



CROSSROADS

2015 VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Study 3

Difficult Choices

*"They do not serve your gods or
Worship the gold image which
you have set up."*



Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia Children's Ministry

Difficult Choices

Objective

To teach the students that we need to follow God, even when nobody else is, and that we need to honor God above all things, and above all men.

Key Verses

Daniel 3 (and 4:1-3) - Main Teaching Passage

Exodus 20:1-6, Exodus 32

Isaiah 53:6

Romans 12:2

James 1:2-3

Memory Verse - Proverbs 29:25

“The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts the Lord shall be safe.”

Hook

Review yesterday’s memory verse, Proverbs 1:7.

Ask the students, “Have you ever been in a situation where other people were doing the wrong thing and you felt like you needed to join in with them?”

“What was the situation? Did you join in? If not, what were the consequences of your decision?”

Give a number of students an opportunity to share, and then open to Daniel 3.

BOOK

In Daniel 3 we encounter another story of the Jews standing firm in their faith while in exile to Babylon. In this passage, Nebuchadnezzar had made a statue of Gold and decreed, “that at the time you hear the sound of the horn... you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.” This reminds us of Exodus 20:1-6, “You shall have no other God’s before me... you shall not bow down to them or serve them,” and Israel’s sin with golden calf (Exodus 32). Of all possible sins for our heroes to commit, this is the most condemning, to worship another God over Jehovah. Verse 7 makes things more difficult for them, “*all the people, nations, and languages* fell down and worshiped the gold image.” Everyone else in the Kingdom, including the other Jews, was bowing down to the golden statue. Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego needed to stand for God, but also needed to stand against what everyone else was doing. It is important to note that choosing to honor God meant putting themselves through incredible hardship and persecution. God did not remove the penalty for standing for righteousness, but He would carry them through it. The end result of their faith is found in chapter 4:1-3, showing that because they chose to follow God’s ways, He was proclaimed throughout the whole Kingdom.

LOOK

The Bible describes mankind’s tendency to follow the crowd by comparing us to an animal: sheep. Sheep will blindly, even to the point of endangering themselves, follow the rest of the herd. If one sheep walks into a ditch and gets stuck, all the rest of the sheep will follow along behind it (Isaiah 53:6). The Bible also tells us that we should not simply follow the crowd, but rather should at all times follow the Lord (Romans 12:2). Joining in with what everyone else is doing, even if we don’t really want to, is called “peer pressure.” It is when we are afraid to look different or stand out, and because of that we try to fit in.

Peer pressure is a very difficult force to overcome. Imagine how hard it must have been for Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego. They knew that it would be wrong to worship a statue in the place of God, but every single other person in the whole Kingdom, even some of their friends, was doing it. To make it even worse, if they didn’t worship the statue, they were told that they would be thrown into the fiery furnace. If they chose to do the right thing, they would be the only people in the whole country who were.

LOOK

There are times when we might be tempted to do something that we know is wrong, simply because everyone else is doing it. Maybe the kids in your class are making fun of someone and teasing them. Maybe your brothers or sisters want you to join in with something that you know your parents would disapprove of. Whatever the case may be, it is very important that we don't succumb to temptation, but stand up for what is right.

Notice that in the case of these three friends, the consequence of doing the right thing and honoring God above man was that they have to endure some really difficult things. While standing up for what is right might not get you thrown into a fire, it might mean that you lose a friend. It might mean that the people that you don't join in with start to make fun of you. When this happens we need to remember that God did not take away the consequences for these men, but He did help them get through it. When the soldiers looked into the furnace, they saw not three men but four, and one of them looked like the Son of God. God promises that if we stand up for Him that He will help us endure trials of every kind (James 1:2-3).

In all of these circumstances we need to look at the big picture. For Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego, worshipping God meant that His Name was preached to every person in the whole Kingdom of Babylon. For you and me, it might mean that others who were going to sin choose not to, or someone who was being hurt asks why you would help them out. Maybe because of your actions people will see Christ at work in you and want to know the same good God that you will stand for no matter the cost.

TOOK

As a class, memorize Proverbs 29:25

Make a list of all the situations that the kids might find themselves being tempted by peer pressure and think about ways they could honor God in those situations.

Pray: Ask the Lord for strength to stand for Him even when nobody else is. Praise Him for His grace to endure negative consequences when we stand for righteousness. Thank Him that He endured much suffering on our behalf.

