

With Daniel in God's Training School

by George Verwer

The sermon emphasizes the struggle with temptation and the importance of seeking Jesus' help to overcome it, using the story of Tony and the puppy as an illustration.

Duration: 1:05:54

Scripture: Matthew 14:22

Topics: "Daniel"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher tells a story about a boy named Tony who is tempted to play football. Despite being told to go straight home, Tony is persuaded by Satan to play for just five minutes. He puts his sack down, takes the ball, and climbs over the fence. However, after only ten minutes, Tony is urged to go home by his mother. The preacher uses this story to illustrate how Satan tempts people to do naughty things and encourages the congregation, especially the children, to resist temptation. The sermon also touches on the importance of trusting in God and learning valuable lessons from the Bible.

Transcript

Okay, our speaker today, for all the children, we have a very, very important man. You know why? First of all, he and his wife, Matilda, Matilda is over there, sitting over there, they've been with, for many, many years, they were on the Lagos, they work in Bromley, and today they have a special ministry, it's what we call a film ministry. And now, Mr. Dave Armstrong is going to tell us something very, very nice, so all the children, I believe, will like it.

You will like it? Yeah, okay. Yes, you and daddy too will like it. Okay, now Dave Armstrong is going to share with us, and after the children, after this, the kids will go to Sunday school, and also Dave Armstrong is going to share for all of us.

Thank you, Anne, it's a great privilege to be on board with you, but it's always a preacher's nightmare when he stands up here, and he looks out, and there are empty seats in the front, and people are sitting up at the back. So, while we're telling the story to the kids, those of you at the back, move forward, and encourage the preacher. Okay, we need all the encouragement we can get at this point.

Now, right, come on, start moving right now, those of you at the back, don't be shy. Meanwhile, for you children, I'm glad you're here. Have you all got smiles on your faces? Show me a nice, oh, you've got a nice smile on your face.

Well, I wanted to show you something very, very special. I don't know how long you've been in England, but in England, we use pennies and pounds, and that little coin there, who can tell me its value? How many pennies is that one, do you know? Ten pennies, you're absolutely right. Now, I'm going to show you something magical.

I want you to watch very carefully. Are you watching? Can you see it? Because you know what we're going to do. I'm going to take this 10p coin, and watch very, very carefully, because that's a strong hand.

You see, my name is Armstrong, and I'm going to crush it until there's nothing left in there. Wait a minute. And then, what are you going to do first? Well, there's a magic part to every story.

You know what the magic part of the story is? Boys and girls, and big ones, too, as you're moving forward. Do this. They're still moving forward.

I see you moving. We're praying for you. Right.

Do this. Do this. That means you can hear everything that's being said.

So, you remain very quiet, because I wanted to tell you a story about a little boy, and I wanted to know your name, all English. What's your name? Tony. You wouldn't believe this, but this morning, the story I was going to tell you was about Tony.

Well, imagine that. Tony, I think I'm going to need your help. Will you help me? Good.

Now, he looks like a nice little fellow, doesn't he? Do you like Tony? Let's give him a big clap. He's a special fellow, this Tony, because, you know, is your mummy here? Where is she? Oh, good. I'm glad your mummy's here, because, you know, mummies like us little boys and girls very much, don't they? Mums are very nice, but dads are, too, of course.

But mums seem to love us especially nice, and mum, she said to Tony this morning, she said, Tony, today, I want you to be a very, very good little boy, because I've got a special job for you to do. And Tony, actually, he got up this morning, and he was feeling very grumpy. Now, I know you're never like that, but that particular, and I'm sure Tony's, you're never grumpy, are you? No, no, of course you're not.

But this is a pretend story this morning, you see. So we're going to pretend that this particular morning, Tony was feeling in one of his bad moods, and he came down from bed, and he hadn't brushed his teeth. Hands up, those who haven't brushed their teeth this morning.

Only the children. You're OK. OK, well, Tony hadn't brushed his teeth, and he was feeling in one of those moods.

He didn't know whether to cry or to laugh, and he sat down at breakfast table, and he got a bowl of porridge. Tony, do you eat porridge? Yeah? Do you like porridge? You know, if you live in Scotland, they eat porridge with salt on it instead of sugar. I can never understand that.

But Scots are very special people. And so he got his bowl of porridge, and instead of eating it, he took his bowl of porridge, and he turned it upside down and it went all over the table. So he was definitely in one of those moods.

But mum said to him, Tony, today you're going to be very good because I've got a special job for you to do. You see, she had a little puppy. Now, how many of you have ever seen a little puppy? You don't have puppies on board a ship, do you? No, because you can't take them for long walks, and that could be a disaster on board a ship, the puppy.

