

- **In The Firey Furnace** Series

Scripture: [Daniel 3:4-30](#)

**Summary:** The effect Jesus had on those he encountered in the Firey furnace

Introduction:

There has never been a person who impacted the world more than Jesus, and this is evident in his life.

Not only did he impact people during and after his life, but he impacted people before he came.

The hope of the Jew was in the coming of the Messiah.

The way in which a Jewish person was saved was by having faith that God would bring this Messiah into the world.

There are a select few times in which Jesus gives us a brief viewing in the Old Testament; this is called a Christophany or an appearance of Christ in the Old Testament.

One of my favorite stores of the Old Testament is the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego or as Veggie Tales calls the Shad, Rack and Benny.

We are all quite familiar with this story, but I think that many times we miss the main points being taught to us by God.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are three great men.

They were Jewish men who lived in the Southern country of Judah.

After an attack by the Babylonians they took back to Babylon the smartest and the wisest of the Jews, among that crowd was Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

As they were there the king made attempt after attempt to drive God out of those Jewish people.

I have heard it said that you can take the girl out of the country, but you cannot take the country out of the girl.

I believe this was uniquely true with these four amazing and Godly men.

From what I understand the Babylonians were quite successful in driving God out of the Jews' lives.

They were away from their homeland, they were away from their place of worship and they were backsliding fast.

We know though that there were four who didn't bow.

Daniel and his friends became well respected throughout Babylon to the point that they were promoted to leadership positions.

The reason they was not because Babylon had an Affirmative Action program that forced them to put Jews into public office, but because they were blessed by God for their faithfulness.

They were living in a completely pagan world; there were not many people who even believed in one God. Constantly they tried to remove God from their lives.

Two decrees came out by the kings during that time in Babylon.

First was a command for everyone to bow down and worship a statue that was made. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow.

We know that is when the three of them were thrown into the fiery furnace as a result of their disobedience to the King's command.

Secondly, there came a command not to pray to any God for thirty days.

Despite that Daniel prayed three times a day and was thrown into the lion's den because of his faithfulness to God.

Perhaps we do not live in a world that so hostilely threatens our faith, but in these stories I see much of our culture.

I see people who claimed to follow God renounce him when the first threat of oppression came.

I see one time it being popular to be a follower of God and then all the sudden people bailing out when it was no longer the majority.

People when threatened quickly bowed down and worshipped other gods.

For many people then the Truth was exchangeable for prosperity and popularity.

When we look back though we see who was rewarded both spiritually and even physically.

It was Daniel and his friends who were respected and promoted.

In their time of testing Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego didn't bow, they didn't bend and they didn't burn.

The question we need to consider is, will we too give in on what we hold dear when hard times come our way?

When we unexpectedly loose someone we love will we turn away from God in anger?

When we loose our job, money and homes will we blame God and stop following him?

When life does not treat us the way we want will we bow to some other God?

When being a Christian is no longer the popular thing, or when most of the people at work are doing immoral things will we too leave our faith and join them because it is convenient?

Or will we hold fast to our faith and not bow and not bend.

Text: Daniel 3:4-30

## I. Their Challenge

After the king's command to worship the statue went up, I bet that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were aware of their challenge.

They knew that they would be in trouble for breaking the law of the land, but they decided they would rather be right with God.

The Apostle's Peter and John were presented with a similar situation in the book of Acts.

They were commanded in court to stop speaking of Jesus, and they said, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God, we cannot help, but to speak about what we have seen and heard."

They took seriously the command of the Lord and would carry it out to any extent even if it meant breaking the law.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came to the same conclusion.

They were not willing to give up their faith and worship some statue.

But why didn't they just give in?

It wouldn't have hurt anybody to give just a little bow to some statue.

To them that was out of the question, it was not even an option.

In these three men we see integrity and conviction.

It seems that in today's world people do not have integrity about their faith.

In one setting a person may be the strongest Christian in the world.

Those people are the ones that come to church and know when to say amen and how to act spiritual.

Then when those people get to work they indulge in and participate in the same immorality as everyone else.

These people with lack of integrity for their faith are very similar to Peter after the death of Jesus.

If you remember the gospel accounts, you remember that Peter was the most zealous of the disciples.

He was very religious, in fact, when Jesus told him he must be handed over and killed Peter said, “No way, I will die with you”.

Peter was so intent on preventing Jesus from being killed; he chopped off the High Priest Malchus’ ear.

Then just a few hours later Peter is in downtown Jerusalem and he is recognized as one of Jesus’ disciples.

He is confronted and then three times he denied he even knew the man.

Peter denied Jesus, thinking no one would know and that his life was on the line.

I do not doubt that Peter was sincere in his faith, but when tempted and when it was not so easy to be a follower of Jesus he denied him.

Secondly we see people who call themselves Christians who do not stand up for what they believe in.

I call these people Chameleon Christians.

These people agree with everybody about everything everywhere.

They forget that we are to hold onto sound doctrine and that we need to take a stand for what they believe in.

If you believe God’s Word stand up for it and don’t be a chameleon Christian, blending in with any and everybody.

These people are essentially cowards, and they forget that in Revelation 21:8, the cowardly are the first ones mentioned thrown into the lake of fire.

We have a great example in Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

There is no doubt that they were faced with a challenge, but they lived out their faith with conviction and integrity. It would have been easy for them to give in because:

a. No one would have known

They could have easily not worshipped the statue because very few people would have known.

