

## Our God Is Able to Deliver Us

Daniel 3:1-30

The burning question in Daniel chapter 3 is this: **“Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?”** (3:15). History is littered with proud and pompous leaders who have defied the Most High God, denying His power. Men such as Nimrod, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus Epiphanes, Nero, Hitler, Stalin, and Mao Zedong have all had their day. And according to Biblical prophecies, the coming Antichrist will have his day. But all of these will ultimately prove that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men and He gives it to whomever He chooses (Daniel 4:17). So in today’s burning episode, Nebuchadnezzar demanded the answer from three Hebrew young men: **“Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?”**

Across the years, that has been the central question posed to and about God’s faithful people. In January 1945, a German camp commandant placed a handgun to the head of Sergeant Roddie Edmonds, and threatened to pull the trigger. Would God deliver Sergeant Edmonds out of the commandant’s hands? In 1973, in the north-central African nation of Chad, the local Prefect threatened Pastor Mark Rama. Would God deliver the pastor out of the hands of the Prefect? Or on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February, 1554, Lady Jane Grey<sup>i</sup> was placed under the executioner’s axe by Bloody Mary. How would she be delivered? Bloody Mary’s first victim was the protestant preacher, John Rogers. How would God deliver him as the flames began to rise around him?

The story in Daniel chapter 3 can be divided naturally into three parts:

- *The Fierce Challenge from the King*
- *The Faithful Testimony of Three Young Men*
- *The Frank Admission by the King and His Counselors*

To glorify the governing hand of the Most High God, faithful men will stand and furious leaders will fail.

### I. The Fierce Challenge from the King

#### **What God can deliver you from me? Proud leaders and their pompous threats**

Daniel chapter 2 records that God gave King Nebuchadnezzar a dream about the kingdoms of the world. The image in his vision was made up of various metals, signifying respective kingdoms.<sup>ii</sup> The head of gold represented his own Babylonian kingdom (2:32, 36-38). The chest and arms of silver represented the Medes and Persians (2:32, 39; 8:20). The belly and thighs of brass represented the Grecians<sup>iii</sup> (2:32, 39; 8:21-22). The legs of iron and feet of iron and clay represented the fourth kingdom (2:33, 40-43; 8:23-26); commentators identify this fourth kingdom as Rome, which was originally very strong, but would be fragmented; the Scripture is purposefully ambiguous (see 8:26), but somehow this fourth kingdom will be revived and return in strength. Ultimately, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed (2:34-35, 45). How did “the king of kings” Nebuchadnezzar respond to this dream? He built an image (90 feet tall and 9 feet wide) that was covered in gold (head to toe), and insisted that men worship it. In other words, Nebuchadnezzar’s aspiration was that his kingdom would remain, regardless of what the Lord had revealed. What do we learn from this?

#### **A. Proud men will exalt themselves, even if they had to twist God’s revelation to do so. 3:1-3**

How did King Nebuchadnezzar go about exalting his vision for the future? He set up his image in the plains of Dura.<sup>iv</sup> He insisted that all of his Chaldean leaders, and all of the captured wise men (whom he was grooming for leadership) should come to worship the image. Setting aside God's truth, Nebuchadnezzar set up his image to be exalted. Commenting on this tendency, the Apostle Paul wrote, **"Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen"** (Romans 1:25). This tendency is alive and well in humanity today, and will be ultimately revealed in the coming Antichrist.

How did Nebuchadnezzar go about compelling these leaders to worship the image? Using public announcements, music, and the threat of death in a fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar compelled the people to worship. What can we learn from this?

**B. Proud leaders will often use controlling techniques and even threats to pressure people into abject submission. 3:4-7, 13-15**

As we noted, the central challenge – the central conflict – in this story was stated clearly by King Nebuchadnezzar. According to verse 15, he demanded, **"Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?"** How will God respond to such manipulative demands? It helps us to know in advance how God will glorify Himself in the midst of these challenges.

The declaration was not merely a general announcement to the public, but also a specific threat made to God's people (vs. 13-15). And the peer pressure was enormous. Everyone was bowing down, under penalty of death, but three young men refused to bow. And right on cue, their peers saw a way to undermine these men, who had been promoted to places of authority (see 2:49). For those times ahead when we will also need to stand, what can we learn from this?

**C. In such situations, you can expect pagan leaders to try to gain an advantage over God's people. 3:8-12**

Don't be surprised when people demand that you give up properties, possessions and positions because of your stand for the Lord. It's expressed in the manipulative parlance of today's leaders this way: "Don't let a good crisis go to waste." In other words, you can expect that people will try to further their personal and political agendas, especially in times of crisis.

But in today's text, we can see God's purposes: To glorify the governing hand of the Most High God, faithful men will stand and furious leaders will fail.

