A lot of the most popular movies the last couple years have been about superheroes – those who supposedly have super powers. These heroes use their super powers to protect the rest of us from the super-powers of villains. This month we were introduced to Shazam who has superman type abilities but is only 14 so he is trying to figure out how to use them. He is an addition to the DC universe. Last month, we were introduced to Captain Marvel in the Marvel Universe. She now seems to be the strongest of the Avengers. Later this month, we have the highly anticipated finale of the original Avengers series – I think it is the culmination of 21 movies!

We see those superheroes as close to invincible, so it doesn’t surprise us that they seem to never give up. After all they have these powers we don’t have. They aren’t crushed by the first attack of their enemy. But in real life we don’t have those superpowers to overcome. We face pressure to conform and abandon God’s ways for more so-called “modern ways”. Whether our pressure is merely social – or it becomes legal or physical as we will see in the book of Daniel – we want to choose Jesus & His ways no matter what the cost! While we have a servant’s heart towards our neighbors, God also wants us as fearless as lions, bold and courageous when it comes to following Jesus. While we don’t personally have an superpowers, God wants us to embrace an overcomers attitude, like those superheroes – simply because we are serving the Lord who made this real Universe and is stronger than any force in it. Do you realize as servants (weak, puny, scared fallible servants) of the most High God we are invincible right now as we serve God’s purposes! Invincible simply means “too powerful to be defeated or overcome”. Others can stop us, hinder us, discourage us and even kill us, but they can’t stop God from using us in eternally powerful ways – ways we won’t fully know until heaven. If God has something for us to do, no one can stop us! And if someone stops us, our work is done. God is God. He is the ruler over all, no matter how it may feel at the moment.

PROPOSITION: In a world where we are discriminated against, prejudge, and even persecuted, we will be invincible as we serve God’s purposes for which we are placed here, now.

I. Intense pressure to conform

As Christians, the world, the flesh and the devil (that is the culture around us, our old nature and the evil demonic spirits around us) will at times put intense pressure on us to go their way in disobedience to God. How should we respond and what does that have to do with being “invincible” in our service for Jesus? Let’s see some clear principles here in Daniel 3.

A. Leader/society puts something ahead of the true God’s way

READ Daniel 3:1-2. We aren’t told how long this was after the events in Daniel 2, but we clearly know Daniel 3 happens after it because v 12 confirms that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had already been put in places of authority in the province of Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar – which happens at Daniel’s request at the end of
chapter 2. In chapter 2, God miraculously revealed the future to Daniel and in the interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, the Lord said Nebuchadnezzar the head of gold, the first Kingdom mentioned to whom all other Kingdoms were inferior in some way and his power was allowed by the true God.

Whether that dream led to a swelled head by the King or whether turmoil had been happening in the empire, Nebuchadnezzar came up with a plan to unite all the vast areas under his control and strengthen his own leadership position. He made this enormous gold image – we are never told what it looks like so that is not important. What we are told is that it was incredibly large, expensive and noticeable – 90 feet high (that is 9 stories), 9 feet wide and covered with gold. Because of its tall height and narrow width, it was probably an obelisk or tower. It wasn’t in the city of Babylon, but it was in that province. It was set up on the “plain of Dura” – “Dura” was a common name for any place that was enclosed by mountains or a wall.

B. Leader/society insists we must affirm or participate in the error Daniel 3:4-7

The top officials of the Babylonian Empire were called together for this special dedication – seven “named groups” of officials are focused on while the rest are lumped together as ‘other officials’. READ v 4-6. Many different people groups will be represented here. This reflects Nebuchadnezzar’s policy of appointing native rulers to govern the provinces he took over rather than put foreign Babylonians in charge. All the officials of the Babylonian Empire would have learned Aramaic – which is why a significant portion of the book of Daniel was first written in Aramaic, with the rest in Hebrew. These top officials are all commanded to bow down and worship this image when the music starts. Because they are showing their loyalty to the King and his plan for unity through common worship, any who do not bow down are to immediately be put to death in fiery furnace – and any idea that this command was not optional was extinguished because the fire in that furnace was already going! Picture the intensity of that scene. It is an honor you have been invited – that means you are seen as an important official by the King. You are in the midst of a huge crowd of important people and now are being asked to do something publicly that your faith does not allow you to do. Talk about pressure. You would feel like ALL EYES are on you. No wonder we read in v 7 READ.

