

Set Free

[Daniel 3: 14-20, 24-25, 28](#), [John 8: 31-42](#)

You may well be feeling shut in and fed up as we continue our period of lockdown. But what if you were about to be shut into a burning fiery furnace?

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego could have avoided putting their lives in danger by giving in to King Nebuchadnezzar's demands to worship his huge golden statue. Surely they could have just gone along with him in public and then quietly carried on worshipping God in private?

But that wouldn't have been living truthfully. In the Ten Commandments, the first command is: "You shall have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20: 3) Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego put the word of almighty God before the word of an earthly king, however mighty he might think he was. They trusted God and were willing to defy the king's command, whatever the cost.

As it was, they were set free without so much as a wisp of singed hair or even the smell of smoke on their clothing, and the king acknowledged that "no other god can save in this way" (v. 29) and promoted them to high positions within the province of Babylon.

They were set free because they trusted God: their trust in the truth of his words literally set them free.

Jesus was surrounded by people who had come to believe in him and were eager to hear him speak. Nevertheless, some of the Jews who came to listen were obviously not so convinced. What did they need with the message this carpenter from Nazareth was telling them about following the truth of his teaching when they had the whole company of Jewish heroes, spreading right the way back to Abraham himself as their pedigree?

Jesus could have smiled and let them have their way, but his message will not be silenced. He knows their plans: "I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word." He points out that they are held captive by their hard hearts, their complacency, their lack of trust.

They weren't willing to let go of their trust in their ancestry. They have a distorted sense of the truth. The proud remark that they "have never been slaves of anyone" ignores the fact that they were effectively slaves, subjects of the Roman empire, and had been enslaved by many different peoples since the days of the great founding Fathers of the Jewish faith.

Jesus demonstrates to them and to us a different way of being. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is able to transform our lives: and our lives will show that change as we love and trust him rather than ourselves. He looks at us with an unflinching gaze and asks us whether we will follow the truth of his word.

Take some time now to look at the picture below. Enjoy the scenery.

Put yourself into the scene. Where do you see yourself?

Which side of the gate are you on?
What happens if you open the gate?



Try concluding with this prayer:

My Lord and my God, take me from all that keeps me from you.

My Lord and my God, grant me all that leads me to you.

My Lord and my God, take me from myself and give me completely to you.

Amen.

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