## **II. The Faithful Testimony of Three Young Men**

**Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us: God's people facing fiery trials.**

God's men had made their choice to stand – and stand together. But it's important to notice that they had to make that same choice again. As the king put it to them, beginning in verse 15:

**Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we *are* not careful to answer thee in this**

matter. **If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.** (Daniel 3:15-18)

These three Hebrew young men gave a direct response to the king's demand: **"Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?"** Their names had been changed to try to give them an identity based in idolatry. Their places of prominence were challenged to pressure them to conform. Now their very lives were threatened to try to force them to yield their worship to an idol. How did they respond? They answered, **"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."** Consider their fascinating answer, and make it your own:

- Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace
- Our God will deliver us out of your hand
- If our God chooses not to deliver us from the fiery furnace, we will still honor Him; we will not serve your gods and your golden image.

In short, they responded to the king's direct challenge with these words: Our God is able. For the challenges ahead in our own life stories, what can we learn from these men?

**A. God's faithful people must trust God's overarching purposes, especially when they encounter dangers and angry threats. 3:15-18**

Identity: **"Our God"** Though they had been bullied and pressured, they still declared that God – the God of the Bible – was their God. And collectively, they identified their faith in the one true God.

Servants: These men declared, **"Our God whom we serve . . ."** Have you ever bowed your head and your heart to submit to the Most High God? Have you reviewed and renewed that commitment recently? These are challenging times, and it's important that every one of us present himself as a living sacrifice to the Lord.

Faith: **"Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us."** Our nation is in trouble. In all that trouble ahead, the central question is this: Do you believe that God is able? Romans 4:20-25 describes the truth of Abraham's salvation, and then applies that truth to every person who will believe. Being strong in faith and giving glory to God, Abraham believed about God that **"what He had promised, He was able to perform."** When Abraham placed his faith in God's promise, God declared Abraham to be righteous in His sight. And God will do the same for you. Do you believe that Christ died for your sins according to the Scriptures? Do you believe that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day in order for you to be declared righteous in God's sight (Romans 4:25)? Then, like Abraham, and these three Hebrew young men, you believe that **"God is able!"** These young men believed that God would deliver them out of Nebuchadnezzar's hand – even if it cost them their lives. They knew that if they were to die, they would go to be with the Lord whom they loved. By life or by death, God would deliver them.

Perhaps these young men had the words of Job in their minds as they took their stand for the Lord; **"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him"** (Job 13:15).

With illustrations such as these in mind, we can carry through on the exhortation of Hebrews 10:23: **“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for He is faithful that promised).”** Holding firmly to God’s promises, these Hebrew young men took a stand, and you can too. John Walvoord commented, “The common excuses for moral and spiritual compromise, especially the blaming of contemporary influences, are contradicted by the faithfulness of these men. In spite of separation from parents and of the corrupting influences of Babylonian religion, political pressure and immorality, they did not waiver in their hour of testing.”<sup>v</sup> Holding fast to God’s promises, they courageously look a stand.

This is what gave Sergeant Roddie Edmonds the ability to stand with the commandant’s pistol to his forehead. Major Sieggmann had demanded to know which Allied prisoners were Jews. Edmonds, a Christian believer, refused to tell him. When threatened, he warned the commandant that he would be tried in a war crimes court if he pulled the trigger. And the commandant turned away. For protecting the Jewish men under his command, Edmonds was the first U.S. soldier to be honored at the Holocaust museum in Israel.<sup>vi</sup> In 1973, the government of Chad began to pressure Christians to send their young people to pagan initiation rites. Many Chadian pastor were killed for refusing to yield.<sup>vii</sup> Pastor Mark Rama refused to yield to the local Yodo tribal Prefect and was threatened. In response, Pastor Rama reminded the Prefect that his wife had nearly died, and that the local hospital could give them no hope. But when the people prayed for the Prefect’s wife, she improved. Pastor Rama asked the Prefect, “If these young people defile their consciences in these tribal ceremonies, then how can they pray for people like your wife?” The Prefect agreed and relented.<sup>viii</sup> But God delivered John Rogers and Lady Jane Grey in a different way. Bloody Mary, the Catholic monarch, had ordered the execution of them both.<sup>ix</sup> As the fire rose around John Rogers, he washed his hands in the flames to show God’s people that they had nothing to fear. Through death, God delivered Pastor Rogers from Bloody Mary and his pagan persecutors. And on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of February 1554, Lady Jane Grey prayed aloud, “Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit” and the executioner’s axe fell upon her beautiful neck, when she was only seventeen years of age. These all faced their fiery trials with tremendous faith. Do you have that kind of faith? Do you believe that God is able to deliver you?

