

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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Stand or Compromise: What Will You Do? (Part 7)

Daniel 3:16-18

We finished up last month thinking about The Fearlessness of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men were more concerned about being right with God than they were about conforming to the king's commandment or about being in conformity with those around them. They were not afraid of the king himself nor of the fiery furnace with which he threatened them. I closed out last month with some comments about how those around them were probably amazed that they could be so fearless. They had probably never seen any common people so fearless. Maybe they had seen soldiers preparing for battle who were fearless, but probably in this crowd before Nebuchadnezzar were many of the wise men who had been terrified years earlier when he threatened them with death because they could not tell him what he had dreamed. They begged for leniency and even suggested that no king had ever asked of his wise men what Nebuchadnezzar had asked of them. They knew what it meant to be terrified of Nebuchadnezzar because they had experienced it themselves and had seen many others terrified of him. But these men showed no fear. When told earlier that they must bow under penalty of death, they refused to bow. Now in the presence of Nebuchadnezzar, the king with unlimited power, they were given a second chance and told to bow. How did they respond? They said that they were not careful to answer him. There was no need to give them a second chance, and there was no reason to give them time to reconsider. They knew what they were doing, and they were not going to change their mind. They were not going to bow.

How could they be so fearless? I believe they were filled with the Holy Ghost. The passage does not say it explicitly like it does about others in the Old Testament, but in comparing how they acted

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throughout the chapter with the way others acted when it does say that they were filled with the Holy Ghost, I do not believe that it would be a great stretch to say that they were filled with the Holy Ghost. I will not go into a lengthy discussion at this point, but I know that these are Old Testament believers, and they did not have the continual indwelling of the Holy Ghost like New Testament believers. However, they acted just like the apostles in the book of Acts when they were standing before religious and governmental leaders who ordered them to stop preaching in the name of Jesus. As those New Testament apostles spoke with boldness and had no fear of what the leaders could do to them, so Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were equally fearless of what Nebuchadnezzar could or would do to them. How could they fear when they knew God was in control and was going to take care of them either by sparing their lives or by letting them die for His honor and glory? Whatever God wanted to do with them was fine with them. If they could be fearless, there is no reason that you and I who are continually indwelt with the person of the Holy Ghost should not be fearless no matter what opposition we may face. This account alone, although there are many others, should encourage us to be absolutely fearless of what the world can do to us.

What these Hebrew men say in verse 16 is astounding, but they are not finished. They show Their Faithfulness in verse 17 by saying, *"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."* Notice some of the words that they use in this verse. They say *"our God."* They are letting Nebuchadnezzar and those around them know that the God whom they are talking about is distinct from the gods of Babylon and even Nebuchadnezzar himself. Their God is a personal God Who can be claimed by each person as his own. He was the God of their fathers in the past such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and many others, but He is also the God of the present Who is worthy to be worshipped and served now.

They go on to say that this God is the One *"whom we serve."*

The word serve means “to worship, revere, and minister.” It has a broader meaning than perhaps we normally think of the word. While what they are saying would be true at any time, and these men would have said so, it is interesting to notice that this is the same word that is used previously in verses 12 and 14. Verse 12 records the accusation against the Hebrews and verse 14 records the questioning by Nebuchadnezzar as to the validity that they were not serving his idol. In response to the accusation and questioning, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego declare their faithfulness to the true God alone. They do serve a God, but He is not one that is placed on a pole or is fashioned with man’s hand. Their God is not the one that Nebuchadnezzar had someone make. Their God is the true God, and He alone is the One that they will serve. The men do not have a problem with devotion and consecration, but they will not be devoted to a false god. The true God, the God of the Jews and the One they have been serving, is the only One they will serve. They will not desert the real God for an idol.

After stating their allegiance to the true God, they declare their belief in His power of deliverance. They say that he “*is able.*” Able means “can, couldst, prevail.” They had no doubt as to the unlimited power of God. Many of their ancestors had doubted God’s ability in the past, but that did not shake their confidence in God’s ability. They knew that their God was the same One that had parted the Red Sea and had provided food and water for the children of Israel. He had delivered Israel and Judah in battles where the only hope they had for victory was in the powerful hand of God. God had done great things in the past and was well able to do great things even now.

They then state specifically what they believed God had power to do. They say that He is able “*to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace.*” The men had been threatened on two occasions with being thrown into the fiery furnace if they refused to bow to the image. After being told the second time by Nebuchadnezzar himself, they confront the threat. They state that their God is able to deliver them

from it. They had not been told by God before this that they would be delivered, but they wanted everyone to know that their God was not some weak, anemic God Who was incapable of performing a miracle. If He so desired, He could deliver them. The word deliver means “to leave, to free.” Did they know exactly how God would deliver them? No, because He had not revealed to them that He would do it, or how He would do it. What they are stating to Nebuchadnezzar and those around them is that their God is capable of delivering them. They believed He had the power to change Nebuchadnezzar’s mind so they would not even be cast into the fire, but if cast in, they believed He had the power to cause the flame not to hurt them. The God Who had done great miracles in the past would not find it hard to deliver them in any manner which He chose.

The last statement of verse 17 continues their statement of faithfulness to God and also declares to Nebuchadnezzar that He is not really in charge. They say, “*And he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.*” Even in this statement of faithfulness to God, you can see the boldness and firmness of resolve that these men had. They let Nebuchadnezzar know that he does not have as much power as he thinks he does. You have to understand some of the conditions of this time. Babylon, as most other countries of this time, did not have a separation or balance of powers. They did not have a court system with levels of courts to whom you could appeal decisions that you thought were wrong. There was not a legislative branch that could stop Nebuchadnezzar. He had all power in the country, or at least he thought so, and most everybody else did too. There was no court nor anything else that governed the country other than Nebuchadnezzar. When he made a decision, it was final. Everyone in Babylon thought Nebuchadnezzar was in control. But these men said that he was not in control. He might issue their judgment, but that would not be the final word. God would have something to say. They were in God’s hand and under His control, not Nebuchadnezzar’s.

As this statement came out of the mouths of these servants of God, I can imagine an audible gasp of amazement coming from the

crowd of advisors who are with Nebuchadnezzar. They knew the power of their monarch. They knew what he had commanded in the past. They knew that no nation had withstood his onslaught let alone individuals. He had all power in the country both militarily and politically. They were not about to tell him that someone was above and over him. But these Hebrew men had just stated what no one else had even dared to think in their own minds or talk about to each other, let alone say it to Nebuchadnezzar himself. Who were these men? How could they say something like that to Nebuchadnezzar? Most of the Babylonians probably thought they were insane.

But they were not crazy. They just had complete faith in God. They knew what they had read in the Word of God. They remembered what Daniel had stated as recorded in Daniel 2:21, “*And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.*” Their God was the One that had placed Nebuchadnezzar on the throne of Babylon. He was the One that allowed Nebuchadnezzar to defeat Judah and take them captive. They knew that truth and had no problem declaring it to Nebuchadnezzar. May we do the same in our day.