

Daniel 3-A Story About: Courage, Faith, Trust and Deep Currents With God December 9, 2007 - Skip MacMillan

Situation described:

- 90-foot image stands on the plains of Dura outside Babylon with thousands, maybe tens or hundreds of thousands, of people
- Astrologers were marked by resentment and jealousy for Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael
- Nebuchadnezzar is ripe with pride and arrogance
- The furnace glowing as motivation for any dissenters, a kind of built-in incentive
- Forced compliance; man-made religions require forced compliance with threats, glowing furnaces, capital punishment for those who are unwilling to bow
- The true religion (relationship) is compelled by the love of Christ: 2 Corinthians 5:14-15
- Inclusion: Nebuchadnezzar does not ask them to deny their own God, just include his image
- One-time event, this is a one-time demand, not a perpetual request to worship his image, just once (Matthew 4, the temptation of Jesus)
- This would embarrass Nebuchadnezzar by challenging his authority and place the other Israelites at risk
- Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael would lose everything: good lifestyle, position, comfort, authority, status, etc.
- No TV camera, no recognition or knowledge of being in Scripture, just three guys alone with God, taking a stand

“. . . what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?”

Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael (Daniel 1:16-18)

1. **“O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.”**

Nothing to discuss, no hesitation, no spin, no evasive answer or watering down their reasons. We will not worship an idol; because God is and you are not, period.

Nebuchadnezzar made clear what he wanted and the consequences.
Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael made it clear what they would and would not do.

God says: "You shall have no other gods before Me. "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them" (Exodus 20:3-5).

Jesus said in Matthew 10:19, “. . . when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”

2. **“. . . the God we serve is able to save us from it” – God is fully capable**

Theological statement: “is able” - Omnipotence of God; God is all powerful, fully capable and able. He is able to save us from death or through death, either way.

They were persuaded “that God was the guardian of their life, and would free them from present death by his power if it were useful (to Him)” -John Calvin.

God is able to save us.

3. **“He will rescue us from your hand O king” - God will deliver us, ultimately**

Statement of God’s care and love for us: Our God will deliver us from your hand one way or another, in death or through death.

2 Chronicles 20:15,17 “This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, O

Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.' "

Psalm 18:16-19

He reached down from on high and took hold of me;
he drew me out of deep waters.
He rescued me from my powerful enemy,
from my foes, who were too strong for me.
They confronted me in the day of my disaster,
but the LORD was my support.
He brought me out into a spacious place;
he rescued me because he delighted in me.

Psalm 73:23-26

Yet I am always with you;
you hold me by my right hand.
You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will take me into glory.
Whom have I in heaven but you?
And earth has nothing I desire besides you.
My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

Resurrection: "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:2-4).

"We need not fear what man can do unto us; let him do his worst. God will deliver us" -Matthew Henry.

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

4. "But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

Circumstances

Walking with God will not always result in blessing from this world. Blessing from God yes. In fact, when you walk closely with God you may find yourself standing before a blazing furnace.

No shame, no fear

"They are neither ashamed nor afraid to own their religion, and tell the king to his face that they do not fear him, they will not yield to him; had they consulted with flesh and blood, much might have been said to bring them to a compliance, especially when there was no other way of avoiding death" -M. Henry.

"They are resolved rather to die in their integrity than live in their iniquity."

Calvin said their determination and boldness were based on two things:

1. "Their certain persuasion that God was the guardian of their life and would free them from present death by his power if it were useful."
2. ". . . their determination to die boldly and fearlessly, if God wished such a sacrifice to be offered. . . For God's glory ought to be more precious to us than a hundred lives."

What if they had yielded over and compromised?

1. No chapter three of Daniel
2. No suspension of the natural order resulting in a supernatural rescue by God
3. No declaration by the king of the world empire, "no other god can save in this way"
4. The three guys would live with regret instead of a once in a lifetime experience with God
5. No Theophany or Christophany

Theophany

"Manifestation of God that is tangible to the human senses. In its most restrictive sense, it is a visible appearance of God in the Old Testament period often, but not always, in human form. Some would also include in this term Christophanies (preincarnate appearances of Christ) and angelophanies (appearances of angels). While there are no indisputable Christophanies in the Old Testament, every theophany wherein God takes on human form foreshadows the incarnation, both in matters of grace and judgment."

It is uncertain as to who this is in the fire. Nebuchadnezzar in his limited understanding simply describes what he sees, an additional human form in the fire, that looks like a son of the gods. He is witnessing a suspension of the natural order.

If Christ, then what a beautiful picture of the Savior rescuing these men from the fires of this furnace and a precursor for how He rescues us from the eternal fires of hell itself.

If an angel, then our understanding of angels is broadened; these beings are no fat babies with wings flickering around in churches, but endowed with incredible ability and power and standing in blazing fires.

How are they able to stand like this? What is driving them, where is this kind of strength derived?

How awkward and strange to read about this kind of commitment to God, so narrow, so exclusionary.

Personal experience and knowledge of the One True God, "the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God. . ." (1 Timothy 1:17).

They had a history of walking with God, experiencing and growing in their knowledge of God.

They came to believe that God was more real than the furnace, fire, heat, smoke, and my circumstances.

Resulted in courage, boldness, strength, humility, confidence, and trust in God.

Can God be this real to a person?

Moses - Hebrews 10:25-27

He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. **He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value** than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; **he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.**

Just as Moses did, "they trusted in the living God, and by that faith chose rather to suffer than to sin; they therefore *feared not the wrath of the king*, but endured, because by faith they had an eye to *him that is invisible* (Heb. xi. 25, 27): 'If it be so, if we are brought to this strait, if we must be thrown into the fiery furnace unless we serve thy gods, know then, that though we worship not *thy gods* . . . there is a God whom we can call ours, to whom we faithfully adhere. . . we have devoted

ourselves to his honor; we employ ourselves in his work, and depend upon him to protect us, provide for us, and reward us' " -Matthew Henry.

Peter - "where else would we go?" - John 6: 66-69

"From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. You do not want to leave too, do you? Jesus asked the twelve. **Simon Peter answered him 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.'** "

Paul - Philippians 1:18-26

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: **I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.** Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me."

Yes, God can be this real to a person, even to you.

Where is this deep faith in the church today?

Am I willing to follow Christ into the fire?

A part of us wants to say yes, and yet another part fears a hint of cowardice within us all.

You will follow Christ into the fire if He is as real to you as He was to them (Moses, Peter, Paul).

The call is for you:

- To continue moving into a deeper faith in the LORD via personal experience and knowledge of Scripture
- To not allow your circumstances to determine your view of God
- Persevere because you see Him who is invisible
- To believe Jesus has "the words of eternal life. . . and know that He is the Holy One of God"
- Reach the point when you can say, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain"

Why this call? Because "no other God can save in this way" -Nebuchadnezzar.

1 Cor. 16:13