Well, she had this little puppy, and she said this morning, Tony, she didn't live on a ship, she said, Tony, I want you to take this puppy up to the Farmer Brown's house. Now, Farmer Brown, he lived across the field in his own big farm, and that puppy was to be delivered specially by Tony. We've got a couple of puppies around, look.

There they are, good morning puppies. What kind of a noise does a puppy make? Bark, bark. Oh yeah, you know what a puppy is.

Bark, bark, bark, bark, bark. And so, she took this little puppy, and she went to the cupboard and brought a sack. Then she took the puppy very carefully, just like this, she took the puppy very, very carefully, and went, bark, bark, bark, and very, very gently, she put the puppy inside the sack.

Good landing there. And then, she went to the cupboard and she found a pink ribbon. It's very much like this one here, but it was one that you could tie in a big bow.

So, just like that. Come and stand up here and show everybody. Stand right here.

Can you see that pink ribbon in the middle? Isn't that nice? Wave to the camera. Can you see that thing? Wow, it was just like that. So, when the puppy was inside the sack with this pink ribbon, she tied it round the back of the sack in a big bow, and very carefully, Tony put the sack on his back.

Put the sack on your back very carefully like this. Good. Very carefully, because it's only a tiny baby puppy.

And she said, Now, Tony, I want you to go straight to Farmer Brown's house, deliver the puppy, and come straight home. And no dilly-dallying on the way. And so he said, OK, Mum, and off he went.

Come on, follow me. Here we go. And as he was going, he was whistling.

Whistling. But on the way, Tony saw some of his friends, his school friends, and they were over in the field, and what game do you think they were playing with their ball? Football. You've got it right the first time.

And they said, Tony, come and play football with us just for five minutes. And he thought to himself, what did Mum say? Go straight to Farmer Brown's house, deliver the puppy, and come straight home. And no playing on the way.

So he kept on going. Off he went. But one of those boys, he was one of Tony's pals, and he got the ball, and he gave the ball a great kick.

Woo! And he nearly lost his shoe line. And that ball came flying over the fence. And it landed by his feet.

Now it just so happened that football was Tony's favourite game. So he looked at that ball. In his mind, Mummy was saying, straight there, straight home.

But Satan came along. And Satan, he comes and he whispers in your ear, and he's the one who tempts you to do naughty things. He tempts you sometimes to tell lies.

But he whispered to Tony. He said, Tony, you go and play football just for five minutes. How many minutes? Let's count them.

One, two, three, four, five. Stop. Just like that.

That's not very long, is it? So, he sat down by the fence. Sit down right there. Good.

And he took the ball, and he climbed over the fence, and off he went to play football. Right over here. You can sit right there.

Now along came some very naughty boys. And they saw his sack. And they untied that thing with it.

And they took the puppy out. And you know what they put inside? You're not going to believe this. A monkey.

Have you ever seen a monkey? What does a monkey do? It does this. It was just like a monkey. And they put the monkey inside, tied it up again, and with that puppy very, very quietly, they all turned aside.

Now after ten minutes, along came Tony from his game of football. He'd had a very nice time. He'd even scored a goal.

He thought he was doing very well. Come on, Tony, back over here. Pop that sack on your back real quick.

Put the sack on his back. He thought, nobody will ever know that I play football. What was in his sack now? Did he know that there was a monkey inside? Well, he was feeling very proud of himself.

He'd had a good game of football. So off he went now to Farmer Brown's house. Here we go.

When he arrived at Farmer Brown's house, he knocked on the door. Farmer Brown opened the door. He said, Good morning, Tony.

You're a little bit late, but not too early. Have you got the puppy? Oh, yes, Farmer Brown. I've got the puppy.

He said, then put it on my table. So he took the sack and put it on Farmer Brown's table. Farmer Brown untied that pink ribbon and he looked inside and what jumped out? The monkey.

Come on, try with me. Are you ready? Oh, he's quite a monkey. Look at this.

There we go. Well, he was so amazed he'd never seen anything like it. He took all of that monkey and he said, What's going on here? He put it into his sack again because Farmer Brown was very angry.

He said, Young man, I didn't want a monkey. I wanted a puppy. So you better take this straight home.

So he put it back in his sack. He was still scratching his head and he was weeping a little bit. Are you weeping? Go on, weep a little.

Can you see him crying? No? Just a minute. There he goes. He was weeping a little.

He put the sack back on his back and off he went. This time his head was a bit low. Come on, we're on our way home, carrying the sack.

And he couldn't understand what had happened with that puppy and why it had suddenly become a monkey. How can a puppy be sometimes a puppy and sometimes a monkey? He didn't really understand this, did you Tony? Huh? But on the way home, who did he see in the field? Who did he see? The puppy? What? Playing football? No! Who did he see playing football? His friends, the boys. And what did the boys do? They said, Tony! Come and play football with us! He said, well that's the last thing I'm going to do.

