



DANIEL 3:1-18

1 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. 2 Then 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. 3 Then 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. 4 And the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, 5 that 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. 6 And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace." 7 Therefore, 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. 8 Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. 9 They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! 10 You, 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. 11 And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. 12 There 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." 13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar 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? 15 Now 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?" 16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If 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. 18 But 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."

STRUCTURE

- I. **The Kingdom of Man Builds: The State Constructs an Idol and Demands Public Allegiance (1-7)**
 - a. It Manufactures Glory (1)
 - b. It Liturgizes Worship (2-5)
 - c. It Coerces Allegiance (6-7)
- II. **The Kingdom of Man Confronts: The State Accuses the Faithful and Defies Their God (8-15)**
 - a. It Weaponizes Envy (8-12)
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- III. **The People of God Confess: They Declare Allegiance to God—not Outcomes (16-18)**
 - a. They Refuse to Bend (16)
 - b. They Trust God's Power (17)
 - c. They Surrender the Outcome (18)

GENERAL COMMENTARY:

Chapters 2 and 3 reveal parallel images and contrasts to convey a similar theme: The Kingdom of God reigns supreme over the Kingdom of Man. Both chapters portray an idol, a royal court, a contest, a threat of death, a furious tyrant, and a triumph for God's people. But where chapter 2 shows earthly kingdoms collapsing before God's rule, chapter 3 reveals God's people standing firm within the Kingdom of Man.

The story begins with a familiar monument: an image of gold erected on the plains of Babylon. It's familiar for two reasons. First, the image is made of gold, reminding us of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2, where a statue of a man—the Kingdom of Man—consists of four primary materials, each representing a different empire. Nebuchadnezzar (and Babylon) are the head of gold. Now, in chapter 3, the pagan king constructs an image entirely of gold. The dream intended to relativize Babylon; the king twists it to absolutize himself.

The image recalls not only Daniel 2 but Genesis 11, where Babylon's ancestors built a similar religious monument in a "plain" (Gen. 11:2; Dan. 3:1). Just as Nebuchadnezzar ignored the lesson of his dream, he also failed History Class. The Tower of Babel was a disastrous religious-political project—yet Nebuchadnezzar builds it again.

The Kingdom of Man builds. It builds monuments to its own glory, cultures that mirror its own fallenness, and political systems that enforce its own rule. In Nebuchadnezzar's case, he erects an idol in full view of the empire, summoning all his officials to its dedication and cueing their false worship with a Babylonian orchestra. Man's Kingdom manufactures its own glory and then liturgizes it with music and public ceremony. Social pressure generally gains allegiance, but should it falter, the Kingdom of Man threatens harm. In contrast, God's Kingdom is not manufactured, and His worship is not coerced. His Kingdom is the stone "made without hands" of chapter 2—built by God's hands and winning human hearts through love, not coercion.

As the story plays out, that's exactly what we see. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego quietly resist the king's demand because a Greater King has captured their hearts. Their lack of cooperation does not escape the notice of rivals. Jealous Chaldeans seize the moment to "maliciously accuse" them—literally, they "ate them to pieces." The Kingdom of Man devours.

When Nebuchadnezzar learns of the matter, he offers them a second chance: bow or die. He concludes his challenge with a question of theological significance: "who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?" (3:15). In chapter 2, God displayed His superior wisdom by revealing mysteries; in chapter 3, God will showcase His superior power. The gods of Babylon do not possess the power to rescue, but the God of Israel does. He reigns even over death.

Daniel's friends refuse the tyrant's "gracious" second chance. They didn't bow; they won't bow. They trust that God is able—and even will—rescue them from the fiery furnace. But their faith does not presume outcomes. Even if God doesn't deliver, He has their hearts; their allegiance is settled. The Kingdom of God does not force worship. It wins our hearts.

VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY:

1 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. 2 Then 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. 3 Then 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.

—"King Nebuchadnezzar made": The stone of chapter 2 was "made without hands"; this image is made by Nebuchadnezzar. God's kingdom comes from above; Nebuchadnezzar's glory is manufactured below.