They didn't care if no one knew, they knew that God would know and that is all that matters.

That is integrity.

Perhaps we are faced with similar situations.

I doubt that many of us are tempted to worship a golden statue, but we are tempted to deny God by the way in which we live sometimes.

You may think no one will know if I do this. It won't hurt anybody.

The lack of other people's knowledge of our actions is not a justification for our sin.

We need to practice integrity in our faith and not bend or bow when tested.

Did you notice that just because we don't feel guilty for something doesn't mean it is not wrong in the sight of God? Or consciences are not our guide for right and wrong.

b. Everyone else is doing it

I wonder how many other of the Jews bowed to that statue.

I wonder how many renounced their faith because of that fear. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego could have given in and used the excuse, "everyone else is doing it".

I remember when I was a kid and I wanted to do things other kids my age were doing I used to always tell my mom that everyone else was doing it. S

he would always respond the same, "you're not everyone else".

I think sometimes this excuse tempts people today.

Everyone else is watching that so I might.

Everyone else talks like that so I can.

Everyone else does that so it must be okay for me to do it too.

I love the story of Noah.

Noah lived in a world where everyone else was doing it, but he didn't.

In the midst of a wicked world he did not give in and say everyone else is doing it, but he alone walked with God and was blameless.

Noah was rewarded for his faithfulness in an immoral world.

We too will be rewarded for faithfulness to God in the midst of a world where everyone else is doing it.

You better believe that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego faced a challenge.

The essentially gave up their lives for their faith.

They didn't bend, they didn't bow, and they didn't burn, will you?

## II. Their Confidence

Shad, Rack and Benny had confidence that God would deliver them.

Daniel 3:17-18

These men had such an amazing trust that God would reward them for their faithfulness one way or the other. They did not know for sure what would happen to them. They didn't know if they would die, but above anything else they knew that God would work their situation for good. I believe that one reason why people bend and bow today in pressure is because of a lack of confidence in God. They do not think that God could possibly bring good out of some situations. How strong is your confidence in God? I hear story after story of people turning their back on God when they do not get handed what they want in life. Perhaps they loose someone they care about or something bad happens, they see it as an end.

We need to be people of faith; we need to be confident that no matter what situation befalls us that God will deliver us. Perhaps God will not deliver us in the way in which he did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, but we can be confident that God works

all things for the good of those who love him and who are called according to his purpose.

We serve a God that is in control of the universe, all things are under his control, who better to put your trust and confidence in?

Romans 8:38-39

Oscar was apprehensive about his first airplane ride. His friends, eager to hear how it went, asked if he enjoyed the flight. "Well," commented Oscar, "it wasn't as bad as I thought it might be, but I'll tell you this. I never did put all my weight down!"

I believe a lot of people have a relationship with God that is just like that. They never fully put their feet down and trust in the Lord. People who do not have confidence in the Lord miss out on much of a relationship with him. Only when you have confidence in the Lord can you enjoy really what it is like following Jesus.

### III. Their Companionship

Daniel 3:24-25

I think that one of the greatest aspects of this story that we read about is not Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's strong conviction, but it was the love of God. The three went into the furnace expecting God to deliver them from the fire. Not only did he deliver them from the fire, but he passed through the fire with the three. This shows something about the way in which our savior loves us. He could have easily delivered them, but he went through the fire with them to show them that he was always there with His people and it does matter how people treat God's people.

When Saul was walking on the road to Damascus Jesus spoke to Saul, saying, "Why do you persecute me". When people mess with God's people, He takes it seriously.

None of us will enter a blazing hot furnace as Shad, Rack and Benny did, but we do enter the fire in a different way. We enter the fire by going through trials and tough times that sometimes feels as bad as going through a fiery furnace. It is awesome to know that we have a savior who loves us and goes with us through the fire.

We can learn from this how much God is concerned about the trials in our lives. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were great godly men, but they were not special in God's sight, but they were godly.

How awesome it would have been to see Jesus go through the fire with them, but we know that he goes through the fire with us when we have trials and hard times. It is encouraging to know that no matter what hard times befall us Jesus is always right there with us going through the furnace.

#### IV. The Confession

Daniel 3:26-30

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego took a stand against the king's command and suffered the consequences for their actions. They could have bowed down to the statue and very few people would have known. Look though at what happened since they did not bow. They were a great example and witness for their God. The impressed upon the pagan king their faithfulness to their God and he wanted to be a part of that God.

Many times we may think it is the more appealing thing for people just to give in. I have heard of people participating in bad things in the name of Jesus Christ thinking that they are relating to those people. These three men left us great examples of the effects of standing up for their God despite opposition.

Many people bowed to that pagan statue and none of them are remembered, but we remember Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego because of their faithfulness to God. Greater than being remembered they impacted people because of their strong stance.

When we have convictions and stand for what we believe in people are drawn in. Use these three men as an example of the impact that we can have on people if we would only stand for the truth and not bow down and give in.

If you want to impact the world, stand up for what you believe in and live out your convictions.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego serve as great examples of the impact a completely dedicated Christian can have on the world. As we read other stories in the Bible we

see the same thing. Those people who take a stand are people of influence, but we know nothing of those who gave in. They didn't impact people by giving in.

If you really truly with all your heart believe what is in God's Word than live it out with integrity and conviction, not willing to bow down or give in.

Shadrach Meshach and Abednego didn't bow they didn't bend and they didn't burn and neither will those who stand for him **today**.