom of Judah all the way from the time of Rehoboam thought that they were the holy nation. They were the righteous nation. Too many individuals are going around thinking that they themselves are God's people without living the lives that they ought to be living.

But of course, the northern kingdom fell in 721 B.C. And the final captivity of the southern kingdom came in 586. There were several captivities or exiles that took place. And it's most likely that the exile of Daniel

and his friends came in about 605.

And it is likely in the description that we are given of these individuals that these individuals were young. From probably around the age of 14 to about mid 25. These individuals though were living for God.

And it might have been good that they were not under the influence of their parents. But they learned for themselves how to live for God. How to follow God.

And God used them because of that. Turn with me to Daniel, the third chapter. Giving us some thoughts of these individuals and where their hearts are, where their mind is.

I like to look at the mind and the heart as separate. Because they are. The mind is thought.

The mind is information. The heart is affection. It must permeate both places for us to live for him.

Daniel, the third chapter. The situation that has occurred is Nebuchadnezzar in verse 1 has made a statue. A statue of gold.

A statue that stands 90 feet tall. And 9 feet wide. It ran along the lines of two rivers.

Of what they think, the planet Dura being in, was between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers. Where great commerce had come through. You ever drive down the highway and you see the big cross or the name of Jesus somewhere? That's what this statue was all about.

This golden statue for everyone to see. Living by an idol. Living by something that is material rather than immaterial.

Well, these individuals come together. And, of course, Nebuchadnezzar being a glorified king. He only called these individuals prior in the first chapter of Daniel.

Because he wanted individuals that he could show that he conquered. That were knowledgeable, that were wise, that were handsome in nature. He was a self-glorified king.

And with this 90 foot gold statue, he thought he could bring more glory to himself. He was the king of the time. He was the ruler of nations.

Daniel, the first chapter, verse 3 and 4. They're giving new names, these three individuals. In fact, we often don't refer to them as their godly names. Hananiah, Meshach, and Nazariah.

We say Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. But if we were only to realize what those names mean. Shadrach means command of Aku, the moon god.

Meshach, who is what Aku is, the moon god. And Abednego, the servant of Nebo. How would you like to be called something that you're not? What would you think about all the names that are thrown at you? These individuals had no choice in the matter.

These were their names. In fact, even today, we don't have their names right. Look further.

These individuals, prior to, in verse 49 of chapter 2. Were made to sit, or took over the affairs of the providence of Babylon. And because of this, individuals had plotted against them. Like so many godly men of the Old Testament they have, and as of the New Testament.

The princes, in verse 3. The governors, the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, the rulers of the providences. Were gathered together to the dedication of the image of Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

And a herald cried aloud. To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages. That at the time ye hear the sound of the cornet, the flute, the harp, the sand butt, the psaltery, the dulcimer, and all kinds of music.

Ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. And whosoever falls not down and worships shall the same hour be cast in the midst of a burning, fiery furnace. Death.

If we only realize that we have already died. If we can already realize what we have given our lives for. We would become better servants.

We would truly give up more time for God. In our personal affairs. We would give more time to God.

To our family. That's what it means to take care of our families. We would give more money to God.

Because we would see that it is his work and not our own. Now I appreciate the lessons that have been given to us. So far in this lectureship.

A lot of things I'll probably just be repeating. How shall they hear except without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless Orinson's then? As it is written. And how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring gladness of good things.

Romans chapter 10 verses 14 and 15. The lessons that we preach and teach are not so much about us. But about God.

It is not about the preacher that is up here like David Dalton was saying. It's about the life that we have given to him. In servitude towards him.

By and Daniel chapter 3. They are probably about 30 years old I would imagine. Probably no more. These individuals were told something similar to what Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter 4 verse 2. Let no man despise thy youth.

But be an example in word, in conversation, lifestyle, and in love I believe it is. What you say. How you act.

How you conduct yourself. And what's inside. The situation that occurs is that of course these individuals, these godly men like so many godly men do.

They refuse of what these individuals had set up to worship when they heard these musical instruments. And of course they go to the king. And they say in verse 12.

There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the providence of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, have not regarded thee. They have not served thy gods nor worshipped the golden image which thou set us up.

Nebuchadnezzar in verse 13 says his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. And in verse 14 Nebuchadnezzar speaks unto them.

It's like he gives them another chance. Or in other words he tempts them another time. And he says 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? If ye be ready that at that time ye hear the sound of the corn at the food, etc. Look at how they react in verse 16. O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

We don't care what you think. And we're not going to put honey or sugar over top of it. 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 thy hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image which thou has set up. Standing the test.

Good examples for us to learn from are what these individuals were all about. They were willing to give their lives for a moment. Many individuals believe and protect their lives so much so that they can live so much longer.