—"made an image of gold":

- We are instantly reminded of Daniel 2, where Nebuchadnezzar's dream featured a great image with a head of gold, representing Babylon and its king.
- The parallel suggests:
 - Nebuchadnezzar did not learn his lesson. Worse, he doubled-down on ignorance. The dream warned him against idolizing the Kingdom of Man, but he interpreted it as how-to manual for creating an idol.
 - He absorbs flattery like a sponge and deflects criticism like a wall. The part that puffs him up—"Nebuchadnezzar, you are the head of gold" (2:38)—he turns into an image made entirely of gold.
 - The dream intended to relativize Babylon as just another passing empire, but the king absolutizes himself as a glorious king. He copies the "good" part of the dream but ignores the "bad" part.
- "made an image": literally, "a thing cut out". Unlike the stone that was "cut out" of the mountain by no human hand, Nebuchadnezzar's image was cut by humans. The contrast is deliberate. Man's kingdom is fashioned and quarried according to human effort. God's kingdom comes from above—as immortal as the One who "cut" it out.
- Nebuchadnezzar's response shows how wickedness responds to revelation. It twists God's Word by picking and choosing.

- We don't know what the "image" was. Given the parallel with Daniel 2, some infer it to be an image of a man—perhaps Nebuchadnezzar himself. But since the text is silent, we cannot assume. It could be anything.

—"sixty cubits... six cubits":

- Ninety feet tall and nine feet wide. If this was a human-shaped statue, the proportions would be slender—possible, but awkward—which is why some suggest the structure may have included a pedestal or had a more obelisk-like form.
- In the ancient world, this was unfathomably huge—slightly shorter than the Colossus of Rhodes (105 ft), but far taller than the Statue of Zeus at Olympia (nearly 40 feet) and taller than the Great Sphinx, which stands about 66 feet high.
- The repeated sixes may also invite theological reflection. Scripture does sometimes use numbers symbolically, and six is often associated with man falling short of divine fullness. I would not press that too hard here, but it is at least possible that the dimensions subtly reinforce the image as a monument to human glory—man magnified, but short of divine.
- The effect is part of the point. Nebuchadnezzar does not fashion a private idol but a public spectacle—an empire-sized object meant to overwhelm the eye and command submission.

—"plain of Dura":

- Scholars suggest the site was close to Nebuchadnezzar's capital city, but the site is unknown. Less important than the precise location is its topography. The idol is built on a "plain"—like the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:2: "And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there"). Once again, on a Babylonian plain, mankind assembles to build a towering icon of false worship.
- The Babylonian instinct—the human instinct—is to build up. From the plains of human existence, we seek vertical mobility, as if to reach heaven (or status or significance or glory) by our own effort. The gospel works in the opposite direction: not man building up to God, but God coming down to man. Jesus is the great Anti-Babel.

—"the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces":

- Each held a different role, which can be discerned by the title. More relevant to Daniel's purpose is his decision to list every role and repeat them in verses 3 and 27.
- We saw a similar list and repetition in Daniel 2 with the wise men, which included magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, astrologers, diviners, and Chaldeans.
- In both chapters, the repetition creates an atmosphere of totality: all the recognized powers of Babylon stand together against the Word of God. In chapter 2, the focus is on spiritual elites; in chapter 3, it is upon governmental officers.
- Since Daniel 1-6 illustrate how the saints endure the beastly kingdoms unveiled in Daniel 7-12, this scene shows the pressure of empire in concentrated form. Babylon does not merely govern regions; it seeks to command consciences. The machine of empire gathers its whole administrative force to compel allegiance and devotion.
- Given the significance of the occasion, Babylon's populace also showed up (v. 4). But the emphasis is on the officials. Daniel highlights the leaders because false worship is often institutionalized from the top down. The rulers bow first, and the people follow. What begins as state policy soon becomes social liturgy.
- I'm reminded of Psalm 2 where "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers of the earth take counsel together against the LORD and His anointed" (v. 2). Throughout Revelation, we observe a similar emphasis on political elites: "the kings of the whole world" assemble for Armageddon—a worldwide, state-enforced persecution of the church (Rev. 16:14). These same rulers—"the kings of the earth" (17:2)—compromise with what John calls "Babylon", the archetypal symbol of godless culture. John's visions repeatedly portray global elites conspiring against God's people to destroy them, but he ends on a hopeful note: "the kings of the earth will bring their glory" into New Jerusalem (21:24)—a phrase always used for worship in Revelation. Putting it all together: pagan kings will compromise with

godless culture and conspire against godly people, culminating in a final persecution. But some will come to faith and be saved (cf. Ps. 2:10-12). The rest will perish when Christ returns to punish our persecutors (Rev. 19:18).

