

## **Reflecting on God's Word**

Reading: Daniel 3:1-6,14,16-20,24-29 (OT pages 886-887)

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## **Background**

**In order to understand our reading, just a few comments:**

At Daniel's request Nebuchadnezzar made Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego "administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court" (v. 49). While Daniel governed in the city, his friends went out into the province to oversee personally the king's business.

It was quite common in antiquity for gentile nations to erect statues to be worshipped. In chapter 3 the king of Babel erected one of 30 meters which would have included the base upon which the image rested. One researcher said the statue was roughly the size of a nine-story building!

The writer cleverly sets the scene between serving a lifeless "statue god" and the Almighty God who is in control of all things.

On the one side he is emphasizing all the *non sense* of worshipping this so called god in comparison to serving a living God through the faith and trust of Daniel's friends in the Almighty God. He does this by meticulously recording how many high ranking officers were present, the repetition of mentioning all the music

instruments and also addressing all “peoples, nations and men of every language”.

The writer also emphasizes the difference between the authority of the king and serving the Almighty God. To serve the Almighty God would mean to disobey the commands of a king who would not allow anyone to worship the Almighty God. To serve the Almighty God will mean sacrifice, obedience and trust. On the other hand any command to serve a lifeless statue will come to nothing.

The writer points out the stark differences between a human being with a lot of power like the king and the grace of the Almighty God who actually rescues the three friends of Daniel.

More interestingly is the prayer of Daniel’s friends. They are not saying to the king that their God will automatically save them. Their faith in God means to accept whatever the Almighty God decides. No human being can think to stipulate God what to do. But whatever God decides - it will be acceptable to them.

And then the miracle happens. The three men are unharmed by the severe fire. The king saw an angel of the Almighty God walking with them in the fire. The mighty king then shouts for them to come out of the oven and then makes a confession of faith by saying: “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.”

The writer succeeds in convincing any reader that there is only one God to be served and that is the Almighty God! But to serve him will mean sacrifice , trust and obedience! And because of their faith, a miracle happened which changed

history when the king's attitude changed and he acknowledged that there is only ONE God!

## **MP 544      Open my eyes that I may see**

### **Sermon**

17 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. <sup>18</sup> 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."

The writer had a good argument to prove the senselessness of serving a lifeless "statue" while the opposite is true when you are serving the Almighty God.

The writer also clearly states the principles of having faith in the Almighty God. To serve Him will require hard work, sacrifice, trust, loyalty, faith, hope and obedience. To have faith in Him will mean to acknowledge that He is different and acts differently from any creature on earth. He is the Ultimate decision maker which will mean that when you have faith that you should let go and fully rely on His loving will just like the friends of Daniel did.

And yes they have proved that anyone can get through a fire with the help of God, when it is His will and purpose. They did not believe in order to be saved. They believed because to them there was no other God.

So is it possible for us today to walk through any proverbial fire?

I visit many people when the fires of pain, discomfort, aloneness, broken relationships, worries, fears and anxieties are burning ferociously. I often see how people walk through the fire with the help of God and yes even when they know that they will not come out, they still hold on to their faith in the living God. In fact when you ask them if they are ok, they will tell you all is well.

We even find this in history. Stephen in the New Testament was the first martyr to be stoned to death. In his dying moments he said "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." He came through the fire...

And in Scotland the grandfather of the Scottish reformation George Wishart also died as a martyr because of his beliefs. He declared that the authority of the Bible as God's Word has priority over anything else in the church - even the authority of the pope and the cardinals. The Cardinal at St Andrews David Beaton wanted to get rid of him and ordered that he will be burnt alive. They even put gunpowder in his pockets to make sure he dies quickly. But he did not. So much so that when the captain of the castle saw that he was still alive after the gunpowder exploded he came close and told him to have good courage. Wishart then said his final words: "This fire torments my body, but no way abates my spirit".

His steadfast conviction and faith in the Lord, even in his dying moments led other people to the truth of trusting the Word of God more than the authority of the priesthood of their day. Wishart's death in many ways started the Scottish

reformation when his student John Knox was forced into action, openly challenging the authority of the church above the authority of the Almighty God.

How on earth did they manage?

They managed because of their faith in the Lord Jesus. Jesus Christ went through the fire for us all and saved us from the tyranny of sin, death and hell. Jesus Christ is the Ultimate example of God's sacrifice to save humanity. He is our example when we face the fires of pain, discomfort, aloneness, broken relationships, worries, fears and anxieties are burning ferociously.

And yes when we have faith and believe that He is our Only Saviour and redeemer then any rescue plan from Him is acceptable even those we did not expect or asked for because when we are living we live in the Lord and when we are dying, we dying in the Lord".

SO let us also go out and show the world that we too, with God's providence can walk through the fires of this world in humble trust. Let us show our faith and commitment by obeying the Lord God above anything else. And may God help us all to cry out in our last moments words of faith, the words of the martyrs, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

Amen