In Philippians chapter 1 in verse 21 it says, For me to live is Christ, to die is gain. Why don't we look at death like that? Why aren't we willing to give our lives for him? These individuals, of course, were put into a fiery furnace. And these individuals were, in verse 25, after the king seized them, He says, Lo, I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt.

And the form of the fourth is like unto the Son of God. And we're not going to get into the fourth one. But the point is, God takes care of his people.

All things work together for the good, for them that love God, for them that are called to his glory. Romans chapter 8, verse 28. It is important.

I think the first point we can make from this lesson is that the remnant cannot rely upon its outer beauty. So many denominations are relying upon their buildings. So many, quote, unquote, churches of Christ rely upon their name so that they live.

We have a life to live. We have been buried with him in baptism, Romans chapter 6 in verse 3. We have a life to live for Jesus. And that's what it's all about.

I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me.

And the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. When we realize what Jesus has done for us, and he enters in our hearts and our minds, these numbers will seem pathetic. We will look at our lives and say, look at what I've become, not for myself, but for the cause of Christ.

It's a shame to see so many congregations look at their development by the number of people they get inside of a building. It's discouraging. It's discouraging for the fact that people don't know anything.

Hosea chapter 4 in verse 6 says, my people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge. We've got a lot of dumb people out there. We've got a lot of people that just don't care anymore.

They don't care about how they live their lives. They don't question their actions. Forget the elders for a second.

Look at the Christians. Look at you. Look at how you conduct your life.

Whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by it. Do you look for that? Do you look for chapter and verse? Romans chapter 10 in verse 10, with the heart of a man believeth unto righteousness. When God sits upon our hearts and Jesus sits upon our minds, we will live for him.

We will conduct ourselves in righteous actions all the time. Consider what Ephesians chapter 5 in verse 25, Oren quoted it earlier. Husbands, love your wives even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.

What kind of relationship do we have with our wives, our family? I know preachers, we discussed it just yesterday about the difficulties of finding time to make with our family. And that time needs to be quality time. Bible study time.

Talking about the Bible. Talking about what we have learned. Praying together.

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. James chapter 5 in verse 16. Where is our prayer life? Pray without ceasing, 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. How are we living? Looking at ourselves.

What kind of life do we want to live? Malachi chapter 3 in verse 8 says, Will a man rob God? But ye say wherein have we robbed thee? In thy tithes and offerings. Look at your own pocketbook. See how much you have increased giving unto the Lord.

See how much your contribution to the Lord's work has gone up. Are you challenging yourself to give more? I think people in the Old Testament seem to give more than we do today. And that's a shame because we have so much more.

We have better promises. We have a better high priest. We have a better covenant.

Hebrews chapter 8. We're supposed to give cheerfully and not grudgingly. 2 Corinthians chapter 9 in verse 7. You know it's interesting. The rich young ruler that came to Jesus.

When Jesus sees him in Mark chapter 10 verse 21. It says he loved him. He looking upon him loved him.

And he goes on to say, he says, One thing you lack, go your way and sell whatever you have and give to the poor. And you will have treasures in heaven. Come and take up your cross and follow me.

Are we willing to give all for the cause? Are we willing to give up our TVs, our families, our churches for the cause? So many churches are not the Lord's. Whether they wear the name Church of Christ or not. They're not giving their hearts over to him.

They're not giving their energies to him. They're not learning of his way. I brought these two pencils.

This is the one I use and this is the one that I don't use. This one is made of metal. It doesn't bend very easy.

Notice at the small point in which this pencil breaks. How much does it bend? Does it bend very much? That's the life of a Christian. When we give in to false doctrine.

When we give in to individuals that are not teaching the will of God. That are not following the will of God. That have itching ears.

Pulling away people from the gospel. I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. For it is the power of God unto salvation.

To the Jew first and also to the Greek. Romans chapter 1 and verse 16. How many of us are ashamed? Look at our relationships with one another.

How many people have you had in your home the last week? That you would say are Christians. Or that you're talking to individuals about the gospel. Consider where you go to work.

Consider whether it be a food plant. Whether it be a custodian. Who do you talk to about God? First Corinthians chapter 9 verse 22 says.

To the weak became I of the weak that I might gain the weak. I made all things to all men so that I might by all means save some. Do we take advantage of the God given opportunities that have been given us? That rich young man of course.

Some people have suspected that that might be Barnabas. That later on he goes on and he does sell all that he has. And lays it at the apostles feet.

What a thought if it is so. If we can just get over our own glorification. Because I believe that is the thing that bends us the most.

Is when we look at ourselves rather than at him. Where your treasure is there is where your heart will be also. Luke chapter 12 verse 36.

I can't but think of what these individuals had to overcome. They weren't even quite certain for the fact that they would live through that fiery furnace. In fact they heated it up seven times hotter.

