

## **With God All Things Are Possible**

George Tabac - June 1991

Flesh's disposition is often "I CAN'T!"

Our theme text is Matt.19:26 "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."

Many times in my life, - and it's probably true in most of our lives, that our decisions are based on limits we set up, of what we feel we can do with our own present abilities and strength.

That is, we kind of set up boundaries of what we are sure we can handle ourselves.

We like to stay within bounds of things that we know, things that we are comfortably familiar with.

Our natural tendency is thus to have a fear of risk that keeps us away from anything unfamiliar, and things we can't do or control with our own ability.

When we ask for God's guidance and help, it is often limited to thinking only in terms of what we think we can accomplish with our present frail availabilities.

As a result we often limit God's ability to lead us into new paths he would desire for our lives.

Paths in which God would grant us greater increased knowledge, abilities, and strength, to accomplish the fullest potential possible, in us and thru us to others.

Perhaps we could ask ourselves a few questions, "I wonder what my life would be like if I could fully grasp and believe with all my heart JOH 14:13.

"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

Also PHI 4:13." "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

We believe these scriptures, but are we applying them fully?

What service for the Lord would we dare to attempt if we could be sure that the Lord would fulfill these promises and help us in the areas we are somewhat lacking in.

What have we avoided doing by saying, "Oh I couldn't do that, it's just beyond me, it's impossible!"

I'm don't have the ability, I can't speak very well, I'm not smart enough, I don't have the funds,  
Who am I to think I could do it,

What have we avoided, - in order to keep our lives safely familiar and free of risk?

What goals for our families, our work, - what opportunities of service for the truth, would the Lord be pleased to have us step out in faith and attempt, even though it seems somewhat impossible when we think of our own inadequacies?

May we each think for a moment what our lives in the near future would be like, if we could just claim and apply these promises to ourselves in their fullest degree.

"I can do ALL THINGS through Christ which strengtheneth me."

"If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."

Our purpose

Our study this morning will be considering a few of the incidents in the lives of the Ancient Worthies which exemplifies that quality of heart of being willing to step out in faith beyond the familiar, beyond their own feeble abilities, knowing and trusting that the God of the universe would provide all that was best.

In so doing we trust it will help us all to reflect less on our many inadequacies, and more on what the Lord could accomplish through us if we have the same courage to step out in faith, and rely on His promised grace to help.

As we examine their lives we want to notice, how God endows them with abilities that go beyond their natural talents, but only after they have manifested complete faith and trust in Him.

Will God do less with us, - his spirit begotten children?

Oh not from the standpoint that we will be able to see supernatural miracles done on our behalf, no we realize we must walk by faith, not by sight.

But we believe God will be pleased to grant wisdom and abilities beyond our own, when we're willing to step out in unswerving faith.

Our Lord promised, "If ye shall ask anything in my name I will do it."

Obviously this does not mean if we ask for something out of harmony of God's will that it will be done.

But rather we believe the Lord is speaking to those who are His spirit begotten ambassadors in the earth. And when we are thus representing Him, we can ask for anything that he has indicated thru his word would be in harmony with his will, and He will do it.

This is why Paul and all of us could say, "I can do all things thru christ which strengtheneth me."

Abraham

The story of Abraham begins with his one day hearing a voice. We're not told how whether it was an audible voice, or just in his mind:

GEN 12:1 Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

GEN 12:2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

Try for a moment to put yourself in Abraham's shoes. You hear a beautiful promise, but with it a somewhat frightening request to leave everything you hold dear.

Your home, your family, your familiar surroundings you grew up in, - that which you knew, which you understood, - to go, to who knows where.

To conditions which you didn't have the slightest idea of what they would be like. It meant you would probably never again see your present friends and homeland.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Perhaps the Lord has in some way placed a somewhat similar apprehensive suggestion or request on your heart and mind.

Perhaps like Abraham you too are a little afraid, but may we always remember, the Lord with His providential methods, will only encourage us into that which would be for our eternal interests, however frightening they may at first appear to us.

May we keep reminding ourselves, "I can do all things thru Christ which strengtheneth me!"

