

## Practices born of Daniel 3

### Trust

For me, it has never been a question of not believing. Rather it is a question of trust. To be sure, I trust the Lord... but do I trust him fully? Am I willing to trust him unto the death? Across the globe, Christians are being martyred daily. It is hard for us as Americans to fully count the cost of discipleship, but count it we must.

### Submission

*Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—  
that is your spiritual act of worship.* —Romans 12:1

Confess your agenda to God and honestly ask the Lord what must die in you for God's will to come forth.

### A Simple Prayer

Lord, I am willing to receive what you give, release what you take, lack what you withhold, do what you require, and be who you desire. Amen. —Spiritual Disciplines Handbook

**Additional Resource:** Community and Submission, Jan Johnson

# The Year of Daniel

## Chapter Three

### Chapter Outline

3:1-7	Nebuchadnezzar's Image of Gold
3:8-12	The Accusation Against the Three Friends
3:13-18	The Confrontation with Nebuchadnezzar
3:19-27	The Miraculous Deliverance
3:28-30	Nebuchadnezzar Worships God

### Memory Verse (Daniel 3:16-18)

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

### Related Texts

- On Integrity (I Chronicles 29:17-19)
- We must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29)
- Jesus is our "second Adam" (I Corinthians 15:45)
- The Lord will rescue me (II Timothy 4:18)
- Humble ourselves (I Peter 5:6)

## Literary Background

Chapter 3 deals with the cost of non conformance born of faithfulness to God's sovereign call. There are times in life when our faith puts us at odds with our culture. For the three friends this is one of those times. To bow down before an image of gold is unthinkable to these men of faith. For them (as for us) there is but one God and that God alone will they (and we) serve. They are prepared to stand true to their God even if it means death. As Jesus was to later warn us: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

It is interesting to note that they would have gotten away with their nonconformance had their colleagues not turned them in. Professional jealousy is as old as time. But, even in the face of possible death, the three friends do not compromise their faith. Such was their resolve born of integrity. Their identity, and therefore their sense of purpose, was grounded in their relationship with God. In all things, they seek God first.

By contrast, the nine story tall statue of gold reflects a deep insecurity on the part of the king. For all his power, Nebuchadnezzar lived in constant fear of insurrection. Such insecurity in one so powerful (at least from an earthly perspective) prompts the question of identity. Where we get our sense of significance makes a difference. What does it take for us to feel important?

Note how the king's attitude toward the Israelites changes when the three are delivered from the fire unscathed. Literally translated "the image [*selem*] of his face changed." Having asked: what God will be able to rescue you from my hand? (v. 15). The answer is now given: the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the Most High God. With this the king is moved from anger to praise.

**The Fourth Man** A study of chapter three is not complete without at least a brief discussion of "the fourth man" in the fiery furnace. As John Calvin points out in his commentary, God could have delivered the Israelites in any number of ways, but instead he chose to save them by the presence of a "fourth [who] looks like a son of the gods," thereby providing believers with a prefigurement of Emmanuel: God with us (v. 25; see Daniel 1, p. 143). The experience of the three friends reflects the truth that the Apostle Paul is to later speak of when he writes that nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (see Romans 8:38-39). Such is the loyalty of God.

## Contemporary Relevance

What one of us has not been in the "fiery furnace" or walked into the "Lion's Den" at some point in our lives? A key learning of the faith is that God does not "save" us from all of life's trials. Rather God uses them to shape and form us according to his purpose.

As Beth Moore in her study on Daniel points out, sometimes God **delivers** us from the fire that our faith might be **built**. Other times, God carries us **through** the fire that our faith might be **refined**. Still other times, God **delivers** us by the fire that our faith might be **perfected**.

We live in a culture that has become expert at avoiding pain. Yet, those who seek to follow in the Way of Jesus know that trial and temptation are part of the spiritual journey. The core paradox of our faith is that death precedes resurrection. It should not surprise us therefore, that spiritual growth entails suffering, pain, and struggle.

Oddly enough it is through our sharing in this world's suffering that God is glorified. Just as God created us to live in relationship, so God uses trials and temptations to tear down barriers to his love and invitation to life.

The gift and burden of free will means that we must choose between good and evil. Will our actions testify to our faithfulness? Or will we choose "safety" over God? In the end, whom will we serve?

## Questions for Reflection

1. Some believe that times of trial are due to sin or lack of faith. How does the story of the three friends in the fiery furnace inform our understanding of trials and tribulations?
2. What can we conclude about the character of the three friends?
3. What does it mean to be loyal to Christ? Have you predetermined your loyalty to Christ?
4. What commitments can you make to the Lord today to prepare you for future trials and temptations?