

## Evotional

**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> November 2007 (am).  
**Speaker:** Neil Durling.  
**Message title:** “Praying in faith.”



### **Bible passage: Daniel 3:16-25:**

*The passage is too long for this page.*

### **The message in brief:**

On Remembrance Sunday we remember those who suffered and gave their lives for peace. In this passage we remember three men (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) who were willing to give their lives for their God. They were Daniel's friends in exile in Babylon. They were probably also administrators; normal people like you and me.

King Nebuchadnezzar had a gold image made (90 ft tall & 9 ft wide) and commanded that when people heard the sound of various instruments they must fall down and worship. These three men refused and were eventually found out and brought before the king where they make a firm but courteous refusal. They basically say, “If our God exists he is able to save us, but if he doesn't, we trust him.” The king is angered and orders the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than usual. His strongest soldiers take the bound men and throw them into the furnace. These strong men die in the process as the three men wander around in the bottom of the furnace (it was shaped like an old fashioned glass milk bottle with a large door above another opening for the wood). Nebuchadnezzar sees them walking around with a fourth man who looks like a son of the gods. It could be Daniel, an angel, God or Jesus; we don't know who exactly. The men are brought out and the king admits their God is real.

This is an amazing story. We hear and read of many amazing stories like this one. But please notice two things:

1: The length of time they had probably been praying and secretly refusing to bow down. Why do we shrink these Bible passages into Sunday School stories? Is it to keep them at arms length?

2: This passage is a mountain-top experience; they only went in the fire once. Why do preachers (like me) often preach these mountain-top experiences as if they were everyday life and should always be for everyone as well!? If we took the mountain-tops along with the valleys and plains in our lives and stretched them into one long line representing our lives, the mountain-tops would be but a dot.

So what is praying in faith?

It is not primarily about changing God's mind: We have been sold this so many times. If I pray loudly or quietly enough... If enough people turn up for the prayer meeting... If I use the right formula... God has to answer. If we go down this line we become god and God Almighty becomes our Genii who has to respond to our request. Philip Yancey points out in his book on prayer that there are over 600 requests for God to change his mind in the Old Testament and God only changes his mind on four occasions – there are four mountain-tops if you like.

The three men prayed in faith. They prayed: “God is able to save us... but if he doesn't...” We need to remember when we pray that “If he doesn't” is a *real* possibility; and when that is the case, the “fourth man” is in the fire of our disappointment and confusion with us.

Praying in faith is about changing us and others. When we pray we often become the answer to our prayers. Through our actions we see others changed, just as the three men in the furnace did.

Let's pray for the mountain-tops because God is able to give them... but if he doesn't...

### **Question:**

Am I praying in faith?

### **A prayer:**

Father God,

Thank you that you hear my prayers.

Amen.