Thru faith Abraham obeyed! Journeyed to Canaan but when a famine arose they had to go to Egypt for food.

While there we see Abram's fearful side. For like us, he too had periods of a lack of full trust in God's providences.

Because Sarah was very beautiful, Abraham tells her to tell the Egyptians that she is his sister for fear that they may kill him to obtain Sarah for a wife.

We remember the story, when Pharaoh finds out the truth he's enraged, and Abram and Sarah barely escape with their lives.

Later God promises Abraham he would have a seed, and that his seed would become as the stars of heaven.

When no seed comes for many years, Abram again questions God's ability and so he tries to help by having a child with Sarah's concubine Keturah. Ishmael is born, but he was not to be the heir.

Years pass and when Abraham is 99 and Sarah is 90, God tells him that they would have a son, again we see Abraham's doubting humanity, when he falls to the ground laughing - for humanly speaking he knew it was impossible.

But was it impossible? Jesus said in:

MAT 19:26 "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."

Isaac is born!

Oh how Abraham loved him. He becomes his pride and joy, the center of his life, his heir and hope for the future.

Now try to put yourself in Abraham's heart when he hears the Lord ask the impossible of him to test his faith. Feel the anguish with each word when God says:

(GEN 22:2) Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

Why God why? he must of cried, he is my heir you promised! Nothing could have seemed more abhorrent.

But God wanted to test Abraham to the uttermost to see what was truly first in his life.

Sometimes we too may have a similar test! It may be possible that we have something or someone in our life who is our Isaac, somewhat competing with God for first place.

Sometimes imperceptively we may have a figurative Isaac of home, position or what have you, developing in our life, taking first place in our hearts and minds and we are unaware of it.

Like with Abraham we may one day hear God say to us, my child, I want you to give up and sacrifice your Isaac, that is surrender to me that which is replacing me as your greatest concern.

What will we answer?

Try to imagine climbing Mt. Moriah with Abraham and Isaac. Isaac suddenly realizes they have no lamb for the sacrifice.

GEN 22:7 My father, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? Isaac trusted his father, but now Abraham trusted God even more when he answers, - My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.

Imagine Abraham's thoughts as he built the altar, arranged the wood and then began to tie up his precious son. And then the fatal moment when Abraham raised the knife to thrust it into his sons heart, - God calls out:

GEN 22:12 Abraham, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

He looked up with his eyes and saw a ram caught in the thicket.

Abraham's heart must have leaped for joy. Oh Lord I knew, I knew you would provide a way.

He offered the ram as a burnt offering and called the place Jehovah-jireh, meaning "the Lord will provide."

Oh how we see the essence of ultimate faith demonstrated in this account.

Our test of faith is often to see if we are willing to follow God's guidance, to step out to do or say what we naturally may fear or feel totally incapable of.

When we thus hear God's prompting for us, may we remember Abraham's faith, and truly believe and trust "That the Lord will provide."

"I can do all things thru Christ which strengtheneth me."

## **MOSES**

Let's now jump to another Ancient Worthy Moses, which shows with God all things are possible.

In Moses we have an individual who at first, no doubt felt that he could accomplish by his own abilities and power unlimited wonders.

Moses, raised in the courts of Pharaoh of Egypt, had the highest schooling and resources in the world at that time.

But before he could be used of God had to be brought low and humbled for 40 years. All self assurance based on human skill and ingenuity, had to be drained away.

It may seem somewhat ironic, that for some of God's people there is too much self assurance, so God must remove it, and for others there is too little, so God must encourage it.

But in either case I think we can see the end result desired by God for us. It is a life lived to the full in bringing glory to God as His Ambassadors, accomplished however by trust and faith in God's resources working in and thru us, - and NOT in our own feeble abilities.

Finally the time comes for God to call Moses to deliver His people. After 40 years in the desert, self assurance has been drained away.

God calls to Moses, EXO 3:10 Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

In Moses' eyes - this was now the MOST IMPOSSIBLE thing he could ever imagine - that HE could ever get the people of Israel out of Egypt.

His response in verse 11 is: "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt."

Moses was not unlike our own feelings at times. He goes on to negatively question God implying he's not worthy or able.

