

## **Courage - God is in Control**

### **Daniel 3**

We established that *one mark of a true Christian is courage.*

A basic definition: *Courage is a Godward strength of soul manifested in doing what is right and necessary despite difficulty or danger.*

*Courage as a Christian virtue is distinct in that it is rooted in the fear of the Lord - a life lived in wholehearted trust and obedience to God's revelation in His Word.*

Courage is foundational to virtually every virtue. It's impossible to mature in Christ without it. It's impossible to consistently live in obedience to Christ, and to have fellowship with Him, and please him, if fear dominates us instead of courage. That's why this topic is so important, so central to our daily lives as followers of Christ. Without courage, all our other virtues will be weak and easily compromised. They'll fade away at the slightest challenge. For us to be strong, God-honoring disciples, we must exercise courage. Our courage must be grounded in the fear of the Lord.

Daniel 3:18 - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abendnego.

These three men were Hebrew captives, men of royal or noble Israelite birth who had been taken from their homeland when the Babylonians, led by Nebuchadnezzar defeated Judah in 586 B.C.

Nebuchadnezzar brought them to Babylon and trained them for three years in the language and culture of the Babylonians. Then he made them regional governors over his kingdom.

So, these were men in positions of civil authority, and their refusal to worship the golden idol immediately become known to the whole kingdom. Their actions were interpreted by the king, as a direct challenge to his authority. And it was, but they stood firm, because they recognized an authority even higher than king Nebuchadnezzar - the God of the Hebrews; the one true God, Yahweh. ***Where did their courage come from? It came from God Himself: they were convinced that God had the power to deliver them, and they trusted Him.***

Daniel 3:16-18 - *These three men understood that all human power is subordinate to God's power.*

Although Nebuchadnezzar didn't realize it, *he could do nothing to these men that God did not explicitly permit.* John 19:9-11

*We can draw courage and strength from the knowledge that no one can harm us without God's permission.* God is able, whenever he wishes, to deliver us. His power is greater than any human being, no matter what position they may hold. His power exceeds even that of angels, and demons, and Satan himself. His power is above all, and overall. He is in control. He is sovereign over all things.

*God is actively sovereign over the circumstances of your life.* No one can lay a finger on you or me unless God permits it for His own good purposes. And if He does allow harm to come to you, he will strengthen and support you during it so that it cannot overwhelm and crush you. God is your Father, and he will take care of you. Deuteronomy 31:6; Joshua 1:9; Psalm 46:1; Psalm 118:6; Isaiah 41:10.

*Courage comes from the conviction that God is in control.* Period. God loves me, and He is able to protect me. God cares for me, and He is able to take care of me. God has saved me from sin, and He is able to deliver me out of any conceivable danger.

Your courage might be faltering this morning. You are not ready to do battle. You want the forces of darkness to go away. Perhaps, you just want out. But we walk by faith, not by sight, and not by feelings. And God promises that He will never allow any trial into your life that He and you together, can't handle. Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. John 16:33; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

You can take courage in the knowledge that God is in control. He has not been defeated; he has not become distracted. He is sitting on the throne. He is sovereign over all the events of your life, and He is wisely and lovingly and actively working out all things for our ultimate good and his ultimate glory. He doesn't make mistakes; He can't be beaten; His love never fails; and we belong to Him.

**However**, as much of a blessing as it is to know that God can deliver us from trouble, we know that He doesn't always do so. Ultimately God will rescue us from every danger, He will destroy sin and evil, and He will raise us up to live eternally with Him, in perfect joy and peace. Yet, in this present world, as Jesus says, we will have tribulation - trials, suffering, tears, sorrow, struggle. We look forward to a very different world; one in which none of those things are even a memory. But that world is not this world. In this world, we have tribulation.

In Hebrews 11:29-34, the author first lists all the giants of faith, people who saw God do great miracles and perform great acts of deliverance for his people.

**But**, in verses 35-40, these heroes of the faith did not receive temporal deliverance.

**What does God have planned for you? Verses 29-34, or verses 35-40?** He does what pleases Him, according to his wisdom, and understanding, and love. Sometimes we witness a powerful deliverance in this life, and sometimes we don't. But you know what? ***It doesn't matter.*** Regardless of how things turn out, we can still have courage. Why? *Because, as Jesus tells us, he has overcome the world.* Death is not the end. Jesus Christ has risen from the grave, He has defeated death, and we who trust in Him for forgiveness of sins will also be resurrected to eternal life. Our destiny is to be completely and eternally delivered from every form of suffering.

And that is why Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were able to utter verses 17- 18 of chapter 3, one of the most profound statements of faith in the Old Testament:

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

*In other words, Nebuchadnezzar, it doesn't really matter. God is able to rescue us, and we hope and even expect that He will. But even if He doesn't, it doesn't matter.* It doesn't matter if God rescues them from the fiery furnace. It doesn't matter if God delivers you out of your painful circumstances. Because your faith isn't founded on what you think God is going to do, or on what you hope He will do, in this world. ***Our faith is based on who God is.*** We serve a good God whose wisdom and knowledge are infinitely higher than any human mind. And we know - we know - beyond any doubt, that He will always do what is right, and good, and best.

Some of you here this morning will experience deliverance in this life. And some of you won't. Why does God deliver some, and not others? Why does He heal some, and not others? Yes, ultimately, we will all be delivered, and all healed, but as for here and now, why the disparity? No one knows. Some day, when we see Jesus face to face, we'll understand. We can't force His hand; we can't manipulate Him to get what we want. We can pray, and God answers prayer, but He does so only according to His own good pleasure. But in the end, it doesn't really matter. Our courage, and our strength, come not from what we hope God is going to do for us in this life. Our courage, and hope, and strength, come from who God is. And God is good (all the time). God is wise. God is holy. God is sovereign. And God is our faithful, loving Father. Take courage. In this world you will have tribulation. But Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, has overcome the world. Rest in that.