

The Wrath of Man Shall Praise God

Daniel 3:26-30; Psalm 76:10

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There are two verses in Scripture that speak of the wrath of man— which might seem a bit contrary to one another, but they are not.

The first verse is **Psalm 76:10**. Here the psalmist takes that which we often fear so much (namely, man's wrath that is brought against us for obeying the Lord and His truth), and he gives us a most powerful reason NOT to fear man's wrath: for the wrath of man will praise God. God will take man's sinful wrath against us and sovereignly turn it around in such a way as to glorify Himself (either His justice or His mercy). God overrules man's sinful anger to accomplish His own wise and holy purposes. God's enemies certainly do not intend to praise Him, but the Lord purposes that such will be the case (the wrath of Goliath praised God—justice to Goliath and mercy to Israel; the wrath of Joseph's brothers praised God—Joseph was sent ahead to rescue his family; the wrath of the Jewish Sanhedrin praised God—it brought Jesus to the cross; the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar praised God—God's power and mercy were revealed).

That is why we are not to fear what man can do unto us (Hebrews 13:6). Man's most extreme wrath is governed by God. If God can use even the violent anger of man to praise Him, we need not fear man's wrath.

The second passage about man's wrath is found in **James 1:19-20**. Though God sovereignly causes man's sinful wrath against His people to praise Him, that does not justify or excuse man's sinful wrath. This is God's revealed will for us even though God providentially takes that which is wicked and glorifies His justice and glorifies His mercy. Nebuchadnezzar sinned greatly against God in his display of anger by casting Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fiery burning furnace, but God caused the sinful wrath of the king to praise Himself.

The main points from our text are: (1) God Turns Man's Wrath into an Opportunity to Display His Power and Mercy (Daniel 3:26-27); (2) God Turns Man's Wrath to Speak Forth His Praise (Daniel 3:28-30).

I. God Turns Man's Wrath into an Opportunity to Display His Power and Mercy (Daniel 3:26-27).

A. Review

1. When Nebuchadnezzar heard the faithful testimony of the three godly young men (Daniel 3:17-18), he was "full of fury", and commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter and that they be bound and cast into it with all their clothing yet on them (Daniel 3:19-21). The furnace was so hot that the king's "most mighty men" that threw them into the fiery furnace were instantly slain by the flames of the fire (Daniel 3:22), but faithful Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were seen by the king walking safely and unbound in the fire, fully clothed, and communing with a fourth person—either a mere angel or the Lord Jesus (Daniel 3:24-25).

2. They were never alone, even at that time of the king's most violent outburst of anger and tyranny against God and His people; and neither are you, dear child of God. You have God's promise who cannot lie—"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). In facing your greatest fear, you are never alone!

3. The presence of almighty God is a fearful prospect to the unbeliever (Hebrews 10:31), but is the greatest comfort to the believer.

B. Having seen the three godly young men walking safely in the fiery furnace from a short distance, Nebuchadnezzar draws as near to the entrance of the furnace as he can without suffering the same

judgment as his most mighty men, and he calls them forth (Daniel 3:26).

1. Nebuchadnezzar does not own “the most high God” as his own God, but as the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—“ye servants of the most high God.” However, his declaration is an amazing testimony from a heathen king, and yet he retains his idolatry—Jehovah is simply the most high God among all the gods that the king worships.

2. It is notable that the three faithful young men that were bound (probably hands and feet) when they were cast into the fire were now unbound and yet not trying to escape the flames. They were enjoying fellowship with that fourth person sent by God and could have remained there among the flames indefinitely because the Lord was with them (like Peter walking on the water). They only came forth when the king called for them. That is what I pray for you and for me—that we will be at complete peace in the midst of the fires of persecution, trial, affliction, heartache, or loss as we walk with Him in the midst of the fire. As long as we know and believe that the Lord is with us, we can walk in peace and not be screaming to break out of those fires.

3. Nebuchadnezzar only calls forth the three, but not the fourth person. Why? He had vanished bodily (though not spiritually) by that time. The powerful sense of Christ’s presence may come and go even though His presence spiritually can never come and go.

C. As Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego come forth from the fiery furnace, they are thoroughly examined and inspected by the king and by the king’s officers (Daniel 3:27). What did they find?

1. **There were no signs of burns upon their bodies** (“upon whose bodies the fire had no power”). This was a direct hit against the fire gods that the Babylonians worshipped. Their fire gods (which are no gods at all) were powerless before the God who created fire and controls it (Jeremiah 29:21-23—this was a common method of punishment and Jews suffered by the flame for their abominations—but this made this miracle all the more amazing). God is a consuming fire to the unbeliever (Hebrews 12:29; Deuteronomy 9:3), but is a fire of protection to His dear children (the pillar of fire to ward off the enemy at the Red Sea and during the time in the wilderness). The very same fire that judged “the most mighty men” of Nebuchadnezzar became a mercy in showing the power of God to the three godly young men (the miseries of this life are a curse to unbelievers, but are mercies to believers for Jesus has borne the curse for us, Galatians 3:13, and uses them for our benefit).

2. **Not a hair of their head was singed by fire** (“nor was an hair of their head singed”). The most delicate part of the body to be affected by fire (namely, hair) was not even brought under the power of their “fire gods”.

a. Sadly, this is what the unbelieving world likewise does when God unleashes His great power in mighty acts of nature (like hurricanes)—they call it an act of “mother nature”—they give it a god-like personality and power (this is heathenism). This is simply the way of the unbeliever to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to God’s righteous judgment that is on the earth (Isaiah 26:9-10).

b. Does our nation deserve God’s righteous judgment? Our nation encourages the butchering of children that have been told they are a different gender than their actual biological sex. Our nation protects sexual abuse in pornography and calls it freedom of expression and promotes the murder of unwanted children rather than preserving their lives by way of adoption. Our nation worships the false gods of the past (new age—nature) and the false gods of the present (pleasure, power, reason, self). May God grant that we learn His righteousness (in His commandments) and repent of our unrighteousness and turn in faith to Jesus Christ to deliver us from His righteous judgment.

3. Finally, as they inspected their clothing, **there was not the slightest discoloration to the fabric** (“neither were their coats changed”) **nor was there even the smell of smoke on their clothing** (“nor the smell of fire had passed on them”). What a sight this must have been! There was Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego standing in the midst of the king and his chief rulers as they got closer and closer to see and to sniff

and to handle their garments and to check out their hair. These inspectors were not favorable at all to these three godly young men or to their God, and yet these idolaters become God's witnesses to this mighty miracle. God caused the wrath of man to praise Him and used the king's wrath as an occasion to show His mercy to His people.

II. God Turns Man's Wrath to Speak Forth His Praise (Daniel 3:28-30).

A. Nebuchadnezzar had made a proud boast when he pretended to be mightier than the Lord (Daniel 3:15). He now has to swallow his pride and confess before all of the world that the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (not his gods, but theirs) is alone able to save out of his hands (Daniel 3:28, sent his angel—whether that be a mere angel or the angel of the Lord, Exodus 3:2—the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses and yet is called Jehovah). God humbles the proud, but exalts the humble (James 4:6). Humble yourselves then under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time (1 Peter 5:6).

B. Nebuchadnezzar even honors the faithfulness of these three young men who did not surrender their supreme allegiance to God when they faced the most severe consequences.

1. He honors them for disobeying His tyrannical command even to the point of suffering death in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:28). God turns man's wrath to declare God's praise. Now this was indeed unheard of by a totalitarian king like Nebuchadnezzar.

2. At the Day of Judgment all will declare that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:11—every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord). This is a preview of things to come. Let us do now willingly from a heart of faith and love what even the wicked will be compelled to do from hearts of fear.

C. Nebuchadnezzar is so overwhelmed by the power of God (but not brought to worship only Him or to repent of his idolatry) that he issues a decree that anyone who speaks against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will be cut to pieces and their home forever publicly shamed (Daniel 3:29). If a pagan king at that time made it a law that God's name not be blasphemed, how much more should the laws of our land do so, for the gospel has been proclaimed for hundreds of years in this nation? We have received greater light as a nation. We are more accountable to prohibit false religion, idolatry, and blasphemy against the Triune God of the Bible; and the fact that we don't is why God's righteous judgment is falling upon this nation (in the form of wicked laws, wicked leaders, wars, corruption, perversion, murder, violence, economic ruin, and natural disasters).

D. Nebuchadnezzar "promoted" or prospered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in their positions in the civil government (Daniel 3:30).

1. Because they were not required to swear an oath to uphold that which was evil and contrary to God's commandments (in fact they showed they were willing to die first before they did so), they could serve in a pagan government and bring honor to God and protection to God's people.

2. They that honor the Lord, God says He will honor (1 Samuel 2:30). They that confess Jesus before men and are not ashamed of Him and His truth, He will confess before His Father in heaven (Matthew 10:32). Those who are ashamed of Him, Jesus says He will not confess before His Father in heaven.

3. How many professing Christians have a profession similar to that of Nebuchadnezzar? There is an acknowledgment that God exists, that He is Creator, and even Savior, but they will not bow the knee to surrender their lives entirely to Him? Does your profession sound more like Nebuchadnezzar's (Daniel 3:28-29) or like the three faithful young men (Daniel 3:17-18)? Nebuchadnezzar's profession will not save you.

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