

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THREE NAMES HIGH ON THE MUSTER-ROLL.

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”—Daniel iii. 16—18.

IF you read the second chapter of the Book of Daniel, you will think that Nebuchadnezzar was not far from the kingdom. His dream had troubled him; but Daniel had explained it. Then the king made this confession to Daniel, “Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret.” He acknowledged that Jehovah, the God of the Jews, was the greatest of gods, and was a great interpreter of secrets; and yet in a short time we find this man setting up an idol, and persecuting to the death those who would not worship it. He seems, indeed, to have turned the blessing into a curse, and made the image of his dream the pattern of the idol he set up for the nation to worship; thus making that through which God had graciously revealed his power and wisdom, the very instrument of his folly and vain glory. Man’s proud heart is the same in all generations, and the same thing happens even to-day. Have you not seen in your time men seriously impressed? They could not hold their own; they seemed stricken down by the force of truth, and you felt almost sure that they would become, like Saul of Tarsus, true converts, and even apostles of the faith. But after a while they forgot it, forgot it all, and became at length the most bitter and determined opponents of the truth before which they seemed once to bow. Every minister, who has a congregation of any considerable size, must have met with such people. I remember one who, being at a prayer-meeting where there was much wrestling power with God, was so overcome that he prayed aloud, and seemed to cry with all his heart for mercy, and ere he left he said that he had found it; but the next day he declared that he would never go to such a meeting again; that he had been almost caught, but he would not trust himself in such society any more. And I fear

that he never did; for he could always speak with great severity against the people who met for prayer, and were earnest in the faith. We know, then, what to expect; that some who seem like fish almost landed, will, nevertheless, slip back into the stream; that it will happen unto them according to the true proverb, "The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." They will go out from us because they are not of us, and the last state of such men will be worse than the first.

This great king of Babylon was an absolute monarch. His will was law; no man ever dared to dispute with him. Who would differ from a gentleman who could back up his arguments with a fiery furnace, or with a threat to cut you in pieces, and to make your house a dunghill? And now, when it comes to this, that he sets up a god of his own, a huge colossal statue, and gathers all the princes and potentates of his world-wide dominion together, to bow down before this image, it seems a strange thing to him that there should be anybody found who would not do so. And yet there were three Jews who mastered him. Once before, they had broken the laws of his court, and refused to eat unclean meat; and though they ate nothing but pulse, "At the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." Having stood firm for the right before, they were the bolder to face the more terrible ordeal. The king himself had exalted them in the land, and he expected them, of course, to do his bidding, and set an example to others; but these three of the despised race of the Jews were unconquerable even by the master of the whole world. They stood out before Nebuchadnezzar, and carried their point for God and for conscience.

As we dwell upon this deed of noble heroism, may we become sharers in the courage and faith of these men, whose names stand high on the roll of worthies in the kingdom of God! Thirteen times their names recur in this chapter, like a refrain to the song which speaks of their deed of valour.

Notice, first, *the excuses they might have made*; secondly, *the confidence they possessed*; and thirdly, *the determination at which they had arrived*.

I. First of all, as we think of these three brave Jews, let us consider THE EXCUSES THEY MIGHT HAVE MADE. They were accused by the Chaldeans, who had so recently been saved from death by Daniel and his three friends. The surest way to be hated by some people is to place them under an obligation. "What favour have I ever done him, that he should hate me so?" said one. But in this case the wrath of man was to praise God. The incensed monarch called the offenders before him, and, scarcely believing that in his realm any could have defied his authority, he put the alternative plainly before them. "Here is the golden image; you three Jews are to bow down before it. If you do not, there is the burning fiery furnace, and into that you shall be cast at once. What is your answer?"

