

LESSONS FROM DANIEL: A MAN OF GREAT COURAGE [3]

INTRODUCTION: In this lesson, we shall study an outstanding act of bravery on the part of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Like Daniel, his three friends have left us an excellent example of what it means to be faithful to God. They were willing to die rather than to disobey God! May our faith become as strong as theirs. With Daniel, these three good-looking, very intelligent, young Hebrews, refused to eat the king's food or drink the king's wine. (Dan. 1:11-16) By refusing to defile themselves, they placed their positions and lives in grave jeopardy. Because "*these four youths*" had the courage to put God first in their lives, "*God gave them knowledge and skill in learning and wisdom...*". (Dan. 1:17-20)

Maybe this illustration will help you to remember their names. When my brothers and I were growing up, my daddy would ask about bedtime, "What were the names of the three Hebrew children who were cast into the fiery furnace?" We would answer, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego." He'd say, "No, it was Shadrach, Meshach, and a bed we go." (We stopped answering that question!)

I. SHADRACH, MESCHACH, AND ABEDNEGO REFUSED TO WORSHIP THE GOLDEN IMAGE AND, THEREFORE, WERE THROWN INTO A FIERY FURNACE (Dan. 3)

- A. Nebuchadnezzar "*made an image of gold*" about 90 feet high and 9 feet wide (vs. 1)
 - 1. Brother Harry Payne said it would be about the size of a tall pine tree
 - 2. It was probably overlaid with gold and not solid gold
- B. He appointed a dedication day for the image and, at the sound of musical instruments, everyone was to fall down and worship it (vs. 2-5)
 - 1. How foolish it is for man to make an image and then worship it as though the image had made him! (Isa. 44:14-22)
 - 2. Daniel said that the Babylonians worshipped gods, "*...which see not, nor hear, nor know...*" (Dan. 5:23)
- C. Those who failed to worship this image would be "*cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace*" (vs. 6)
- D. The Chaldeans told on these three Hebrews (vs. 8-12)
- E. They were brought before an angry king (vs. 13)
 - 1. The king asked them if they had willfully disobeyed (vs. 14)
 - 2. He was graciously willing to give them another chance (vs. 15)
 - 3. The choice was clear – either disobey the king, or disobey God (Ex. 20:1-6)
 - 4. These, who worshipped the holy God, were commanded to worship an unholy idol. What would they do?
 - 5. What would you have done if you were in their place?
 - 6. If we give into sin, when a little pressure is applied, how could we hope to remain faithful to God under a situation like this? (Example: boss, classmates, husband or wife, etc., applying pressure)
- F. What a courageous answer they gave the king! (vs.16-18)
 - 1. I believe they are saying that if God willed for them to be delivered, they would be; and, if not, then they still refused to worship the image!
 - 2. *The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 13, p. 107, states, "*...what follows asserts merely the ability of Jehovah, 'our God whom we worship,' to deliver his servants from the burning fiery furnace, and even from the hand of the great king himself; but there is no assertion that he will deliver them... Even if God did not deliver them, still their*

determination is fixed – they will not worship the gods of the king, nor will they worship the golden image he has set up."

3. It is easy to understand why Daniel and these three Hebrews were good friends. They shared the same great faith in God and the determination to do His will regardless of personal cost!

- G. The king had the furnace heated to a temperature seven times above normal (vs. 19-23)
1. These men, who threw them in the furnace, were killed by the heat of the fire
 2. Have you ever been severely burned? (Tell about almost being seriously burned while trying to find out how to light the oven on our gas stove as a newlywed.)

II. BY THE POWER OF GOD, THESE THREE HEBREWS WERE DELIVERED COMPLETELY UNHARMED (vs. 24-27; Hebrews 11:32-34)

A. *"Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste..."*

1. The king saw a fourth person *"like a son of the gods"* or *"like the Son of God"* (NKJV)
2. I do not know if the king saw the Son of God or an angel (vs. 28)
3. What a comfort it must have been to these three loyal servants of the most High to have this heavenly Being with them!
4. God did not prevent them from being cast into the fiery furnace, but He delivered them from their distress (Ps. 120:1; 121:1,2)
5. God may not prevent trials from coming upon us, to test our faith, but He will give us the strength to endure them!!!! (Jam. 1:2-4)
6. God will not only be with us in our troubles, but will provide a place of refuge for us (Ps. 46:1 -3)
7. Heaven is the place where the faithful children of God shall be free from all earthly troubles and sorrows and be forever in the presence of the Lord (Rev. 21:4; 22:3-5)

B. Because of their great faith, God was glorified

1. The king's question, *"...who is that god that shall deliver you out of my hands?"* has been emphatically answered (vs. 15)
2. The king now knows that *"there is no other god"* that can compare to the Almighty Creator (vs.29)
3. What awesome power God possesses! We should serve Him with heart-felt reverence and awe (Heb. 12:28,29)

C. Instead of dying, as some hoped, they were rewarded by the king for their courage to die for their faith in God (vs.30)

CONCLUSION: It has been said of these three courageous Jews, "They wouldn't bend; they wouldn't bow; they wouldn't burn." Are you letting your light shine by doing good works? (Mt. 5:16) Are you fighting the "good fight of the faith" or about to give up? (I Tim. 6:12) Would you rather die than disobey God? (Mt. 10:39) Are you bowing before the god of materialism? (Mt. 6:24) Will you obey the Lord by being baptized into Him for the remission of your sins? (Gal. 3:26,27; Acts 2:38)

~ Don Hastings ~