

## AGAPE HOUSE OF WORSHIP MIDWEEK BIBLE STUDY

Topic: *Daniel: Faith Unfazed (2)*  
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Text: *Daniel 3*  
Date: *October 28, 2020*

### Introduction

Our main text today reveals the true character of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, as their faith was pushed to the limit. Along with Daniel, they were taken into captivity in Babylon where God blessed them as they impressed King Nebuchadnezzar (**Dan 1:17-20**). Last week we focused on how God rewarded them for their faithfulness, as they steadfastly refused to eat the defiled food of the king. Today, we will conclude this 2-part series with the trial of their faith in **Daniel 3** (See **1 Pet 1:7**).

### Their Faith

Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold (**Dan 3: 1-3**), and commanded that the image be worshiped (**Dan 3: 4-6**) as he sought to test the allegiance of his subjects. Whoever disobeyed would be cast immediately into a fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar regarded the refusal to worship the image as treason, not merely a religious infraction. He was not a man who allowed lawbreakers to go unpunished. So, everyone but the three Hebrew men complied in total submission.

Did you notice that the three Hebrew men did not lodge a formal protest? They simply refrained from sharing in the sin of idolatry, but certain Chaldeans accused them (**Dan 3: 8-12**). The actions of the Hebrew men were not public, but neither were they hidden. They must have known they would be discovered, yet they obeyed God rather than man. Nebuchadnezzar interviewed the disobedient Hebrew men (**Dan 3:13-15**) and told them: if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into a burning fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar would not tolerate losing face on such an important occasion, declaring: *“You shall have no other gods than me.”* Imagine the enormous pressure on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego to compromise.

The Hebrew men insisted that they would never worship the image (**Dan 3:16-18**), that their God was able to deliver them, but they still would not, even if God did not deliver them. They showed a good understanding and appreciation of God’s great power, but they also knew that they must do what was right even if God did not do what they hoped for. They did not doubt God’s ability, but neither did they presume to have a complete understanding of God’s will (See **Job 13:15**). They recognized that God’s plan might be different from their desires.

These men stood firm when challenged to eat impure foods and they witnessed how God blessed their obedience. That gave them the courage to obey when the stakes were much higher. Note that their statement was remarkable for what it did not have – any hint of an excuse. In a time of testing like this, it is easy to think of a thousand excuses that seem to justify compromise. Like Job who would not waver in his allegiance to God even in the midst of his affliction (**Job 1:20-21**), like Habakkuk who would praise God even in suffering (**Hab 3: 17-19**), like the apostles who rejoiced to suffer in God’s name (**Acts 5:27-29**); they were determined to be faithful.

### The Fire

A furious Nebuchadnezzar threw the three men into the furnace (**Dan 3: 19-23**). No matter how brave Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were, facing the fury of the king must have been extremely intimidating. Perhaps prior to their statement the king spoke kindly, almost in a fatherly manner to these wayward young men. But after encountering their recalcitrant behavior, his countenance must have changed. They were bound in their coats with the furnace exceedingly hot; everything was done to make sure that they were quickly and completely burned. But God had another plan.

### Their Deliverance

Nebuchadnezzar must have been astonished to see that they survived the fiery furnace, but not only did he see them survive, he noticed that four people, not three, were alive and well in the furnace while others perished at

the door (**Dan 3: 22-25**). He was able to recognize the additional person as being like the Son of God. Jesus was literally with them in the worst of their trial. It is not clear if the three men knew that the Son of God was with them in their fiery trial. Sometimes we are aware of Jesus' presence in our trials and sometimes we are not – but he is there, nonetheless. God can deliver us from a trial, or he can miraculously sustain and strengthen us in a trial. All four were free, the fire only burned the ropes that bound them.

### Rewards of Unfazed Faith

1. **Protection from the ire of men (Dan 3:26-27):** The Hebrew men left the furnace unharmed. Being on fire for God in faith insulates us from the fire of men. The trial had no power over these men because they were thoroughly submitted to the power and will of God. Everything was done to make sure that they were quickly and completely burned, but God stepped in. Even before the time of Jesus, they knew the truth of Jesus' promise in **John 16:33**.
2. **Complete Deliverance:** The smell of fire was not even on them (**Dan 3:27**). This demonstrates how complete their deliverance was. Their steadfastness brought them a new sense of freedom, they entered the fire bound, but were soon seen *loose, walking* (**Dan 3:25**). The very thing designed to hurt them was powerless against them. So, our own trials can be used to set us truly free (**Jam 1: 2-4; Rom 5:3-5**).
3. **Demonstration of God's might:** Before they were out of the furnace, Nebuchadnezzar recognized that these men served the only true God. He acknowledged the greatness of the God of the three Hebrew men. Nebuchadnezzar had earlier asked, "*who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?*" (**Dan 3:15**) Now he knew a great deal about this God. He even made a proclamation (**Dan 3: 29**) that nothing evil should be said against this God. The three Hebrew men did not ask for this decree, and they probably did not want him to issue it, because coerced worship is never appropriate.
4. **Recognition of God's power by others:** The king declared that there was no other God who could deliver like this. Seeing God at work in the life of his people was an extremely effective testimony to Nebuchadnezzar. Paul expressed the same idea in **2 Cor 3:2-3**.

### Conclusion

God showed himself as the God of the Hebrews (the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego); as the God who sends a savior (who sent his angel); as the God of great power (who delivered his servants); as the God worthy of trust (who was with those who trusted in him); as the God worthy of full surrender (who frustrated the king's word, and delivered the Hebrew men), and as the God who demands exclusive allegiance (that his followers should not serve nor worship any god except their own God). Will you trust God totally today, like these men did?