# Into the Fire

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qCzY-gyup70>

<https://hymnary.org/text/lord_the_light_of_your_love_is_shining>

<https://hymnary.org/text/we_have_heard_the_joyful_sound>

In the 1992 I was studying at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. I majored in Computer Science with minors in mathematics and religious studies. My favorite professor was Dr. Donald Schley. He was an unorthodox teacher, and therefore an excellent teacher. Each day class would start with him sitting on his desk or throwing his books on the table and starting a conversation. His conversations would start with current events or questions about someone’s mother and continue from there. By 15 minutes into the class, the conversation was still going, but was now firmly on the topic of the day. He never seemed to change topics; the topic just seemed to morph from chitchat to whatever he was talking about.

One day, Dr. Schley had to miss class. In his absence, the head of the philosophy department covered our class, which was studying eastern religions at the time. This professor started explaining that the best way to understand eastern meditation was to experience it.

As the rest of the class started to follow his meditation instructions, I sat quietly in my chair and took notes about his instructions, choosing not to participate in Eastern meditation that I felt went contrary to my Christian faith. This substitute professor stopped class, looked directly at me and asked why I wasn’t participating. I said that I felt doing so would be an affront to my Christian faith. After taking several minutes to explain how participating in Eastern Religious meditation was consistent with Christianity, he said that I had one more chance to participate or I would have it negatively affect my grades. Believing His arguments were wrong, I continued to sit at my desk taking notes, not disrupting the class, but also not participating.

Later, as I spoke with my parents, they asked why I didn’t just pretend to meditate and pray to God instead. I told them that I had just that morning read Daniel chapter 3 and that my response was patterned on what I saw in that scripture.

I don’t know if that professor ever told Dr. Schley that I had not participated, but I do know I passed Dr. Schley’s class without difficulty. From our conversations, I know that Dr. Schley was a committed Christian. He never forced his beliefs on anyone, but was always open to talk about them, in fact, many students who were non-Christians were enthusiastic fans of Dr. Schley. A couple years later, Dr. Schley was dismissed from the University, ostensibly because of budget cuts, but they immediately brought in someone else to fill his place. I later learned that Dr. Schley had also lost positions at a college in South Carolina because he was open about his beliefs. My minor difficulty with the head of the department had no lasting difficulty on my life, Dr. Schley paid a higher price for his faith.

As we look at Daniel 3 today, I hope we learn that not everyone responds to God’s blessing with repentance, that people will notice and be offended when we choose to be faithful to God, that our faith requires us to stand in truth and that God’s faithfulness will carry us through.

## Not everyone responds to God’s blessing with repentance Daniel 3:1-6

Last week we saw how God had given Nebuchadnezzar a prophecy of the future, which included acknowledging King Neb. as the head of Gold. While he acknowledged God, he did not humble himself before God. Instead he let God’s blessing go to his head.

“**1** ¶ Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. **2** Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent word to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. **3** Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. **4** Then the herald loudly proclaimed: "To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and men of every language, **5** that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. **6** "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire."” (Da 3:1-6 NAS95)

I have no doubt in my mind that this image was inspired by the dream he had. Perhaps he thought, if he made the entire sculpture of gold, he could change destiny and ensure himself a lasting kingdom. Perhaps he just got prideful. Perhaps he listened to the advice of the very wisemen he intended to execute in the last chapter. Either way, he did not respond in humility.

Many times we think that if God would only work in someone’s life that they will see God working and turn to him. Sadly the opposite often happens. And it doesn’t just happen in the lives of non-believers. King Hezekiah began his life as one of the most Godly kings of Judah. When Assyria attacked Jerusalem, God did a mighty miracle to save the country. Shortly thereafter, King Hezekiah became ill to the point of death. When he prayed to God, he was granted an additional 15 years of life. Rather than rejoice in God’s salvation, Hezekiah then bragged about his wealth and power to emissaries from the King of Babylon, leading directly, according to God’s prophet, to Babylon conquering Judah. In addition, when Hezekiah died, his 12 year old son Manasseh became King in his place and was one of the most evil kings that Judah ever had. As the kingdom of Judah did not always go to the oldest son, if Manasseh had not been born, it may have allowed a more Godly king to follow.

So what about you, when God gives you a blessing or a vision, will you glorify Him in that, or will you celebrate your own minor part in the victory? What have you done in the past?

## People will notice and be offended when we choose to be faithful Daniel 3:7-12

“**7** Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. **8** ¶ For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews. **9** They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: "O king, live forever! **10** "You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music, is to fall down and worship the golden image. **11** "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire. **12** "There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, namely Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up."” (Da 3:7-12 NAS95)

When someone turns their back on truth and you don’t then your faithfulness reminds them of their unfaithfulness. This makes them uncomfortable and people never enjoy being uncomfortable. Proverbs 16:29-30, 2 Peter 3:17 and other passages tell us that sin seduces the righteous to join them in their trap.

As any country moves to be more authoritarian, the government begins to expect people to report on each other’s crimes. I have read that more people were denounced for being a Christian in the Soviet Union than for using or selling illicit drugs.

If you remain faithful to God, it will be noticed. At some point it may be condemned. Right now we are not meeting in person because of a health crisis and the government has the right to request this, but if the government ever asks us to stop meeting because of our religious beliefs, I will defy that order.

Ask yourself a question, if you were brought to court for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

## Faith requires us to stand in truth Daniel 3:13-18

“**13** Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king. **14** Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? **15** "Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, very well. But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?" **16** Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. **17** "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. **18** "But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.” (Da 3:13-18 NAS95)

Now some people ask why only Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego were called in to bow. Did Daniel give in and bow? From what we know of Daniel, I cannot for a moment believe that he chose to bow. So what did he do? There are three theories on this that I have heard. Option 1 is that since his political office was not listed in the group that has to come worship that he was exempted. I think this is ludicrous. Daniel would have stood up to the king, for God and for his friends. Option 2 is that Daniel was powerful enough that the accusers were afraid to accuse him. Again, this is crazy. By accusing Daniel’s friends, they were directly going after Daniel, it is like modern politics where they go after members of the administration when they can’t go after the president…but when the president did something they thought they could get him on they impeached him. In the same way, if these people saw an opportunity to stop Daniel, they would have taken it. The third option is that as the King’s high advisor, Daniel had been called out of the country to represent the king. This seems to be the most likely.

Initially King Neb. was looking for an excuse to let them go. I think he genuinely liked them. They had been faithful and capable leaders. If they had chosen at that moment to bow, all would have been good. Imagine the temptation. They could bow with their bodies, but know in their hearts that they were praying to the one true God. But God would not be glorified. The world would see no difference between them and the others.

When given this offer, the three Hebrews knew that refusing was certain death from a human standpoint, but look at what they said:

1. O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. – They proclaimed the higher authority of God over the rights of the king.
2. "If it be *so,* our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. – They expressed confidence in both God’s ability to save and His faithfulness to His people.
3. **18** "But *even* if *He does* not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up. – The expressed their determination to serve God even if their salvation was not in the way they expected…they would die rather than bow.

Will you die rather than bow? In church history those who die for their faith are known as martyrs, those who are persecuted for their faith without wavering are known as confessors. I honestly think being a confessor may be the harder road. Are you ready to live for Christ if it means living under severe and prolonged persecution? What if it means your kids, grandkids or great grandkids are attacked because you won’t recant your faith?

## God’s faithfulness will carry us through Daniel 3:19-30

“**19** ¶ Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. **20** He commanded certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in order to cast them into the furnace of blazing fire. **21** Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps and their other clothes, and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire. **22** For this reason, because the king’s command was urgent and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. **23** But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire still tied up. **24** Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he said to his high officials, "Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?" They replied to the king, "Certainly, O king." **25** He said, "Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!" **26** Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he responded and said, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came out of the midst of the fire. **27** The satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king’s high officials gathered around and saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire even come upon them. **28** ¶ Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king’s command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God. **29** "Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way." **30** Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to prosper in the province of Babylon.” (Da 3:19-30 NAS95)

There is no doubt that the furnace was hot. Normally a camp fire burns at about 900°F, but most of that heat escapes into the air, so the temperature a few inches away are warm but won’t burn you. The furnace was an enclosed fire, adding 7 times the wood and forcing in the air needed to get it going, it could easily have gotten to 2,700°F in the core and sent flames out the doors at thousands of degrees. Knowing that this killed a guard as he tried to put the three in, means it was likely at least 1000°F outside the door of the furnace.

There is no conceivable way that the furnace could burn that hot and the men walk around unharmed in it. Skeptics speculate a cool spot in the furnace, but there is no way to make a furnace that hot have a survivable cool spot in the middle, and even if there was, how would they get to it through the flames that instantly killed their guard.

But it wasn’t just that they were walking around. They were unbound, their ropes had burned off or been removed. The king checks them out Shadrach is walking around untied…Meshach is walking around untied…Abednego is walking around untied…that glowing guy is walking around untied. Wait! Glowing GUY? Who is that? Is there a soldier missing? What’s happening? And why does that Glowing GUY look like he a son of the Gods? Get them out of there, I need to know what is happening.

When the three come out, King Neb. and his advisors are amazed. They are unburned. Their clothes are unburned. Their hair was unburned. They didn’t even smell like smoke. And the fourth one doesn’t even bother to come out of the fire.

The forth person in the fire was at least an angel, but I personally believe it was a pre-incarnation appearance of Jesus. Notice God did not save them from the fire, He saved them through the fire. And not only did he save them through the fire, He was WITH THEM through the fire.

God wants to be with you through your fires, but He is a gentleman and will only be with you if you invite Him to be there. You don’t need to do it at the moment of panic, you need to have him already with you.

You will bow to someone…will it be to God who loves you enough to die to save you and loves you enough to be with you in the fire, or will it be to one of the many gods of this world that only wants to use you to advance their own agenda. The gods of money, popularity, political power, and social recognition will only take from your life. There really is only one logical choice.

# Into the Fire

## Not everyone responds to God’s blessing with repentance Daniel 3:1-6

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It doesn’t just happen in the lives of non-believers.

When God gives you a blessing or a vision, will you glorify Him or celebrate your own minor part in the victory?

What have you done in the past?

## People will notice and be offended when we choose to be faithful Daniel 3:7-12

Υour faithfulness reminds them of their unfaithfulness.

Sin seduces the righteous Proverbs 16:29-30, 2 Peter 3:17

If you remain faithful to God, it will be noticed.

Ιf you were brought to court for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence?

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2. They expressed confidence in God’s ability and His faithfulness
3. They expressed determination to serve God

Will you die rather than bow?

Are you ready to live for Christ if it means persecution? (If it means your grandkids are attacked?)

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Will you die rather than \_\_\_\_\_\_?

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Not only did he save them \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the fire, He was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ through the fire.

You \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ bow to someone…