

SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO GOD

DANIEL 3:13-18

SCRIPTURE READING AND INSIGHTS

Begin by reading Daniel 3:13-18 in your favorite Bible. As you read, allow the Word of God to bring revival to your soul (Psalm 119:25, 93, 107).

In yesterday's reading, the Chaldeans accused Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego of not bowing before Nebuchadnezzar's golden image. Today we'll see the three Hebrews remain unbendingly faithful to God in the face of accusation. With your Bible still accessible, consider the following insights on the biblical text, verse by verse.

Daniel 3:13

Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage (3:13): It would have been one thing for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to privately refuse to bow before the golden image. But the three youths publicly refused to bow before the image and worship it. To Nebuchadnezzar, this represented a public defiance of his religious and political authority. He was therefore enraged. He immediately ordered that these three be brought before him.

Nebuchadnezzar had previously held these three youths in high esteem (Daniel 1:20), but that did not exempt them from submitting to his decree regarding the golden image. They now had to answer for their defiance.

We note in passing the growing evidence that Nebuchadnezzar may have had an anger problem. Recall that when the wise men could not tell the king his dream, "the king was angry and very furious" (Daniel 2:12). Now, when he heard that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down to the golden image, he was "in furious rage" (3:13). Later, when the three youths definitively stated to the king that they would not worship the image, he was "filled with fury" (3:19). He seemed to *react* far more often than he *responded*.

Notice again that Daniel is not part of this group. This is only because Daniel was not at the dedication ceremony. Had he been there, he too would have refused to worship the golden image, and he too would have found himself being dragged before Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 3:14-15

Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (3:14): It appears that by the time Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego arrived before Nebuchadnezzar, he had gained a bit more control of his emotions. Instead of passing immediate judgment on the three, he asked them if the Chaldeans' accusation was true. If it turned out that the accusation was false, he would drop the matter.

If you are ready...well and good (3:15): Nebuchadnezzar gave the three lads a second chance—perhaps due to his former high esteem of them. He informed them that if they would bow before the image upon hearing the music, then all would be forgiven. They would escape punishment, and life would go back to normal.

If you do not worship (3:15): If the three lads refused to bow before the image, they would be cast into a fiery furnace. That is the consequence for defying the king's authority.

Who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands? (3:15): Nebuchadnezzar's question no doubt stimulated the three lads' faithfulness to the one true God. This reminds us of Pharaoh's defiant statement to Moses: "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go?" (Exodus 5:2).

Nebuchadnezzar apparently considered himself to be higher than all other gods, for no other god could turn back his hand. No other god could circumvent his authority. Nebuchadnezzar was here claiming for himself what is ultimately true only of the one true God. Indeed, God affirms, "My counsel shall

stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose... I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it" (Isaiah 46:10-11). He asserts, "For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?" (14:27).

Nebuchadnezzar would soon learn that he would lose any contest with Yahweh. Nebuchadnezzar asked, "Who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?" Yahweh would soon indicate, "That would be Me" (see 3:25-29).

Daniel 3:16-18

O king, we have no need to answer (3:16): The three youths may initially appear to be disrespecting the king with an in-your-face attitude. This is not the case, however. Their point was that their commitment to Yahweh was so firm and so rock-solid that they would not consider doing anything to offend Him. They knew Him to be the true and living God, so they had "no need to answer" because they could take no other course of action. They would remain forever faithful to God.

Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us (3:17): The same God who delivered the Israelites from the hand of the Egyptian pharaoh (Exodus 18:10) could deliver the three youths from the hand of the Babylonian king. These three men may have been employed by Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:49), but they did not serve the false gods of Babylon. They served only the one true God. And they had confidence that this one true God could deliver them.

We are again reminded of the First and Second Commandments, which were pivotal to the thinking of these Hebrew youths: "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God" (Exodus 20:3-5).

Moreover, the three youths were fully aware that God not only has the power to deliver His people but also has promised to do so. We again recall what God said in Isaiah 43:1-2: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you."

