

Daniel: A Fiery Furnace and a Fourth Man

Daniel 3

MPS God delivers those who trust in Him and uses their life to testify, so the nations see His glory and worship Him.

OBJ Every person should trust God to deliver because of Four Issues we face that Jesus has already overcome.

READ Daniel 3:1-13

King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. ²Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ³Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ⁴And the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, ⁵that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. ⁶And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace." ⁷Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

⁸Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. ⁹They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! ¹⁰You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. ¹¹And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. ¹²There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

¹³Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? ¹⁵Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?"

Nebuchadnezzar sets up a massive golden image in the plain of Dura. He summons his whole kingdom by gathering leaders in every field of the Babylonian kingdom for the dedication. He commands that when they hear the sound of the instruments, they bow down and worship or they will immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. So when they heard the sound, they fell down and worshiped the golden image.

Some Chaldeans accused the Jews of not complying with the king's command. They identify Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as three who refuse to fall down and worship the golden image. Nebuchadnezzar is furious and brings these three before him. Mercifully, he asks them if this is true and gives them one last opportunity to comply. He tells them that if they do not bow down, they will be thrown into the burning fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar's demand climaxes in the question he poses that frames the whole chapter, "*And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?*"

TRANS This question sets up quite a showdown. But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew there was never a question as to who would win. And they entrusted their whole life on the One they knew who could deliver.

God delivers those who trust in Him and uses their life to testify, so the nations see His glory and worship Him.

Q? Our question today is "How do you trust God to deliver you when you take a stand to bear a faithful witness for Him?"

OBJ You should trust in Jesus today because He has already overcome Four ISSUES.



ISSUE #1: WORSHIP - Idolatry vs True Glory

These first verses remind us that just as in Babylon, we live in a world filled with opportunity for idolatry that is very demanding. False idols are always built on lies and are never provide what they claim. But the demand to worship them can be heavy and overwhelming. The gravity of the situation, and tension of the story, is heightened by the author's repetition. Rulers tell us what to bow down to: Nebuchadnezer "sets up" eight times in fourteen verses. What everybody is doing seems normal: the list of people gathered (.2,3), the group commanded(.4,7), and the instruments(.5) used to signify are repeated to emphasize the universal nature of the king's summons. What we repeatedly hear trains our thinking: the command, "fall down and worship", gets repeated (.5,6,7) reveals the complete allegiance they are expected to give. False idols promise you the world, demand complete allegiance under threat of life, and produce nothing for you. Repetition in this opening passage reveals much for us about the demand of idolatry. It is universal to all people, familiar to every culture, and summoning of all people. **The demand of idolatry beckons upon our life for worship, but only true glory satisfies the soul.**

What you worship is important because it shapes your whole life. Worship shapes your thinking, trains your patterns of rationale, and ultimately controls your whole life. Idolatry darkens your mind by honoring lesser glory to deprave your thinking with higher priority and lead you step-by-step further away from God and His true glory. You will always prioritize in your thinking and rationalizing what you have bowed down to in your life, because worship shapes your mind around what it glorifies. This is why Paul instructs in Colossians (3:1-2) to set your heart and mind on things above, so that the peace of Christ rules your heart and the Word of Christ rules your mind(3:15-16). **What you bow down/give in to shapes your whole life.**

GSPL Jesus is true glory that is worthy of your whole life. He defeated the Evil One.(Matthew 4:1-11) He was tempted in every way as we are, yet was without sin.(Hebrews 4:15) He committed no sin, and no sin was found in Him.(1 Peter 2:22) And though He knew no sin, he was made to be sin for us.(2 Corinthians 5:21). **Jesus proved He is the true glory that is worthy of all your worship because by faith He fulfills all His promises!**

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not go looking for a fight or a cause. Often times, living a peaceful life in this world, the Enemy brings the fight to us. So they knew they were standing on battleground because every opportunity of worship and demand of idolatry is a war for your life. **Is what you are worshipping, that which you give your time, energy, resource, and affection, worthy of your whole life?**

TRANS Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego show us how God stands with us to deliver us when we trust to stand for Him.
READ Daniel 3:16-18

¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

What a powerful reply! But not an easy one. Their response is simply that they cannot put Nebuchadnezzar's command above God's. They are confident that God is able to deliver them, because even if He chooses not to, they remain fully surrendered to His will. When we think of doing hard things, we typically think of "working up the courage", whether to speak, act, or otherwise. These three young men demonstrate that true confidence to obey comes from an absolute surrender to God. **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego honored the king, but stood to obey God because of a steeled courage from a complete humility before Him.**

ISSUE #2: OBEDIENCE – Compliance vs Trust

Nebuchadnezzar's threat was real, but it was not greater to these three men than God and His power. Trial and temptation always create moments of real hardship and tests of worship, to determine where one's trust really lies. **What you really worship is revealed by what you obey, what you choose to participate in with your life.**

Obedience is never a "one and done" proposition but daily following in all of life. Obedience to God is what got these men into their trial! God has not called you to an easy life, friend, but to a faithful one. Two aspects form our obedience in



every trial and temptation. First, knowing the truth about God is essential. Otherwise, we live by lies that deceive. They believed He was able. But the second aspect ultimately formed their obedience; surrendering to God's Will in the way He chose to work. They knew WHAT God could do, but their obedience was not in their intellect, it was in their surrender to whatever He chose to do. Their courage rested in God, that no matter HOW He chose to work, He would deliver them. 1 John 5:14 states, "And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us." Our prayer is never, "God, I know you can. And here's how...", BUT "God, I know you can, so I trust however you will." We should be confident in our prayer NOT because we pray, but because of the One in whom our faith rests; and not in only knowing what He can do, but in trusting that He will. You don't have to KNOW God's Will; you do have to fully trust it. Obedience means that you truly know God, but in discerning His will, wanting it for your life and trusting Him with your life is greater than knowing it before you obey. **A right belief in God (doctrine) will give you courage and confidence in what God can do, but only humility will surrender you to what He chooses to do.**

GSPL There was another similar prayer that led to perfect obedience. In the garden Jesus prayed, "nevertheless, not as I will but as you will...your will be done".(Matthew 26:39, 42) Jesus has already answered the question of whether God IS ABLE to deliver you from any fiery trial or temptation, AND THAT He will. But you must trust the truth of what you know of God as revealed in the Bible for how He chooses to work. When you place your faith in Jesus, His perfect obedience is applied to your sinfulness, so that when you trust Him you can be confident that no matter HOW He chooses to do it, God will deliver you. Make sure, friend, that what you ask of God is in accordance with His will. Then, surrender to obey His will no matter how it comes. **A life of humble courage knows God is able to deliver and trusts His way of deliverance over the threat of compliance or promise of indulgence. Will you surrender to God's way, to live your life like you KNOW He IS able and that He WILL deliver you?**

TRANS As this last passage showed God's power at work IN us, this next passage shows the power of God working for us. **READ** Daniel 3:19-25

¹⁹Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. ²⁰And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. ²¹Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. ²²Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. ²³And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.

²⁴Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." ²⁵He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

Nebuchadnezzar was mad, such that his face was changed. The heat of the furnace matched the fury of his rage. There is no heat like the fury of a false idol ignored! The furnace heated "seven times more" is a phrase that denotes an extreme, maximum amount. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were bound while fully clothed and thrown into the furnace. But his anger was so out of control that he was careless and caused his mighty men to be killed. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego fell bound into the furnace. Then, Nebuchadnezzar's face changed again, but this time to astonishment. When he looked into the furnace he saw four men, not three, all unbound, walking around in the fire unhurt. And the fourth looked like a son of the gods. This is known as a Christophany, an appearance of Christ in the Old Testament. And don't miss what happens here, friend, when Jesus shows up. The only thing that the fiery furnace affected was that these men were unbound.(bound .20, 21, 23; unbound .25) **Jesus met these men in the fire of their obedience, removed their bindings, and walked with them through their trial.**

ISSUE #3: PRESENCE - Problem vs Power

What seemed like a real problem for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was nothing more than a moment for Jesus' power to be manifested in their lives. We see their problem in what they faced. The furnace is mentioned five times, once in every verse from 19-23. And, in what was put on them. Three times it tells us they were bound.(.20,21,23) What started as a



temptation to comply turned into a trial of suffering, but God's power proved sufficient for both! **And how was God's power sufficient in the trial?** Jesus met the men who trusted Him in the hottest part of their trial to deliver them by walking with them. The way we saw the problem is the way we see their deliverance, they were unbound and unhurt.

