

1.4

HOLY FOR A PURPOSE

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God empowers us to live a holy life for a purpose.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will pursue God's holiness to fulfill God's purpose.



FOCUS VERSES: Daniel 3:17-18

¹⁷If 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.

¹⁸But 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.

LESSON TEXT: Daniel 3:1-30



BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Daniel 3:1–30

King Nebuchadnezzar's choice to build an idol in his own image and force inhabitants of Babylon to worship it was a strange response to the interpretation of his dream in Daniel 2. Furthermore, Nebuchadnezzar's actions in Daniel 3 demonstrate he did not fully understand the interpretation in the previous chapter. In the interpretation, Daniel demonstrated how God had used Nebuchadnezzar as an instrument to conquer other nations, but Nebuchadnezzar's power was not of his own making. Daniel told the king any power he had was given to him by God (Daniel 2:37) and his kingdom was temporary: to be replaced by other inferior kingdoms (Daniel 2:39). Nebuchadnezzar seemed to miss these crucial points and focus only on his current power, resulting in ordering the construction and worship of the golden idol.

However, three Hebrew young men—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—were not swayed by Nebuchadnezzar's decree to worship the idol. The three young men were “not careful to answer” the king, demonstrating their unflinching faith in God (Daniel 3:16). They did not bother with a royal curtsy before King Nebuchadnezzar, knowing the God they served was more powerful than any Babylonian royalty. Moreover, these young men did not need time to consider their answer; their principles were well established at this point. They had remained faithful under a wicked Judean king, an exilic deportation to Babylon, and the threat of death when they refused to eat Nebuchadnezzar's unkosher meat in Daniel 1. They likely had internally reckoned with martyrdom well before this point, so while their decision not to bow seems brave, it was actually built on many years of faithfulness and holiness prior to this moment.

Notably, Daniel is not mentioned in the narrative of Nebuchadnezzar's image and the three Hebrew young men. No explanation for his absence is offered in Scripture. Since it is extremely unlikely he bowed to the image, the most likely explanation is he was not present during the events of Daniel 3 or for some unknown reason was excused from attendance (*Apostolic Study Bible*, note for Daniel 3:12). Daniel had been promoted to a very high level and sat “in the gate of the king” (Daniel 2:49), so it is possible he was on a diplomatic trip or working on some other governmental task that allowed him to be absent.

THE THREE YOUNG MEN WERE “NOT CAREFUL TO ANSWER” THE KING, DEMONSTRATING THEIR UNFLINCHING FAITH IN GOD.

DAY 1

Daniel 3:1-3

¹ Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

² Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

³ Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Biblical Insight

By these metrics, the statue would have been only nine feet wide but ninety feet tall. Though not impossible, it is unlikely this statue would have been lanky; rather, it more likely was set up on a high platform to be better seen by more people (*Apostolic Study Bible*, note for Daniel 3:1). In this scenario, the platform would have contributed to the statue's height, but the statue would have been more proportional. The list of many high-ranking officials in attendance demonstrated the significance of this event.

Daily Devotion

Unlike in the days of biblical Daniel and King Nebuchadnezzar, most of the idols humanity has today are not giant statues with ornate detail. In fact, idols do not even have to have a physical form. They can come in the form of social media, poor time management, and even friends or family.

God deserves—and true, wholehearted worship demands—all of us. No matter how large or small the idol may be, nothing should ever be put in God's place. When we place frivolous things before Him and set Him on a back burner, those frivolous idols cannot hear or help us in times of need. God alone warrants the right to have our whole life, not the leftovers.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

Daniel 3:7-8, 12-13

⁷ Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

⁸ Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews.

.....

¹² There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king.

Biblical Insight

Nebuchadnezzar's power and reputation as a conqueror of kingdoms was well established, so it is not surprising only three in attendance dared to disobey the mighty king's command. However, besides the three, many other Jewish captives would have been present, and they likely all bowed. Such lack of conviction on the part of the captive Jews serves to demonstrate the apostasy and idolatry already existent in Israel in the first place and contributed to their being given over into captivity (*Apostolic Study Bible*, note for Daniel 3:12).