They might have said to themselves, "*It is perfectly useless to resist*. We cannot contend against this man. If we submit, we do it unwillingly; and surely, being coerced into it, we shall be but little blamed. A man cannot be expected to knock his head against a brick

wall, nor throw his life away; and therefore we will bow our heads, as the rest of the multitude have done, and worship the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up." It is a bad excuse, but it is one that I have often heard made. "Oh," says a man, "we must live, you know; we must live." I really do not see any necessity for it. We must die; but whether we must live or not, depends upon a great many things, and it is infinitely better to die than to sink your manhood, and to violate your conscience, at a tyrant's bidding.

Again, they might have said, "*We are in a strange land*, and is it not written by one of our wise men, 'When you are in Babylon, you must do as Babylon does'? Of course, if we were at home, in Judæa, we would not think of such a thing. We would remember how God has said, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.' If we were at home, we would obey that law; but we are many hundreds of miles away from Jerusalem, and surely we may be permitted to yield in this point." Thus have I known many who say they are Christians at home act when they are abroad; they have not regarded the Sabbath, neither have they even regarded the decency or the indecency of the amusements to which they have betaken themselves, because, forsooth, they were not at home! "We would not do this in England; but we are in Paris, you see, and the case is altered," they say. Is the case altered? Is God the God of this island, and not the God of the Continent? Has he ever given us permission to do abroad what we may not do at home? It is a vile excuse, but commonly enough made.

They might also have said, "*We are in office*"; and seeing they were set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, they might have found some difficulty in detaching their private religion from their public duty. They were high officials; and what an excuse this is for a great deal of roguery and trickery everywhere! A man gets elected to a parish vestry, or a council, or a board, and when he once gets to sit on that board, he seems to have left his honesty at home. I say not that it is so always, but I am sorry to say that it has often been so. The official has no sooner put on his robes of office than his conscience has vanished. But these men were not so foolish as to think that because they were made rulers in Babylon, they might therefore sin against the Most High God. It is true that they were bound to obey the lawful orders of their sovereign; but whether it be right to obey men rather than God, their conscience could easily enough judge; so they never made that excuse.

But, then, they were prosperous men. They were getting on in the world, and I believe that God sent this trial to Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, because they were prospering. They might have said, "*We must not throw away our chances.*" Among the dangers to Christian men, the greatest, perhaps, is accumulating wealth—the danger of prosperity. Wesley used sometimes to fear that Christianity was self-destructive; for when a man becomes a Christian, the blessings of this life are his, too: he begins to rise in the world; he leaves his old

position behind him ; and, alas ! too often, with increasing riches, forgets the God who gave him all. There is much truth in this idea ; and unless the Spirit of God abides with his people, we might indeed see our faith thus commit suicide. It is a danger to be guarded against, both by liberal giving and by frequent intercession. We often pray for Christians in adversity, and it is right that we should do so ; but it is even more necessary to pray for Christians in prosperity, for they run the risk of gradually becoming soft, like Hannibal's soldiers destroyed by Capuan holidays, who lost their valour in their luxury. Many a man who was an out-and-out Christian when he was lower down in life has, when prosperous, become much too great a gentleman to associate with those who were his honoured brethren before. I have seen it scores of times ; but it is a shocking thing. May God grant that we may never turn his mercies into an excuse for sinning against him ! You who are rich have no more liberty to sin than if you were poor. You who rise in the world have no more right to do wrong than you had when you were down in the world ; and his lordship is no more honourable at a prize-fight than the bullet-headed pugilist. We must do right. We must never do wrong, or plead our position in society, or our prosperity in worldly things, as a reason why we may do what others might not do.

Again, further, they might have excused themselves thus. The putting up of this image was not altogether a religious act. It was symbolical. The image was intended to represent the power of Nebuchadnezzar, and bowing before it was therefore doing political homage to the great king. Might they not safely do this ? They might have said, "*We are politically bound.*" Oh, how often we hear this brought up ! You are told to regard the difference between right and wrong everywhere, except when you get into politics ; then stick to your party through thick and thin. Right and wrong vanish at once. Loyalty to your leader—that is the point. Never mind where he leads you, follow him blindly. You are even told that you may do wrong because it is politically right. I hate such an argument ! These men never for a moment entertained the evil thought. It is true that politics were mixed up with this image ; but whatever might be mixed up with it, they would not worship it, for God had said, "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them," and these sturdy believers would do nothing of the kind under any pretence whatever.

