



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

Special Study:
FAITHFULNESS AND GODLINESS DURING PERSECUTION
Daniel 3:13-18

It is no child's play to be a true and devoted worshipper of God, to be a true soldier of the Cross. The true believer lives under the banner and the laws of his Captain but the world expects him to follow its rules. The god of this world is the devil and he wants to claim implicit obedience. Satan sets up himself to be worshipped. If we would not worship him or his image, the fierce tyrant would remind us that the burning fiery furnace has not yet cooled. To be a real Christian, you must decide to cast off the bondage of this present evil world. Your resolve must be taken to bear all consequences rather than worship the idol of the hour. The music of the world will sound and the threats of its prince will be heard but the true believer would disobey the evil one and obey God. That which commends itself to your conscience as true and pure, you must do but that which is false and sinful you must quit with firm resolve. The loyal subject of King Jesus will not try to serve God and mammon.

The question came, "**Is it true?**" The tyrant asked for a reaffirmation of their resolve. Would they reconsider and change their decision or were they ready to prove it true at the expense of their lives? In his hands lay their liberty and their lives, their progress and their prosperity, their happiness and their hope. He was their benefactor, employer and emperor. He could not believe that anyone could disobey his orders. We must be ready to answer without any hesitation or fear; it is most certainly true.

THE RUTHLESSNESS OF THE PERSECUTOR OF PERSEVERING SAINTS

Daniel 3:13-15; Exodus 5:2,10-19; John 15:18-22; Acts 8:1-4; 9:1,2,13,14; 1 Peter 2:19-23; 1 Thessalonians 2:4-6,14-16; 2 Timothy 3:12-14; Psalms 119:86-93,157;143:3-10.

Nebuchadnezzar's call to idol worship was universal and non-negotiable - the command extended to all people without exception. The penalty for refusal was death, painful death in a furnace of fire. His full tyrannical authority was behind the edict of this supreme dictator. The threat was to force everyone to become fearful and forsake their character, conviction and their Creator. What a lamentable sight to see all the people, except the faithful few, bend and bow to the will of tyranny! The creatures of God were forced to worship a creation of man!

Nebuchadnezzar himself did not notice that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had refused to worship his idol. Some informants had reported them to the king. The king's fury rose with his pride. The information that three believers in the true God had the boldness to disobey him and disregard his idol came upon him like a thunderbolt out of a cloudless sky. It was unexpected. He devised the greatest form of persecution he could imagine.

The persecution was a fiery trial of their faith but their faith was strong enough to neutralize the fear of fire and to remain "**steadfast and unmoveable.**" They were strong in their commitment to God and would rather suffer than sin. During the persecution of the early Church, an heroic saint was summoned before the Emperor of Rome. The Emperor threatened him with banishment if he dared remain a Christian. '*Me thou canst not banish, for the world is my Father's house*', was his noble answer. '*But I will take thy life*', said the Emperor. '*Nay, but thou canst not, sire, for my life is hid with Christ in God*'. '*I will deprive thee of thy treasures*', continued the Emperor. '*I have no treasures that thou canst seize*', was the response, '*for my treasure is in heaven and my heart is there*'. '*I will drive thee away from men, and thou shalt have no friend left.*' '*Nay, that thou canst not*', replied the bold and faithful witness, '*for I have a Friend in heaven from whom thou canst not separate me*'.

THE RESOLUTION AND PERSEVERANCE OF PERSECUTED SAINTS

Daniel 3:16-18; Philippians 4:6-9; 1 Peter 5:7-9; Isaiah 51:12-16; Acts 4:17-20; 5:27-30; Hebrews 12:1-4; 1 Peter 4:12-19; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10; 2 Corinthians 4:13-18.

The three faithful worshippers of the living God refused to worship the image of the king of Babylon. Unafraid of the king's fury and unintimidated by the terrors of the burning fiery furnace, they refused to give up the worship of God for the worship of the golden image. The king was fierce in his persecution and they were firm in their purpose and principle. He had insulted their God and they must defend God's glory with their very lives. They

were unwilling to render unto Caesar the things which are God's. They were ready to part with their lives rather than part with their conscience or convictions. They were captives in Babylon but their souls were not in captivity to the god of this world. God has forbidden His people to bow down to any idol and no reasoning can make that right which God has said is wrong. As God's command is plain and direct, so our obedience must be plain and direct. This example of heroic steadfastness teaches us that we must always say NO when we are tempted and threatened to do wrong.

The believer who has pledged and consecrated his heart and life to Christ is resolved and determined to serve God at all times, whoever is pleased or displeased. The truth has arrested him and he knows that the love of God and the love of the world will no more mix than oil and water. He stands for truth and righteousness; he refuses even to parley with iniquity. With such brave resolve we shall be able to endure the trial of the hour.

THE RECKONING AND PERSUASION OF PERSECUTED SAINTS

Daniel 3:17; Romans 4:20,21; 8:18,25-28; Isaiah 43:2,7; 2 Timothy 1:11-14; Hebrews 2:13-18; 7:25,26; 2 Timothy 4:18; Romans 8:31-39; Jude 24,25.

These uncompromising believers refused to bow to the king's unrighteous demand because they were sustained by unwavering faith in God's promises. "**When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee**" (Isaiah 43:2). When we believe that God will make all things work together for our good we will live in constant obedience to Him and leave the outcome of all events in His hands. No sevenfold heated furnace of persecution is hot enough to burn up the conviction of a true child of God. All the fury and power of the most tyrannical persecutor cannot burn up the deep-rooted truth of God's Word from our hearts if we trust in His grace and power to keep. Whatever God calls you to do or to suffer, fear not to obey. He will be with you in whatever He calls you to. If He calls you to enter the fiery furnace hesitate not for one moment. He will be with you and either sustain you, or deliver you, or make it conducive to your higher good and future glory. With courage and determination we must act in the light of eternity. We must not judge any situation by the king's threats or by the heat of the burning fiery furnace, but by the everlasting God and the eternal life awaiting us.

These three conquerors stood their ground against sin and dared the rage of an infuriated persecutor because they saw Him who is invisible and had respect unto the recompense of the reward. We must constantly live in the reality of the future or we will miss the chief fountain of holy strength. "**Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us.**" The overwhelming power of their faith dominated their hearts. In times of emergency their faith sprang to the fore and asserted itself. Faith made them fearless, courageous and persevering. They knew that God's will, not the king's will, will prevail and God will be glorified. Through faith they "**quenched the violence of fire**" (Hebrews 11:33,34).

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