

A children's bible study on the friends of Daniel (Read Daniel chapter 3):

In the times of Daniel the great world power was the Babylonian empire. They were the ones dictating all the rules of business and all the world had to pay taxes to the Babylonian king. The king in those days was Nebuchadnezzar. He was a powerful man no one would want to get into trouble with. Well, in Daniel chapter 3 we read of the three friends of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who got in trouble with him because they didn't fear him.

Do you fear anyone? I'm convinced that Daniel's three friends also knew about fear and did have fear even for Nebuchadnezzar at other instances. The only reason why they were so brave in this story, was because it dealt with their relationships with God and they feared God more than an earthly king. In other matters I'm sure they would not have wanted to get into trouble with Nebuchadnezzar.

What happened in this story was that Nebuchadnezzar made a golden statue that everyone in his empire had to worship. I know that his empire was so big that he would not have known if everyone obeyed him or not, but the problem was that the three friends of Daniel were officials in his government and were invited (or I guess forced) to the dedication of this statue. At the dedication it was obviously not possible to keep such a low profile that no one could see them not worshipping this golden statue.

How brave are you? Boys think they are brave and girls think they are silly because they think they are so brave. The problem is it is easy to be brave when you enjoy a story. I wonder how many of you know the story of Tarzan swinging around in the jungle, a brave man? I remember when I used to be as young and energetic as you, how we would, after a Tarzan movie, get up in the trees in our underpants pretending to be Tarzan. We were brave in the Tarzan story, but that was not reality. To be brave takes guts and 99% of us don't have it, except when God helps us. My question to you today is, "How brave are you we when it comes to the story of Jesus?" Are you willing to loose favour in the eyes of even you best friend for Jesus' sake?

I think the three friends of Daniel were part of the gutless 99% and it was only God's empowerment that gave them the courage to say the following words to Nebuchadnezzar, after he gave them a second change to worship his golden statue:

*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered King Nebuchadnezzar, "Your threat means*

*nothing to us. If you throw us in the fire, the God we serve can rescue us from your roaring furnace and anything else you might cook up, O king. But even if he doesn't, it wouldn't make a bit of difference, O king. We still wouldn't serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up."* (Daniel 3:16-18 The Message)

Were they so brave because they new God was going to save them? Yes and no. No, because they said even if God wouldn't save them they would still not obey Nebuchadnezzar. Yes, because they knew that even when God would not have saved them out of this furnace, He would save them with heaven.

What followed we read in the next four verses:

*Nebuchadnezzar, his face purple with anger, cut off Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace fired up seven times hotter than usual. He ordered some strong men from the army to tie them up, hands and feet, and throw them into the roaring furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, bound hand and foot, fully dressed from head to toe, were pitched into the roaring fire. Because the king was in such a hurry and the furnace was so hot, flames from the furnace killed the men who carried Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to it,* (Daniel 3:19-22 The Message)

Our fear of God has a reward. For Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego it was coming out of the furnace completely unharmed in Daniel 3:26-27. For us it might maybe not be in the same measure as for them, but it will be in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ with peace and joy in our hearts. To this will be added heaven, one day, when we leave this temporary home for the eternal one in heaven.

Driving it home:

1. Do you fear your friends more than God?
2. Do you love the things of this world more than God?
3. Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus?