

COURAGE

CORE PASSAGE: DANIEL 3:14-18,24-29

CONTEXT

After three years of Babylonian training, Daniel and his friends served the king as advisers. One night, the king had a disturbing dream, and only Daniel, blessed with God's gift to interpret dreams, was able to answer the king about its meaning. That dream included a multi-layered statue and foretold the rise and fall of nations, beginning with Babylon, whose king was represented by the statue's golden head. Nebuchadnezzar later decided to build an enormous statue made entirely of gold and to have all of his subjects bow in worship to it. Daniel's friends, however, chose to remain faithful and to worship the Lord alone.

KEY CONCEPT

God is worthy of our trust and obedience, even if the result is death.

As you examine Daniel 3:14-18,24-29:

- Recognize that the three friends' courage stemmed from their belief that God could be trusted in life or death.
- Notice how Nebuchadnezzar recognized God's power and gave Him the praise He deserved because of the three friends' faithful testimony.



TIMELINE

Daniel and His Friends
Remain Faithful to God's
Dietary Laws (Daniel 1)

SESSION STUDY:
**Daniel's Friends Refuse to Worship
Nebuchadnezzar's Statue (Daniel 3)**

Daniel Interprets the Writing on
the Wall for Belshazzar (Daniel 5)

Daniel Interprets Nebuchadnezzar's
First Dream (Daniel 2)

Daniel Interprets Nebuchadnezzar's
Second Dream (Daniel 4)

Daniel Is Thrown into the
Lions' Den (Daniel 6)

Daily Readings

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| ☐ Day 1: Daniel 3 | ☐ Day 4: Ezekiel 40–44 |
| ☐ Day 2: Daniel 4 | ☐ Day 5: Ezekiel 45–48 |
| ☐ Day 3: Obadiah | ☐ Day 6: Psalm 14 |



Scan this QR code
to access this session's
Scripture passages.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

DANIEL 3:14-18

GOD IS ALWAYS ABLE TO SAVE.

Circle all the conjunctions, the connecting words, in the passage (and, but, if, then, when, etc.).

14 Nebuchadnezzar asked them, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, is it true that you don’t serve my gods or worship the gold statue I have set up? **15** Now if you’re ready, when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, drum, and every kind of music, fall down and worship the statue I made. But if you don’t worship it, you will immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire—and who is the god who can rescue you from my power?” **16** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to the king, “Nebuchadnezzar, we don’t need to give you an answer to this question. **17** If the God we serve exists, then he can rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and he can rescue us from the power of you, the king. **18** But even if he does not rescue us, we want you as king to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up.”

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

MIRACLES: A miracle is an event in which God makes an exception to the natural order or supersedes natural laws for the purpose of demonstrating His glory and/or validating His message. Miracles are recorded throughout Scripture; signs and wonders were oftentimes evident when a prophet or an apostle was speaking God’s message to the people. Because we believe God to be all-powerful and personally involved in this world, we believe He can and does perform miracles.

Key Concept: God is worthy of our trust and obedience, even if the result is death.



King Nebuchadnezzar set up a gold statue to be the center of worship for his subjects. But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (previously called Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah) determined not to bow to it—they worshiped the Lord alone, even while facing a gruesome death. Some Chaldeans, likely jealous these Jews were set over Babylon’s affairs, told the king these three men would not serve his gods nor worship his statue, which enraged the king (vv. 1-13).

Daniel’s friends determined to obey God’s commandments: “Do not have other gods besides me. Do not make an idol for yourself” (Exodus 20:3-4). So Nebuchadnezzar, himself jealous for the worship and total submission of his subjects, did what all people do who set themselves against the one true God—he persecuted God’s faithful people, threatening them with death by fire.

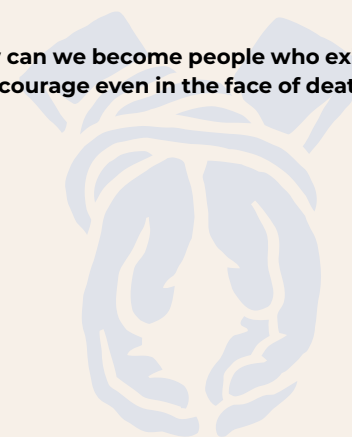
What are some ways believers today experience difficulties and persecution for their faith?

The persecution coming for these three courageous Jews was a very real threat, yet they saw this as an opportunity for them to give glory to God. Nebuchadnezzar mocked their God, claiming to have supreme power in this matter (Daniel 3:15). Still, Shadrach,

Meshach, and Abednego remained firm in their faith. They would worship God alone, no matter the outcome. The Lord could rescue them with a miracle, but He might not. Both were acceptable outcomes because the Lord alone is the true God who is worthy of worship.

These friends embodied Paul’s words from Philippians 1:21: “For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” For the Christian, there is no losing situation. As Jesus said, “Don’t fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; rather, fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). The reverent fear of God is the end of all other earthly fears.

How can we become people who exhibit faith and courage even in the face of death?



VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

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“Let faith be yours, and God will be with you in your trouble.”¹

—Augustine of Hippo (c. 354–430)

GOD SAVES SO THAT ALL WOULD KNOW HE IS THE MOST HIGH GOD.

Circle every instance of God or gods in the passage.

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in alarm. He said to his advisers, “Didn’t we throw three men, bound, into the fire?” “Yes, of course, Your Majesty,” they replied to the king. **25** He exclaimed, “Look! I see four men, not tied, walking around in the fire unharmed; and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.” **26** Nebuchadnezzar then approached the door of the furnace of blazing fire and called, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, you servants of the Most High God—come out!” So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire. **27** When the satraps, prefects, governors, and the king’s advisers gathered around, they saw that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men: not a hair of their heads was singed, their robes were unaffected, and there was no smell of fire on them. **28** Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed, “Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel and rescued his servants who trusted in him. They violated the king’s command and risked their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. **29** Therefore I issue a decree that anyone of any people, nation, or language who says anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will be torn limb from limb and his house made a garbage dump. For there is no other god who is able to deliver like this.”

Key Concept: God is worthy of our trust and obedience, even if the result is death.



The courage of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego sent Nebuchadnezzar into a rage. The furnace was heated seven times hotter than normal—so hot that his best soldiers who threw them in died from the heat (vv. 19-23). But the three did not die because the living God was among them.

Nebuchadnezzar himself was the one to notice the fourth man, an “angel” of God (v. 28), walking in the fire with the other three. The king who believed he had power over life and death was beholding a supreme power unlike any he could achieve. The flames of man cannot extinguish the glory of God!

Why do you think God gave Nebuchadnezzar the ability to see “the fourth man” in the fire?

God’s rescue of His servants was not for their sake only. Their preservation brought glory to God. Imagine it! The king who had ridiculed the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego now praised the very same God. What a turnaround!

The three friends risked their lives to serve God, and God came through. That’s a truth that rings through the ages. Whatever threat God’s people face, it is nothing compared to God’s power. He has all authority in heaven and on earth, and

He laughs at the schemes of the wicked (Psalm 2:1-4). Nothing can move God from His throne, and nothing can thwart His plan of salvation for His people.

How have you seen the power of God at work in your life?

Not every fiery trial will end like this, however. Not everyone who stands up for God and His gospel survives the punishment of worldly kings. That doesn’t make God a failure. He is always powerful and glorious. No, flames can only kill the body. God can raise up the body again. Jesus was raised from death to life, and He will raise up everyone who trusts in Him on the last day (John 6:39-40).

GOSPEL CONNECTION

God’s power saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fire, and that same power resurrected Jesus Christ. Even in dire circumstances, God makes a way to accomplish His will, as seen ultimately in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

MODERN-DAY STATUES AND FURNACES

Read Daniel 3:14-18,24-29. Identify some modern-day “statues” that demand worship and modern-day “furnaces” we may face for upholding the gospel.

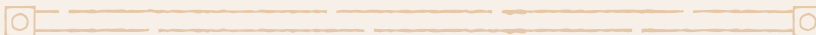
MODERN-DAY GOLDEN STATUES

MODERN-DAY FIERY FURNACES

How can we fix our eyes on Jesus instead of golden statues the world offers?

How can we encourage other believers who are facing fiery furnaces?

Key Concept: God is worthy of our trust and obedience, even if the result is death.



HEAD

Why is it important that we believe the miracles in the Bible?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read Psalm 14. Confess and pray for forgiveness for the times you acted as if God did not exist (vv. 1-3). Thank the Lord and rejoice for His faithful actions and promises to be a refuge for His people who trust in Him (vv. 4-7).



HEART

What in your life keeps you from trusting God and obeying with courage?

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



HANDS

How will you act with faith and courage this week, trusting the Lord for direction, words, and boldness?