A very soothing salve for their conscience might have been found in the absence of any command to renounce their own religion. They might have encouraged each other to submit, by saying, "*We are not called upon to abjure our God.*" They need not believe the idol to be divine, nor confess the least faith in it ; in their hearts they might make a mental reservation as they bowed, and they might have whispered to one another, and said that it was a devil, and no God. They might have excused themselves to their own conscience by saying that they prostrated themselves to the music, and not to the idol, or that they made obeisance to the king rather than to his image. In fact, if their consciences had been as elastic as some modern ones, though that was hardly possible, as the virtues of indiarubber were scarcely known then, they might have said that, in bowing down before the

image, they were praying to Jehovah, since he might be worshipped anywhere, and under any circumstances. They might have said that, although they looked at the image, they did not worship it; but beyond the glitter of its gold, their thoughts rose to the God of glory. Anything, in fact, will serve for an excuse, when the heart is bent on compromise; and, especially in these half-hearted days, it is very easy to find a specious reason for a false action, if some temporal benefit is attached to it. Modern charity manufactures a multitude of excuses to cover sins withal.

A stronger argument, however, might have been secured from the fact of the universal submission to the decree. "*Everybody else is doing it,*" they might have said. That morning, when the rising sun was saluted by the strains from those varied instruments of music from Persia, and Greece, and Babylon, when all the music of the world seemed gathered together, everybody bowed. There were Jews there, thousands of them; and they all bowed. There were fire-worshippers there, men who hated the worship of graven images; but they all bowed. There were men there who had gods of their own which they revered; but they all bowed before Nebuchadnezzar's god. "What a singular being you must be to stand out against the fashion of the time!" the tempter might have said; "your own countrymen have bowed, and you will not; better men than you, let me tell you, have bowed, but you will not." No, they will not, these three singularities, these strange eccentricities! It is folly to be singular, except when to be singular is to be right; and to be eccentric is not commendable, except the eccentricity consists in not being concentric with any kind of evil way. In spite of all the apostate crowds, these brave men would not yield—not they! Though millions bowed, what had that to do with them? My dear hearers, I ask you to cultivate a brave personality. In the service of God, things cannot go by the counting of heads. You must follow the Lord's will wherever it leads you, whether you go alone or not.

"Dare to be a Daniel,
Dare to stand alone!"

They might have said, "*It is only for once, and not for long.* Ten minutes or so, once in a lifetime, to please the king; such a trivial act cannot make any difference; at any rate, it is not enough to brave the fiery furnace for. Let us treat the whole thing as a huge jest. It would be ridiculous to throw away our lives for such a trifle." Have you never heard such arguments in these days? This indulgent nineteenth century has plenty of easy maxims of a very similar sort. In the supreme hour many fail, because the trial is seemingly so small. They mean to stand for God; but this is scarcely the right time; they will wait, and choose a more worthy occasion, when something really heroic can be attempted. Were they to stand for such a little thing, the world would laugh with derision at such a straining out of a gnat. So Adam eats the apple; Esau the pottage; and the one temptation, unresisted, issues in life-long loss. Not even for a few minutes in a lifetime would these three brave men deny their God. May their stubborn faith be ours!

Another excuse that they might have made was, "*We can do more good by living* than we can by being cast into that furnace. It is true, if we are burnt alive, we bear a rapid testimony to the faith of God; but if we live, how much more we might accomplish! You see we three are Jews, and we are put in high office, and there are many poor Jews who are captives. We can help them. We have already done so. We have always seen justice done to God's people, our fellow-countrymen, and we feel that we are raised to our high office on purpose to do good. Now, you see, if you make us bigots, and will not let us yield, you cut short our opportunities of usefulness." Ah, my dear brethren! there are many that are deceived by this method of reasoning. They remain where their conscience tells them they ought not to be, because, they say, they are more useful than they would be if they went "without the camp." This is doing evil that good may come, and can never be tolerated by an enlightened conscience. If an act of sin would increase my usefulness tenfold, I have no right to do it; and if an act of righteousness would appear likely to destroy all my apparent usefulness, I am yet to do it. It is yours and mine to do the right though the heavens fall, and follow the command of Christ whatever the consequences may be. "That is strong meat," do you say? Be strong men, then, and feed thereon.

But they might also have said, "*Really, this is more than can be expected of us.* If we had been asked to contribute our tithe to the support of the religion of Jehovah, we would cheerfully do so; but to yield our lives in this horrible way, to be cast into a burning fiery furnace, is more than flesh and blood can bear." Yes, and some of us could not answer that argument, for, peradventure, it is pressing upon ourselves. Remember what Jesus said to the multitudes who went with him, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, *yea, and his own life also*, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." We must stand to a full surrender, and say, "Let it cost what it may, I make no exception. I take all risks. I will follow Christ, the Lamb, whithersoever he goeth, even should I die while I am following him." He that does not come to that has not taken the position which Christ demands of us, and which his Holy Spirit must work in us, before we are fully converted to the faith. "Strong language again", says one. God make you strong enough to apply it to yourself!

Thus, I have set before you the excuses that these three Jews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, might have made.

II. In the second place, let us assure our own hearts by admiring THE CONFIDENCE WHICH THEY POSSESSED. They expressed it very emphatically and clearly. They had a very definite, solid, foursquare faith.

First, they said, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter." The word "careful" there, does not give you the meaning. Read it, "We are not full of care as to how to answer thee." They did answer very carefully; but *they were not anxious about the answer.* It was not a thing that troubled them in the least. They knew what they were going to say. They did not deliberate. They

did not hesitate. They said, "Nebuchadnezzar, we can answer you at once on that point." They were so calm, so self-collected, that they could talk to him, not as a king, but as Nebuchadnezzar. When it came to life-work, it was man to man, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to Nebuchadnezzar; and they told him that they had no difficulty in answering him.

In the second place, *they did not judge it theirs to answer at all.* I find that it may be read, as in the Revised Version, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer thee in this matter," meaning, "We will not answer you. It is not for us to answer you. You have brought another Person into the quarrel." Let me read the words that precede my text. Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" In effect, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego replied, "It is not for us to answer you. There is Another that will do that. You have challenged God, and God shall make his own reply." It was bravely spoken. They threw the onus of this matter upon God himself. So may you. If you will do right, it is God's affair to see you through. With the consequences you have nothing to do, except patiently to bear them; the consequences must be with God. Only you do the right. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and obey him, and keep the command of the Most High, and then whatever comes of it, it is no blame of yours. That must be left with God.

Then notice what they say. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace." *They avowed their faith in the Omnipotent God,* knowing that, if he chose, no mighty man of Babylon could ever throw them into that furnace. The furnace itself must die down, and become cool as ice, if God so wills it. They tell the tyrant to his face, enveloped as he was in the flame of his wrath, that God can save them out of the fire. Their God was almighty, and they put their trust in him.

What is more, they add, "And he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." Whether they burned in the fire or not, *they were sure they would be delivered.* "If we die, we shall be out of your reach; but we may not die; we may live beyond your reach. You have asked the question, 'Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?' and we answer you, 'Our God will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.'"

Now, beloved friends, if any of you are in great difficulty and trouble, tempted to do wrong, nay, pressed to do it, and if you do what is right, it looks as if you will be great losers and great sufferers; believe this: God can deliver you. He can prevent your having to suffer what you suppose you may; and if he does not prevent that, he can help you to bear it, and, in a short time, he can turn all your losses into gains, all your sufferings into happiness. He can make the worst thing that can happen to you to be the very best thing that ever did happen to you. If you are serving God, you are serving an Omnipotent Being; and that Omnipotent Being will not leave you in the time of difficulty, but he will come to your rescue. Many of us can say with Paul, "We trust not in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth

deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." The Lord has helped us in the past, he is helping us in the present, and we believe that he will help us all the way through. He will help you, too, if you just follow his word, and by a simple faith do the right thing. I believe that we have reason to expect interpositions of providence to help us when we are called to suffer for Christ's sake.