C. Someone in society points out we aren’t, so there is no escape Daniel 3:8-12

But what does a follower of the True God of the Universe do at a pressure-packed time like this when that true God has commanded all His followers to never worship another god? There is no way not to be noticed by someone. You must choose an action. This is like someone yelling out in the lunchroom – Are you so bigoted to think Jesus is the only way to heaven? There is no hiding or avoiding this. Any reaction or non-reaction is going to say something.

What’s interesting is that neither Nebuchadnezzar nor his guards notice these three Jews don’t bow down. Instead, READ v 8-12. These astrologers seem to be from the
province of Babylon and despise the Jewish people who are different than them. They are particularly upset that King Nebuchadnezzar would put non-Babylonians in leadership positions in the very providence of Babylon (READ v 12a). Now they see their opportunity to gain favor with the King by showing their loyalty and also to viciously attack, tear down, demoralize the Jewish people as they get rid of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from leadership positions. (At this point some ask, ‘where is Daniel? ’ He’s probably at the royal court taking care of business as Daniel 2:49 says).


When the king heard about these three young men, he was furious and sends for them to be brought to him. You can imagine the guards saying, “You three are in big trouble. I’ve never seen the King this furious.” So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are really feeling the heat – both from inside themselves and literally on the outside. But for some reason, Nebuchadnezzar was willing to grant these young men an opportunity to change their minds. After the “bad cop” treatment, now like a “good cop”, the King basically says “Boys, surely there must be some misunderstanding, so I will give you a second chance. But if you don’t bow down and worship the image I made you will immediately be thrown into that fire.”

E. Applies extreme pressure to conform Daniel 3:15, 19-23

Then Nebuchadnezzar adds at the end of v 15, “Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” Although only social, we can feel a similar pressure to disobey God and conform to societal expectations because of...

- our unwavering stand that the baby in the womb is a child,
- that God’s plan for marriage is one man and one wife for a lifetime,
- that we should avoid all forms of sexual immorality,
- that Jesus is the only way to heaven,
- that we shouldn’t pass on anything that could be false, without checking it first – but we are often tempted to because it seems to prove what we want,
- or that we not live our life thinking more things will make us happy or safe or likeable – American materialism.

When we picture the extreme pressure they were feeling – and when we feel we are being pre-judged, discriminated against, or even persecuted – it is very tempting to give in to fear, try to rationalize away God’s commands, or come up with some acceptable excuse for the attackers. We don’t have the right kind of confidence at that point.

II. The Right Confidence Daniel 3

But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did. READ v 16-18. They have a different perspective than we normally do – the right confidence in the face of overwhelming odds. Unlike the superheroes, this confidence has nothing at all to do with their own abilities, resources or super powers. Their confidence is in God alone. In a world where we are
discriminated against, prejudged, and even persecuted, we will be invincible as we serve God’s purposes for which we are placed here, now. Let’s quickly break that down.

A. Settled before hand

**READ v 16.** First off, this isn’t the first time they have faced pressure to conform and disobey God in the process. These young men have been ripped from their families, forcibly enslaved, carried off to a new country, forced to take on the names of pagan gods, re-educated in the ways of a pagan culture, and faced countless attacks because of their ethnic background & beliefs in the Lord. Yet they have held firmly to their faith. When they say, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter” it is not some proud, snooty, or in your face reply. It simply is a firm reply – a reply that was settled long ago. As I have personally said to people who ask me to affirm something I don’t believe, “If you ask me to choose between Jesus and you, there is a really good chance you will be disappointed with my reply.” Their confidence in God didn’t suddenly show up out of thin air! They had already shown it in smaller ways in the years before. God said in the 10 commandments that they are not to make, bow down to or worship any idol or image (Ex 20:4-5) and they were not about to change.

B. Done before hand in smaller things

Jesus taught His disciples in Luke 16:10 that those who have been faithful in little things, can be trusted with bigger things. Faithful in little, faithful in much! Faith is something the Holy Spirit is constantly seeking to grow in our lives & church body. He does that through difficult situations we face, unfair statements made against us, being part of a broken world and even our spiritual disciplines. In Daniel 1:6-20, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had seen God bless their actions of sacrificial obedience. Stepping out in faith in the little things, allows God the opportunity to give us evidence that He is all-powerful and sovereign over all. As we rejoice in today on Palm Sunday, Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords! We can have the same invincible attitude that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego have here.

Silicon Valley in California is known for its high-tech companies – while some of those are very accommodating to dedicated Christians, a number have corporate cultures that challenge or demean those who believe the Bible. A couple years ago, an executive in one of those companies faced this pressure. She was a strong Christian, open about her faith, didn’t use her position to force her faith on anyone but was very open about her Christian beliefs and activities on societal media. The director of human resources called her into the office and said, “It has come to our attention that you are really open about your Christianity. As an executive here, you represent the company, and you can’t be doing that.” Feel the pressure (job on the line, mortgage needs to be paid, kids to raise, chance of being black-balled so she can’t get work in similar companies in the area). Her answer was very much like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s. She didn’t get angry or defensive but simply said, “You know I care about you and this company. I won’t do anything to harm..."
this company. But I can also tell you that what I do on my own time as an expression of my private religious belief is none of this company’s business. In fact, I am pretty sure if it were any other belief system, you wouldn’t be having this conversation with me. So unless you can show me a specific way I have violated the law by practicing my faith on my own time, I think this conversation is done.” She knew that answer could get her fired, just like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew their answer could cost them their lives.

C. Faith in God’s ability to intervene now

Daniel 3:17a
What’s behind this right confidence – this sense of invincibility as we serve Jesus right now? They all had faith in God’s ability to intervene right now. READ Dan 3:17a. They believed God could do anything right now. This is a truth Jesus is seeking to grow in each of us. In the brokenness & frustration of this world, we have many opportunities to see Jesus heal, bring marriages back together, return wayward loved ones, reconcile enemies, flip injustice, turn greed into generosity, hate into sacrificial love and bring good out of bad. Do you really believe right now that God can intervene and do anything He desires! That is what the people were saying they believed that first Palm Sunday when they proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah – the One who would rescue them – even though He was humbly entering on a donkey. Let God grow your faith in His ability to do anything by praying bigger prayers, stepping outside your comfort zone, caring for hurting people, being in this world, but not of it.

D. Confidence in future

Daniel 3:17b
READ v 17b. That seems like quite a bold statement – our God will surely deliver us from the King’s all-powerful hand. Again this is not said in arrogance – it simply expresses total confidence in their future. They knew they could physically die, but even if that happened their future is secure and they are going to heaven and know God’s pleasure for eternity. No matter what the King does to them, their future is safe because their God is stronger. They have all eternity to live, love, be loved, enjoy, praise, rest, and have great interpersonal relationships. We can’t have this RIGHT CONFIDENCE now, if we don’t believe that God has accepted us & opened Heaven to us by His gracious action, rather than our achievements. Despite our sin and failings, we are reconciled to God because Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty of our sin and rose bodily from the dead to prove it true. God offers us forgiveness, heaven, a new nature, the Holy Spirit in us and so much more if we will accept this gracious gift by faith. That means we recognize our sin is wrong & repent. It means we believe Jesus’ words in the Bible. It means we surrender to go God’s ways instead of our own ways or culture’s ways. The right confidence can’t come by wishful thinking or be dependent on us “doing enough”! Confidence in what Jesus surely has for us in the future releases us to live this life on earth very counter-culturally!

E. Desire to do right no matter the cost

Daniel 3:18
READ v 18. “But even if He does not...” Although no doubt existed in the minds of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego about the ability of their God to deliver them, they
humbly accepted the fact that God does not always choose to intervene miraculously in human circumstances, even on behalf of his servants. Obeying God was more important than physical life to these three, so if God chooses not to deliver them, they would still obey Him. God said not to make, bow down or worship physical things and that is what they are going to do no matter what the cost. That faith will fill you with great peace, even in turmoil.

