

Reformation 2009  
Daniel 3: 16-28  
November 1, 2009

The outward, earthly church was in dire need of being re-formed, formed again, by God through His almighty Word by the 1400's. God did reform the church on Earth by His Holy Gospel at that time. It took many courageous people, lots of brave leaders to serve God faithfully, acting in accord with the Holy Scripture, in that time of Reformation. Martin Luther was among those leaders!

Reformation is not the context of these verses of God's Word in Daniel 3. But three faithful and therefore brave men are here presented. State sponsored religious persecution is the context. The spiritual Reformation of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century endured plenty of that kind of persecution, too. Humble believers in the pure Gospel of the Holy Bible were consigned to the flames and to other methods of torture and execution in those days, too.

What of the outward church on Earth today? It is in dire need of being reformed again by God through His almighty Word. Could we be among the courageous people through whom God wants to work? God also works the courage. I doubt that most of those through whom God has worked felt all that brave. Courage is a fruit of simple, child-like trust in Our Savior and His Word.

Any Reformation Needs People of Unflinching Faith in the Savior.

These precious verses of God's Word God wants to use to create such unflinching faith in us.

Not so awfully long before all this happened, God, through His prophet, Daniel, had told Nebuchadnezzar both the dream he had had and its meaning. Nebuchadnezzar seemed quite impressed by the LORD. But it did not last. He soon let it drop out of his mind. It didn't really change him.

Still today it happens that something really jars people into realizing their littleness and God's bigness and for a moment they think about eternal and spiritual things. But a little time goes by and nothing is different. Soon, they hardly ever give God a thought. If you pointed that out to them, they'd only get irritated with you.

Let us watch out lest we let God slip out of our living.

Soon Nebuchadnezzar was erecting an impressive statue, an idol, and for the dedication ceremony commanded that everyone show up for it and, at the given signal, bow down and worship it. This was especially true of representatives of the nations, people's cultures he had conquered. This would show his greatness and their submission to him. Yes, it was more about the king's pride and arrogance than anything else! "Publicly worship my statue, representing my gods, or publicly die in a furnace!"

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego showed up but kept standing when everyone else bowed down. They were rather hard to miss. They rather stuck out. And they were in trouble immediately. A number of other lesser Babylonian officials expressed their dislike for these non-Babylonians and pointed out their passive disobedience.

The three were dragged before the king at once. Actually, he gave them a second chance. They did not take it. They were on their way to an extra hot furnace!

What made these men so brave? It's what they knew. But what they knew did not come from their high IQ or from human learning. It was by faith in God and His Word, faith created in them by God through His Word!

They knew the first commandment. They knew the one, true God, who gave that commandment. They knew God Himself had forgiven all their natural born sin and every evidence of that sin. They knew He was almighty on their behalf. They knew that the Savior would go with them to the furnace and that whatever happened to them that day would turn out for all their good!

They did not know whether or not they were to die that day. That God does not tell His people. Maybe God would rescue them from death by furnace. God certainly could do that. Maybe God would make that day their heavenly homecoming.

What kind of temptations might sin and satan use in situations like this? He will try to lie that survival is what it's all about. No, the glory of God is the purpose of life, the highest purpose. If I do this, will it glorify my God?

Satan might have used rationalization to get those three men to bow. You know, something like this. God will know that you didn't really believe in this idol. You're just showing your obedience to government. Doesn't God command such obedience in His fourth commandment?

Beware! Never use God against God. It's a lie. The God of the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment is the God of the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment and it's no accident that God put the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment first. The LORD is King of kings. So, we must obey God rather than men whenever people contradict God.

These three men did not merely say, No!" They confessed their faith in Scripture's God. They said, "Our God is able to save us from the furnace. But we so trust God, that even if we die in the furnace, we'll be fine, so we won't worship your idols."

We know the outcome. God sent one of His angels. The fire only freed the three inside the furnace so that they could get up and walk around. The fire did not even singe their clothes. It couldn't even add smoke smell. Many Babylonian leaders witnessed it up close and personal.

The three certainly had their faith confirmed. God certainly made another attempt to break through the proud, unbelieving heart of the king. The king seems still to have resisted. He is willing to add the LORD to his list of gods, but sadly refers to the LORD only as the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And he still thinks his government can dictate religion, making a new law to turn anyone into mincemeat if they said anything bad about the LORD. Even after this, we see God go on trying to change the king.

God's people were benefited, though. They'd never be forced to worship any god but the LORD. Under Babylonian government, they'd be protected from open attack. Maybe some of those other Babylonian officials did come to faith. Centuries later, the Magi came from this area.

Our world needs to learn of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who had produced forgiveness of all sin and made eternal life available for all. Most people today are as lost as the Babylonians were.

Going along with the world, sin, and the devil is a denial of Jesus. Being quiet and trying not to be seen as followers of Jesus is doing no favors for the lost either.

Sinners don't seem shy about proclaiming their sins. Many think falsely that doing good things for people makes their own sins not count. That also is a religious lie, confirming them and other people in their sin.

May our faith in our Savior show clearly. Confess your faith before people, even before an unfaithful, God's Word –denying-contradicting earthly church. Maybe you don't feel you've got the courage of such lions. Then have the courage of a child-believer in Jesus! Amen.