- Satan loves to pick off individual Christians. But his most effective tool for mass deception and destruction is gaining control of state power (Rev. 12-13).
- Longman: "The various categories of people in the list are political officials from around the empire, which may signal that this was Nebuchadnezzar's attempt to solidify control over the diverse elements of his vast empire."
- House: "Repetitions provide this and subsequent sections with rhythms more akin to songs or poems than a 'normal' narrative... the author mentions five times the monument Nebuchadnezzar 'raised' (3:1, 2, 3, 5, 7). Twice the author repeats a list of officials (3:2, 3), twice a list of musical instruments (3:5, 7), and twice the fact that the officials come from various peoples, places, and languages (3:4, 7). Perhaps most importantly, three times the author repeats the requirement to 'bow down and pay homage' (3:5, 6, 7) to the image Nebuchadnezzar 'raised up'.

4 And the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, 5 that 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. 6 And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace." 7 Therefore, 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.

—"You are commanded": The image was not an optional add-on to Babylon's worship.

—"fall down and worship": These same Aramaic words are rendered "fell upon his face and paid homage" in 2:46, when Nebuchadnezzar prostrated himself before Daniel—before God. Rather than maintaining his humble posture, Nebuchadnezzar demanded that others humble themselves before him. The parallel shows how little the tyrant had learned.

—"furnace": The fire was already present. Execution was not Nebuchadnezzar's Plan B for dealing with dissent. It was always part of the plan.

—"O peoples, nations, and languages":

- Dan. 3:7: "Therefore, 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."
- Dan. 3:29: "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."
- Dan. 4:1: "King Nebuchadnezzar to all **peoples, nations, and languages**, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you!"
- Dan. 5:19: "And because of the greatness that he gave him, all **peoples, nations, and languages** trembled and feared before him. Whom he would he killed, and whom he would he kept alive; whom he would he raised up, and whom he would he humbled."
- Dan. 6:25: "Then King Darius wrote to all the **peoples, nations, and languages** that dwell in all the earth: 'Peace be multiplied to you.'"
- Dan. 7:14: "And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all **peoples, nations, and languages** should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."

—By listing "peoples, nations, and languages", the text highlights the extent of Babylon's dominion. It also contrasts with the final such list in 7:14, where "one like a Son of Man"—Jesus—seizes authority over "all peoples, nations, and languages." This is a battle between two kingdoms for the peoples, nations, and languages of the whole earth. Jesus won this battle decisively at the Cross. He consummates that victory at His return.

—The Kingdom of Man and the Kingdom of God are not just fighting over territories and legislation. They are fighting for people—to capture the heart and loyalty of every tribe.

—"horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music":

- First, we had an elaborate list of officials; now, of instrumentation.

- This list appears in verses 5, 7, 10, and 15.
 - The repetition of lists—of officials, of instruments—creates a totalizing effect. Babylon's *satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials* of the provinces summon all *peoples, nations, and languages* with a musical cue of *horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music*. The whole government orchestrates the whole world with a whole musical ensemble—to worship an idol.
 - They do not merely legislate false worship; they liturgize it. The State understands that people are not formed by law alone. They are formed by ceremony.
 - Totalitarian states seek to *form* their citizens. The government makes disciples. The wise discern this. They resist idolatrous and unbiblical formation.
 - King Jesus makes disciples too. Right after saying, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me," He commands us, "Make disciples of all nations." Jesus fits us for His eternal kingdom, but the kings of the earth shape us for theirs.
 - How do you observe the State shaping its citizens? Who is shaping your affections and allegiance—a current President, a former one, or the King of heaven and earth?
 - Rome had its incense and emperor festivals. The Third Reich had its rallies and salutes. The Soviet Union had its parades, propaganda posters, youth formation, and revolutionary songs. America is gentler, but not exempt. We train love of nation through pledges, patriotic songs, national anthems before sporting events, military flyovers, presidential imagery, civic holidays, and public ceremonies. *None of these are evil*. But Daniel helps us see how easily political communities can drift from healthy civic gratitude into quasi-religious devotion. The State is always catechizing. The question is whether its liturgies are being kept in their proper place.
 - Longman: "The list emphasizes the 'pomp' surrounding the ceremony and heightens the tension, focusing on the moment of obedience or disobedience."
- "whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace":
- The Kingdom of Man trends toward coercion.
 - Certain matters must be enforced. A righteous state enforces righteous laws, punishing those who tear down society through criminal activity.
 - Worship, however, belongs to another realm. True worship cannot be coerced because true love cannot be extorted.
 - This highlights a difference between worship in the Kingdom of Man and the Kingdom of God. Man demands worship through force; God wins hearts with covenant love.
 - Totalitarian governments never stop at governing conduct. They reach for the soul. They demand allegiance that belongs to God alone, crossing the line from lawful authority to idolatrous power.
- "all the people... fell down and worshiped": In totalitarian governments, resisters are always in the minority. God's people are always outsiders in such a system.