The bible says in Daniel chapter 3. Were they going to live? They didn't know. But the will of God was a greater hope. The remnant is beyond name.

We looked at the three names of these three individuals. Sometimes we get caught up in the names so much that we haven't learned to serve him or live for him. We haven't given ourselves over to him.

Be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving your own selves. James chapter 1 verse 22. We must be doers.

We must be active. And I applaud individuals that have been getting up for the first time and leading prayers. And serving on the Lord's table.

But it goes on outside of this building. Your relationship with God is important. Where you live and what you live for.

1 Corinthians chapter 3 verse 16. Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy.

He's speaking of you. He's not talking of some building. He's talking about your bodies.

He's talking about the life that you live for him. It is where God dwells. And you represent him.

Ye are bought with a price. Be not servants of men. 1 Corinthians chapter 7 verse 23.

Jesus has paid for you. In 1 John chapter 2 and verse 1 and 2. Little children, these things are right, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

And he is the payment for sin, the propitiation for sin. And not ours only, but for the whole world. One of the things we started out in Mount Vernon is a service night.

And I know you just talked about it, Oren. But there are some things that are expedient to try and get some things going. And I asked people.

I said, think in your mind just for a moment. Who are the people that you love the most? Who are your friends? Have they heard the gospel? Do you really love them? Do you care for them? We've got to ask these tough questions. Jesus Christ did not just die for Ernie.

He died for all of us. And not just those in this building, but everywhere. Scarcely for a righteous man would one die.

Yet, perventure, a good man would one even dare to die. But God commended his love, and yet while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans chapter 5, verse 7 and 8. When we realize the gift that God has given to us, we will live for him.

We will give everything. We will put everything at his altar. One of the other things I've confronted in the work that I'm at is a lot of individuals are so caught up in the commandment of being there at church.

That is a problem. Let us hold fast to the profession of our faith without wavering. For he is faithful that promise.

And let us provoke one another unto love and to good works. What is first? Where your heart is. Where your love is.

What motivates you? Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some, but exhorting one another so much more as you see the day approaching. That's what life's about. That's what you're motivated.

You can have all the truth you want. You can know the Bible inside and out. But unless Jesus is in your heart and you're willing to live for him, it means nothing.

Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? Isn't that what just happened to these three individuals? As it is written, we are killed all the day long. We are counted as sheep for the slaughter. That was one of our lessons.

Nay, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, neither death nor life nor principalities nor powers nor angels nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth shall separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Romans chapter 8, verse 35 to 39.

What do we live for? Are we glorifying ourselves? Are we living for him? I know I'm short on time and I haven't even covered half my lesson. But the thing that should hit us home the most is that we have to live

for Christ. We must serve him beyond anything that this life has to offer.

We're so caught up in our own selves and we must get over it. We have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but in all points was tempted like as we are. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy in a time of need.

There is where our salvation lies. There is where our hope lies. Look at yourselves.

Ask yourself, what have you truly done to convert the world to Jesus? Where do you live? What do you live for? Many individuals are still desiring the sincere milk of the word, but don't understand it. Leaderships have fallen and they continue to fall. But unless somebody takes the reign, there will be no leadership in the years to come.

The remnant, it will grow fewer and fewer in numbers until we say it is my duty. It is my stance that I will make for the cause of Christ. Let's go over a few more verses.

Buried with him in baptism, wherein also we are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God. And you being dead in your sins, the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he forgiven you of all your trespasses. Baptism brings death and it also gives life.

When we submit to the will of God, we have life. If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. And the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

We must stay within truth. We must be led by his word. And we must not give in.

2 Corinthians 13, verse 5. Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith. Prove your own self. Know ye not your own self, that Jesus Christ be in you, except ye be a castaway or a reprobate.

Somebody that has given up. Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth a prize. So run that ye may obtain.

Give all that ye got. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings of eagles.

They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. Strength is in Jesus.

I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me. Philippians chapter 4, verse 13. If God be for us, who can be against us? Romans chapter 8, verse 31.

I ask you now, why have we given up on Jesus? I ask you now, why have we given up on our God? Because so many of us have really had. I want to give a couple more verses before I get out of here. In Hebrews chapter 9, verse 22.

It says, it is appointed unto man once to die and then the judgment. In 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 10. It says, for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

That every man may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done. Whether it be good or bad. We have responsibility, each and every one of us.

Measure success by what you've done. Live for Christ. Give all that you can for Him.

Don't measure success by somebody else's. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. For if man thinketh he is something when he is nothing, he deceives his own self.

But let every man prove his own work. And then will he have rejoicing in himself and not in another. That's what life's about.

We have choices to make. Don't compare yourselves with some that commend themselves. Look to give all that you can.

Thank you.

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