

The Fiery Furnace

Daniel 3:19-30

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2/22/2026



Daniel 3:1-18 Summary: King Nebuchadnezzar sets up a huge gold statue demanding that everyone worship it when the music prompts them. Those who fail to comply will be burned to death in a fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego refuse and are turned in by “certain Chaldeans” who were fellow servants of the king.

What applications can be made to the here and now?

- Professed faith is not necessarily true conversion faith; head knowledge is not always heart knowledge.
- Courage comes from knowing God.
- Making excuses for disobeying God is what pagans do.

Saved in Fiery Trial, Daniel 3:19-25

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. ²⁰ And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace.

²¹ Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. ²² Therefore, because the king’s command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. ²³ And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.” ²⁵ “Look!” he answered, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”

How did Nebuchadnezzar react to the three Hebrews expressing their faith in God?

- He became outraged and had a temper tantrum!
- He exchanged his esteemed position as King of Babylon to that of being a mad man – the real man came to the surface

- He ordered the furnace to be heated to seven times normal

Why did it require men of valor to cast Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the furnace?

The king’s command was urgent and the furnace was so hot that any who came close to the furnace would be in peril; indeed, those who threw them in themselves died from the heat.

- They tied them up so that it would be easier to throw them into the furnace.

What did Nebuchadnezzar see in the furnace?

He saw three men walking about unbound and “one who looked like the Son of God”

- The fire only consumed the ropes and cords that bound them
- The flames of the fire did not harm them

Who is that one who “looks like the Son of God”?

- From Nebuchadnezzar’s pagan point of view – “a son of the gods”
- From a Scriptural point of view – the “pre-incarnate Son of God”
- The three Hebrews were enjoying the company of the one who was preserving them, Jesus the Christ!

How were the 3 Hebrew men able to have courage?

The three were able to have courage because of their unwavering faith and trust in God.

- They recognized the clear conflict between God’s law and the king’s command to worship the golden image, which was idolatry forbidden by the first two commandments.
- They chose to obey God rather than man, demonstrating civil disobedience with respect and reverence toward the king.

Their courage was rooted in their confidence that God was able to deliver them from the fire, but even if He did not, they were still committed to obeying God rather than compromising their faith.

Isaiah 43:2 – *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you.*

Was their courage based on just an intellectual knowledge of God's faithfulness?

No, that would not be enough in and of itself. They had to have an experiential trust as the result of a deep relationship with God and a history of His faithfulness in their lives.

What does the Bible reveal about having courage?

Courage is also called “good cheer” as in Mark 6:50 when Jesus gave the command to the disciples who saw Him walking on the water of the Sea of Galilee and coming toward them.

- The Greek word translated “courage” and “good cheer” means literally “boldness and confidence.”

What is the opposite of courage?

Fear is the opposite of courage. When God commands us to fear not, to be of good cheer, and to have courage, He is commanding us to trust in Him.

Are the biblical commands to have courage calls to have blind faith?

God doesn't command courage with no reason behind it. In nearly every incident where God says “fear not,” there follows a reason to have courage, and that reason is God Himself, His nature and His perfect plans.

- When God calms Abram's fears after his battle with the kings of Sodom, the captivity of Lot and his rescue, God says, “Fear not, [for] I am your shield” (Genesis 15:1).
- When Hagar was despairing for her life and that of her child in the wilderness, the angel of the Lord tells her, “Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is” (Genesis 21:17).
- God's promise to the Israelites in Isaiah 41:14 is similar: “Fear not [for]...I am the One who helps you.”

In each incident, we see God commanding courage, not because it is natural for man to be brave and courageous, but because, when God is protecting and guiding us, we can have courage because our confidence is in Him.

Why shouldn't Mary, the mother of Jesus, fear being pregnant before she was married?

Luke 1:30 – *Do not fear...for you have found favor with God.*

The reason for her courage was to be because Almighty God controls all things.

- The shepherds are similarly commanded to be of good cheer and have courage by the angel who brought good tidings of great joy (Luke 2:10).
- Zachariah was told not to fear, for his prayer had been heard (Luke 1:13).

In each incident, the courage commanded is the result of understanding the foreknowledge and sovereignty of God, whose plans and purposes cannot be thwarted and whose omnipotence makes every circumstance of life subservient to His will.

So, what is the principle here for having courage?

Knowing God and His promises. We can be confident, courageous, and of good cheer because of Him.

Proverbs 3:25-26 – *Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being snared*

Here is the promise of God's superintending care for us, a care that is absent from the lives of those who reject Him. For those who have placed their faith in Christ for salvation, we are to have no fear because:

Luke 12:32 – *it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*

In this great promise lies the basis of our confidence, our courage, and our good cheer.

Nebuchadnezzar Praises God, Daniel 3:26-30

²⁶ *Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here.” Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire.* ²⁷ *And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.* ²⁸ *Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!”* ²⁹ *Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this.”* ³⁰ *Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.*

How did Nebuchadnezzar react to seeing the three Hebrews unharmed in the furnace?

He commanded the three to come out of the furnace. They came out and upon inspection found there was no harm done to them!

How did Nebuchadnezzar refer to the three Hebrews when he called them out of the furnace?

- Nebuchadnezzar now acknowledges what the three really were calling them the “*servants of the Most High God*”
- The King of Babylon, the most pagan nation in the world, acknowledged that the God of the Hebrews is supreme

Was this a sincere confession of Nebuchadnezzar?

Doubtful, this confession of Nebuchadnezzar is superficial at best – his pride stood in the way of a total commitment and acknowledgment of God as LORD!

What decree did Nebuchadnezzar make as a result?

Anyone who “*speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap*”

- This decree is in accordance with the usual style of an Oriental Monarch of that time... Their bodies to be cut with the sword by hewing in pieces and the utmost possible dishonor and contempt placed on their homes to be made a dung hill
- There is no evidence that this decree was enforced!

How did God use this miracle to preserve the Hebrew people in captivity in Babylon?

While Nebuchadnezzar’s initial order required that public officials, who were present, must worship the golden image, it is certain that the decree would have subsequently been expanded to include all the subjects of his Babylonian Empire

- Thus, all the Jews living in captivity throughout the Babylonian Empire would have been ordered to worship this idol
- If God had not intervened, all the Jews who refused to worship a false god would have been executed --- probably by fire
- By choosing obedience to God, the three young Hebrews prevented the vast majority of the Jews in Babylon from becoming victims to genocide!

What principles are represented here by seeing the fiery furnace as a type of the Tribulation?

There will be great affliction for the Jews and new Christian believers during the Tribulation Period

- The three Hebrew men are a type of Israel, who will be preserved through the Tribulation Period
- Nebuchadnezzar is a type of the Antichrist. He is trying to force believers to bow down to his own image and worship him (indirectly worshiping Satan).
- Daniel is a type of the Church. He is not present during all this activity

What principles come to mind that we can apply to our own lives in the here and now?

- God is sovereign whether the results are tragic or triumphant
- God never promised us the Christian life would be without tribulation; the abundant life is knowing we are eternally saved – come what may!
- Courage is the result of knowing God and His promises
- Deliverance is impressive whether seen by “godly” or by “ungodly” men
- God uses Christians as sermons to reflect His Glory.