

I'm on Fire
Daniel 3:1 – 4:3
The Laurel Center
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Main Idea: God rescues his faithful servants out of persecution and receives the glory.

Introduction

I mentioned my three friends, Shadrach Meshack and Abednego, and how we represented our God in a foreign land where people believed in false gods. There were constant challenges to our faith as we lived in this land of captivity. Let me tell you today about the time when my friends endured a fiery trial because they stood up for our God. Despite the challenges of doing what we know God wants us to do and facing the dangers of people who do not like God, we must be faithful and he will rescue us from whatever consequences are faithfulness brings.

Text – Daniel 3:28–30

28 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king’s command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. **29** Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way.” **30** Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

- I.** Challenges arise for those faithful to God (vv. 3:1 – 3:7).
 - A** Arrogant people challenge God’s sovereignty.
 - 1 The golden statue mentioned in verse one is 90 feet high and 9 feet wide. This is an unusual statue if it contains an image of a God or the king. The dimensions do not match such an image.
 - 2 It is most likely that we must remember that there was a pedestal or base around the image. It is most likely there was an inscription on it or perhaps images of the Babylonian gods.
 - 3 Perhaps it was an image of the king himself in the base was full of religious symbols and images of their gods. This would make the image not only idol worship but also worship of the king as close to the deities.
 - B** Peer pressure and dangers the people of God.
 - 1 The passage does not tell us that everyone in the kingdom was forced to worship this image. Bowing down to the image may have been an act of homage and in loyalty test for the rulers represented by nations.

- 2 The objective may have been for the rulers from different nations such as Daniel and his friends to pay homage to the king by bowing down to the image. This would be more than simply paying homage.
- 3 If the image contain both deities and the King, it would've been bowing down to idols, specifically forbidden by the second commandment. It also may have been paying homage not just to the king but to the gods of Babylon.
- 4 Such a loyalty test would go against not just a religious code of Israel but also would stretch the limits of a loyalty test. The Hebrews would not just be showing their loyalty to the king but also to his gods.
- 5 This loyalty test was done because many of the people in leadership positions were from other empires and other nations. It was part of the Babylonian program of brainwashing those from other nations to become Babylonians.

II. God delivers faithful ones who refused to bow down (vv. 3:8 – 3:30).

A God's faithful people stand up to persecution.

- 1 Because this command violated the way that we live in the land of foreigners, the Hebrews stood up to the king's order not out of disrespect to the king or his office, but because they could not worship a man as God or worship the gods of Babylon.
- 2 Even though they were young, the Hebrews show us a great principle for living in a foreign land and strangers. Romans chapter 13 outlines how to live in a foreign land.
- 3 We are taught that when civic rules go against our worship of God and his rules, it is not wrong to protest the rules peacefully. That is exactly what these Hebrews do here.
- 4 At no time are we allowed to follow the rules of any nation or leader when they go against God's rules for worshiping him. We are called to stand against worship of men or idols.

B God rescues his people from persecution.

- 1 The fiery furnace that was set up as a trial for the Israelites was heated seven times hotter than usual. The sermons of the king who put them there died in the fire because of its heat.
- 2 No matter how fiery the trials or how hot the fire gets, the Israelites teaches another lesson about dealing with persecution. Whether or not God rescues us from the flames or the trial, we are still called to stand for him.
- 3 Even if we endure the final trial of death and God does not rescue us from whatever dangers we face from persecutors, we're still to stand up for him.

At no time are we given a free pass to be angry at God if he does not deliver us from a trial.

- 4 Faithfully serving him despite the trial is also a show of faithfulness to God and trust in him. No matter how long we face the trial and if we don't get rescued we still honor God by demonstrating faithfulness to him despite the length of the trial or its veracity.
- 5 Are faithfulness to God in the midst of a trial shows just as much worship of him as seeing ourselves read from a trial. Whether or not God rescues us we still remain faithful to him and demonstrate a witness to unbelievers.

III. God is praised for his power and grace (vv. 4:1 – 4:3).

A God's deliverance calls sinners to worship him.

- 1 In this instance, the faithfulness of the Hebrews is rewarded by God through his rescuing of them from the fiery furnace. Not only does God rescue them but shows his power in the same instance.
- 2 Although three Hebrews go into the fire, the fire does not harm them in any way. It does not even censure their hair! God also sends another person to be with them in the flames.
- 3 God is always with us in our trials even when we do not notice his presence. We must take it on faith would we do not see them in the trial that he is still there with us.
- 4 Because God allowed for this fourth person be with the Hebrews, it presents a miracle in which the king notices God's protection of his people and his presence with them.
- 5 It is most likely that this is a Christophany, an instance of the pre-incarnate Christ appearing before the incarnation in the Gospels. Often, Angels or the angel of the Lord may be a representation of Jesus himself. One of the better ways to tell is how the angel of the Lord is described.
- 6 Here the king specifically calls him one of the sons of the gods. This would be the perception of a king who believes in multiple gods. It is also noticed that sometimes an angel of the Lord may be worshipped and not stop them from worshipping him.
- 7 In any case God is given the glory for his rescuing of the Hebrews in the fiery furnace. His visible presence with his people in the midst of their trial is assigned to the king of God's power over false gods.

B God is praised for his faithfulness.

- 1 Because of this visible sign of God's presence with his people in the midst of trials, the king gives praise to the God of the Hebrews. Although he

arrogantly set up a trial through the image probably of himself, he learned very quickly that neither he nor his gods are greater than the God of Israel.

- 2 Not only is the king humbled and his gods are proven to be false because they cannot do this by his own admission. This shows that God is more than worthy of praise even by unbelievers.
- 3 Whether others see God's visible signs of his presence with his people through trials or they only see the witness of faithful servants of God in during trials and still serving him, they will either be in awe of God or think the servants are more than they are.
- 4 In instances where people turn to us in worship because we are faithful to God and trial or even are impressed with us, we must point the praise to God. He alone deserves praise.

Conclusion

No matter what the trial may be or how hard it may be, God's presence is always with us through it. We trust in him no matter what the circumstances and we give him praise. Whether the trial is set up by God or by someone else our faithfulness to him is always the key to the trial. He receives the glory for our faithfulness to him. Unbelievers will see that their false beliefs or false gods are called into question when they meet the one true God.