Parent Question: As a family read and discuss Daniel 3 and Romans 12:2.

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on Daniel 3 by David Guzik

Daniel 3 - Saved In the Fiery Furnace

A. Nebuchadnezzar erects an image and demands everyone worship it.

1. (1) The image is made and set up.

Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height *was* sixty cubits *and* its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

a. **Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold:** There is considerable debate regarding when this happened. Some think it was a short time after the events of Daniel 2, but others think it happened many years later.

i. There is a discernible link between Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2 and the image he made in Daniel 3. It seems that Nebuchadnezzar deliberately made an *entire* statue of gold, to say that the day of his reign and authority would never end - in contradiction to God's declared plan.

b. **An image of gold:** The image was more like a stylized obelisk rather than a normal statue, being 90 feet (30 meters) high and 9 feet (3 meters) wide. Being so large, it is safe to say that it was not made of solid gold but probably wood overlaid with gold. This was a common method of construction in the ancient world.

i. "On the plains of Dura there stands today, a rectilinear mound, about twenty feet high, an exact square of about forty-six feet at the base, resembling the pedestal of a colossal statue." (Heslop)

2. (2-3) All Babylonia's dignitaries gathered at the dedication of the image.

And King Nebuchadnezzar sent *word* to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

a. **Gather together the satraps:** **Satrap** is a Persian loan word that means *protector of the realm*. It refers to a specific category of public officials.

b. **All the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image:** The demand that all come to the dedication ceremony means that Nebuchadnezzar meant to use the worship of this image as a test of allegiance.

3. (4-6) The command to worship the image.

Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, *that* at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

a. **Horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery:** Some of these musical instruments are difficult to define precisely but the idea is still clear. This was an impressive orchestra.

i. The use of the Aramaic words for **lyre, psaltery** and **symphony** has led some critics to say that the Book of Daniel was written hundreds of years after the time of Daniel. They say this because these particular words are Aramaic words borrowed from Greek words and supposedly Daniel did not have these words at his disposal in the sixth century B.C., and they supposedly did not come into the Hebrew vocabulary until the third century B.C.

ii. Nevertheless, ancient records tell us there were Greeks in the region of Assyria, Babylon, and Persia as far back as the *eighth* century B.C. Archaeology also proves beyond a doubt that Greek mercenaries fought and made military settlements in and around Judea *before* the time of Daniel.

b. **Whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace:** The command was backed up by a powerful threat. Nebuchadnezzar regarded the refusal to worship the image as *treason*, not only as a religious offense.

i. In this, Nebuchadnezzar was just like many politicians who often seem willing to use religion to strengthen their grip on political power. Politicians are happy to blend together *spiritual* allegiance and *national* allegiance. An example of this was displayed in 1936 when Herr Baldur von Schirach, head of the youth program for Nazi Germany, said: "If we act as true Germans we act according to the laws of God. Whoever serves Adolf Hitler, the führer, serves Germany, and whoever serves Germany serves God."

ii. Another example comes from 1960 when the President of Ghana had a slightly larger than life-size statue of himself erected in front of the national house of Parliament. An inscription on the side of the statue read, "Seek ye first the political kingdom and all other things shall be added unto you." The statue was destroyed after a bloodless coup in 1966.

c. **A burning fiery furnace:** Nebuchadnezzar was not a man who allowed lawbreakers to go unpunished. In an ancient cuneiform writing, Nebuchadnezzar was described as so devoted to justice that "he did not rest night or day." The document also tells of a criminal guilty of a second offense who was decapitated, and afterwards a stone image of his head was displayed as a warning.

4. (7) The crowd obeys Nebuchadnezzar's command.

So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, *and* lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down *and* worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

a. **When all the people heard the sound:** Nebuchadnezzar's grand idolatry was accompanied by music - elaborate and well-produced music. This reminds us of the great inherent power in music, both for good and for evil.

b. **Fell down and worshiped the gold image:** According to Baldwin, this literally reads *as soon as they were*

hearing they were falling down. There was total and immediate obedience to Nebuchadnezzar's command.

B. Three Hebrew men refuse the demand.

1. (8-12) Certain Chaldeans accuse the three Hebrew men.

Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up."

a. **Certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews:** These Chaldeans had an obvious political motivation against these Jews who were promoted to high office along with Daniel in the events recorded in the previous chapter.

b. **They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image:** Apparently their failure to worship the image was not discovered until these certain Chaldeans made it known. With so many thousands of government officials in attendance, it would be easy to overlook these three. Additionally, we see from this that the three Jewish men did not lodge a formal protest; they simply refrained from sharing in the sin of idolatry themselves.

i. Their actions were not *public* but neither were they *hidden*. These three Hebrew men must have known they would be discovered, yet they obeyed God rather than man. "You will not be able to go through life without being discovered: a lighted candle cannot be hid. There is a feeling among some good people that it will be wise to be very reticent, and hide their light under a bushel. They intend to lie low all the wartime, and come out when the palms are being distributed. They hope to travel to heaven by the back lanes, and skulk into glory in disguise. Ah me, what a degenerate set!" (Spurgeon)

2. (13-15) Nebuchadnezzar interviews the disobedient Hebrew men.

Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, "*Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?*"

a. **Is it true:** To his credit, Nebuchadnezzar did not accept the accusation on hearsay. He made sure of it with a personal interview. This was an even greater test for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. It is one thing to make a stand for God; it is a greater thing to *stick to your stand* when pointedly asked, "**Is it true?**" Peter followed Jesus after His arrest, but he wilted and denied Jesus when asked, "**Is it true?**"

i. "If, standing before the heart-searching God at this time, you cannot say, 'It is true,' how should you act? If you cannot say that you take Christ's cross, and are willing to follow him at all hazards, then hearken to me and learn the truth. Do not make a profession at all. Do not talk about baptism or the Lord's Supper, nor of joining a church, nor of being a Christian; for if you do, you will lie against your own soul. If it be not true that you renounce the world's idols, do not profess that it is so. It is unnecessary that a man should profess to be what he is not; it is a sin of supererogation, a superfluity of naughtiness. If you cannot be true to Christ, if your coward heart is recreant to your Lord, do not profess to be his disciple, I beseech you. He that is married to

the world, or flinthearted, had better return to his house, for he is of no service in this war." (Spurgeon)

b. **But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace:** Nebuchadnezzar would not tolerate losing face on such an important occasion. His pride made him declare, "You shall have no other gods than me."

i. We can imagine the enormous pressure on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego to compromise. Everything in front of them - the king, the furnace, the music, their compatriots, their competitors - all of it conspired to convince them to compromise. Yet God was more real to them than any of those things. "Do not judge the situation by the king's threat and by the heat of the burning fiery furnace, but by the everlasting God and the eternal life which awaits you. Let not flute, harp, and sackbut fascinate you, but hearken to the music of the glorified. Men frown at you, but you can see God smiling on you, and so you are not moved." (Spurgeon)

c. **Who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?** Nebuchadnezzar thought nothing of insulting *all* gods with this statement. He is more of a *secularist* or a *humanist* than a *theist*. The god he *really* believes in is himself, not the gods of Babylon.

3. (16-18) The three Hebrew men insist they will never worship the image.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

a. **We have no need to answer you:** They had **no need** to defend themselves. Their guilt in the matter was clear - they clearly would not bow down to this image.

b. **Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us:** In this, the Jewish men showed a good understanding and appreciation of God's great power. In fact, they knew that God was able to save them from both the **burning fiery furnace** and from the **hand** of Nebuchadnezzar himself.

c. **But if not:** In this, the Jewish men show they had a good understanding and appreciation of *submission* to God. They knew God's power, but they also knew that they must do what was right even if God did not do what they expect or hope Him to do.

i. We often complain about our rights and what is fair. Often it is better to make a stand and endure our difficulty, leaving our fate in God's hands.

ii. They did not doubt God's *ability*, but neither did they presume to know God's *will*. In this they agreed with Job: *Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him* (Job 13:15). They recognized that God's plan might be different than their desires. I have my own desires and dreams and I pray that God fulfills them. But if He doesn't, I can't turn my back on Him.

iii. These were men who did *not* love too much. There are popular self-help books that hope to help people who seem to love too much, yet many Christians are hindered because they love too much. Remember that early Christians were not thrown to the lions because they worshipped Jesus, but because they would *not* worship the emperor.

iv. In our day, many do love Jesus and think highly of Him - yet they are far from God because they also love and worship the world, sin, and self. *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him* (1 John 2:15).