Daily Devotion

We see a prevalent theme throughout the Bible of people who caved under the pressure of society and what others thought of them. While Noah hammered away at the first boat in history, he eagerly attempted to get more people on board. He warned of rain, but no one believed him. He looked crazy, but he was in the will of God, and mocking words of naysayers were no deterrent.

We still see this theme today. As an Apostolic you may feel like the odd one out. As you try to reach for others to come aboard the ark headed toward Heaven, they may mock and criticize you. Just stand firm. Do not bow to what the world worships. Do what you know is right. Stand. One day we will walk through those pearly gates.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

Daniel 3:14-18

¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?

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 musick, 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?

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ 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.

Biblical Insight

One of the most important and telling phrases in Daniel 3 appears in verse 18: “But if not.” This key phrase demonstrated their faith was not primarily for deliverance; their faith was based on a conviction of truth, righteousness, and justice that extended beyond temporary human life. Their principles and beliefs were firmly established, and not even death itself was a strong enough motivator to change them. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego demonstrated deep dedication to holiness and faithfulness. While we may be tempted to simply imitate them, their convictions point to a faithful God who empowers all who desire to follow Him in holiness and righteousness to do so, no matter the opposition.

Daily Devotion

The cemetery was cold that day as a young lady went to visit the gravesite of her mother who had passed years before. As she walked toward the headstone to pay her respects, she was stopped in her tracks as she passed a child’s tiny headstone. The child had not lived past one day old. The words on the stone simply read, “He chose not to.”

We often pray fervently for different outcomes, but sometimes God chooses not to answer in the way we think He should. We must trust that no matter what may come, furnace or fair weather, God will be standing by us.

God always knows best. Trust Him even when He chooses not to answer your way. Embrace a “but if not” faith. God is still good and He is still God.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

Daniel 3:21–25

²¹ Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

²² Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

²³ And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

²⁴ Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

²⁵ 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.

Biblical Insight

Debate exists on the identity of the fourth being in the fire. In Daniel 3:25, Nebuchadnezzar's description as "the Son of God" (KJV) might be better translated "a son of the gods" (ESV, NASB, NIV) since Nebuchadnezzar believed in a pantheon of deities. The Aramaic word for "god" can be translated as both singular and plural. Moreover, in verse 28 Nebuchadnezzar called the being an "angel," so the visible entity in the fire was likely an angel, not a theophany (*Apostolic Study Bible*, note for Daniel 3:25). Regardless, the purpose was clear: Jehovah intervened to save His faithful children.

Daily Devotion

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were faithful to Jehovah despite what the worldly consequences could have been. They were willing to die for their faith, and God honored their loyalty. Faith isn't faith when we have all the answers. Part of faith in God is knowing that even though the proverbial fire is raging, He will guide us through it and be with us come what may.

God's Word does not say fiery trials will not come when we give our lives to Him. But His Word does assure us of His ever-present help. He is with us, working on our behalf, even when there seems to be no hope.

You can point others toward God by how you react when hard times come. He is always with you in the fire. Trust Him. When you stand for God, He stands with you.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

Daniel 3:26-30

²⁶ Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, 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.

²⁷ And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

²⁸ Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, 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.

²⁹ 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.

³⁰ Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the province of Babylon.

Biblical Insight

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not resist with violence or force. They simply placed their trust in God, and He protected them. Even more, God caused them to be promoted. Not only were they saved, but they were better off in the end. God also used their deliverance as a tool to prohibit any blasphemy against Jehovah in Babylon. Ironically, this decree had not existed (or at least, had not been enforced) in Israel and Judah before the Exile.

Daily Devotion

A young lady tells of a summer she volunteered at a camp over the Fourth of July holiday. Someone stealthily smuggled fireworks onto the sacred campgrounds; it was a sight to behold. Through the week the young lady kept thinking about fireworks. She was unsure if her brain just liked to pause when pronouncing compound words or if the Lord Himself was trying to teach her something, but as she repeated the word, it kept coming out as "fire works."

Fire has many outcomes. When utilized correctly, it works. Fire can consume, warm, illuminate, eliminate, and sometimes even teach. With Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the fire worked to show God's grandeur and His preserving protection. The faith of the three Hebrew young men was honored, and they reached others by standing for something greater than themselves. Ultimately God received the glory from the situation. The fire worked then, and it always will.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*
