

Speaker's Note:

We acknowledge & appreciate the interpretation of the scripture in Daniel 3, about the *Three Men in the Fire* which is from Rev. Jim Rosemary

3/08/2015 Service by Janet Meschi

FAITH & GRATITUDE

I have been very moved lately by the number of people I've spoken with who are getting a renewed sense that God is most definitely guiding their path, even when they are not paying attention.

Synchronicities seem to occur that put people in alignment with others who can teach them, who can give them spiritual encouragement.

Some have felt the sense of wholeness and completeness that comes with fully accepting that God is indeed living within them, supplying their needs in unexplainable ways. I have felt more connected with the God of my being as I seem to be able to step back from world crisis' and personal challenges more easily. It is almost as if don Miguel Ruiz, who wrote *The Four Agreements* keeps whispering in my ear, "Don't take anything personally: nothing others do is because of you. What others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you won't be the victim of needless suffering."

Perhaps our progress has something to do with mankind's movement into the "Green Age," described in the stages of Spiral Dynamics I spoke on one Sunday. It proposes that the hyper-consumers of the previous stage of the evolution of consciousness experience a feeling

of being over-“stuffed.” They begin to see the world as the shared habitat of humanity. This involves putting the ego aside and living in harmony. Releasing greed and participating in community service begins to emerge. Collective thinking and shared leadership become more popular choices for decision making.

Maybe it’s because of our exploration of Bible interpretation with Les Brown or classes on Manifesting the Presence with Jerry Cook.

Perhaps it’s just a cyclic spiritual growth spurt, but whatever the reason, I’m very excited about it. During the beautiful Celebration of Life for our friend, Joan Conkey two weeks ago, Sr. Maryann Lucy shared a scripture from 2 Kings: 8-9, which tells of Elijah and Elisha, together at the Jordon River just before Elijah is taken up to Heaven by a whirlwind. Elisha knows that Elijah is going to be with the Lord and when Elijah asks him what he could do for him before he is taken, Elisha answers, “Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit.”

This scripture spoke to me very deeply, as I personally know that the fullness of God can be so indescribably overwhelming to our human senses, that once experienced, leaves a craving inside that can never be satisfied by anything or anyone else.

There is a wonderful story in the book of Daniel, Chapter 3, that illustrates this wholeness in God, better than I can do it. In the story, three men are thrown into a fiery furnace because they refused to bow down to the king. The king was Nebuchadnezzar and he had made an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide and set it up in his

province of Babylon. Then he commanded that all the people of all nations and all languages fall down and worship this golden image anytime they heard music of any kind. All the people in all the kingdoms obeyed. Well, almost. Of course, in every kingdom, there are those who would try to elevate their status by being self-appointed tattle-tale police and Babylon was no different. Some astrologers told Nebuchadnezzar that there were Jews that wouldn't worship the golden image. They wouldn't bow down to any God but their own.

King Neb was furious! He demanded that these three men be brought to him before they met their fate. Before they entered the furnace, the three men talked to the king and he tried to intimidate them by making the fire seven times hotter than usual. It was so hot that those tending to the fire died.

The king wanted to know why the men were so sure they would be delivered from the flames and they answered, "Nebuchadnezzar, we don't need to answer that. If we survive, it will be God who is able to deliver us, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. If he doesn't, we will still not serve your gods or worship the golden image you've set up. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego accepted their fate. In non-resistance, they didn't try to change the unchangeable situation. In acceptance, they declared that their God was the only power in their lives, and even if God did not save them, they would never worship the false gods of the king.

The men were thrown into the furnace and were unharmed. The king and those who were with him then saw a fourth man walking in the flames. There are several interpretations of this fourth man, but essentially he was evidence of the Presence. The three men were released from the fire, and their clothes did not even smell of smoke.

Faith requires the acceptance of things unseen. Acceptance is not defeatism, as in throwing our hands up and sitting through horrible situations that are unchangeable. In such cases, we must start with nonresistance. This means that we will not attempt to change the condition or find a solution. Then acceptance allows us to let go and accept our human situation. In our human acceptance, we free our spiritual man to step forward and carry us through the situation unharmed. Our spiritual self is where our faith is housed. We turn our attention on God and realize that God is our power.

This illustration of faith in God makes most of our life experiences pale in comparison, but the same truth penetrates every example, no matter its drama or danger. It can be argued that what we desire most as human beings is security. When we are in human consciousness, we believe security comes from acquisition. We get a good job, and then we will feel secure. Next, we need to provide for our retirement. Then

we realize that we may need more than that: land, securities, annuities. After achieving all these financial goals, we still don't feel secure.

Conversely, many of us have reached the depths of financial despair and realized that the soul was secure. In Truth, the only real security is in God. Even when there is no apparent security in the world, we find security in the Spirit. God's presence sustains us. God provides for us. God protects us.

When we accept the outer conditions we are facing and declare our commitment to believe in God's perfect provision for us, we step out of our humanity. When we take it to the next level, and say, no matter what happens, I will still praise God, we raise our consciousness beyond human thinking and from that position, we are acting from pure Spirit. We are one with God. We are in the flames without being burned. We will come out on the other side unharmed because Spirit cannot be harmed. It is eternal and indestructible.

Stepping out on Faith, we acknowledge God's divine plan for our lives. We do not try to change it. We accept it and we say, "Not my will, but Thine," knowing that God wants us to experience only our highest and best good. We do not become discouraged because we trust Spirit to reveal our purpose and direction. God has placed our dreams within us to be realized. We take the next step with confidence and faith, knowing that our soul's unfoldment is God's plan for blessing the world through us.

Let's close by repeating that together. I'll feed it to you in small bites. . . and let's make it first person singular.

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