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## AN UNEXPECTED GUEST JOINS THE THREE IN THE FIERY FURNACE

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL  
NUMBER 10  
DANIEL 3:16-30

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The statement, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter" should read, "We are not afraid to answer thee in this matter." This statement was an expression of their mental attitude concerning the loss of their places of leadership in the provinces and also the prospect of losing their lives. They were about to lose everything at one time, and yet they were not afraid.

DANIEL 3:17 "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." With this statement they brought up for the first time the prospect of God's deliverance from the fiery furnace. Their deliverance depended entirely upon the judgment and wisdom of Almighty God. Whether they were delivered or not, God had the option. "Our God whom we serve" is just another name for Jesus Christ. They were not afraid of death in the furnace if that happened to be the will of God for them. They knew their God could deliver them. Please notice they called Nebuchadnezzar "O king." They recognized the authority of the king, for he was their leader and guide. But they could not recognize his right to destroy their freedom and their free will. They knew they had the right to follow the dictates of their own consciences. Here they proved that they believed in the separation of church and state. They believed that no human government had the right to dictate to them in matters of conscience and belief. They believed that in the privacy of their own will and volition they had the right to make their own decisions concerning their God.

Then they took another fantastic step. A step which few people recognize today and that is that God has the right to exercise his free will and volition. They realized that there is no such thing as human coercion of divine volition. Now what do we mean by that? Well, there are always those people who try to be good, so God will do the best by them. They try to make a trade out with God and they say, "Since I have been good and since I have given you my 10 percent, I believe you owe me my deliverance." In that way, legalism actually detracts from the sovereignty of God.

Illustration--Suppose some doctor tells you that you have a malignancy and only have three months to live. What do you do? Do you hit the panic button and run to some fake healer or try to send off for some healing cloth? Well, don't try it. And please don't try to get hold of my handkerchief, it will only make you worse.

So we don't tell God that we are going to be good so he will heal us. This is human coercion of divine volition. It doesn't work and God is never fooled by this kind of thinking. God can't be coerced by this kind of thinking. God has a plan for each of us, but it doesn't include his changing his plan just to please our fancy or whims so that things can move along as we think they should go. Most believers have the concept that God is a "genii" and if they just rub him the right way, if they are good and go to church and stay morally clean that then God is obliged to give them his blessing. "Now look God, I used to be out on the town and do most everything that all the other boys do, but since I've been in church for a year and since I tithe, I expect you to come across with all the goodies I deserve." But God does not allow human volition to dictate to him like that concerning what he should or should not do. Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego have not taken this stand just so God will deliver them.

DANIEL 3:18 "But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." This verse is the turning point and it recognizes the fact that God has the right to choose what he wants to do with our lives. If he wants us to die in the fiery furnace, then we will go singing to the fiery furnace. And if he wants to deliver us from the fiery furnace, then that's fine also. But the point is that God always has the option.

SEVEN POINTS ON "BUT, IF NOT"

1. The three believers recognized the freedom of God's volition to deliver or not to deliver. They recognized God's sovereignty. God has freedom of volition and we have freedom of volition.
2. These three believers had enough Bible doctrine in their minds to understand the true essence of human freedom.
3. The central government of a nation has no right to dictate to its constituents regarding religion or their faith in God. This is outside their rights.
4. These three believers not only recognize the freedom of human volition but also the freedom of divine volition.
5. They were oriented to grace by knowing Bible doctrine. They do not seek to coerce or to bribe God into delivering them. You can't bribe God. You can't trade out with God. They took the correct stand because the Bible was their life.
6. Therefore, they do not seek to earn or deserve deliverance, therefore, they do not seek to dictate to God how he will handle their case.
7. Under the faith-rest principle they placed the entire matter in his hands to do according to his will.

PSALM 55:22 "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

1 PETER 5:7 "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

EXODUS 14:13-14 "And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

PSALM 37:5 "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."

1 SAMUEL 17:47 "And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands."

This is the principle upon which these three men operated. Doctrine was their life.

"We will not serve thy gods" was indeed a very bold statement for these three men. They would not give outward obedience to these pagan gods in order to save their lives. They chose rather to stand with doctrine. So they left the matter in the Lord's hands. They took their stand against idolatry for idolatry is contrary to the will of God. "Live by doctrine and leave the rest in the Lord's hands" was the guideline for their lives. It was even harder for them for they had the sweet smell of success upon their work. They were VIPs in the empire and were highly successful. But their belief in God was more important than their jobs.

DANIEL 3:19 "Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated."

Now we have already seen the two fires. One was in the furnace and the other was in the mind of Nebuchadnezzar. The furnace was about to be heated seven times hotter than normal, and Nebuchadnezzar's mind was about to get so hot it would just burn up his mind so he couldn't think.

"Full of fury" was a description of the mental attitude of Nebuchadnezzar. You cannot have in your frontal lobe hostility and hatred and implacability and ever be happy. Now we have seen the relaxed mental attitude of Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego. Contrasted to this was the hatred and fury in the mental attitude of Nebuchadnezzar. This bitter mental attitude of Nebuchadnezzar led him to do some very foolish things. Please notice this point. Here is the most powerful man in the world and he had everything but he was miserable. How can a man with a great empire, power, with millions of people under him be a miserable man? Simply because he had anger and fury in his mind. He had power and money and position, but he also had mental attitude bitterness. And at this point Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego had nothing. They had just lost their positions as leaders of provinces and now they are about to lose their lives in the fiery furnace. They had inner peace and poise and stability and mental attitude happiness. Inner happiness based on Bible doctrine. They had given up their positions on sound Bible principles, and now were being maligned and ridiculed and hustled off to the fiery furnace for a very ridiculous reason. Nebuchadnezzar was the king and was wealthy, had people all around him serving him, yet he was absolutely miserable. These three men, Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego had been stripped of everything and yet they were happy and relaxed. But you see, they would not have had this inner happiness if they had conformed to the popular customs. If they had bowed to the image against their will, they would have been miserable. Compromise always brings mental misery.

If they had rationalized their position and bowed down, they would have had mental attitude misery. And remember, God does not use people who compromise doctrine. The picture of Nebuchadnezzar contrasted with these three Jews is the picture the difference doctrine makes. "The form of his image was changed" and this means that his mental attitude was so bad on the inside that he blew a gasket and his face wrinkled up and he looked like a California prune. He had destroyed his own face. Here is a man who controlled the world but he couldn't control his own face. Out of his mental attitude came the command to heat the furnace seven times hotter than it was. At this point there is just one word that will describe Nebuchadnezzar-- and that word is "fool." Now when you are thrown into a furnace what difference does it make whether it is red hot or even seven times hotter than red hot? If the fire burns you up, the intensity of the heat makes absolutely no difference at all. So Nebuchadnezzar found out that the fire that was raging in his own mind was the only place where the fire did any damage. Who got hurt from having the fire seven times hotter? The brave soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar are the ones, for when they threw the three men into the fire, they were burned up themselves.

DANIEL 3:20 "And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace." Anger had made a fool out of Nebuchadnezzar. Mental attitude anger always does this to people. When you heat your brain seven times hotter, you can easily destroy your brain and with it also destroy all those who are around you. When you hate people, you can make everybody else around you absolutely miserable. And you can make people avoid you on every hand by this kind of mental attitude anger. When with anger and bitterness and criticism you try to hurt other people, you always end up hurting yourself even more. We will see these three saved men have a ball inside that furnace, while Nebuchadnezzar, because of the raging fire in his mind, destroyed some of his own best men. So the king did not kill the people he thought he was going to kill; he only destroyed his own people.



DANIEL 3:21 "Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Coats here is the word for uniform. As governors of provinces they wore very beautiful uniforms. He had them bound right there in their dress uniforms. The word "hosen" is really a disgraceful translation. When the time the King James Version was translated men wore "hosen". But be assured that these three men didn't wear "hosen". The word here translated "hosen" is underwear. Now why does it mention their underwear? Well, if you get burned up in a fire like this your uniform is burned and your underwear is burned also. But they are going to come out of this without even their underwear being scorched. I started to call this paper tonight "No scorched underwear." The only thing that was burned were the ropes binding them down.

DANIEL 3:22 "Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego." Some of the bravest men in all of Babylon lost their lives because of the ridiculous anger and fury of Nebuchadnezzar. Now in verses 23-25 we have the triumph of grace.

DANIEL 3:23 "And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace." These men were tied, so when they were thrown into the furnace they fell down into the burning coals. Can you think of a more helpless situation than this? They were not only in the furnace, but they were bound.

DANIEL 3:24 "Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king." Here Nebuchadnezzar received a great shock "Astonied" is the old English word for "astonished". Here is a man who had lost his poise and he had also lost his self-sufficiency. He now consulted his counsellors and they were just a bunch of "yes yes" men. They said "Yes, O King, yes it is true. We did throw three men into the furnace. Yes sir, you are right O king."

DANIEL 3:25 "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" After Nebuchadnezzar got his "yes sir, answer" he said "I see four men loose". Not three men bound, but four men loose, and they had no hurt and one looks like "The Son of God". Now I am going to spoil this for some of you. The Chaldean aramaic language here says "It looks like one of the gods". Nebuchadnezzar at this time was polytheistic. He had adopted the Babylonian pantheon as his own. They had a pantheon of Gods, and Nebuchadnezzar had adopted his own system. So we have four men walking in the fire and they were having a ball. A great place for a warm party. No one is going to bother you there. This illustrates this principle-- when you live by doctrine, doctrine will protect you in the midst of suffering. God has designed all suffering, no matter what it is, to bless the believer.

I Peter 1:7-8 "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:" Here are three men under maximum pressure their bonds have been burned and their executioners killed. This flame of suffering only burned away the ropes and they were free in the fire. Why? No fire can ever destroy the truth of God in your mind. They were happy and relaxed.

Now why did Jesus join them in that furnace? Because when Christian soldiers suffer he is always there. The happiest people in the plane of Dura that day were

these three men walking around in that fire with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now when the King looked at this scene he wasn't a bit happy. He saw that inside the furnace they had no hurt. The Chaldean language says here "His form is like a son of God." This can refer to any deity in their pantheon. This is their phrase for a Babylonian deity. The original language here is Chaldean. Nebuchadnezzar didn't recognize him as Jesus Christ. Now it is Jesus Christ in that furnace. Here is the key to the next chapter. Jesus Christ is the God of Israel. Nebuchadnezzar had conquered the Jews three times and he at that time had no respect for "The God of Israel". You see, at that time he thought his Babylonian gods were superior to the Jewish gods, for he had conquered them. Now Nebuchadnezzar had heard of Jesus Christ from Jeremiah and Daniel and these three men in the furnace. But at this time in the story Nebuchadnezzar had no respect for their God. He didn't realize that Jehovah God had allowed him to conquer the Jews as a part of their punishment for their sins. He didn't realize that Babylon was being used as a whip in God's hand to discipline the Jews. Nebuchadnezzar will have to go through some years of humiliation before he will accept Christ as Saviour. So he said that the fourth one looks good enough to be one of the Gods of Babylon. Now all those Babylonian gods were on Nebuchadnezzar's side and were not in that furnace. Jesus Christ was in that furnace with his own men and he delivered them because they trusted in him. In chapter four we will see that eventually Nebuchadnezzar will accept Christ as Saviour and chapter 4 is a copy of the salvation tract he wrote and sent to all the people of his empire. So Nebuchadnezzar said "That God in there looks good enough to be one of our Babylonian gods."

DANIEL 3:26 "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." They probably had been in the furnace several hours by this time. It had been heated seven times hotter, so it would take it quite some time to cool down. So Nebuchadnezzar had to pat his foot for some time and stand around and wait for the furnace to cool. Please notice-- Nebuchadnezzar didn't offer to go in. Notice he called these three men "servants of the most high God". In this statement he recognized the fact that their God was greater than the Babylonian gods. In his salvation tract in Daniel 4:37 he will call Jesus Christ "The King of heaven". In verse 34 he will say "He that liveth forever." He asked them to come forth. There were four in the fire and only three came out. Jesus Christ is God and he reads minds and he knew it would be eight years before Nebuchadnezzar would become a believer.

DANIEL 3:27 "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." The fire had no power on them. They not only were not burned, but they didn't even smell like a fire had been on them. In a fire not only does the fire burn but smoke does as much damage as fire. But they came out and didn't even have the smell of fire on them. They could keep on wearing their uniforms and their so-called "hosen" because it was not only not burned but they had no smell of fire on them. Hebrews 11:34 refers to this when it says "Quenched the violence of fire".

DANIEL 3:28 "Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God." Here Nebuchadnezzar

called Christ an angel because he sent his messenger to help them, and because he didn't come out when they came out. Nebuchadnezzar here referred to the fact that these three men "served their own God".

DANIEL 3:29 "Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill; because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort." Now here is old stupid again. He was going to pass a law that all who did not bow to the god of these three men from the furnace, would be quartered and would be made a public disgrace.

1. The analysis of this decree or law shows pagan rulers repeat their same mistake but in a different form.
2. Nebuchadnezzar abandons here the attempt to force idolatry on his subjects. But he didn't eliminate the principle of coercion from the state.
3. Instead of forcing all to bow down to his golden image, he now turns and seeks to make everybody worship the God of these three men who had just come out of the furnace.
4. This action of his violates the idea of the separation of church and state.
5. Furthermore, the God of these three men, namely Jesus Christ, does not need the sponsorship of the state. Christ didn't need the sponsorship of Nebuchadnezzar. The power of Christ was far greater than any power Nebuchadnezzar could give him.
6. People must come to Christ of their own volition. It is "whosoever believeth". The issue of the Gospel is John 3:36. The state can't demand that you believe in Christ. The purpose of the state is to preserve order so the church can live in freedom and not be hampered in evangelism. So don't support any law that sponsors Christianity. Nebuchadnezzar came to the conclusion "There is no other God who can deliver after this sort.

DANIEL 3:30 "Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon." They started out as VIPs and now they are super VIPs. This is the only smart thing Nebuchadnezzar did in this chapter.