

Title: Quenched the Fury of the Flames [Daniel II]

Scripture: Hebrews 11:34

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Greetings of peace to you all. Today's scripture is from Hebrews 11:34.

34 "quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies."

Today, we will focus on "Quenched the Fury of the Flames."

As recorded in Hebrews 11:34, those who quenched the forces of fire and emerged unharmed include Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These are examples we are all familiar with.

Daniel 2:48 states, "Then the king promoted Daniel to be ruler over the whole province of Babylon," and verse 49 adds, "and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were set over the affairs of the province." By God's addition of wisdom and intelligence to these men, Babylon reached its peak of prosperity through their influence.

Daniel 3:1-2 tells us that King Nebuchadnezzar made a colossal statue of gold and set it up in the plain of Dura, requiring officials from every province to attend its dedication ceremony. Naturally, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who were administrators of the province, were also expected to be present. As heads of their province, they would have stood right at the front.

Fortunately, Daniel was in the palace, so he did not need to attend. In Daniel 3:4-6, a herald loudly proclaims, "Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: 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." This was a significant challenge for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who

were committed to adhering to the commandments in Exodus 20:4-5 against idol worship.

When the sound of the horn was heard, everyone fell down and worshiped the statue set up by King Nebuchadnezzar. However, an astonishing scene unfolded: three men did not bow down but stood stiffly upright, right in the front row. Imagine King Nebuchadnezzar, facing the people bowing before the statue, witnessing this defiance. He must have been truly shocked and his pride deeply wounded. How could it not be? It was a situation bound to hurt his pride. And this set the stage for a grave confrontation.

Daniel 3:19 shows that King Nebuchadnezzar, filled with fury and with his face transformed with rage, commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual because the three men did not bow down to the statue he had made. He ordered that these men, who had shocked him, be thrown into the blazing furnace. The furnace was heated to an extreme degree. Verse 22 tells us that the men who were taking these three to the fire were killed by the heat before they could even get close to the furnace, indicating just how intensely hot it had become.

Despite the ferocious heat, when we look at verse 27, we see a miraculous scene: the three men were not harmed by the fire. Their hair was not singed, their garments remained unchanged, and there was no smell of fire on them. They were accompanied in the furnace by what appeared to be a fourth figure, described as an angel sent by God, ensuring their safety until they were called out by Nebuchadnezzar himself. They emerged unscathed. How could such a thing have happened? More precisely, why did such a thing happen? No, why did God have to perform such a miracle? Was it for the common reasons most of us know? No, it wasn't.

Pay attention to the following passage. In Daniel 3:13-15, Nebuchadnezzar, furious and wrathful, said to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, "You will be thrown immediately into the midst of the blazing furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?" What does this mean? Simply put, he heated the furnace seven times more than usual to the extent that it could

potentially melt, implying that there was no god who could save them from such a furnace. Nebuchadnezzar taunted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego by saying, "Even the god you worship cannot rescue you from the furnace I have made. Who can defeat me? Which god can overcome me?" Nebuchadnezzar should not have spoken like that, but he did.

In Daniel 3:16-17, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego respond to the king, who claims superiority over their God by having made such a fiercely hot furnace. They say, "O king, you think our God is less powerful because you have made this furnace seven times hotter. Do you think our God cannot save us from this fiery pit? The God we serve is surely able to deliver us from this burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us. Moreover, even if you order a punishment more severe than this, our God will deliver us from your hand."

These three men, seeing the king's actions and his arrogance, felt confident that God would not remain silent. Hence, they spoke such words. True to their faith, an angel sent by God quenched the mighty power of the flames and rescued them perfectly.

Some people believe that God rescued Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace because they refused the king's delicacies and did not defile themselves by eating only vegetables. They also think that their refusal to bow down to the golden statue was the reason God saved them from the furnace. However, nowhere in the Book of Daniel is it stated explicitly that these were the reasons for their salvation. There is no passage that directly links their dietary choices or their refusal to worship the idol as the reasons for their divine deliverance. Indeed, these specifics are not mentioned.

Then, some might think that God rescued these three men from the fiery furnace because of their strong faith. These men believed that God had the power to save them from the midst of the flames, which could be seen as a demonstration of profound faith. However, there is also no record that states that God saved them because of their faith.

If we were to say that these three men received that miracle because of their

great faith, then what about verse 18? It is written in Daniel 3:18: "But even if he does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were saying, "God is surely able, 100%, to deliver us, but He might also choose not to. Even if 'He does not,' it is because He decides according to His will, which we cannot fully know. Nevertheless, we will never bow down to your statue." Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had faith that God would certainly save them, but they also considered that God might choose not to save them. From this, it can be seen that they were not saved because of their faith alone.

God did not save Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace because of anything they did well, nor simply because of their faith. Again, the reason God saved them through a miracle was not because of the three friends' actions or faith. It was because of Nebuchadnezzar, who challenged God. If God had not saved them, the whole world would have accepted Nebuchadnezzar's claim that 'no god can deliver Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from his hand.' God performed the miracle to prevent this from being acknowledged.

As recorded in Daniel 2:37, God wanted Nebuchadnezzar to understand that it was He, the God in heaven, who had given all kingdoms, powers, and authorities on earth, and that Nebuchadnezzar's reign and the prosperity of Babylon were possible only because of His allowance. God demonstrated the miracle of the fiery furnace to show Nebuchadnezzar that He could destroy a kingdom or abolish a throne in an instant. This was the reason why the miracle was necessary—to make Nebuchadnezzar realize the ultimate sovereignty and power of God.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were there as instruments in a miracle according to God's purpose. They were neither more nor less than participants in the miracle God intended to perform. Contrary to what we might assume, the primary purpose of the miracle was not to ensure the safety of these three men. Nor was it performed merely to bless them. This is why the author of Hebrews in Hebrews 11:34 refers only to the "quenching of the fury of the flames," without naming these famous companions of Daniel.

In the Book of Daniel, the event is recorded factually with the names of the three men because it was essential to document the occurrence in detail. However, in Hebrews 11, often referred to as the "Faith Chapter," there was no need to specifically mention their names. The absence of their names in such a well-known miracle is notable and can be considered a miracle in itself.

The reason the names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are not listed in Hebrews could be interpreted as the narrative focusing on Nebuchadnezzar's experience being sufficient to convey the impact of the miracle. His name alone was enough to illustrate the dramatic effect this miracle had on him, underscoring the transformation in his understanding and attitude towards God. Therefore, there was no need to specifically mention the three men in that context.

The effect of the fiery furnace miracle manifested through King Nebuchadnezzar, as seen in Daniel 4:1-3, where he makes a proclamation to his empire. He says, "It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation." This proclamation highlights a significant shift in Nebuchadnezzar's recognition of God's power and sovereignty, showcasing the broader purpose of the miracle beyond just saving the three men—it was also about impacting the heart and the declaration of a powerful king.

Indeed, Daniel 4:37 records Nebuchadnezzar's profound declaration: "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble." This confession was not made in isolation nor merely to his officials; Nebuchadnezzar made it known throughout his empire. God's rescue of the three men from the fiery furnace was intended to lead Nebuchadnezzar to this recognition and declaration of God's sovereignty. The three men, whom we might consider the protagonists of this miracle, were essentially instruments used in the miracle to achieve a greater purpose—bringing about a monumental change in the heart and the acknowledgment of a

king, thus serving God's broader divine plan.

Right from the first chapter of the Book of Daniel, it is recorded that God allowed Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, to take some of the vessels from God's temple. Along with these temple vessels, God also permitted Daniel and his three friends to be taken to Babylon. This was because God intended to use Daniel and his friends as instruments for His miracles when necessary. God had strategically placed these young men and the Jerusalem temple vessels in Nebuchadnezzar's hands early on for use in future miraculous events.

The individuals featured in the Book of Daniel, whether they were Jews or Babylonians, were used by God to manifest and assert His glory and authority across the world. This is why events such as the fiery furnace and the lions' den were necessary. The primary purpose of these miracles was not merely to save Daniel and his friends but to proclaim and continuously announce God's glory and sovereignty throughout the earth. This purpose of the miracles and the core message of the Book of Daniel highlight the overarching theme of God's sovereignty and His use of human events to reveal His divine authority.

Indeed, not only are the kingdoms and rulers of this world subject to God's authority, but so too is Satan, often referred to as the devil. According to divine decree, Satan, once in heaven, was cast down to the earth, specifically to the atmospheric domain referred to as the air, where he remains confined. After the final judgment, when the Son of Man leads us to Heaven, Satan will be thrown into hell, where he is destined to be imprisoned eternally. This fate underscores the immense power of God.

While Satan currently operates in the realm of this world's atmosphere, he too is ultimately a being used by God.

In Job 2:6, the LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life." This directive from God meant, "I will deliver my servant Job into your hands to test him. You may bring calamities upon him and inflict illness, but you are strictly forbidden from taking his life. Do not harm his life in any way."

Satan's limitations are clear; he cannot overstep the boundaries set by God's command. Although Satan was allowed to test Job and bring suffering through illness, he could not touch Job's life. Job overcame all the trials and diseases inflicted by Satan, which ultimately led to him being more greatly esteemed by God. The trials inflicted by Satan inadvertently increased Job's heavenly rewards. On earth, he also received twice the wealth he had before the trials. Without these trials, Job might not have received such blessings. Thus, the role Satan plays in our lives is limited to this extent. God allows us to be tested through Satan, but this is for the growth of our faith and the future rewards that await us. By overcoming these challenges, we become stronger.

Satan is not a rival to God; he cannot be a direct opponent that God must personally confront. Instead, Satan is an adversary for us, the people, to contend with. This does not mean, however, that Satan can do with us as he pleases. He can tempt and test us only within the limits set by God's will. God does not permit Satan to bring upon us trials that are beyond our capacity to overcome. Satan cannot exceed these boundaries.

Therefore, when we face difficult trials or sufferings from Satan, we should seek the truth and overcome these challenges in the name of Jesus Christ, armed with that truth.

Indeed, some individuals turn to God to ward off Satan's temptations even before attempting to confront them themselves. Despite God's assurance that He will not allow us to be tested beyond our ability, some people prefer to call upon God immediately without trying to stand against the devil first. They pray, "God, please quickly come and resolve this temptation before it affects me. Block the devil directly, Lord." They request God's intervention from the outset. God, in His grace and mercy, indeed steps in to protect even those who may seem weak in faith. If He doesn't step in and protect them, they might just perish. So God steps in at times."

In this context, while it's critical to trust in God's protection, it's equally important for believers to develop resilience and a proactive approach to

spiritual battles. We must consider this: If God intervenes and solves the problem for us, what benefit does the trial bring to us? When we reach heaven, how can we say that we have won the good fight? What rewards can we expect?

Let's pray.

Dear Heavenly Father,

We realize that we have sometimes thought about the miracles in the Bible as being more for the people involved than for Your divine purpose. Because of this, we've wished for miracles in our own lives and declared our faith, hoping to experience miracles just like those in the Bible. Now we understand that our thinking was wrong. If it serves Your glory and makes You happy, You will indeed rescue us, but You might also choose not to.

Oh Lord!

You hold all power, so please don't let me be someone who tries to control You with my actions or my faith, thinking it's due to my own goodness. Please act according to Your will, and if it's not Your will, then let it be.

I ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.