d. **Let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up:** It took great faith to say this. God brought them to this place of great faith by preparing them with tests in less dramatic areas.

i. These men stood firm when challenged to eat impure foods and they saw God bless their obedience. That gave them the courage to obey now, when the stakes were much higher.

ii. Many fail in their obedience because they wait for something "big" to test their faith before they really start to obey God. Some fill their life with many small compromises; yet tell themselves that they will stand firm when it really matters. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego show us that obedience to God in small things really matters.

e. **Let it be known to you, O king:** The statement of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego is also remarkable for what it does *not* have - any hint of an excuse. In a time of testing like this it is easy to think of a thousand excuses that seem to justify compromise.

i. They might have said, "*There is nothing to gain by resisting; wouldn't we do more good by living?*" It is easy to say, "We must live," but in reality, we all must die - so why not die making a stand for God?

ii. They might have said, "*We are in a different place; in Rome, do as the Romans do.*" Yet they knew that God has unlimited jurisdiction. We must do more than "perform" acts of religious obedience when we have an audience.

iii. They might have said, "*We will lose our jobs and our standard of living.*" Often when God blesses us, we make the blessing an idol and compromise God to keep what we have.

iv. They might have said, "*After all, we are not being called to renounce our God.*" They did not have a super-elastic conscience that said, "We are not bowing down to the idol, but only bowing down in respect for the king, or in honor of the music." Excuses like this are common but prove the principle that anything will serve as an excuse, when the heart is bent on compromise.

v. They might have said, "*Everybody else is doing it.*" Instead they cultivated brave personalities, willing to stand alone with God.

vi. They might have said, "*It is only for once, and not for very long. Ten minutes, just for the king. It is stupid to throw our lives away for ten minutes.*" These men knew that ten minutes could change an entire life. Ten minutes can chart the course for your eternity.

vii. They might have said, "*This is more than can be expected of us; God will understand just this once.*" It is true that God understands our struggle with sin - that is why He loves the sinner and made provision at the cross for freedom from the penalty, power, and presence of sin. Knowing that "God understands" should be a spur to obedience, not a license to sin.

viii. "I am glad that the three holy children were not 'careful to answer,' [the KJV has, "we are not careful to answer thee" here] or they might have fallen upon some crooked policy or lame excuse for compromise. What have we to do with consequences? It is ours to do the right, and leave results with the Lord." (Spurgeon)

C. The Hebrew men in the fiery furnace.

1. (19-23) The three men are cast violently into the furnace.

Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and

Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who *were* in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, *and cast them* into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their *other* garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Therefore, because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

a. **Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury:** No matter how brave Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were, facing the **fury** of a king was still extremely intimidating. We get the feeling that prior to their statement Nebuchadnezzar spoke kindly, almost in a fatherly manner to these wayward boys. After hearing their bold challenge **the expression on his face changed.**

i. Despite the intense intimidation, the men stayed courageous in their confession of faith. Spurgeon eloquently described the horror of those who lose their courage at such times: "Remember also that by yielding to the fear of man you are demeaning yourself. There shall come a day when the man that was ashamed of Christ will himself be ashamed: he will wonder where he can hide his guilty head. Look at him! There he is! The traitor who denied his Lord! The Christ was spat upon and nailed to the cross, and this man was afraid to own him. To win the smile of a silly maid, to escape the jest of a coarse fellow, to win a few pieces of silver, to stand respectable among his fellow-men, he turned his back upon his Redeemer and sold his Lord; and now what can be said for him? Who can excuse him? The angels shun him as a man who was ashamed of the Lord of glory. He is clothed with shame and everlasting contempt. Even the lost in hell get away from him, for many of them were more honest than he. Is there such a man as this before me? I summon him in the name of the living God to answer for his cowardice! Let him come forth and own his crime, and humbly seek forgiveness at the hands of the gracious Savior." (Spurgeon)

b. **Bound in their coats . . . the furnace exceedingly hot:** Everything was done to make sure that the three Hebrew men were quickly and completely burned.