But if not, be it known to you (3:18): The Hebrew youths affirmed that God's deliverance was possible and even likely. They also recognized that martyrdom was possible. But one outcome was impossible from their perspective—come what may, they would never worship false gods. Regardless of the outcome, their commitment was to do God's will in all things. On that, they would not bend. They firmly believed that God would deliver them, and they would trust Him even if He didn't.

One is reminded of Joshua's attitude when he said to the Israelites, "Choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15). Like Joshua, the three Hebrew youths chose to follow and serve God alone.

The three Hebrew youths remind us of an important lesson—we should maintain faith in God even when our circumstances remain difficult. We are reminded of this truth in Habakkuk 3:17-19: "Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places."

MAJOR THEMES

1. *Belief in false gods.* Daniel and his associates knew that in reality the gods of Babylon were not true gods at all. Scripture consistently affirms that there is only one true God. God Himself affirmed, "Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me" (Isaiah 43:10). He said, "I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God" (Isaiah 45:5). That there is only one God is the consistent testimony of Scripture (John 5:44; 17:3; Romans 3:29-30; 16:27; 1 Corinthians 8:4; Galatians 3:20; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 Timothy 1:17; 2:5; James 2:19; 1 John 5:20-21; Jude 25). God understandably commands, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).
2. *Human arrogance.* Nebuchadnezzar is a sad example of unrestrained human

arrogance—a character trait that God hates. Scripture reveals, “Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate” (Proverbs 8:13). God promises, “I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless” (Isaiah 13:11; see also 1 Samuel 2:3). Jeremiah 50:32 affirms, “The proud one shall stumble and fall, with none to raise him up.” God promises, “The haughtiness of man shall be humbled, and the lofty pride of men shall be brought low, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day” (Isaiah 2:17).

DIGGING DEEPER WITH CROSS-REFERENCES

Human boasting—1 Samuel 17:10, 44; Psalms 73:9; 75:4; Ezekiel 35:13; Daniel 3:15; Matthew 26:33, 35; Acts 8:9; Romans 1:30; 1 Corinthians 4:7; 2 Timothy 3:2; James 3:5; 4:16; Jude 16; Revelation 13:5

Divine deliverance—Judges 8:34; 11:21; 1 Samuel 14:12; 17:37, 46; 24:15; 2 Samuel 18:28; 22:2, 18, 49; 2 Kings 17:39; 19:19; 2 Chronicles 16:8; Psalms 18:2, 17, 43; 34:4, 17; 54:7; 56:13; 68:20; 109:31; Jeremiah 1:8; Matthew 6:13; Luke 22:42; 2 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Timothy 3:11; 4:18; Hebrews 2:15

LIFE LESSONS

1. *Courageous believers.* The three Hebrew youths were unbendingly courageous in the face of Nebuchadnezzar’s threats. You and I can be bold and courageous as well. The early believers in the book of Acts prayed, “And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness” (Acts 4:29). We are then told that “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness” (verse 31). We can be bold in the power of the Holy Spirit, just as the early believers were (see Psalm 138:3; 2 Corinthians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Timothy 1:12). Deuteronomy 31:6 exhorts us, “Be strong and courageous...it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.” Stand strong for the Lord!
2. *Confidence in God.* Daniel and his friends were courageous because of their strong confidence in God. They seemed to have had the same confidence in God as portrayed in the psalms. The psalmist said, “The LORD is my

light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1). The psalmist goes on to say, "Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident" (verse 3). He affirms, "The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble" (Psalm 9:9). He says to God, "My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!" (Psalm 31:15). God promises us, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). You can be confident in God!

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What stands out to you about Nebuchadnezzar's character in Daniel 3:13-15?
2. What inspires you most about the three Hebrew youths' response to the king in Daniel 3:16-18?
3. When was the last time you felt pressured to compromise your faith? How did you respond?