III. God answers/uses our obedience in His way

As we read together earlier, the results of this terrifying encounter are truly incredible. All the top leadership of the empire are given evidence that the God those lowly Israelites worship is the true God of the Universe. A pagan ruler is humbled and admits it was best for them to defy his command – “no other god can save in this way.” God made it clear to Nebuchadnezzar that Judah’s defeat was not because their God did not exist or was weak. God provides the highest earthly protection for a despised people group. And Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are personally blessed in every way: their faith is confirmed, they have clear evidence they are living life rightly, antagonistic leaders are now afraid to speak negatively about them, they are promoted and they receive a lot of physical benefits. No human could have foreseen ahead of time. That is why we obey, no matter what, then leave God to decide how & when He will use our obedience. In the meantime we are invincible in our service for God now, regardless of what happens in 5 minutes!

A. We testify for God regardless

Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we want to testify for Jesus in our actions, attitudes and words regardless of the situation around us. We are invincible as we serve God’s purposes now. If they kill us, God multiplies His work; if they mistreat us, God multiplies His work; if they listen, God multiplies His works; if God miraculously intervenes, God multiplies His work. We can’t lose in the long run, no matter what happens. There is this right confidence – this sense of invincibility right now – that God is developing in us so we can testify, obey, proclaim truth, give, show mercy, & forgive regardless of our situation, natural emotions or overwhelming difficulties!

B. We depend on God’s grace for the present

Now things won’t always usually go easy in the short run – there is a cost in this broken world to following Jesus. Rather than hide from those costs, we want to depend on God’s grace to maintain us through the pressured times. While no one can stop God’s work and we are guaranteed paradise in the future, things can get pretty difficult right now. That’s Ok because we know we are not just here to survive, we are here to serve God’s purposes. And if we are in a time of difficulty, God has a plan for us right in this situation. So we aren’t afraid to cry out as a child to the Father for God’s help, His grace, just to get us through that moment! And we are confident God will do more with our simple acts of obedience and our tiniest amounts of faith than we can imagine.
C. We leave the results to God

That can’t happen unless we truly leave the results to God! Just because someone doesn’t recognize our obedience to Jesus now, does not make it any less noble, important or powerful! God will do incredible things with our simple obedience, witness for Jesus or help for another. We won’t clearly see the full depth of that until heaven, but Jesus is regularly opening our eyes to how He does far more than we can think or imagine. And that goes back to the cross.

The story is told of a Christian miner who was injured at a young age and became an invalid. All he could do was watch out the world go by out his window as he was bedridden. He watched others his age prosper, get married, raise families, and have grandchildren, while his house crumbled, his body withered and his life seem to waste away. One day, when the bedridden miner was quite old, a younger man came to visit him. “I hear that you believe in God and claim that he loves you. How can you believe such things after all that has happened to you? Don’t you sometimes doubt God’s love?”

The old man hesitated and then smiled. “Yes, it is true. Sometimes Satan comes calling on me in this fallen-down house of mine. He sits right there by my bed where you are sitting now. He points out my window to the men I once worked with who are still strong and active, and he asks, ‘Does Jesus love you?’ Then Satan casts a jeering glance around my tattered room as he points to the fine homes of my friends across the street and asks again, ‘Does Jesus love you?’ Then, at last, Satan points to the grandchild of a friend of mine—a man who has everything I do not—and Satan waits for the tear in my eye before he whispers in my ear, ‘Does Jesus really love you?’”

“And what do you say when Satan speaks to you that way?” asked the young man. The old miner said, “I take Satan by the hand. I lead him in my mind to a hill far away called Calvary. There I point to the thorn-tortured brow, to the nail-pierced hands and feet and to the spear-wounded side – Jesus dying on the cross so I can go to heaven forever and have a personal relationship with God. Then I say, ‘Satan, you tell me … doesn’t Jesus love me!’”

Sometimes we struggle like that crippled miner did, don’t we? Praise Jesus that He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, because He is working to develop the “right confidence in us” – that sense of invincibility as we serve Jesus now – even if it is just laying in a bed and still trusting God for today and our tomorrow! Keep overcoming in the power of Jesus!