

THE GOD WE SERVE IS ABLE TO DELIVER US.

Daniel 3:1-30 (key verse 17-18)

"If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

In today's passage we are going to learn from Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego what attitude we should have as Christians saved by the blood of Jesus as we live in this world today. Daniel's friends were faced with a life threatening situation that demanded them to compromise their faith as believers, and worship the image of gold their king Nebuchadnezzar had setup. At a glance it seemed Daniel's friends will lose everything including their lives. Are you in such a situation right now or were you in such a situation in the past year, where it seemed like you need to park your Christian life in order to survive? When Daniel's friends were faced with this kind of a situation, they did not give in but challenged the situation and said: *"The God we serve is able to deliver us"*. We are therefore also going to learn how Daniel's friends could have such an attitude and what the result of the attitude was. May God have mercy on us today, to receive one word and be filled with strength and courage like Daniel's friends as we start the New Year.

The passage begins with the King Nebuchadnezzar who made an image of gold that was 27 meters high and 2,7 meters wide and set it up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. He summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. This was indeed a great ceremony that the king had called, when all had gathered he had the herald proclaim a command to all nations and peoples of every language in **verse 5-6** saying: *"As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. / Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace."*

Why did the king setup this image of gold and command all people to bow down and worship it? What does this mean? This started in a dream that the king had in chapter 2, the king had a vision of a statue with the head made of pure gold, chest and arms made of silver, belly and thighs made of bronze, legs made of iron and feet partly iron and partly baked clay. In this dream while the king was watching, a rock was cut out not by human hands and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth. The king summoned magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed and interpret it for him, and none of them could do it. The king's dream was eventually interpreted by Daniel the servant of God, who revealed to him that the statue represented the kingdoms of the land and that he was represented by the golden head. And just like the other kingdoms, Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom will end like chaff on the threshing floor and only the rock, the kingdom of Jesus will remain and become a huge mountain.

Though the king was happy that Daniel interpreted the dream, he wanted king wanted to change the content of the vision, the dream was very clear that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom is temporary. A kingdom that will rule forever is not his, but the kingdom of Jesus who is in the very nature God. However Nebuchadnezzar wanted to be his own god and rule forever, and so he build the huge image

of gold and commanded all people to bow down and worship it. Nebuchadnezzar commanded all people to worship him as god. He threatened the people with death, saying: *whoever does not fall down and worship the image of gold will be thrown into the blazing furnace*. When the king made this command, and the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music was made, all the nations and peoples of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. From the manner in which the king handled matters, we can see that the people only bowed down to the statue in fear, they bow down because they were hopeless and saw no other means. To them, no one and nothing could deliver them from the hand of the king and so they bowed down.

In our world today, people also are faced with many things that demand some form of worship in fear of death, believing it is the only way to survive. Making money, building a career and academics is one of the things that demand such things from many people's lives today. As Christians we also can be found challenged by this situations, put in the corner and tempted to park our Christian faith just to survive. Now in today's passage, although the king Nebuchadnezzar's message was clear, not all people bowed down and worshiped the image of gold he had setup. And so some jealous astrologers went to the king and denounced some Jews and said in **verse 12**: *"But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up."*

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, did not bow down to the image of gold the king had setup. This made the king furious with rage. After Daniel had interpreted the king's dream in chapter 2, the king appointed Daniel's friends as administrators over the province of Babylon. This somehow raised expectations from the king that Daniel's friends will be on his side and do as the king commands because of the favour he has shown them. But Daniel's friends did not bow down to the image of gold, even when the king made threats of throwing them into the furnace. Why did they not do as the king had commanded? In **Exodus 20:4-5** it says: *"You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. / You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me"* When the Astrologers, reported the Daniel's friends to the king they said that they do not pay attention to the king. This implied that Daniel's friends do not respect the king and disregard him. But this is not true, they respected him as king of the land and executed the duties that the king had assigned to them as administrators in the land.