What shall I say when they ask who sent me?

What if they do not believe me?

Ex. 4:10 (NE) O Lord I have never been a man of ready speech, never in my life, not even now that thou hast spoken to me; I am slow and hesitant of speech.

The Lord said to him, Who is it that gives man speech? Who makes him dumb or deaf? Who makes him clear-sighted or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?

Go now, I will help your speech and tell you what to say. But Moses still protested, No Lord, send whom thou wilt.

Moses was struggling with doubts of his abilities - the same as we do at times.

The Lord may suggest for us to be his mouthpiece, take a certain path, do a certain work or change the course in our lives, - something that just looms as impossible to us.

We may tend to respond, Lord "Who Am I?" "How could I ever do that?" "I am not qualified?"

It's true, of our own selves we could not. But notice how God assures Moses, - "but Certainly, I will be with thee." I who created the universe, I who created the mouth, I who cause men to see and hear, I will put my words in your mouth.

And this is our assurance also. He is all-knowing, all-loving and all-powerful, therefore he can do in us and thru us that which indeed is impossible for us alone.

We do not want to misunderstand what is meant when God says with Him all things are Possible, or He will do the impossible for us.

This does not mean literal miraculous accomplishments - such as divine healing or raising the dead. But rather those things we contemplate in our daily walk, that in our eyes is truly **IMPOSSIBLE** for us.

It could be as simple as learning to drive! We feel it's **IMPOSSIBLE!**

It could apply to someone who could use our help, but it would require us driving across the city to do so - and since we have a fear of driving so far - we feel it's **IMPOSSIBLE** for us.

It could be an opportunity to have brethren over for dinner, but doubts arise, I'm not a good cook, I'm too nervous, I'm not a good conversationalist, so we conclude, **IT'S NOT POSSIBLE.**

It could be an Elder who has to prepare a discourse on an assigned subject and we feel, who am I to think I could admonish the brethren on this, I've never delved into that subject area before, I don't have any talent along that line, or whatever, we conclude it's Impossible.

It could be a Deacon asked to perform a service he has never done before - He doesn't even know the first thing about it - it's **IMPOSSIBLE** - I will just have to say "no."

It could be to be God's mouthpiece in some aspect of the Harvest work, but we say like Moses but I am slow of speech, **IMPOSSIBLE!**

This is not to say that these aren't legitimate concerns, but the point of the lesson is that just like with Moses we shouldn't just immediately dismiss them feeling that it is impossible.

Moses too thought of reason after reason of why what God was suggesting he should do was **IMPOSSIBLE**. But just think of what finally resulted.

Going on in Moses' experiences we find how he encountered all kinds of obstacles that at first seemed would be **IMPOSSIBLE**.

Israel did not greet Moses' proposal from the Lord with enthusiasm, but rather they rejected it.

Israel had begged God for deliverance and when it was offered, they resisted his appointed deliverer, and on top of that Pharaoh hardened his heart to the idea of letting go of his slave labor force.

At this point, we can imagine how Moses felt that for him to deliver Egypt was an impossibility, but nevertheless he trusted God and went along with Him day by day following His instructions.

A lesson we might gain is that we should not always expect whole hearted enthusiastic support from others when we endeavor with the Lord's help to do what may seem to be impossible.

But rather we realize that since most of us have rather limited abilities, others advice may concentrate and remind us more of our inadequacies than on the Lord's promised grace to help.

Thus we need to carefully prayerfully watch, weigh, and follow, the overall combined leadings of the Lord, as Moses did.

WE do not want to be discouraged by a single comment or two, nor to we want to rush haphazard into an endeavor, without having carefully weighed all God's leadings, scriptural principals, and promises, which together should make us feel confident that truly this is the Lord's will for me.

But when we are thus assured, may we go forth with full unreserved determination that indeed "I can do all things thru Christ which strengtheneth me."

We recall how the ten plagues followed and Israel (estimated at about 2 million people) left Egypt.

It was not long before there came another test of what seemed **IMPOSSIBLE**.

Israel was surrounded by mountains on two sides, the Red Sea on Front of them and Pharaoh's army in back of them. They panicked.