2. (24-25) Nebuchadnezzar sees four alive and well in the furnace.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste *and* spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

a. **Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished:** It is astonishing that anyone survived for a moment *inside* the furnace when others perished *at the door*.

i. The Septuagint says in Daniel 3:24 that Nebuchadnezzar's attention was caught when he heard the men singing praises in the furnace. We can imagine that the king had them cast into the furnace and didn't intend to look twice, believing they would be immediately consumed. As he walked away with a satisfied look on his face, he was immediately stopped by the sound of *singing* coming from the furnace. At a safe distance from the raging heat, he peered inside - and saw **four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire.**

ii. If this singing in the furnace is true, it reminds us of Paul and Silas singing in the Philippian jail (Acts 16:25).

b. **I see four men loose . . . and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God:** Nebuchadnezzar tells us who the fourth person was - **the Son of God.** Jesus was literally with them in the worst of their trial.

i. We don't know if Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego *knew* that the **Son of God** was with them in their fiery trial. Sometimes we are aware of Jesus' presence in our trials and sometimes we are not - but He is there

nonetheless.

ii. Spurgeon observed that God's people are often in the furnace, and though there are different kinds of furnaces, they serve similar purposes in our life.

- There is the furnace that man prepares.
- There is the furnace that Satan prepares.
- There is the furnace that God prepares.

iii. God can deliver us *from* a trial, or He can miraculously sustain and strengthen us *in* a trial. Trapp quotes an English martyr who said this as he was burnt at the stake: "O ye Papists, behold ye look for miracles; here now you may see a miracle; for in this fire I feel no more pain than as if I were in a bed of down; but it is to me as a bed of roses."

c. **I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire:** Nebuchadnezzar also observed that the four men were *free* in the fire. The fire only burnt the ropes that bound them.

3. (26-27) The Hebrew men leave the furnace unharmed.

Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace *and* spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come *here*." Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

a. **Servants of the Most High God:** Before they were out of the furnace, Nebuchadnezzar recognized that these men served the *true* God, the God **Most High**.

b. **These men on whose bodies the fire had no power:** The trial had **no power** over these men because they were thoroughly submitted to the power and will of God. Before the time of Jesus, they knew the truth of Jesus' promise: *In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world* (John 16:33).

c. **The smell of fire was not on them:** This demonstrates how complete their deliverance was.

i. This whole account illustrates - perhaps serving as a type of - the future of Israel during the Great Tribulation.

- Nebuchadnezzar is like the Antichrist, who forces the whole world into one religion of idolatry.
- Nebuchadnezzar's image is like the image described in Revelation 13, that the whole world will be commanded to worship.
- The fiery furnace is like the Great Tribulation, which will be great affliction for the Jews.
- The three Hebrew men are like Israel, who will be preserved through the tribulation.
- The executioners who perished are like those in league with the Antichrist, who Jesus will slay at His return.
- The mysteriously absent Daniel is like the church, not even present for this time of great tribulation.

1. (28) Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges the greatness of the God of the three Hebrews.

Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!"

a. **Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego:** Nebuchadnezzar gave glory to God, but he recognized that this great God is not *his* God. He was still **the God of** these three brave men.

b. **Who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him:** In Daniel 3:15 Nebuchadnezzar asked, "who *is* the god who will deliver you from my hands?" Now Nebuchadnezzar knew a great deal about this God.

- He is the God of the Hebrews (**the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego**).
- He is the God who sends a Savior (**who sent His Angel**).
- He is the God of great power (**delivered His servants**).
- He is the God worthy of trust (**who trusted in Him**).
- He is the God worthy of full surrender (**frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies**).
- He is the God who demands exclusive allegiance (**that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God**).

i. Nebuchadnezzar knew a lot about God - but he did not yet know Him personally.

c. **Yielded their bodies:** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego surrendered themselves *completely* to God - body, soul, and spirit. It was the kind of submission Paul wrote of in Romans 12:1: *present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

i. This whole account is a powerful illustration of the principle of Romans 12:1. We see Satan trying to make the believer bow down to his idealized image of what men and women should be. Christians must resist this with everything they have and pursue God's ideal. In this, we will fulfill Romans 12:2: *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

2. (29) Nebuchadnezzar makes a proclamation that nothing evil should be said against the God of the Hebrews

"Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this." Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

a. **Therefore I make a decree:** The three Hebrew men did not ask for Nebuchadnezzar to make this decree, and they probably did not want him to. Coerced worship isn't good, either towards an idol or towards the true God.

b. **There is no other God who can deliver like this:** Seeing God at work in the life of His people was an extremely effective testimony to Nebuchadnezzar.

i. Paul expressed the same idea in 2 Corinthians 3:2-3: *You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.*