So he kept on his way. Come on, Tony. On his way.

But what did that little boy do? He took that little ball of temptation and he gave it a mighty kick. Over it came. Everybody whistle with me.

He worked on too long. It already landed right by his feet. And he saw that ball and he scratched his head.

And then who came along? Because he's always the tempter. He's always telling lies. He's always telling us to do things that we really don't want to do.

So he whistled at Tony and said, Tony, go and have another game of football. Because you love playing football, don't you, Tony? Ah, no. You're in the wrong story.

This isn't Walt Disney, you know. It's all pretend. So he looked at that ball and he thought, I'm sure you thought, I'd love to play football.

And it was such a temptation that the devil said, go on, Tony, just for five minutes. Well, he's totally playing for five minutes. And he looked at that ball and the temptation was so great.

So he put the sack down again. Down you go, Tony. You take the ball, climb over the fence.

Here we go. That foot? Yep. Right.

And off you go, right in that corner. Now, no sooner was he away than those naughty boys, they came again. They opened the sack.

And this time they took the monkey out of the sack and put an elephant in. No, no, no. They put the puppy back inside.

Tied it up. Very, very quietly. It crept away out of the sack.

Now, after how many minutes? Oh, come on, try again. How many minutes? No, no, try again. A bit more.

More than that. Ten. Okay, ten.

She's heard the story before. After ten minutes, he came back again. Come on, Tony.

Get that sack on your back quick. On your way to Mum's home. Straight on.

And he'd had a tremendous time. Scored another goal, haven't you? Yes, well done. Very cooperative, this boy.

Thank you for letting him come. He arrived back at the house and then he thought, oh boy, I'm going to get into trouble if I haven't delivered the puppy, which is now a monkey. Isn't it a monkey? What is it now? It's the puppy back again.

But what did he think was inside? The monkey. Oh, what confusion. So he came to the door and he knocked on the door.

But before he did, he thought, I'd better start crying because maybe then Mummy won't spank me so hard. So... Have you seen that? The tears? God, I'm crying. If you don't, I'm going to spit in your eye.

And he really started to cry. Moo! Moo! All over the place, tears everywhere, rolling down his cheeks. Mummy came to the door and she said, Tony, my dearest son, what's the matter with you? And she picked him up and she hugged him and she said, why are you crying? Come inside.

Of course, he thought he was doing very well this time. He said, Mummy, it's this sack. It's not a puppy, it's a monkey.

She couldn't understand this. So they put the sack on the table, untied the pink ribbon, and out jumped the... Puppy! And he barked all over the place. All together now, let's hear you.

Woo! Thank you, boy, you're amazing as well. He was so angry and upset, he took hold of the puppy and he began to shake and shake and he said, if you're going to be a puppy, be a puppy. If you're going to be a monkey, be a monkey.

And at this, Mummy took him by the ear and she said, Tony. Tony. Tears were beginning to dry as he looked up to his mum.

She said, she said, Tony, if you're going to be a puppy, be a puppy. And if you're going to be a monkey, be a monkey. What do you think she meant? She said, Tony, with you, I can never understand whether you're going to be good or whether you're going to be bad.

Sometimes you tell me you're going to be good and live for Jesus, and then the next thing you're doing is such silly, silly tricks that are not honouring to Jesus at all. This time, he was standing there looking very sad with the world. You should put a smile on your face now.

He said, Mummy, you know, really, I do want to be good. But even when I want to be good, it seems I do these bad things. How can I be really good? You know, because Mum loved him.

She said, Tony, I'm going to tell you because you're just old enough to know how you can be really good. So she went to the cupboard and she brought down a big black book. What was that book? Anyone know? Bible.

Oh, you all know that. She turned the page to the Bible and she started to tell Tony the story of Jesus. How he loves boys and girls.

He said, bring all the boys and girls to me. She also told him the story where Jesus died for our sins, for all the bad things, for all the times we've been disobedient, for all the naughty words that we said, for the lies that sometimes we say, and all the nasty tricks we get up to. And she said, you know, Jesus died for this.

And if you will, he's ready to forgive you and change you so you're not sometimes a puppy and sometimes a monkey, sometimes good and sometimes bad. But Jesus wants to come and fill this heart of yours with himself because he is altogether good. Tony said, Mommy, do you think if I ask him he'd come into my heart and cleanse me and make me really good? Of course he will.

Thank you very much. So she said, well then, let's pray and ask him just that. So that's what we're going to do right now.

So boys and girls, put your hands together like this. Just like you did. And they began to pray and they prayed like this.

Lord Jesus, there are so many naughty things that are spoiling Tony's life, that spoil the lives of all boys and girls and moms and dads too. And we ask you, Lord Jesus, in all your mercy and in all your goodness and all your love for us, that you'll forgive and change us and make us really good. For we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. You know, the next day, Tony was back in school and this time, he wasn't doing like he did before. You know what he did before? He would creep up behind the girls and pull their hair and run away.

No, you never do that, do you, Tony? Do you? Oh boy. I knew I shouldn't have asked Tony for this. Well, he wasn't anymore.

Now he was being so kind and helpful. Helping mom do all her shopping too. He'd carry the bags for her.

And you wouldn't believe he was the same little boy. Because he was so good. He wasn't sometimes good and sometimes bad.

He said, now every day, I'm going to read my Bible and I'm going to see what Jesus wants me to do today. And he became the best boy in school. And all the teachers were watching because he was such a good boy.

He decided to live with Jesus. Did you like that story? No? Fine. How many of you are going to live for Jesus? Not many.

The moms and dads seem to be this way. Are you too? Oh yeah, good. Wow, that's really nice.

Thank you very much, Tony, for being so helpful. You're welcome. Remember that 10P? Would you like this 10P? Okay, there you are.

Oh, he's gone again. Okay, there you go. Hang on to it.

Wow, thank you very, very much. Back over to you for a minute or two. Next day.

In heavenly armor we'll enter the land where battle belongs to the Lord. No weapon that's fashioned against us will stand where battle belongs to the Lord. We sing glory honor power and strength to the Lord.

We sing glory honor power and strength to the Lord. When the power of darkness comes in like a flood the battle belongs to the Lord. He's raised up a standard the power of His blood the battle belongs to the Lord.

We sing glory honor power and strength to the Lord. We sing glory honor power and strength to the Lord. When your enemy presses in hard do not fear the battle belongs to the Lord.

Take courage my friend your redemption is near the battle belongs to the Lord. We sing glory honor power and strength to the Lord. We sing glory honor power and strength to the Lord.

We sing glory honor power and strength to the Lord. We sing glory honor power and strength to the Lord. Power and strength to the Lord.

Power and strength to the Lord. Turn to number 14. 1, 4. Be still, all the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here.

Come now, be born in love with reverence and fear. In Him, no sin is found, we stand on holy ground. Be still, all the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around. He burns with holy fire, with splendor He is crowned. Our altar is the sight, our radiant key of light.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around. Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place. He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister His grace.

No word too hard for Him, in faith receive from Him. Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place. Certainly much more than a children's story.

It's one of the most wonderful chapters in the Word of God. Daniel chapter 3. Now there's so many different versions. I'm going to read from the old King James.

Someone said it was good enough to say Paul, so it's good enough for me. Chapter 3. Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold whose height was three square cubits, the breadth thereof six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent together the princes, the governors, the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Then the princes, the governors, the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the province were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Then it, and Harold cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, zephyr, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, you shall bow down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. And whoso falleth not down and worshipeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning, fiery furnace. Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, zephyr, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near and accused the Jews. They spake and said to Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live forever. Thou, O king, hast made a decree that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, zephyr, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down

and worship the golden image.

And whoso falleth not down and worshipeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning, fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, have not regarded thee.

They serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. Then Nebuchadnezzar, in his rage and fury, commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king.

Nebuchadnezzar spake and said 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? Now, if you be ready, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, zephyr, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, you fall down and worship the image which I have made, it will be well. But if you worship not, you shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning, fiery furnace. And who is that god who shall deliver you out of my hands? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this manner.

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 hast set up. Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury.

The form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Therefore he spake and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was able to be heated. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning, fiery furnace.

Then these men were bound in their coats, their horses, their hats, and their other garments, and were cast in the midst of the burning furnace. Therefore, because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound in the midst of the burning, fiery furnace.

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, rose up in haste, and spake and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the form of the four is like the Son of God. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning, fiery furnace, spake and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth, come hither.

Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came forth out of the midst of the fire, and the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose body the fire had no power, nor was there a hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire in past omens. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and hath changed the king's words, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any God, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, that every people, nation, and language, which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in

pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill, because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon. Well, I think we can actually stop right there, because it's such a tremendous message in itself, isn't it? But I will add a little bit more. I find that to be within an organization such as OM, and to work on board a ship like Logos, is one of the greatest of privileges.

Back in 1963, OM came to my hometown, Fulton, up in north-west England, and at first, when I heard that they were in town, I avoided them, because they had not the best name in those days. In fact, they were known to be something like, you might say, a group of travelling Christian gypsies, almost, who were here for a time, and then they'd move on somewhere else, and OM didn't have the best name when they first came to Britain, so I didn't bother with them. Then a friend who worked in my office, I was working for British Rail at the time, he said, Dave, I've just been along to one of these OM meetings, and I heard an Irishman, and he himself was Irish, he said, I've heard an Irishman, his name was Billy Jones, some of you know Billy, and he said, this is fantastic, you've got to go along there, and he got me so whipped up, because I knew him, he was a backslider, this friend of mine at work, but this had captured him so much, I could see him getting closer to the Lord each day, and I thought, if this is having such a transforming message on his life, I'm going to go along and see these guys.

So I jumped on my little old scooter, and I headed off to Atherton, this is where the OM conference was in 1963. Remember those days, Dale? Anybody else here in 63? Bob died off as well. There's one or two around.

But that was some conference. I went in on this conference, it was the annual conference before the groups go out to different parts, I think there were maybe three to four hundred. That was the entire number of OM at that time in that conference.

Hardly anybody would miss the annual conference in those days. And I sat up there at the back, and I listened, McCrosty was speaking, I think on discipleship, and I was riveted to my seat listening to all this, and it was a powerful message. During the meeting, some of the OMers were fainting, and they were having to be carried out.

Now I thought, wow, this is some powerful message. But is it really that powerful? I learned later on that they were folks who just had injections that day, and they couldn't take it. They'd been given some powerful vaccine, you remember that? And they were going off to India or Turkey or wherever in the next few days at the end of the conference.

But I was impressed by my first meeting with the OM group. And at that time, a friend of mine, we went to the same church up in Fulton. He'd just gone off to Bible college.

He'd gone to Moreland, a good Brethren Bible college. And my background in those days was Brethren. I'm a little wider expanded these days.

But they're not a bad group to begin with. Those of you who are watching on that camera, well, they're a great bunch actually. And what I like about the Brethren is that they're founded on the word of God.

And so my friend Alan, he'd gone off to Bible college. And I was saving up so that the following year, I'd have enough money to go and join him in Bible college. But I was so challenged by these OMers that I

thought, maybe, maybe I'll just join OM for one year.

And then after this, I'll go off to Bible college, join my pal Alan. So, the end of 1963, I packed in my job on British Rail. Beginning of 64, I joined the ranks of OM.

The intention was to be with OM just for a year. What I decided in my life, I'd only been a Christian about three years then. And I decided I wanted to give 10 of my best years.

And I thought, your 20s, early 20s into your 30s, that's a good time to give your best years to the Lord. So, I thought I'd give my 10 best years to God. And that first year would be with OM.

Well, I joined for that first year and I enjoyed it so much, as I'm sure you're going to do, this year on board Logus. And I decided to stay a little bit longer. I think I did end up staying about 25 or 26 years.

Found a good OM wife in my Swiss wife, Matilda, there. And they've been great years. And your year on OM, you'll find it to be a tremendous year.

But I must say, it'll only be as good as you make it. And I want to encourage you by something from the book of Daniel. Because as you look at the life of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, you might say that they were in God's Bible school.

And if I could give a title to the message this morning, I'd probably call it, Being Prepared in the School of God. And what better place, I would say, than being with OM. And perhaps one of the best places in OM is on board ship.

But it'll be only as good as you make it before the Lord. Take this as a time of preparation. We stepped out of OM just over a year ago to launch STV videos, share the vision videos.

Although we're no longer in OM, I still counted my main task in life is to be a missionary for God. So whether in OM or out of OM, it makes little difference. We're still missionaries for Christ, wherever He puts us.

And remember that. You're not just a missionary while you're on OM for the next year or two years or whatever your commitment is. But it's a lifelong commitment.

Not just soldiers for a summer, one of our little brochures once said. Soldiers for a life. This is a special time, a preparation in the school of God.

And we see how God was preparing the lives of these men as they were ready constantly to submit their lives to Him. And it was always a learn a bit, submit a little more. Learn a bit, submit a little more.

And you could see Christ growing in the lives of these men. And they met Christ in a personal way, even though it was long before His birth. I think of Daniel chapter 1, and you know these stories very well.

At this time, old Nebuchadnezzar the king, he was probably the greatest king in the world in those days. Outside the borders of China, I should imagine, King Nebuchadnezzar had the greatest empire in the world. It stretched in the east as far as India, and to the west it was down into Egypt, northern Africa.

It was no small empire. We British like to boast that we had an empire at one time. But I don't think we can really compare it with old King Nebuchadnezzar's.

Very, very mighty empire. And at this time he sent his soldiers out west to Israel. They camped around the city of Jerusalem.

Any of you been to Jerusalem? Many of you have been to Jerusalem. A beautiful city, a walled city. And in those days, those walls had been knocked down by Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers.

They had besieged the city. They had burnt down the gates, knocked down the walls, and they had taken captive many of the Jewish people. And old Nebuchadnezzar, in some ways, he seems to be a stupid man.

In some ways, he's got great wisdom. What he'd done, he'd taken the young men of noble background, and that included Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, considered princes in some ways, brought them back into Babylon. And he was going to train them in the ways of Babylon so that he could put them in charge of areas of Babylon, knowing that they were from nobility, they would be the natural ones to lead.

If you've studied history, you'll find that it's men of nobility who seem to have been leading the world. And when a war breaks out, the governments, they go to, not so much to the poor people, they don't come to the working people to run the navy and to run the military, but they go to the nobility and get men who've already grown up as leaders, and they put them on the vessels that lead the war. So that's what old Nebuchadnezzar was doing here.

And all the time, I can see Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Daniel having questions about all this. Here we are, we're the people of God, God's chosen people, the Jewish nation. And look what's happening.

Our great city, the temple of God, it's being knocked down, and we're being marched off into captivity. And there's, but God, appearing again and again. But God, we're being carried away, off as slaves into captivity.

The answer comes back from God, but I have a plan. And there in chapter one, we see something of this plan, because the plan is to perfect these men before God, to make them into character, characters that are godly characters. And in this first chapter, as they're brought into the king's palace, they're told they've got to eat what the king eats.

So they've been set there in the banqueting table with the best of Babylon food. Well, if you were invited along to Buckingham Palace while you're here in London, you probably won't be, but if you were, I don't think you'd turn your nose up as you sat around the queen's table. I think she'd have the best of British food.

And maybe like old Nebuchadnezzar, it might be a good old English breakfast, egg and bacon. If you've ever had an English breakfast, it's one of the best breakfasts going. That is, unless you're a Jew.

And of course, the Jews, they sat there around the king's table, and they knew they couldn't partake. But it was, but God, what are you doing? You're giving us this meat, but it's forbidden food for us. God said, but I've got a plan for you.

I'm going to teach you something special. So they decided before God, they'd already learned it at the mother's knee, that we are going to live for our God no matter what it costs. When the wrong food's set before us, we're going to refuse it.

So they said to the man who was over them, listen, we cannot eat this food. You just give us simple food. Vegetables, water, we'll survive on that.

You just try us for ten days. Well, the man who was in charge of them, he said, look, it's my head that's on the block if you don't look as good as the rest of these others. You test us for ten days.

He says after ten days, their complexion was fairer, their faces were fatter, they looked more healthy than the rest of the kids put together. And these young men, and they're probably only teenagers at this time, they were learning to trust God, you might say in a small way. Then you get into chapter two, the Lord has now a bigger lesson for them.

Because in a sense, the Jewish nation now, who are there in Babylon, their lives are threatened. Because the king, he has a dream. And this dream disturbs him so much, it's a nightmare.

He wakes up in the middle of the night, and his skirt's stiff, and he's hot and sweaty. And as soon as he wakes, the dream has gone out of his head. Have you had that experience? Many times.

Something that really, really shakes you. And you wake up and suddenly think, what on earth was it that I was dreaming? It's gone from you, but it scared you while it was on. And he's very concerned about this because he thinks it's something to do with his empire.

And so he calls for all the wise men. And in among them, of course, there's Daniel. And he said, now I want you to tell me the interpretation of this dream that I have.

So the wise men come along and they said, oh, no problems. King, we can all tell you the interpretation of your dream. Now, what was your dream? He said, ah, so that I know for sure that you've got the interpretation, you've also got to tell me what the dream is.

And that made them scratch their head. Because they could very soon dream up an interpretation, but they couldn't very soon tell him what he'd been dreaming. So he threatened them.

He said, listen, you're just stalling for time. If you don't tell me what the dream was and its interpretation, it's off with your heads, the lot of you. This story went around and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and Daniel, they heard about it.

And they were saying, but God, we've been given an impossible task. How can we know that? We also could give an interpretation, but how can we tell him what his dream was? God comes back, but I am the God who reveals secrets. So they prayed to him.

They got the old prayer meeting going. It's interesting to read through those verses there, how they prayed and how they thanked God and how they praised him. The answer came like that.

God told them the dream and the interpretation. And old Daniel marched back up to the palace with his head high because he knew he had a word from God. And in these days when people are getting words from God, we're sometimes questioning, is it really from God? Daniel had no doubt about this.

He stood before the king. And the king had no doubt because as Daniel told him the dream and its interpretation, he said, yes, that's for sure the interpretation because that was just my dream word for word. So God showed himself to them.

And they were growing in the school of God. And their lives were constantly being prepared. Counted this year on O-M that you're in the school of God and that God is preparing you.

You know, I find that on O-M, there's so much going on. You can get caught up in the work and you can put God inside. You can get so much caught up in the work, you can forget the people that we're supposed to be ministering to.

And it's more than likely that will happen to you this year, especially if it's your first year. Because there's so much happening. Thank God there are some who've been around a few years longer and they've learned some of these lessons.

They've had to go through it too. We've all had our first years. You know, I was very impressed yesterday when we were here.

We'd had a tremendous meeting with George over in the building there. And then we came on board and there's so much activity. The Logos is a beehive of activity.

Be careful in all the activity. You don't push the warning. It's a very severe warning because it's the easiest thing to do.

And I would say O-M and on board O-M ships more than almost any other mission. There's so much going on. It's excitement coming into London.

It's excitement when you leave. It's excitement going to another country and to another port and meeting more people. There's lots of excitement.

Your life can be full of excitement and empty of God. It's a very severe warning. Yesterday, just as we were leaving, we'd enjoyed the day on board.

Just as we were leaving, one shipman came to us and he said, listen, you're not leaving. We want you to stay for a meal. And I thought, you know, that was generous.

It was a man on board. Actually, it was M. I might as well tell you. He had thoughts for people.

Be concerned with the people. Because when you stand out on the book exhibition, and that was my area, my area for the past 21 years has been in books, and it's a great ministry. But you can get so caught up in your book ministry, you stand at the till or you're handing the books out and you treat people like machines.

Be careful. Because God treats you as a person. He has a very loving care over each one of us.

Treat people individually. That's what counts in our life. Make it one of your goals.

As God is your goal, make people a goal too. So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, they were learning more in the school of God. And each time they're learning more to surrender the lives to him, more to trust him.

Then we get into chapter 3, and this is probably one of the more difficult chapters in their life. I like this chapter because it reminds me so much of India. It begins here with the old king going out and building himself this great image, covered in gold.

Those of you who've been to places like India, you'll see gods and goddesses on every corner. Almost every household you go to, there'll be the Hindu god. You'll see the holy cow.

You'll see people in the river Ganges doing their puja every morning to a thousand gods. I used to live in Allahabad. It's right on the banks of the river Ganges and the river Jamuna.

They meet together there. There's a great big fort built by Akbar the Great. I spent about three years there.

Wonderful years. The Indian people are lovely people. I got into the university for some time.

One of my friends was a very intelligent young man. His name was Ramesh. One day we decided to go down by the Ganges.

As you go down by the old fort there, there's an underground temple. In this underground temple, there's a reclining anaman. The anaman means monkey.

This great big reclining anaman god lies there. It's a terrible creature to look at. All in black with garlands of course all around it and offerings of rice and paisa thrown at it.

We were walking past and I could see that anaman down the steps as we walked past. I was talking to Ramesh. As we passed by, I thought I was still talking to him.

But as I looked back, I found I'd left him back there. He was doing his namaste and his puja looking down there at the anaman. I was quite amazed because he was no stupid fellow.

His father was one of the judges in the high court in Allahabad. Very intelligent young man. But that gave me a different light on this passage here.

Because as I read this, remember Nebuchadnezzar, he sent together the princes, the governors, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs and all the rulers. It was the intelligentsia of his domain. He invited them along and he was making them bow down and worship a statue.

I find that very difficult to understand until of course I saw my friend, a very intelligent man, bowing down, worshipping a statue that had ears of stone. I couldn't hear him. Eyes of stone that couldn't see, heart of stone that couldn't feel.

And here King Nebuchadnezzar he said, when the music begins, you're all commanded to bow down and worship. And even the intelligentsia, they bowed to worship a god of stone, a god of clay, a god of gold. But there were certain men who just didn't turn up on that day.

In fact, some of the Chaldeans had been watching Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and Daniel. They found them bowing down in the direction of Jerusalem, praying to the invisible god, to the god of the universe, the god whom cannot be seen with eyes nor touched with hands and yet he feels because he made the ear, he made the eyes, he made the heart and he feels far better than you and I. So they came along and they whispered in the king's ears. They said, oh king Nebuchadnezzar and they put on the butter and they said, as they put the butter on, oh king live forever, another layer of butter.

They said, didn't you give a command that anyone who's not here worshipping the god that you set up, didn't you say they're going to be cast into a fire furnace? He said, I certainly did. They said, well there's Shadrach, there's Meshach and Abednego. You see they were jealous of these men because already they

had proved themselves to the king and they'd already been given important areas of life.

They were jealous of them. They said, well there's these Jews and they're not here. They're bowing down in the direction of Jerusalem, praying to the invisible god.

So king Nebuchadnezzar, he wasn't a man who was used to having his commands disobeyed, so he called for them. They came and stood before him and said, listen, I heard that you weren't bowing down to worship the idol that I, king Nebuchadnezzar, have set up and I can imagine if one day you were called to the front of the queen of England and you'd done something that she didn't exactly approve of, I can imagine my cheek would chatter and my knees would probably knock in the presence of the queen. But she was nowhere near as powerful as old Nebuchadnezzar and I don't believe she's ever passed the death sentence.