Ex. 14:11 & 12:

"And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?"

Some of our trials may make us feel the same as Israel's. We are surrounded on all sides and it seems impossible that there is any way out.

But just like for Israel, our all-powerful and loving God has all the resources of the universe at His disposal. God's almighty power literally held back the sea so Israel could walk thru it on dry ground, and all their enemies were destroyed.

What God did for the Israelites he can do for us. He will lead us thru a way out of every difficult experience, or He will stand by our side to give us the strength we need to endure it, - until we reach the great promised land that Moses led his people to.

Yes, with our Father all things are POSSIBLE, if we ask in fullness of faith in accordance with his will.

## GIDEON

Next we would like to consider the story of Gideon. It happened when Israel was in bondage to the Midianites for 7 years.

JDG 6:14 And the LORD looked upon (Gideon), and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites:

God calls Gideon to deliver Israel, but now notice his initial response it's so much like we might answer as we think in terms of our weak fallen flesh's abilities.

JDG 6:15 And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.

It was almost an immediate reflex action, I can't do it, I'm too poor, I'm the least in my father's house. What had any of that to do with God wanting him to deliver Israel.

When God calls us to accomplish a certain task we like Gideon tend to immediately think in terms of our own inadequacies.

But God assures Gideon that it's not in His strength and ability that God is counting on.

(JDG 6:16) And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

But before God would use Gideon to deliver Israel he wanted to test Him for unswerving obedience.

Israel at the time worshipped two Gods. Jehovah and Baal. Gideon's father had an altar to Baal in his back yard or field, and God instructed Gideon to tear it down and build an altar to Jehovah and then sacrifice his father's bullock on Jehovah's altar.

This was quite a request of God. For Gideon knew that if he obeyed, his neighbors would seek his life. For they had become committed to Baal worship in addition to allegiance to Jehovah.

But Gideon's obedience was complete, he did exactly what the Lord had told him to do. He tore down the idol and sacrificed the bullock to the glory of Jehovah.



We would like to pause from Gideon's story for a moment and look into our own lives reflecting on a lesson regarding how the Israelites worshipped both Baal and Jehovah.

The reason they worshipped two Gods is we believe they feared having their total dependence just on Jehovah God, so they worshipped in addition the god Baal, just for good measure.

We think, oh how foolish not to rely entirely on Jehovah God. But you know we can easily do the same.

How easy it is to believe in God with all our hearts and commit ourselves to him, but at the same time tend to feel we need a little more security from what we have, what we are, our accomplishments, our self image, or the appreciation of others.

All of us have a desperate need to be loved, and to accomplish our goals. The danger is that these desires can become like the idol of Baal to Israel.

For from one standpoint what can become like a God to us, is anything or anyone that dominates our thinking and demands our allegiance at the exclusion of absolute obedience to God.

We all want to ask ourselves, is there an idol to Baal in our backyard, that we use for added security, just for good measure?

Gideon put his life in danger, but he tore the idol down. The people of the city sought to kill him. But his father intervened with sound judgment. "If Baal is a God let him seek his own retribution." The people relented who could argue the point?

Gideon passed God's test of obedience. But Gideon was still unsure as to whether he could deliver Israel.

He requests additional signs from God that it is his will. You remember the story of putting out the fleece. He requests that all the fleece be soaked with dew, and all the ground around be perfectly dry. And when that took place that it should be reversed, that all the ground be soaked and the fleece dry.

God gave him both signs, and Gideon was assured it was God's will to proceed to follow God's instructions to deliver Israel.

Should we make our decisions by putting out the fleece literally? No we think not! But we believe there are fleece assurances that God will give us in answer to our prayer.

In times of special need of guidance, God will assure us of His care and concern and will guide us using Scriptures, the words of brethren, providences or direction of events around us, to convince us of the rightness or wrongness of a particular direction.

The important thing as we come to God in prayer, is to truly devoid ourselves of what is our own personal desire and to want only to know God's will.

We need to tell Him what we think he has called us to do for His glory, and then watch for His answer.

