

They were born with great Hebrew names: Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Two of those names include the word for Jehovah. One of them includes the Hebrew name for God. They were good boys.

Sadly, however, they were born during a bad time in Jewish history. While they were yet teenagers, Nebuchadnezzar, the evil Chaldean King, raided Jerusalem and took them captive. Once delivered to Babylon, these boys were promptly renamed to reflect the heathen culture: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (**Daniel 1:7**).

**Daniel 1:4** – Handsome young Jewish lads, they were indoctrinated with Chaldean culture and custom.

**Daniel 1:8** – Led by Daniel, these young men chose to continue to serve God, even among the godless.

**Daniel 1:15,27,19-20** – And immediately God rewarded them for their unwavering faithfulness.

But all of this was only preparing these three men to face their greatest trial! (Daniel 3)

**3:5** – *The Command* – They were to worship the golden image at a certain time.

**3:6** – *The Consequences* – Death by fire to all who refused to do so.

**3:12** – *The Choice* – These three men made the choice to honor God even in the face of certain death.

**3:15** – *The Chance* – They were given a second chance to save their lives through compromise.

**3:21-26** – *The Cherub* – Having been cast in, an angel of the Lord delivered them safely through the fire!

An amazing story of faith and conviction, but a difficult one to apply. These are not circumstances we are likely to face in our lives. And in this age, God doesn't show Himself supernaturally to the world anyhow. SO what value are this story and the faith of these men to you and to me?

What we can look for is a common connection between us. And this is the common thread:

God's people are called to face fiery trials in life for the sake of proving that God comes first!

The New Testament examples of this same kind of faith are abundant:

- *Stephen* was stoned in the streets.
- *Paul* lost his health and freedom.
- *Jason* was dragged through the streets of Thessalonica.
- *Timothy* was told to expect the same for the cause of serving Jesus. (**II Timothy 3:12**)

**I Peter 4:12-19** – You and I also must be tested, tried and purified through great challenges in Christ!

- Let's not be surprised by this, as if some strange thing were happening to us.
- Let's not try to avoid all difficulties in our walk of discipleship.
- Let's not fail in the face of it or find ourselves overwhelmed and underprepared.

So maybe we are in need of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's example. A slightly deeper look into the events of Daniel 3 will reveal three important choices they made that led to proving their faith.

If they can do it, you can do it! But we must learn from them and do it their way.

Firstly, before we see their 3 choices, please me mindful of their 1 purpose!

*"so as not to serve or worship any other god except their God!" (Daniel 3:28)*

This lesson is of no value to the person who will not "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness."

Will you join with me this morning in acknowledging that this is the great goal of this life?

#### I. "who put their trust in God" (3:28a)

- a. Never a doubt. God is here. God is watching. My choices matter. I trust in Him!
- b. **3:17-18** – God has the power to do as He pleases. He may save us from this flame. He may let us die. (In the New Testament, some were delivered and some were not). But I know He knows best and that He will reward me if I obey Him no matter what!
- c. When you have that much trust in God's sovereign power, there isn't really even a choice.
- d. **I Peter 4:13,14,19** – It is this complete faith in God that empowers us to stand in His name!
- e. Listen, in going through tough trials, you will have to make difficult decision, decisions that will hurt, that may involve friends, family, occupation, recreation, priorities... but first, before looking at any of those, the question must be asked: DO YOU TRUST GOD?

#### II. "violating the king's command" (3:28b)

- a. After all types of faith and commitment have been proclaimed, this is where the proverbial rubber meets the course road. The real test comes when it is time to say: NO!

- b. What a word? This word indicates that there are some things a disciple will NOT do.
  - i. This does not say: “we’ll see” or “maybe this once” or “God will understand.”
  - ii. Regardless of to whom it must be said or what it might mean, the answer is NO.
- c. **Daniel 3:16** – Interestingly, the NO was simply understood. It didn’t even have to be said, the question didn’t even need to be asked. If you are asking us to do something different than what God has asked me to do, and if you knew me at all, you’d know the answer.
- d. **I Peter 4:15-16** – This instruction says that I will not be punished for doing the wrong thing. I may suffer for doing the right thing, and there may be consequences for saying NO, but when it comes to sin, I will not say YES.
- e. Who among is so set on right, that your answer to sinful propositions goes without saying:
  - i. A Job is offered to you that will noticeably interfere with your family’s growing faith.
  - ii. A Friend encourages you to do wrong and your friendship is on the line.
  - iii. Sports and Recreation offers great fun but at the expense of faithful worship to God.
  - iv. Family pressures you to close your Bible, miss worship and be more like them.
- f. Saying NO can cost us much across the landscape of our lives. Who will say it anyway.

### III. “yielded up their bodies” (3:28c)

- a. **Daniel 3:18** - They died for what they believed in. At least, they gave up their bodies to certain death, and were willing to accept it, if that was the will of God.
- b. Their lives were about something more, something of greater value than physical life.
- c. **3:15** – They believed in bodies beyond the flesh and God put that quality on display!
  - i. Nebuchadnezzar was probably thinking: *“I gotta get me one of those!”* But that’s the irony of it all: receiving a body like that one requires the laying down of this one!
- d. **I Peter 4:19** – God’s people will make that trade if that decision comes. God’s people see the eternal, enduring, precious and living soul as their true treasure, even over their flesh.
  - i. And while we may not be asked to give up one for the sake of the other, we are daily and constantly, in trial after trial, temptation after temptation, fire after fire, called to DENY the one for the sake of the preservation of the other!
  - ii. Paul counted all earthly sacrifice as “rubbish” that he may gain Christ.
  - iii. Men and women in Hebrews 11 lived for the better body in the better country.
- e. All who desire to live godly will have to deny their temporary flesh for the sake of their eternal soul and bodies. And at times it will hurt, but we have yielded our bodies.
  - i. We may have to give things up. Take reviling. Lose here. Suffer here.
  - ii. Someday our lives may be on the line and death the result of faith.
  - iii. *What will you do on that day? The truth is, you are already doing it with every choice, every priority, every yield and every stand, every day.*

**Conclusion: Daniel 3:28.** Who said it? Who said that they would not put anything before God, trusting in Him with their life, violating the king’s command, yielding up their bodies? Who acknowledged this great stand and what it said about the great God of heaven? NEBUCHADNEZZAR!

This king, (3:15b), who previously was their enemy and did not believe, is now, by their stand, professing the greatness of the God of heaven! All because of the choice they made and God’s amazing response to it!

**I Peter 2:12** – How do you think we convert the world? Is it handing out CD’s or inviting them to services, or teaching them the gospel? Sure, in part. But primarily and most importantly, it is our daily choices, our sacrifices, our stand for the truth when it is difficult, when most would have yielded. In those moments we change the world.

What a twist in the judgment if Jesus said, “I will welcome you in if you have put your trust in God, violated the world’s demands, yielded up your body, so that you would put God first in all things. But I will not make that determination. And I will not ask you to profess it. Let’s ask the world. Let’s ask the Nebuchadnezzars of your life: the friends, neighbors, co-workers, fellow students, even enemies. Let’s see if your choices stood out as a special service for God, to the world. And if they saw it, I will acknowledge it.”

We know what Nebuchadnezzar saw in these three men. What does the world see in you? Who will profess God and acknowledge His greatness because of what they see in you? And more to the point of our invitation this morning, what can you do right now to show them what God means to you?