As Nebuchadnezzar will say just a few verses later, these men *"yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God."* They believed He could – but they would have never known He WOULD until they trusted to follow Him into the fire where they found His presence awaiting them. They knew David's prayer in Psalm 23:4, *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me"*. I am always reminded of Andre Crouch's song "Through It All", which states, "If I never had a problem, I wouldn't know that you could solve them. I wouldn't know what faith in God could do." **What seemed like their biggest problem was really the point at which Jesus' presence would meet them to display God's power in their life.**

GSPL Nebuchadnezzar was careless and caused his mighty men to be killed. Jesus was intentional in love and willingly laid down His life to be stood up and crucified for us in our place. (John 3:14; 12:32; 1 John 3:16) Jesus can walk with you through your fiery trial and your heated temptation because He stood in your place to die your death for your sin. He is always with you when you offer up your body as a living sacrifice for Him! **The promise of God's presence overcomes every problem of trial and temptation as He walks with you to deliver you.** **Are you walking into your trials and problems fully confident that Jesus is WITH you?**

READ Daniel 3:26-30

²⁶Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. ²⁷And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. ²⁸Nebuchadnezzar 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. ²⁹Therefore 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." ³⁰Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar calls them out of the furnace, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out. Here again we see the list of all who were summoned to idolatry now witness the power of true glory. **And what did they witness?** The fire had no power over their bodies; the hair of their head was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and not even a smell of fire had come upon them. **God doesn't always deliver you from the fire, sometimes He delivers you through it. But however He chooses to deliver, we always know our reward in Jesus is eternal!**

ISSUE #4: REWARD – Resurrection to Eternal Life

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's trial was not about them, but to display God's power for Nebuchadnezzar and the nations. They didn't know this. But they did know God and His Word, and trusted that he would be true to the promise of His Word. For the unbeliever, death, though undesirable, is a way of escape from pain and hurt. But for the believer who walks with the Lord, death is the threshold of our eternal inheritance, the delivery of our imperishable hope, the awards banquet of our promise we have in Jesus. And we hear that hope unto eternal life here when Nebuchadnezzar calls them forth from the furnace, *"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!"* There is no resurrection that is not preceded by crucifixion. If you want to know the power of Christ's resurrection, you must surrender to the cross of crucifixion. But every person who yields up their body by faith in Christ as a living sacrifice is promised a resurrection. **Jesus has never called someone's name from death who didn't get up and walk out of their grave!**

GSPL Jesus was raised from the grave on the third day. (1 Corinthians 15:4) He is the firstborn of the dead (Revelation 1:5), and in Him we know we will be raised too with Him. (Romans 8:11; Ephesians 2:6) IF we are united with him in His death,



we will also be united with Him in His resurrection. (Romans 6:5) Jesus meets us in our trial and temptation to walk with us so that we know by faith we will be with Him in His resurrection; only Jesus delivers. **The glory of the true God is manifested in the power of His reward for the One who trusts; resurrection to eternal life.** **Do you know that you will be raised with Jesus?**

God delivers those who trust in Him and uses their life to testify, so the nations can see His glory and worship Him.

CLOSE Sometimes God delivers from the fire, and at other times He delivers through the fire, but no matter how He chooses to do it, God is always the One who delivers!

On that day, it was the three who stood for God that were thrown into the fire while everyone else stood around and watched. No burn from the flames, no singe from the heat, and no smell from the smoke, not even the ties that bound remained; there was no trace of this world's threat that touched God's children. But there is coming a Day when the only ones who will not go into the fire will be those who by faith stood in obedience to God for His glory. And from the fire of The Day none that are thrown in shall escape but all will go to eternal punishment.

Have you believed to take courage in WHO God is to humble yourself in whatever way He chooses to work?

