

The Cost of Obedience, Part 2

Daniel 3

III. The Gross Intimidation (vv. 13 – 15)

In **verse 13**, the words, “furious” (rēgaz) “rage” (hāmâ), give the sense of “extreme anger.” Therefore, Nebuchadnezzar blew his top. He was *beside himself* with “rage.” So, even though Daniel’s friends were once highly thought of and greatly esteemed, they quickly became the object of the king’s temper tantrum.

In **verse 14**, Nebuchadnezzar didn’t immediately render judgment on these three young men. He gave them the benefit of the doubt. He remembered their faithful service, their honesty, integrity, and Godly wisdom. And perhaps he even questioned the integrity of those astrologers who had accused them. He asks, “Is it true”?

In **verse 15**, apparently without waiting for a response, he gives them one last opportunity to obey his command. This was **Gross Intimidation** at its finest. The choice was to **bow down or burn up**. Therefore, the pressure to conform was off the charts. Nebuchadnezzar arrogantly says, “And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?” The king truly believed his authority, both politically and religiously, was absolute.

IV. The Gutsy Inflexibility (vv. 16 – 18)

In **verse 16**, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego weren’t being arrogant. They were simply standing their ground. Their minds were made up and they weren’t going to budge. Their confidence was in God.

Verse 17 begins, “If this be so...” In other words, “***If you ‘cast’ us into ‘the burning fiery furnace...***” Then we are given a beautiful picture of their faith. They make the confident assertion, “...our God whom we serve is **able** to deliver us...”

How could they stand so firm?

- 1) They were great believers in **God’s sovereignty**. They knew that “The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all” (**Psalm 103:19**). And though these men knew they stood before a king who possessed the greatest authority on earth, they knew that Israel’s God had **supreme authority** over him. No one is over God. No one is His equal. He has all authority over His creation (**Job 42:2; Prov. 21:1; Is. 46:9b – 11; Dan. 4:35; Rom. 9:19, Eph. 1:11b**). Everything and everyone are subject to Him – including Nebuchadnezzar (**Ps. 22:28; 47:2, 7 – 8**).
- 2) They were **familiar with Scripture**. They knew of God’s commandment regarding idols (**Ex. 20:3, 5**). They were familiar with God’s promise (**Is. 43:2**). They were aware that God had ordained the length of their lives (**Ps. 139:16**). Therefore, they knew they wouldn’t die **one second sooner** or **one second later** than the time God had appointed for them before the foundation of the world. That knowledge made them bold and courageous.
- 3) In **verse 18**, we learn they were **willing to die for what they believed in**. These men knew that God has the **supreme freedom** to do **whatever** He pleases, **however** He pleases, with **whomever** He pleases, **whenever** He pleases. They realized that God cannot be **forced** or **coerced** to do anything. Instead, God is free to do all things. He is free to do all His good pleasure (**Ps. 115:3; Dan. 4:17b; Rom. 9:21**). Therefore, this **freedom** might mean that God would be more glorified through their

deaths than through their deliverance. They were willing to suffer **The Cost of Obedience**. Their desire for obedience was greater than their desire for deliverance.

Well, the secret to the faith of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was that they believed in the sovereign power of God. Yet, they respected the freedom of God. And they unflinchingly obeyed the truth of God. And by God's grace, may we be faithful to do the same.

V. The Godly Intervention (vv. 19 – 27)

In **verse 19**, Nebuchadnezzar's anger grew so much that "his face" became twisted and contorted. One commentator said the phrase "heated seven times" was an idiomatic way of saying "heated" 'as hot as possible.' However, if Nebuchadnezzar had truly wanted the Hebrews to suffer, he did the opposite of what he should have done. A higher temperature would have killed them instantly.

In **verse 22**, the intensity of the heat and flames from the "furnace" took the lives of the king's "mighty men." As those soldiers collapsed to their deaths, Daniel's friends "fell...into the burning fiery furnace."

In **verses 24 – 25**, rather than gloating over the deaths of these rebels, Nebuchadnezzar "was astonished" at the signs of life he saw. In fact, he was in such disbelief that he asked someone else to check his math. It's hard to imagine the scene, but sure enough, Nebuchadnezzar witnessed not "three men," but "four."

The "fourth" man, more than anything else, grabs Nebuchadnezzar's attention. Even in the flames of the furnace, Nebuchadnezzar could see this "fourth" man was different. Nebuchadnezzar described the "fourth" man as "like a son of the gods." In other words, he believed the "fourth" figure was supernatural or divine in nature.

The identity of this "fourth" person can't be resolved in the text. Some commentators believe Him to be an appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ. I believe that's most likely the case. But others believe this "fourth" man to be an angel. However, what is clear is that God sent a companion and a protector to Daniel's friends.

In **verse 26**, I found it rather interesting that Daniel's friends, once unbound, didn't try to escape the fire, but were perfectly content to remain there, in the presence of the "fourth" being.

In a similar way, when you find yourself amid a fiery trial, with no relief, no cure, or no resolution on the horizon, may you be content with Christ's promise that He "will never leave you nor forsake you" (**Heb. 13:5**). King David said, even when we "walk through the valley of the shadow of death," God is with us (**Ps. 23:4**). This knowledge can make the heat of our trials bearable, and we can go through the furnace knowing the God will bring His results in His own way and according to His own time schedule.

In **verse 27**, we learn that God preserved them so well that their "hair...was not singed," their clothes were not burned, and remarkably, they didn't even smell like smoke.

V. The Glorifying Impression (vv. 28 – 30)

God was certainly glorified, and Nebuchadnezzar was certainly impressed. He had just witnessed a miracle. He was stunned by God's saving power, and he marveled at the devotion of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to their God.

God's faithfulness to Daniel's friends would have greatly reassured the Hebrew people that God's power was not limited to Jerusalem and the Promised Land. It would have transformed the fear of captivity into courage and hope.