As we wait and watch for His answer we may want to ask ourselves some questions.

Will my decision give me more time to serve the lord or less?

Will it be pleasing the to the flesh more or spirit?

Would my example to others foster greater spirituality or less?

The answers could be a help in our decision but in any case we want to continue to prayerfully watch until God's indications have assured us the path to take.

The next lesson we learn from Gideon is God's ways are not our ways.

Gideon's army was 32,000 men. The Midianites & Amalakites army was 135,000. Israel was outnumbered 4 to 1, but Gideon figured it was a fighting chance with God's help.

But God said no! It is too many. Tell all those who are afraid to go home. 22,00 were afraid and left leaving only 10,000. But still God said it was too many. Another test was given.

The only ones God wanted for the battle were those who drank water at the river by staying alert watching for the enemy, and only drank by cupping up water with their hands. This left only 300.

You remember the outcome. The 300 circled the camp. Their only weapons were a torch of light covered by an earthen pitcher, and a trumpet. At the command of Gideon they all broke their pitchers letting the light shine out, blew their trumpets, and cried out the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.

The result was that 120,000 of the enemy soldiers killed one another, with the rest fleeing for their lives.

Yes, with God all things are possible!

Why did God want to use so few? God only wanted a vigilant, totally committed band of daring faithful ones. In addition, He wanted there to be no question that the victory was won by God's power alone, not their own.

May we try to remember this story the next time we may be inclined to fight our enemies or accomplish any of our goals by depending on our own human talents, skill and power.

Our human strength is as nothing compared to the resources of our Lord, which are available to each and every one of us.

With God all things are possible, but only if we are willing to step out in faith and claim His promises.

In addition we see the insignificant group of 300 soldiers well picture the small number of faithful unafraid valiant brethren who at the end of the age will be willing to break their earthen vessels that is totally sacrifice their lives in letting their light shine forth to all the world as they blow on their trumpets of truth.

Jonah

We've been considering scriptures that illustrate how "we can do all things thru Christ that strengtheneth us."

Now we would like to consider the power struggle that takes place when we decide something the Lord has guided us to do is impossible for us.

Not because it's really impossible, but because our prejudices and judgmentalism make it appear that it's completely unfeasible.

The life of the prophet Jonah well illustrates this warfare that goes on in our minds. The rebellion between our PREJUDICED WILL and the leadings of God in our lives.

Jonah was initially a prophet that cooperated with God, - until God told him to do something that went against his own desires.

It had to do with Jonah's hatred of Assyria who was Israel's arch-enemy. God wanted him to go to Nineveh it's capitol and warn them of their wickedness so they could repent.

JON 1:1 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

JON 1:2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

We could just imagine Jonah's response. Nineveh Lord? The center of power of Israel's worst enemy? Surely it must be a mistake!

The last thing Jonah wanted to do was become responsible for the salvation of his enemies. He wouldn't go. Instead he took a ship to run away in the opposite direction.

We might think of Jonah as personifying the way we at times question God's guidance and resist what in our deepest hearts, we know he has been urging us to do or to be.

To get an idea of how Jonah felt I'd like us to try to envision in our minds eye those in your life that you don't particularly care for. You know what I mean, you love them but you sure have a hard time liking them.

One of the brethren who just rubs you the wrong way, or a neighbor, or family members, or fellow workers, or brethren in another part of the truth movement, or whatever, those whom you, - well you know are not your favorite people, because of what they do, they say or believe, or whatever.

Now envision God bringing to your attention one day that he wants you to go to them and help them to change their way that they too can be blessed as you are. Now you have an idea how Jonah felt.

Jonah was stricken with the malady of being more concerned with his feelings and his concern for what others might think, than he was for doing God's will.

How could God be concerned with these Assyrians, it's wrong, their not righteous, they're our enemies, and besides what would my friends think of me?

So instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah runs in the opposite direction to Tarshish to hide from God.

Sometimes we have our own Nineveh and Tarshish experiences. Nineveh could simply be the Lord's calling us to serve Him in some obedient action, that just doesn't appeal to us, - that goes contrary to our preferences.