Old Nebuchadnezzar, he said, listen, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, I'm going to give you one more chance. We're going to start the music and if you don't bow down when the music starts, then you're going to face the music. So they set the music up, but it's interesting to hear the answer that he gets from these men who now for years have been growing in the school of Christ.

It says in verse 17, I like this, it says, O king Nebuchadnezzar, if it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us and he'll take us out of your hand. So there, but I like the next verse better than that. Because that one began, if it be so, but the next one, and here's a lesson to learn, but if not.

Now often we boast, we say we're going into the mouth of the lion or the mouth of the bear, the ship's going into Russia soon. We're considering taking it into the mouth of the lion, into China. I think Pete's there right now, Peter Conlon.

We're putting our head in the lion's mouth. But, we boast, our God is able to deliver us. We better be ready to learn the next verse.

But if not, but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will still not serve your God, nor worship the golden image which you've set up. Having said that, they'd seen it. Their faith was there on the spot.

They knew it was the fiery furnace they would face. And O king Nebuchadnezzar, it says the form of his face was changed with anger. It's nice being on OM and in these Christian missions because we all walk around like this, don't we? Ten past ten smart.

But in the real world, it's not always quite like that. It's often a twenty past eight. So the king, the form of his face was so angry.

He said, get that furnace hotter than it's ever to be heated. And he commanded his finest soldiers. They came along with their armor plates, giants.

And I can imagine them getting all the shedrack mesh I can imagine they go for. Their feet wouldn't even be touching the floor as they marched them down towards the furnace. You know what I find is interesting? As they were thrown into the fiery furnace, it's the soldiers who don't last very long.

It says they were slain on the spot. They couldn't take the heat. And they didn't even go in the fire.

Shedrack mesh I can imagine they go. It says they fell down in the midst of that furnace, burned. But they weren't burned for long.

Because they'd been learning in the school of Christ. Now they were ready to face that fire. And as old Nebuchadnezzar looked on, if they'd have had binoculars in those days, old Nebuchadnezzar would have had the greatest fear of binoculars.

Because he wanted to watch them burn to a cinder. But as he looked up, he was absolutely amazed. Because no longer were they chained.

No longer were they on the floor. They were standing and they were loosed. And they were walking around.

And it seems to me as though they were chanting in Jesus. Because it says, I see four men. I only cast in three.

I see four. It says the four is like the sun above. Boy, that's something, isn't it? That's something as you march into the bird's mouth.

As you march into the lion's mouth as you get out to China. In the midst of the burning, fiery furnace, Christ promises to be with you. He doesn't always promise to take you out of it.

But he does promise to lead you. What a lesson to learn as you go through the school of Christ. Of course, he called them to come out.

And now his words and his face has changed. He said, I've never seen anything like this. You know, God was also speaking through these men to the king.

And you might be meeting kings or presidents or prime ministers on board this ship. It's amazing who comes on board us. May your life be such a testimony.

As they now stood before the king with their ten past ten smiles, the old king is now making a new command. And he gets all the fellas, the whisperers. He says, if anybody says anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, he says they'll be slain and their houses made into a dungeon.

And God was speaking to King Nebuchadnezzar through these godly men. He spoke many times. He'd spoken to him as he saw their testimony in chapter one.

He'd spoken again through the interpretation of the dream by Daniel in chapter two. He speaks now very strongly through a fiery furnace in chapter three. All this time and yet still, old Nebuchadnezzar is now a converted man.

He has a message to the young God. Because for King Nebuchadnezzar, God has to really humbly take the kingdom away from him, make him like an animal out in the grass for days before he learns that there's a God in heaven who rules. Then he comes to his senses and it does seem then he's a converted man.

But no, the king speaks very well of these young men. And because they've come through the school and they've learned in the school of Christ, they're even promoted in the kingdom. And I think this is the kind of men and women that God searches for today in the nations around the world.

He looks for men who will be true to him, who've come up through the school of Christ and who he can put in charge of governments, in charge of the military, in charge of national finance, in charge of the book exhibition. God is looking for men and women like you and me who will bring through that school of Christ and teaches many wonderful lessons. On board ship, and you know I am, you'll have experiences so valuable you'll probably never find anywhere else.

Don't let them slip through your fingers. Count them as precious lessons and may you come out at the end of the day, at the end of life, saying, I came through Christ's school and I belong to him. And he's my savior and I'll never swap him no matter what the world offers.

It's been a pleasure sharing some of these verses with you. God bless you and may the Lord go with you as you serve him from port to port. Lord Jesus, we do thank you for your word, such a sure foundation.

Lord, we remember the day when you took our lives and you brought us into this wonderful family of God. Lord, you've already done so many wonderful things for us. We don't want to leave this school of Christ.

Today, Lord, we've come so far and we say we want to go on. We want to make it a life of training, a life of serving. As we follow you, we would have no other master.

You're a wonderful, precious Savior. We give you all the praise.

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