8 Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. 9 They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! 10 You, 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. 11 And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. 12 There 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."

—"certain Chaldeans":

- We encountered the Chaldeans in chapter 2. These famed "wise men" failed the king when he requested that they tell him his dream and its interpretation.
- Despite having their lives saved by Daniel and his friends (2:24), they likely felt outdone. Nebuchadnezzar promoted the Jewish exiles over the Chaldeans (2:49), and now these native Babylonians have beef. They "maliciously accused" the Jews (3:8), a phrase that could be literally translated, "they ate pieces of the Jews." It is a hostile, predatory accusation, not a disinterested concern for justice. In 3:12, they introduce the problem—not with the problem—but with

Nebuchadnezzar's promotion of "certain Jews" (outsiders). In other words, they foreground Nebuchadnezzar's elevation of the Jewish exiles, which suggests that their appointment is part of the grievance. Also, in 3:12, they maximally provoke the king by saying, "These men, O king, pay no attention to you..."

- Daniel sought the promotion of others (2:49), which is a value of God's kingdom. The Kingdom of Man promotes itself (2:25) and resents the promotion of others (3:8-12).
- Citizens of God's kingdom must be careful not to allow worldly values to form us. A solid gut-check is: Do I seek the promotion of myself or others? Do I resent the promotion of others—even over myself—or do I celebrate it?

—"pay no attention to you... do not serve your gods or worship the golden image":

- The allegation moves seamlessly from defiance of the king to refusal to worship. The blend is uncomfortable. Totalitarian governments fuse political allegiance to religious devotion. Resisting a tyrant is tantamount to blasphemy.
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faithfully served the king. Their accusers bring no charges of dereliction, except on this matter of worship. In this way they model faithful service inside the empire's machinery. Serve faithfully, but reserve total allegiance for God alone. His law reigns supreme.
- The mention of both "your gods" and "the golden image" likely means the image is not identical with one deity. It publicly embodies Babylon's false system. The three Hebrews resist not just Babylon's false gods but its visible liturgy of allegiance.
- Daniel's friends do not bow to the statue, secretly honoring Yahweh. What they resist inwardly, they display outwardly.
- It's not enough to inwardly resist false gods; we must reject their public rituals. Paul addresses this in 1 Cor. 8-10.

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar 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? 15 Now 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?"

—"furious rage": Nebuchadnezzar is the stereotypical tyrant. Three chapters in, and he's already raged-out twice (2:12: "the king became angry and extremely furious").

—Nebuchadnezzar does not just command them to submit; he cues the music. This makes their quiet defiance into a public spectacle. They did not seek this. They were willing martyrs, but not foolhardy. They accepted possible martyrdom; they did not pursue it.

—I am reminded of an ancient document called *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*. In that account, the church tells of one man named Quintus who volunteered for martyrdom, but lost courage when he saw the beasts and offered sacrifice. The church explicitly says, "we do not commend those who give themselves up [to suffering], seeing the Gospel does not teach so to do." Polycarp, by contrast, did not chase death. When persecution reached him, he initially withdrew, gave himself to prayer, and waited on the will of God. During that time, he received a vision: the pillow beneath his head seemed to catch fire, and he told those with him, "I must be burnt alive." Once arrested, he stood firm. Brought before the authorities and urged to deny Christ, he replied with the line Christians have never forgotten: "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?" Sentenced to be burned, Polycarp was bound to the pyre, but the flames reportedly arched around him without consuming him, so that he was finally pierced with a dagger.

—That is the kind of courage we see here in Daniel 3. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego do not volunteer for death like Quintus, nor do they shrink from it when it comes. They simply refuse to sin when the moment arrives. Faithful courage does not hunt for suffering, but neither does it bow when suffering hunts for us.

—"who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?":

- The question of Daniel 2 was, "Can God reveal?" The question of Daniel 3 is, "Can God rescue?" God is not just all-knowing, but all-powerful.
- Nebuchadnezzar's question foreshadows the answer: the God of Israel. This is not just a story about faithful believers against idolatrous pagans. It is the gods of Babylon versus the one true God.

- On the surface, God had forgotten His chosen people. He allowed a rebellious pagan nation to conquer His own. Babylon viewed this as the triumph of their own gods, a seal of their supremacy. But the story of Daniel is about a God who sets up kings and removes them. God decreed Israel's exile, judging the evil of His own people through another evil people. Despite Israel's sin, however, God did not forget His people or the covenant that bound His heart to their welfare. In chapter 1, He remembers them by preserving them on vegetables and water. In chapter 2, He remembers them by revealing Nebuchadnezzar's dream and saving their lives. Given His providential care thus far, the reader expects a repeat rescue. God remembers His people, not because we deserve it, but because we're His. Even in exile—in hardships of every kind—He shelters us with covenant love.

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If 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. 18 But 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."

—"we have no need to answer you in this matter":

- What a bold statement! To provide no answer to the so-called "king of kings" sounds like a death wish. The context shows, however, that they don't desire death. Rather, they refuse to deny the charges leveled against them.
- One of my former mentors, David Watson, has told me that some of his church planters in persecuted nations required an interesting confession at baptism: They had to publicly state their willingness to die for Jesus. After all, baptism signifies death and resurrection. It's hard to imagine such a confession in America, and I'm not suggesting it. Still, I think every Christian should be willing to die for the gospel. Sometimes, I hear Christians say, "I'm not sure what I would do"—if put to such a test. I get it, and it sounds humble, but it makes me sad. Christ died for us. Should we not be willing to do the same for Him? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew the answer before it was even asked. In my mind, this question should be settled.
- "we": This is corporate faith, not just individual heroism.
- House: "this phrase means they have no legal defence to make to the charge; this is not a sarcastic answer. They admit they have not bowed. Their respectful addressing of the king indicates they do not reject his authority. They just cannot obey it in this instance."

—"our God is able to deliver us... he will deliver us... but if not":

- Nebuchadnezzar questions, "What god is able?" (v. 15). Daniel's friends respond, "Our God is able" (v. 17).
- What a perfect illustration of faith! Notice, they are not certain what will happen. Given their history of rescue with God—and oh, how important it is to build a history with God!—they have reason to expect a repeat deliverance. *But they aren't sure.* They show confidence in God—but they do not presume.
- Many in our day mistake "faith" for "psychological certainty." The Word of Faith movement is a prime example. It teaches that you must be certain God will heal you or you don't have faith. This causes them to play mind tricks. For instance, they will say, "God's Word says you're healed, so you're healed—even if the symptoms say otherwise." They deny reality and call it faith.
- True faith acknowledges reality like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They know they might perish in the flames. Similarly, Abraham "did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb" (Rom. 4:19-21). Faith did not make him blind to the facts. It made him steadfast in the face of them.
- Faith is not certainty about outcomes; it is confidence in God's character. It believes "God can... God will... but even if He doesn't." It leaves room for "even if He doesn't."
- Some people argue that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego reflect doubt, rather than faith, by allowing for the possibility of martyrdom. But the author of Hebrews tells their story as an illustration of faith (11:33-34: "who through faith... quenched the power of fire").

- The point of this section is not just that Daniel's friends had faith; it's that they demonstrated allegiance regardless of outcome. When it comes to living out faith inside the machinery of empire, we must be guided by loyalty, not consequences.

—Longman: "In chapter 2, God made known his great wisdom. Here, he will reveal his power. The story in this way will again support the overarching theme of the book of Daniel: In spite of present appearances, God is in control. The specific focus of this chapter is that God's power transcends even death."



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