So we like Jonah try to hide by going to Tarshish. Oh not that we literally move geographically, but perhaps hide by getting involved in some other good worth while project, or many projects that fills our time and we're very active and busy.

To others it may look like were serving in a fevered pitch of activity, and we are, but it may in reality be running in the wrong direction. Avoiding what God really wants us to do with our life.

The ship Jonah was on to Tarshish suddenly was in the midst of a terrible storm, it looked like they would be doomed, you remember the story, Jonah confesses that he's running from God, and he requests to be thrown overboard, he just wants to end it all.

So with us sometimes, when all our desires just seem to go unfulfilled we kind of come to the end of our rope as it were, and finally it dawns on that our priorities and desires are wrong.

But instead of falling on our knees and praying for forgiveness and thanking God for letting us finally come to our senses, we may decide instead that we must first punish ourselves before God can again deal properly with us.

But who are we to punish ourselves, if punishment is due, let God do it, not ourselves.

God intervened when Jonah was thrown overboard for it wasn't yet time for Jonah's life to be over.

He provides for a great whale to swallow him and in the midst of its belly for parts of three days Jonah offers a beautiful prayer.

He's reawakened to his mistake, thanks God for his mercy, and concludes his prayer in JONAH 2:7.

"When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

Those who regard vain idols, Forsake their faithfulness,

But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.

And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land."

Again we see how the God of what seemed impossible intervened in the life in one of his children. It was God who brought the storm and the miraculous whale to swallow him, just to bring Jonah back to a proper perspective.

So sometimes God brings to us a storm of life as an alarm to cause us to question and look inward at the purpose and priorities of our life.

Not that all trials and trouble are because we are doing wrong, no far from it, they may be an indication of our faithfulness and further crystallization of our character.

But for Jonah he knew why that particular storm was permitted. When he was cast on shore he was ready to begin afresh and do what God originally wanted him to do.

He proceeds to Nineveh with Gods message that somewhat matched his judgmental feeling, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown."

But lo and behold were told that the entire city believed in God and repented in sackcloth and ashes.

JON 3:10 When God saw their deeds that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it."

Jonah becomes furiously angry at God. The last thing Jonah wanted was to have Nineveh forgiven. For it meant he would have to change his attitude toward his enemies.

This was more than he could bear. He was so committed to his negative judgments that now when they would be unfulfilled, he tells God he would rather die than live.

Jonah was secretly wanting his predictions of Nineveh's destruction to be fulfilled. It would show he had the proper insight into their heart condition.

If not careful we too could fall into this state of mind. Have you ever felt a little tinge of satisfaction when someone you don't like fulfills your worst expectations, and your tempted to say to someone "You see, I was right all along."

But evs God still loved Jonah. The next day as the sun beat down on him the God of miracles had pity on him and caused a giant gourd to spring up to shade him from the heat.

And Jonah was very glad. But the next day God caused a worm to eat the gourd and it withered, and now Jonah again became very angry.

Jonah 4:9-11 NAS "Then God said to Jonah, do you have good reason to be angry about the plant? And he said, I have good reason to be angry, even to death.

Then the Lord said, You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work, and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished over night.

And should not I have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons?"

This is the last we hear of Jonah. To the very end we see how God wanted to heal his judgmental heart.

He withered the plant with a worm to remind Jonah that as he gives, he can take away, if his blessings do not turn our hearts to him.

Time and again God had mercy and pity on Jonah trying to get him to have true agape love in his heart for all people ESPECIALLY those he so disliked, but Jonah's feelings of superiority and judgmentalism could not be broken.

May we remember, with what judgment we judge we shall be judged. With what degree of mercy we give, the same degree will be given to us.

#### SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABEDNEGO

We remember the story of Daniels 3 friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian king built an image of gold 90 feet high that all the people were to bow down and worship.

But Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused. The King gave them a last chance, and warned them if they still refused they would be cast into a fiery furnace.

Their answer was in, Dan.3:16-17 "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king.

But now especially notice what they said next, it expresses the secret of their courage.

"But even if He does not, let it be known unto you O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

"But even if He does not, These five words gave them the strength and courage to face the fire. Their faith was not dependant on deliverance, but on the knowledge that God would take care of them beyond the furnace.

