

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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Stand or Compromise: What Will You Do? (Part 9)

Daniel 3:16-18

Last month we finished up thinking about The Firmness of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Now we go to part three of the message—**The Product of Courage**. These men did not do what they did knowing that they would come out of the fire, nor did they know that they would be honored at the end. They did what they did because it was the right thing to do. I have mentioned this previously throughout the message, but I feel that it must be repeated. They were not told the outcome. They did not know that God would deliver them. They had faith that He could, but they also knew that God might want them to die for their faith. Others had done so before them such as Abel, Naboth, and Zechariah. Many others would die after them, recorded both in the New Testament and in history. They could have perished in the flames of the burning fiery furnace. They were willing to die if that is what God desired. But God chose to spare them and provide a miraculous deliverance. That is what we will focus on now.

Notice The Appearance in verse 25. The verse reads, “*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.*” God chose to personally show up and deliver these faithful men. Obviously, He did not have to and did not on other occasions, but He did here. Nebuchadnezzar was a pagan king, but he knew there was something different about that fourth man in the fire. Years earlier, as recorded in chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the Hebrews’ God as “*a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets*” (2:47). In his pride he had forgotten the greatness of God and lifted himself up as one who should be worshipped. But now he sees God in the fire. Some liberals like to

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deny the appearance of God here by saying that Nebuchadnezzar could not have known Who it was in the fire. At this point, I would agree that he had no personal relationship with the true God. He acknowledged God’s greatness in chapter 2, but it was only a surface knowledge or a recognition that the true God did exist. But as I said before, he knew there was something different about this fourth Man. He had seen several of his mightiest men killed because of the heat. There was no way that anyone could survive the flame except through the power of God. Nebuchadnezzar did not personally know God at this time, but he had enough sense to figure out Who it was that protected Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Sadly, liberal scholars profess to know much, but in reality they know less than this pagan king.

Nebuchadnezzar said, “*The form of the fourth is like the Son of God.*” Nebuchadnezzar and the others saw what we call a Christophany—a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. Several times in the Old Testament, God the Son took on human appearance. Among those that He appeared to were Abraham, Balaam, Gideon, Samson’s parents, and David. Now He makes an appearance on behalf of His faithful servants. Because they had been faithful to Him, He was rewarding them with a miracle. Again, He did not always do this for everyone when they were faithful, but He did here. He made Himself visible not to just Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, but also to Nebuchadnezzar and probably anyone looking into the fire.

The thing that we must remember is that Jesus showed up when these men were faithful in their trial. If they had bowed, then Jesus would not have shown up. But when they stood and resisted the temptation to bow to the image under very difficult circumstances, God was seen. Now, in our day and time, God will not take a visible form. He may not spare our life if we are faced with death. He might and could deliver in a miraculous way, but most often He does not choose to do so in this time period. However, that should not diminish our desire to stand up for Him. It did not lessen the resolve

of John the Baptist, Stephen, Paul, the apostles, and many others who stood up for Christ and died by sword, stone, or flame. Again, hoping for a miracle is not the reason to do right and stand up for God. Being found faithful in God's sight is the reason to do right. We may not survive the onslaught of the world and the devil. They may take our life, but may we determine to be faithful even if it means death.

But we must get back to our thought about Jesus being seen in the trial. He will not take a visible form before us and others, but it should be our desire to allow Christ to be seen through us. It may be in the trial that we faithfully go through that others may come to Christ. Someone may stay faithful in their service to Christ when they hear or see us remain faithful in our trial. There is no way to know for sure, and some may say that it does not matter because what is supposed to happen will happen no matter what, but I wonder how many might have been reached with the gospel if someone had stayed faithful to Christ in the time of difficulty. Someone may have been saved, but the preacher, the wife, the children, some church member, somebody somewhere quit being faithful and bowed before the image, and that person stayed lost. Jesus was ready to show up and make Himself known and a sinner would be saved, but He could not find someone strong enough to endure the trial. Someone was lost because someone did the easy thing and bowed to the image. Someone may say, "That is all just make believe. Just a way to try to scare people into doing right." You can say what you want, but this truth cannot be denied. Jesus, the Son of God, showed up. But He did not show up until the men remained faithful even to the point of being thrown in the fire. He did not show up when they were falsely accused. He showed Himself when they were in the fire. We must remain faithful at all times and under every circumstance.

Let me say something about our influence on other believers. When I have faced hard times (I know they pale in comparison with what others have gone through, but they seem hard to me when going through them.), it is a great encouragement to read about the lives of

others and know that if they remained faithful, then I can too. Sometimes we can look at others around us and know that if they remained faithful, then we can also remain faithful. You may be facing what seems to you like a fiery furnace. The temptation may be strong to bow before the image. When that time comes, think about what others see in you. It may be that if you endure that trial, then they may be able to endure their trial when the time comes. Jesus may want to make Himself real to someone else, and He may be trying to reveal Himself to someone through you. You may be one through whom someone will see Christ as never before. Do not bow! Do not give in to the fear! Stay faithful! Christ will be seen in your life, but He will only be seen if you remain faithful to Him.

There is a second aspect to The Product of Courage. In verses 26 and 27 we see The Awareness. Because Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego remained faithful to God, those around them became aware of some things that they had not known before. These are interconnected with the appearance of Christ, but they also stand alone as to what the people saw about the Hebrew men. First, Nebuchadnezzar was made aware that they were *God's People*. Verse 26 says, "*Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire.*" Notice what Nebuchadnezzar called them. He did not just call them by name, but said, "*Ye servants of the most high God.*" It is interesting that they were accused of not serving Nebuchadnezzar's gods in verse 12, and then in verse 14 Nebuchadnezzar asks, "*Do not ye serve my gods?*" The issue here was which god would be served. Nebuchadnezzar demanded that everyone serve his god which was possibly a representation of himself. These faithful servants of God did not bow to the image, nor would they bow to the command of Nebuchadnezzar. Instead they declared that they served a God Who could deliver them if He chose, and they also said that even if He chose to let them die, they would not serve the false god of Nebuchadnezzar (3:17-18). After

demanding that they serve his gods and being rejected, the king threw them in the fiery furnace. When God spared their life, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged that they were indeed servants of the most high God. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged God as supreme over him and all of his other gods. He now realized that they were right. They were serving the true God.

But the others also were made aware of *God's Power*. Verse 27 says, "*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.*" These pagan officers of Babylon, who had gathered at the command of Nebuchadnezzar and who had bowed before the image just a little while before this, now see what the only true God can do. They had committed their allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar and the image, but now they see that the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had caused the fire to have no power. Their hair was not singed, their coats were not changed, and they did not even smell of smoke. What a miracle God wrought! These leaders were made aware of God's power—but only because His men stood. May we stand up for what is right, so others can be aware of God's power.