

BOW OR BURN

The Beauty of a Fire-tested Faith

A Study through Daniel
Spring Series 2024

Texts: Daniel 3:1-30; Isaiah 43:1-4; Jeremiah 29:20-23; Acts 5:25-32

Daniel 3 is one of the most familiar chapters in the Bible and narrates of the best-known stories in the book of Daniel. On the surface, the story seems to emphasize the victory of the unwavering, unflinching obedience of three Hebrew slaves facing overwhelming odds – a powerful, angry monarch and his fiery furnace.

However, there is much more going on here than just the story of three men surviving the wrath of a pagan king and being delivered from the furnace where he hurled them in his fury.

At a much deeper and more significant level, this story is about how God displays His great power and sovereign authority on a world-wide stage against the power and authority of the greatest king in the world at that time . . . Nebuchadnezzar.

Review: Let's make sure to remind ourselves that –

1. Daniel is a Wisdom Book.

- Wisdom for the Nations (*Kiss the Son!* Psalm 2)
- Wisdom for God's People (*When you walk through the fire, I will be with you!* Isaiah 43:1-4)

2. Daniel is fundamentally a book about God.

- He rules sovereignly, absolutely, and wisely.
- His Kingdom matters more.

3. Daniel is artfully constructed to communicate the superior nature of God's character, wisdom, power, and authority over

and against the nations and their gods – no matter who they are, when they exist, or how powerful they appear on earth.

In this chapter, Daniel reminds God’s people that ***living well for God among the nations requires the consistent display of a vibrant faith that is whole-hearted, single-focused, and fully trusting in God and in the wisdom found in His Word.***

One of the best examples of the power and worth of this kind of vibrant faith is in our text this morning!

I. Faith Opposed (3:1-7)

A. The Timing of this Narrative

B. The Location and Scope of this Narrative

C. The Nature of this Narrative

D. The purpose of this narrative

The contest is NOT between Nebuchadnezzar and three Hebrew men; rather, the contest is between Nebuchadnezzar and God.

II. Faithfulness Challenged (3:8-15)

A. It was an unexpected and uninvited challenge:

Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward

B. It was a malicious challenge:

and maliciously accused the Jews

C. It was a theological challenge:

They do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.

III. Courageous Confession (3:16-18)

A. This confession is staggering in nature – *be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.*

B. Gracious in expression – *“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.*

C. Bold in assertion – *and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.*

D. Unwavering despite the Consequences – *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.*

What drove this sort of commitment?

IV. Grace Enabled Obedience (3:19-25)

A. Their Faith enabled them to be Faithful! (3:24)
Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?

B. God Enabled their Faithfulness! (3:25)
But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!”

C. And their Faith is both Confident and Careful!

V. Divine Vindication (3:26-30)

A. Vindicated by God before the enemies that had maliciously accused them (3:27)

B. Validated by Nebuchadnezzar (3:28-30)

Conclusion:

By their radical obedience, three ordinary believers living in an unbelievably hard place determined to let their lives shine the light of God in one of the darkest places on earth – Babylon.

- They obeyed God
- They obeyed willingly
- They obeyed in the face of unthinkable consequences

Make no mistake – it was not just the fact that they were miraculously delivered from the fire that had such a powerful impact on Nebuchadnezzar . . . it was that they were willing to go into the furnace in unflinching obedience to a God who had no image and whose city and temple Nebuchadnezzar had just destroyed and burned with fire!

It was their unwavering faith that produced unflinching obedience!

And that is what God asks of us in our own day and age . . . and when the time comes for us to render obedience in the furnace, He enables us to endure; He will walk in the fire with us; and He will ultimately vindicate and deliver us!