Oh may we ever strive to remember and gain strength in these words when crises face our lives, God will deliver us "But even if He does not."

When we are facing a crucial trial, a life threatening surgery or illness, may we face the crisis in peace knowing that nothing, further sickness, pain, even death, could separate us from God's loving care.

With the one exception of trampling under foot our Lord's sacrifice and committing sins worthy of 2nd death, except for this one exception, "WE will be alive FOREVER MORE!"

Oh yes death will come to our flesh, but after the next instant in our minds we will live forever more!

Oh just Think of this awesome astounding fact! No matter what the vicissitudes of life may bring (except for those who will go into 2nd death,) "WE WILL LIVE FOREVER."

Our natural tendency of fearful anxiety will tend to diminish if we can approach all our trials as the three Hebrews.

"Even if it doesn't work out," - like we planned or hoped, God is still in control, - His love will only permit that which would be for our ultimate best interests for our journey thru eternity.

Like the three Hebrews, we all have these "FURNACE" experiences in our life.

Sometimes it may be because we won't bow down and worship the "Golden Images" that society erect all around us, of materialism, success, power, or popularity.

When we refuse to bow down to them we may experience rejection and criticism.

Sometimes it's because of our own pride and self will.

For others the furnace may be suffering physical or emotional problems.

Perhaps the fiercest furnace is the feeling that God has left us. When we feel alone and forsaken. When our prayers just don't seem to be answered like we would desire, we may start feeling, oh there must be something wrong with me, God is displeased and has forsaken me.

Our frustrations are often compounded, feeling we must do something to be more perfect before God will hear and answer our prayers. So we dash off in frenzied activity to make ourselves more perfect.

But the problem right along wasn't that we aren't good enough, no one is good enough, no one really deserves or can earn God's blessing.

But rather so often the reason we feel we aren't being blessed is because the course we've set out upon, is a course that we've decided on, a course that our flesh would be inclined to like, - rather than truly striving to know and follow the course the Lord would be most pleased for us to take.

But whatever our "furnace" problems are, disappointments, perplexities, illnesses, may we strive to meet them as the three Hebrews, submissive, confident, that even if we are not delivered from them according to our desire, HE WILL SEE US THROUGH THEM.

We are children of God! We belong to Him! We will live with Him forever! He will only permit what He knows is best.

So may we strive to commit to memory this phrase of the three Hebrews, as we approach our difficult trials, "HE WILL DELIVER US, BUT EVEN IF HE DOES NOT!"

Yes even if he doesn't deliver us from the flames, he will be by our side with sufficient grace to sustain us through to the end.

If we can thus have this principal engraved in our hearts it will help us, even as we approach a death threatening experience, to be able to say with Paul in Rom. 14:8,

"For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's," - and we will be for all eternity!

Being able to have this attitude as we approach our trials helps us to Leave the results of the trial to the Lord.

The Three Hebrews trusted God for either His intervention and deliverance, or for His strength through the pain. If we can thus resign ourselves to God in all our experiences, we too will experience what Shadrach Meshach and Abednego did.

As Nebuchadnezzar looked down into the fiery flames he said in Dan.3:25, "I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

Yes the son of God, was by their side.

So with us in our furnaces of affliction. When we can leave all in the Lord's hands trusting Him come what may, we can go into our furnace with submissive confidence, knowing that he is by our side, and will bring His results in His own way and according to His own time schedule.

As we reflect back on the lives of some of these faithful people of God, we see a consistent theme with them all.

God often performed miraculous things that seemed impossible on their behalf. But it was always after they heeded His call to be willing to step out in faith. To trust Him to provide what they lacked, to take a risk as it were of going beyond their natural inclinations by relying on the promises of God's help.

None of them knew how the trial or challenge would end, they simply obeyed God, confident that He would supply their needs to accomplish the work he desired in them, and through them to others.

Are we willing to let go of our fears and step out in faith to do what we know God would be pleased with?

May it be your joy to try, remembering,

"I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHICH STRENGTHENETH ME!"

"WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE"