

Faith and Fiery Trials

Daniel Chapter 3

Introduction

This chapter is about Daniel's three companions Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The evil one tries to destroy our faith, but God tests us to develop our faith. False faith withers in times of trial, but true faith is deep rooted and brings glory to God. This is why God allowed Daniel's three friends to be tested and thrown into the fiery furnace.

Their experience helps us to examine our own faith, and to see if we have the kind of authentic faith that can survive testing and bring glory to God.

True faith confronts the challenge (Daniel 3 v 1 to 12)

- We don't know how much time elapsed between the night Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about the metallic statue and the day he commanded people to fall down before the golden image he had made – it may have been 20 years or more. What do you think motivated him to make the statue?
- The king used music to get people to worship the statue. In what way is music used today to build our allegiance to someone or something?
- What accusations were brought against the three Jewish men? Consider how subtly it was worded to stir the king's anger.
- What do you think made the difference between the many Jews who fell down and worshipped the idol and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego?

True faith confesses the Lord (Daniel 3 v 13 to 18)

- How did this trial of faith differ from anything these men had had to face before?
- How do you think it would feel to make a choice of faith that could very easily result in your death?
- Why did the three heroes say, "We do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter" (v 17)?
- How does their reply to the king demonstrate faith, but not presumption?

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True faith confounds the enemy (Daniel 3 v 19 to 25)

The furnace was probably used for smelting ore. It had a large top opening through which fuel and ore could be placed into the fire, and there was a door at the bottom through which metal was taken out. An opening in the wall enabled the smelters to check progress, and through holes in the wall they could use bellows to make the fire blaze hotter...

But despite the apparent certainty of death, the fire did not affect the three men at all! When the king looked into the furnace he saw they were alive, loose and not bound, and there was a fourth person walking around with them. Who do you think this fourth person was?

True faith confirms God's promises (Daniel 3 v 26 to 30)

Notice that not only were the three heroes unharmed, but their clothing didn't even smell like fire! The only things that were burned were the ropes that had bound them.

When the king ordered them to come out of the furnace, they graciously obeyed. They were living miracles and they wanted everyone to know what their God could do...

- Who witnessed this miracle (v 27)?
- What was Nebuchadnezzar's reaction?
- How did the three heroes end up?
- Does God always deliver his people from 'fiery trials' (see 1 Peter 1 v 6, 7)?

Prayer –

Lord, as we look at the story of Daniel's three faithful and courageous friends, help us to put our trust in you afresh.

Help us to remember that trials come so that our faith, which is of greater worth than gold refined by fire, may be proved genuine, and may result in your praise and glory.

Amen.