What Daniel's friends did not do is worship the king, they did not worship him because they feared God and his word. They had faith in God and believed they were created to bow down and worship God alone. Just like Daniel's friends, we too were created to worship God alone, when we worship other things it displeases God. Not only that, we too will not be satisfied, but will wonder around filled with fear and anxieties. But when we have faith in God, obey his word and worship him in truth and in spirit we will be strong and courageous like Daniel's friends. When the king summoned all nations and people of all languages, they trembled with fear of being burnt in the furnace, and so they hurried and bowed down and worshiped the king's image of gold. But because Daniel's friends loved God and his word they stood firm in their faith and did not obey the king's command. When they were called before the king, he gave them another chance and asked them again to bow down and worship the image of gold or be thrown in the burning furnace. Once again Daniel's friends were not shaken by the king and his threats, even though they were very real, as the furnace was burning

before them. The king even said to them in **verse 15b**: *“Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?”* Instead of trembling with fear and surrendering to the king, Daniel’s friends responded to the king in the **key verse (17-18)** saying: *“If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”*

Through this response, Daniel’s friends further revealed how they could stand before the king. Firstly they could stand before the king because they believed that God is much greater than the king, they believed that God is almighty, that he is the creator of the heavens and the earth. They believed that nothing is impossible with God. They said: *“the God we serve is able to deliver us, and he will deliver us from your Majesty’s hands”*. Although they respected the king and wanted to honour him as their king, they were not willing to do so by disregarding God and disobeying his command. Today as well we have jobs, we have parents, spouse, children, and we have school. These things are important for our lives, and we need to dedicate our lives unto them, but we should not do so by replacing our commitment and worship to God with them. As children of God we should only bow down and worship God alone. We should not compromise our faith, no matter how much danger or trouble we might be in. Just like Daniel’s friends, we should not tremble in fear, surrender to world powers, but rather we should have faith that God is able to deliver us. We should not give up on God no matter how difficult the circumstance may be.

Furthermore, Daniel’s friends responded to the king saying: *“Even if God does not rescue us, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”* What does this mean? Here we see something amazing about Daniel’s friends, in the previous verse we saw how they were 100% certain that God is able to rescue them from the king’s hand and in any and every situation. And now here we see them still holding on to that faith, and additionally they humbled themselves and left everything to the hands of God. They did not dictate how God should save them. Even if they die in the furnace, they were willing to accept it. They were fully convinced that God will fulfil what is good, they did not bound the power of God to their own human limitation and boundaries. Daniel’s friends believed God could use anything, even death to reveal his glory. Daniel’s friends believed that even if they die in the furnace, they will still be saved. Daniel’s friend had **Romans 8:28** in their hearts which says: *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*

When Nebuchadnezzar heard what Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego said, he became furious and his attitude towards them changed. He commanded that the furnace be heated 7 times and had some of the strongest soldiers tie up Daniel’s friends and throw them in the furnace. As they were throwing them into the furnace, the soldiers carrying them were killed by the fire as the furnace was very hot. However something amazing happened, let us look at **verse 24-25**: *“Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, ‘Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?’ They replied, ‘Certainly, Your Majesty.’ /He said, ‘Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.’”* The God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego delivered them from the hand of the king Nebuchadnezzar. Indeed the God of Daniel’s friends is living, in the fire he was with them to deliver them. The Son of God Jesus Christ was in the fire with Daniel’s 3 friends. Our Lord God, Jesus Christ is living and is willing to deliver us, he is willing to walk with us through the fire and rescue us when we have faith in him, when we surrender our lives to him, bow down and worship him.

Yes, in this world it is tough, many of you may wonder how you will tackle this year especially after a tough 2021. Put your trust in God this year, dedicate your life for the service of the Lord, surrender your life to God, bow down and worship him alone. And just as he has delivered Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego unharmed, he will deliver you and I unharmed according to his will and purpose. No matter what fire we go through, he will be with you and I when we trust in him. When Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the furnace, they were unharmed, no hair on their heads singed, their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of the fire on them. As we start the new year, let us hold on to this image that no matter what fire threats we may get this year, Jesus the Savior of our lives will be with us and will deliver us. Through his death on the cross, Jesus fulfilled it all, he defeated the power of sin and death, and he demonstrated that nothing is impossible with him.

Jesus is the only the able King to deliver us, he is the only king worthy of our worship, let us put our trust in him and his word this year. In **Philippians 2:8-10** it is spoken about Jesus saying: *“And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! /Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, /that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,”*