But in the case of the three Hebrew young men, God spared their lives and delivered them from the flames. According to verse 19, Nebuchadnezzar was furious. It has been said that his furnace was hot, but the king got even hotter! He commanded that the furnace should be stoked to 7 times hotter than it normally was. He commanded strong soldiers to cast the Hebrew young men into the furnace. And those soldiers died as they delivered those young men to the fire. But the young men lived! They walked around in the flames. Most remarkable of all, they were joined in the fire by God’s heaven-sent messenger. The astonished King Nebuchadnezzar **“rose up in haste, *and* spoke, and said unto his counselors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, *and* spoke, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth, and come *hither*. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, came forth of the midst of the fire”** (3:24-26)

Over the years, many have speculated about the identity of the fourth man in the fire. Many believe that this was a “Christophany” (a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ), and that is certainly

possible. It could have been an angel; we have not been told exactly, so it is not important for us to know the identity of the fourth man. But it is important for us to know that God was glorified in the midst of that fiery trial. The messenger's appearance "like the Son of God" was all that was necessary for the king and his counselors to recognize God's work. The young men were unharmed.

The king had demanded, "**Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?**" (3:15). And the men had responded, "**Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace . . .**" (3:17). And in order that men might glorify the Lord, God delivered His servants from the fire. What can we learn for our own trying times ahead?

Think about God's purpose: To glorify the governing hand of the Most High God, faithful men will stand and furious leaders will fail.

### **III. The Frank Admission by the King and His Counselors**

#### **No other God can deliver in this manner: God's power in the fiery trial**

According to verse 27, when these young men emerged from that fiery furnace, the pagan leaders were even more amazed. Not a hair of their heads was singed; their clothes were not burned, and they didn't even have the smell of smoke on them! What can we learn?

#### **A. God's faithful people will face fiery trials in order to demonstrate that their hope in God is the only real hope. 3:19-25**

Perhaps Peter had this story in mind when he wrote, "**Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy**" (1 Peter 4:12-13) Surely this means that we ought to anticipate our own fiery trials. But we can face them in such a way that God will be glorified.

#### **B. In their fiery trials, the Most High God will make His presence and deliverance known so that men may praise His unique excellence. 3:25-27**

Just as God's messenger walked with those men in the fire, so the Lord walks with us today.

#### **C. Pagan leaders who persecute God's faithful people will come to witness their faithful stance to the great glory of God. 3:28-30**

In verses 28-30, the Most High God caused King Nebuchadnezzar to answer his own question:

**"Then Nebuchadnezzar spoke, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the province of Babylon.**

The young men had testified, **“Our God is able”** to answer the question, **“Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?”** And now King Nebuchadnezzar had to honestly answer, **“There is no other God that can deliver after this sort.”** What a frank admission! There is no other God who can deliver his servants after this manner. So to magnify the unique excellence of the Most High God, the king declared that no one should speak against this God.

Quoting from Isaiah 45:23, the Apostle Paul portrayed the future of every faithful servant of God, every pagan leader and every dark demon:

**“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him [Jesus Christ], and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”** (Philippians 2:9-11)

More Applications:

- Make friends with those who could help you take a courageous stand for the Lord.
- Get to know “the God who is able” and learn how He delivers His children in trials.
- Get ready to take a stand in the troubling times ahead.
- Trust the Lord to use your faithful stand to cause pagan leaders to behold the Most High God who rules in the kingdom of men.

*Pastor Gordon Dickson, Calvary Baptist Church, Findlay, Ohio [www.cbcbfindlay.org](http://www.cbcbfindlay.org)*

---

<sup>i</sup> Accessed at <https://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/martyrs/fox116.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> When we come to chapter 8, we will see a fascinating contrast. In Daniel 2, King Nebuchadnezzar saw the kingdoms as a beautiful metallic image. But when the Lord gave Daniel a vision of these same kingdoms, they were pictured as brutal beasts.

<sup>iii</sup> The Grecians would be led by Alexander the Great.

<sup>iv</sup> Some scholars think this was inside the walls of Babylon; others think it was about 6 miles southeast of Babylon in a level plain. This would have accentuated the height of the statue. There is archeological evidence there that the base of a large statue was once located there.

<sup>v</sup> John F. Walvoord, *Daniel, the Key to Prophetic Revelation*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1989, p.94

<sup>vi</sup> Adam Eliyahu Berkowitz, “How One Man’s Gentle Christian Faith Saved Jewish GIs from Nazi Death Camps” December 13, 2016, Accessed at <https://www.israel365news.com/80125/80125/>

<sup>vii</sup> See Baptist Mid-Missions information sheet on Chad, accessed at <https://www.bmm.org/country/chad>

<sup>viii</sup> V. Ben Kendrick, “Flight from Death” Cleveland: Baptist Mid-Missions, n.d. pp. 34-38

<sup>ix</sup> John Foxe, 1848, *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* accessed at <https://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/martyrs/fox116.htm>