III. But here is the point that I want to make most prominent—the third one—THE DETERMINATION AT WHICH THEY HAD ARRIVED. "If not", if God does not deliver us at all, "be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Grand language! Noble resolve! "If not, if we have to go into the fire, into the fire we will go; but we will never bow the knee to an idol." So these gracious Jews were enabled to say.

They did not pivot their loyalty to God upon their deliverance. They did not say, as some do, "I will serve God if it pays me to do so. I will serve God if he helps me at such and such a time." No, they would serve him for nothing; theirs was not cupboard love. "If not, if he does not deliver us, if it is his will that we should be burnt alive, we surrender ourselves to his will; but we will not break his divine command, or make idolaters of ourselves by bowing before an image which has no life in it, which could not even set itself up, but which Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up."

They resolved that they would obey God at all costs. Now, I knew a young man once, to whom a certain ordinance of Christ was made known as being Scriptural; but as far as he could see, if he followed that ordinance, every door would be shut against him. If he was bold to do as he thought he ought to do, according to his Master's command and example, it would be the ruin of everything. Well, he did it, and it was not the ruin of anything; and if he had to do such a thing again a hundred times over, he thanks God that he would do it. There is such sweetness in having to make some sacrifice for God; there is such a heavenly recompense, that one almost envies the martyrs. Rather than pity their sufferings, one feels an intense longing that such honour had been ours, and that we had had the moral courage and holy stamina to suffer for God even as they suffered. Who among the bright ones are the brightest in the land of light? They that wear the ruby crown of martyrdom most certainly lead the van; for they suffered, even to the death, for their Lord. O friends, it is a glorious thing when we make no calculation of costs, but with our whole heart and soul follow the Lamb whithersoever he leadeth us!

Let us walk in this heroic path. But some will say, "It is too hard. You cannot expect men to love God well enough to die for him." No, but there was One who loved us well enough to die for us, and to die a thousand deaths in one, that he might save us. If Christ so loved us, we ought so to love him. "Well," says one, "I think it is impossible. I could not bear pain." It is possible, for many have endured it. I remember that one of the martyrs, who was to be burned on the following morning, thought that he would try himself; and there being a large fire in the cell, he put his foot into it to see

whether he could bear to have it burnt, and soon shrank back. Therein he was foolish; for when he went out the next morning to stand on the faggots and burn, he stood like a man, and burnt bravely to the death for his Master. The fact was, his Lord did not call him to burn his foot in the stove, and so he did not help him to bear it; but when he called him to give his whole body to the flames, then grace was given. There is a story of a martyred woman, who had a child born to her a few days before she was burnt, and being in great pain, she cried aloud. One said to her, "If you cannot bear this, what will you do when you come to burn?" She said, "Now you see the pains of nature which befall a woman, and I have not patience enough to bear them; but by-and-by you shall see Christ in his members suffering, and you shall see what patience he will have, and what patience he will give to me." It is recorded of her that she seemed as if she had no pain at all when she yielded herself up to Christ. Do not judge, by what you are to-day, what you would be if you were called into trouble. Grace would be given you. I have no doubt that many of the most timid of those who truly love the Lord, would be the very bravest; while some who think they would be brave, would be the very first to start back. You may never be called to such a trial as that; but still, if you cannot bear the small trials, how would you bear the great ones? "I cannot bear to be laughed at," says one. But though there is something cruel about mocking, it does not break anybody's bones. And being laughed at—well, really, I have sometimes thought, when I have seen a good joke cracked over my poor head, that there is so much misery in the world, that if I might be the cause of making a little more mirth, I should be glad; and even if it told against me, if it made somebody feel a little merrier, it was not a matter for great sorrow. And when you go into the workshop, and they point at you and say, "There comes a canting Methodist!" remember, that is the way in which the world pays homage to Christianity! If there is anything genuine in the Christian religion, the world pays its respect by cavilling at it, and caricaturing it. Accept their compliments, not as they intend them, but as you choose to read them, and you will not be grieved. You, Shadrach, not afraid of a burning fiery furnace, are surely not going to be frightened by the laughter of a silly boy or girl in the workshop? Alas, this unworthy fear enters into all relationships! I have known men afraid of their wives! I have known fewer wives, however, afraid of their husbands; for they are generally bold for Christ, and can suffer for his name's sake. I have known children afraid of their parents, and some poor parents, six feet high, afraid of their children! Oh, what poor worms it makes of us when we begin to be afraid of our fellow-creatures! Do right, and fear nothing, and God will help you.

To enable us to get the spirit of these three holy men, we must get, first, *a clear sense of the divine presence*. If a man feels that God is seeing him, he will not bow his knee to an idol; neither will he do evil, for God's eye is upon him. He will endure, "as seeing him who is invisible;" and though the floods of ungodly men lift themselves up, he will remember the Lord who sitteth upon the waterfloods, and is higher than they. The man who realizes God's presence is by that

invisible companionship rendered invincible. Greater is he that is for him, than all that can be against him.

“For right is right, since God is God,
And right the day must win;
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin.”

We must, next, have a *deep sense of the divine law*. I have already reminded you of the law. “Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.” No Virgin Mary, no cross, no crucifix, no picture, no image, no visible object is to be regarded with reverence, or worshipped instead of God. All this must be put away. That is clear enough; and therefore Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, feeling that God was near, and knowing what God’s law was, dared not violate that law, but would sooner die.

Above all, to keep us right, we must have a *mighty sense of the divine love*. We shall never obey God till by his grace we have new hearts, and those hearts are full of love to him through Jesus Christ. Then, if you love him, you will say, “What! put an image of gold in his place? Never! Join the multitude in worshipping a colossal statue instead of the invisible Jehovah? Never!” With holy indignation you will choose the furnace of fire, rather than have that purer flame which glows in your heart quenched, or made to burn dimly.

To some of you this must seem very trifling, because you say, “I do not care about religious forms and ceremonies. Let me enjoy myself while I am here; it is all that I ask.” Well, you have made your bargain, and a sorry one it is. If this life be all, how ought a man to live? I am sure I cannot tell you. Perhaps the wisest thing of all is, “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” But there is another world, and a life beyond, and it is sometimes incomparably wise to fling this life away that we may win the life eternal. Our Lord often reminded his hearers of this great truth, “He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”

“But what did these three men do?” says one: “they simply did not bow their heads, and they were cast into the fiery furnace. What did they do?” *They influenced their age, their people, and all time.* These three men influenced the city of Babylon, and the whole Babylonian empire. They certainly influenced king Nebuchadnezzar. They influenced the next age, and to this hour the influence of their brave stand for God in his eternal unity, and for the non-worship of any visible thing, has held the Hebrew race firmly to this one point. It was principally through these three men that the whole Jewish people were taught their deep hatred of everything like idol-worship; and they were, by such men as these, and some who followed after, weaned from their tendency to wander after idols, and tethered fast to the worship of Jehovah, the one living and true God. Would God that the Jews as a nation went further, and knew our Lord Jesus Christ! Still, it is something that they are yet alive upon the earth bearing

witness that there is but one God, Creator of heaven and earth, who only is to be worshipped. More than that, the influence of these three men lives in this audience, and will live in thousands of audiences in days to come. Does it not make your pulse beat? Does it not make your heart leap within you? Have you not said to yourselves, "This is a noble example"? Oh, that we may rise to it! In an age like ours, when everything is sold, when you can buy anybody, when the flute, harp, sackbut, dulcimer, and all kinds of music carry everything before them, when a mask and a vizer will infatuate even a saint; it is time that there were some men of the stern old mould of these three Jews, who could not, and would not, yield, whatever might happen. The pillars of the earth might be dissolved, but these men would still stand upright, and bear the whole world upon their shoulders by the grand power of God that made them strong. Be like unto them.

These three men command the admiration of heaven and earth. A fool would have pointed at them and said, "There go three fools—gentlemen high in office, with large incomes, and wives and families. They have only to take their cap off, and they may live in their wealth; but if they do not do it, they are to be burnt alive; and they will not do it. They will be burnt alive. They are fools." Yes, but the Son of God did not think so. When he in heaven heard them speak thus to king Nebuchadnezzar, he said, "Brave, brave men! I will leave the throne of God in heaven to go and stand by their side;" and invisibly he descended, till where the fires were glowing like one vast ruby, where the fierce flame had slain the men that threw the three confessors into the burning fiery furnace, HE came and stood. And there they walked. It was the greatest walk that they had ever had. On those burning coals the four of them were walking together in sweet fellowship. They had won the admiration and the sympathy of the Son of God, who left heaven itself, that he might come and stand side by side with them. It was therefore comparatively a little thing that they won the admiration of Nebuchadnezzar. That proud imperial tyrant cried to those about him, "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered, "True, O king;" and he, with his visage white with ghostly fear, said, "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." He himself could not but stand there, and, awestruck, admire these three heroes. And now to-day you do the same. These three men still live. From the glowing coals their voices call aloud to us, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

To close: if we would be servants of God, we must be believers in his Son Jesus Christ. Come and trust Jesus Christ, and you are saved. When you are truly saved, you are to be saved from all hesitation about obedience to God—so saved, that henceforth God's law is your rule. Then, with that holy law imperative upon you, you will go forth into the world, and say, "It is not mine to ask what others will do. It is not mine to shape my course by them, not mine to enquire what will bring me most profit, what will bring me most honour. It is mine to look up to thee, my God, and ask, what wouldest thou have me to do? I will do it at all costs."

I wonder how many young men to whom these words are addressed have pluck enough in them to come out on Christ's side. I do believe that many young men do not want an easy life; they would rather have a hard time, and a stern battle. We have brave spirits among us still, who like to lead the forlorn hope, and are not afraid. I challenge such to come and serve my Master fully and thoroughly, and they shall have a rough time of it; but they shall have glory, and honour, and immortality as their reward. Make a whole burnt-offering of yourself, my brother, body, soul, and spirit, for Christ. These three young men "yielded their bodies", as we read in the twenty-eighth verse. "I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Let the faith of your spirit carry your whole body with it, in hearty obedience to God's command, and let this be true of you—

"In full and glad surrender,
I give myself to thee,
Thine utterly and only,
And evermore to be.

"O Son of God, thou lov'st me,
I will be thine alone;
And all I have, and am, Lord,
Shall henceforth be thine own!"

But I fear that I speak in vain to many, who will turn away, and say, "This world for me." Well, if you make choice of this world, and of ease and pleasure for yourself, then have you chosen Egypt's treasures, and you have disdained the reproach of Christ; you shall find one day how dreadful a folly you have committed. God grant that you may find it out soon, and not in the world to come! God bless you, and save you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Daniel iii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—486, 670, 671.

Very little can be added to former notes concerning MR. SPURGEON except this—He firmly believes that our gracious God has spared his life in answer to the "effectual fervent" prayers of the Church of Christ all over the world; and it is his confident conviction that the Lord will, in due time, raise him up, and fully qualify him for future service. He cannot yet be considered out of danger; therefore continued supplication for his complete restoration is earnestly entreated, with hearty thanksgiving for the answers to prayer already received.

MR. SPURGEON is very desirous that friends everywhere should know that he is full of gratitude for their prevailing prayers and loving sympathy, and that from his sick-room he presents heartfelt petitions that rich blessings may be bestowed upon all of them.