

# But Suppose God Doesn't Do It

by Warren Wiersbe

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*The sermon explores four types of faith: credulous, cowardly, commercial, and confident, using the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel 3 as a case study.*

**Duration:** 38:03

**Scripture:** Daniel 3:16, Matthew 9:29, Matthew 17:20, Matthew 21:21, Mark 9:23, Luke 17:6, Hebrews 11:34

**Topics:** "God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the book of Daniel. He highlights how their faith in God allowed them to be delivered from the fiery furnace. The speaker emphasizes that this story has been a source of encouragement for Jewish people throughout history, particularly during times of persecution. He also emphasizes the importance of faith in the life of a believer, stating that our faith determines the level of life we experience. The sermon concludes by challenging listeners to examine their own faith and where it truly rests.

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## Transcript

We read the word of God from Daniel chapter 3. I'm going to begin at verse 16. Nebuchadnezzar the king is enraged at the three Hebrew children because they refuse to bow down before his idol. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need 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 has set up. Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Therefore he spoke and commanded that they should heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. And these men were bound in their coats, and their stockings, and their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the burning fiery furnace.

Therefore, because the king's commandment was urgent and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach,

Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded, and rose up in haste, and spoke, and said unto his counselors, Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

He answered and 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 a son of the gods. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spoke, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth and come here.

Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came forth from the midst of the fire, and the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counselors being gathered together, saw these men upon whose bodies the fire had no power, neither was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar spoke, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants who trusted in him, and hath changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any God except their own God. Therefore I make a decree that every people, nation, and language who speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a refuse heap, because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon. One of the truly great experiences of faith in the Word of God. The story of the three Hebrew children is familiar even to people who don't read the Bible.

It has been permanently embodied in a very popular Negro spiritual. It shows up in coloring books and slide presentations and even occasionally on canvases and art exhibits. The exciting story of how God delivered three of his servants from the fiery furnace.

I'm sure that over the centuries this chapter, Daniel chapter three, has been a great encouragement to Jewish people all over the world. If ever a nation, if ever a people, both literally and figuratively have been through the furnace, it's the nation of Israel. And I'm sure that this chapter is going to be an encouragement to that Jewish remnant on earth during the tribulation time when the world ruler sets up his image and commands people to worship him.

But you and I are not living in past history or future prophecy. We're right now involved in present reality and so the big question is what does Daniel chapter 3 mean to us? What encouragements are there for us? We live in a land of freedom where nobody forces us to worship. In fact, we have freedom right now to gather together and praise God and preach.

And I seriously doubt if very many of us face a fiery furnace if we stand true to the faith. We may lose some friends, might even lose our job, but I seriously doubt if any of us physically would be burned to ashes because we stand up for Jesus Christ. And so I want us to lay hold of the essential truth of this chapter which is faith.

The theme of this chapter is faith. Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 34 pick this up, by faith they quenched the violence of fire. Didn't put out the fire, didn't destroy the furnace, they just quenched the violence of the fire.

It's a marvelous thing when a beaver can enter into the fire but the fire doesn't enter into him. That's what faith is all about. No person here today lives any better than his faith.

If you have no faith you have no life. If you have a little faith you have little life. If you have much faith you have much life.

All of God's response is a response to faith. According to your faith be it unto you. And I notice in this chapter that we have illustrated four different kinds of faith.

And each person here today can examine his own faith and say this is where my faith really rests. First of all if we'll look at this vast multitude gathered here on the plane waiting for the orchestra for the band to start to play, bowing down to the great golden image, ninety feet high, nine feet wide, up on a great pedestal. If you look at this crowd you'll see one kind of faith.

It's what I call credulous faith, gullible faith, faith that believes anything. You see man has to believe something. Man is so constituted he has to believe.

I meet people in restaurants and airline terminals and out in the street and they say oh yeah you're a reverend, you're a pastor, sure you've got faith. I don't have any faith but they're reading the Wall Street Journal. It takes faith.

They get on the elevated, that takes faith. Get in a taxi cab, that takes faith. Eat in some restaurants in Chicago, that takes faith.

They get on an elevator, go up 80 floors, that takes faith. Everybody has some kind of faith. The only difference is that we Christians have our faith in God through Jesus Christ.

Faith is only as good as the object. I could worship this piano and I'd get exactly what a piano could give me. I could worship these flowers and I would get exactly what flowers could give me.

Everybody has faith. You believe in something if only in yourself and your bank book. But here we have a great mob of people who had what I call credulous faith.

They bow down to an image. They say oh this is the thing to do. We believe in the great king.

We believe in his image. A nation of sheep. When I think of what modern advertising is accomplishing in this country both for good and for ill, I say to myself credulous faith.

The most entertaining thing on television today is the assininity of the advertising. It's very entertaining. You should eat this breakfast food because this great baseball star eats this breakfast food.

And you should use this hair lotion because this beautiful movie star uses this hair lotion. And you should drive this kind of an automobile. What difference does it make what they eat for breakfast or what they put on their hair or what kind of automobile they drive.

I'm going to eat the cereal that's best for me that I can afford. I'm going to use whatever I can use on my hair. And I'm going to drive the automobile I can afford to drive whether or not Hollywood even cares.

You see credulous faith is based on authority. You should do this because this man says. After all the king made this image and all of his officers are bowing down to it.

And if so many important people are doing it, we should do it. I've noticed in my Bible that the important people were often wrong. Credulous faith bows down to the authority of man and credulous faith is impressed with statistics.

Everybody's doing it except those three guys. But if you take it statistically, all of these people here on the plane about to dedicate this image, all of us are bowed down. And if everybody does it, you should do it.

I like what Henry David Thoreau said when he said, I marched to a different drummer. Oh, how many people today are credulous, gullible. And if someone starts a parade off, they go because everybody is doing it.

Popularity, authority, statistics. Oh, how much it must have cost. Imagine an image covered with gold, 90 feet high, nine feet wide.

That's a lot of gold. But if it costs something, it must be right. Our people today don't know the difference between prices and values.

Credulous faith. But Nebuchadnezzar was no dumbbell. He knew that the way to get people to believe was to stir their emotions.

And so he had music there. Every great dictator has ridden to his victory through music. And so he had the musicians there and they played.

I don't know what they played, but oh, it got the people stirred emotionally. Pure propaganda. Credulous faith.

And so when the musicians began to play and the officers began to bow down, all of the people bowed down and said this is the right thing to do. And it was the wrong thing to do. They were bowing down to an idol that could not see or hear or feel or touch or speak.

And while they were bowing down, three of the officers, three men who held high office in the kingdom, just stood there and refused to bow down because they did not have credulous faith. Have you heard this stupid statement? It makes no difference what you believe in as long as you believe something. I believe for every drop of rain that falls, a flower grows.

If that were true, we'd be up to our armpits in flowers. I don't believe that. I conducted a funeral once for a lady who was not a Christian.

I did not even know her. It was one of those episodes where they phone you and say, Pastor, we have a person who passed away and she had no church connection. Could you come? Sure, of course you will.

I got there to the service and one of the relatives had a book of poetry by a very famous Eastern poet and she said, Reverend, would you read this poem in the service? And I read the poem to myself and it said nothing beautifully. It was pure cotton candy. When you tried to get a bite of it, it was gone.

I said, yes, I'll read the poem. And so I opened the service and I said, dear friends, we've come today to pay our final respects to so-and-so. And I gave the name and I've been asked by the family to read one of her favorite poems.

And so I read it just as beautifully as I could. And I closed the book and put it down. They were sitting smiling because the poems we talked about, as long as you believe in goodness, as long as you believe in these things, good will come to you.

All of this kind of froth. And they sat smiling and I gave them just enough time to enjoy it. And then I said, now shall we hear the Word of God.

And if lightning had struck that chapel, you couldn't have seen smiles disappear any faster. And I began to read the Word of God, which is the truth. You see, people don't want truth.

They want to believe a lie. And the more people who believe a lie, the easier it is to believe it. Credulous faith.

I hasten now to the second kind of faith that is represented in this chapter. Cowardly faith. Only three Jews? Well, if I understand Jeremiah correctly, there were several thousand Jews that were deported.

One scholar has estimated that some 70,000 must have been deported in that time of discipline for the nation of Israel. Where were the rest of them? Now, they all couldn't have been in one place at one time. I know that.

Daniel wasn't even there. He was probably off on some mission somewhere. But when the music began to play and the signal was given and everyone went to his knees, only three men were left standing.

Where were the rest? When Elijah was up on Mount Carmel, praying and fire comes down from heaven. I read later on that there were 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Where were they? It's easy to show up afterward and say, hey, we're with you.

How about standing with someone when he's standing all by himself? Cowardly faith. There were Jews there who believed the same way as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, but they did not have the same kind of faith. And they used the same excuse as you and I use.

Well, you know, we're strangers in a foreign land. We everybody's doing it. And after all, it did come from headquarters.

The king is the commander. And we'll just do it once. We don't have to do it all the time.

Just do it once and nobody will see us. And if we live, we can be better witnesses. It's much easier to witness alive than it is ashes.

And so they used all the excuses and all the rationalizing that all that we do. Cowardly faith. You know why? You know why they had cowardly faith? They were afraid of the furnace.

They weren't afraid of God. If a man fears God, he fears nothing else. If a person walks in the fear of God, he's not afraid of the faces of people or the furnaces of kings.

And if he has to stand alone, he'll stand alone, but he won't be a coward. Cowardly faith. We have a lot of that today.

And after these cowards had bowed down and gotten up again, they said, oh, we ought to get together and pray for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They need our prayer support. Bless your heart,

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego needed to pray for the cowards.

Cowardly faith. Now you and I don't face furnaces or idols or kings. We face ordinary everyday people in the office, in the store, on the neighborhood.

And yet we're cowards. And Jesus said, if you're ashamed of me and of my words, I'm going to be ashamed of you. There's a third kind of faith, and this is the one I want to spend a little more time on.

I call it commercial faith. You say, what in the world do you mean by commercial faith? I mean this. I will believe and obey God if you'll do something for me.

Look at these three men. Our God is able to deliver us, but even if he doesn't, we aren't going to obey you, okay? Now that's not the theology I see in the books in the bookstores today. I look at the books in the bookstores, the cassettes in the tape racks, and here's what I see.

If you believe, you can be rich. How about that? That's good. Well, that's one good reason for believing, so you can be rich.

If you believe, you will be healed. That's a good reason for believing, you can be healed. Here were three men who said, we're not going to believe, we're not going to disbelieve, we're not going to disobey, regardless of what happens to us.

We do not have bargaining faith, commercial faith. Oh, I meet people who do have commercial faith. They say, oh, I believe in God.

He answered my prayers. Suppose he didn't answer your prayers, would you still believe? Is it right to believe in the true and living God revealed in the Word? Yes. Then regardless of what he does, believe.

Oh, I believe in God because he gave me a job. Suppose he didn't give you a job. Suppose you lost your job.

Oh, I believe in God. He healed somebody. Suppose he didn't.

If your faith is resting upon what God does instead of what God is, you have commercial faith. And one of these days, God won't give you what you asked for. One of these days, God won't answer your prayer.

One of these days, God will want to give you something bigger and better and greater. And then you'll get angry at God and say, oh, he let me down. Wherever you go today, you meet whimpering saints, though they want to believe so hard.

They know they just want to believe, but God let them down. God never let anybody down. I dare you to find me any place in this book where God let anybody down.

We've let him down. He's never let anybody down. You see, this commercial faith is really satanic.

One day up in heaven, God had a little committee meeting with Satan. He said, have you considered my servant Job? And Satan says, he is number one on my list. And God, I want you to know something about Job.

The only reason Job trusts you is because you've blessed him so much. Beautiful family, lovely home, wealth and health, wisdom. He's the number one man in the East.

I want you to know something, God. If you'll take all that away from him, he'll curse you to your face. Now, God knew better.

God said, all right, Satan, you can take away things, but you can't touch him. And in one day, Job lost everything. Everything.

His wealth, his family, his wife came and said, curse God and die. Job looked up to heaven and said, naked I came out of the womb and naked I'm going into the womb of the earth. The Lord gave, the Lord took away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. Not cursed, blessed. Satan cringed.

Heaven rejoiced because Job didn't have commercial faith. Satan said to God, look, if I touch his body and he's sick, he'll curse you to your face. And so God said, all right, his body, but you can't take his life.

Job woke up sick, bad breath, awful infection and sores, ugly. People stared at him. Job said, though he slay me, yet will I trust him.

Job didn't have commercial faith. You can tell when a person has commercial faith, when he loses something, he complains. God doesn't love me anymore.

God has turned his back on me. God has forsaken me. That's commercial faith.

It's satanic. It's infantile. Can you remember when your children or grandchildren were just little tykes? They come and say, mommy, I want this.

Oh, I want it so badly. And you say, no, you can't have it. You don't love me anymore.

Ever hear that? God hears this often. Somebody comes and says, oh God, I've just got to marry that girl. If I don't get her life, won't be worth anything.

God says, you do get her, it won't be worth anything. You think she's a dream. I happen to know she's a nightmare.

Oh, I've just got to have her. God says, no, you can't have her. You don't love me anymore.

Whimpering, infantile saints who judge God by what He does, not by what He is. Commercial faith. Now the faith you've got right now, my friend, what would happen to me? What would happen to you if God didn't give us some of these things? Would we still love Him and trust Him and obey Him? Which leads us to the fourth kind of faith.

The faith of these three Hebrew children. Confident, courageous faith. Do you know what real Bible faith is? Real Bible faith is not saying, I know God will deliver me.

They didn't know whether God would deliver them. No angel had brought a message. They had nothing from God.

They knew God was able to deliver. That's not the question. God is able to heal.

Is He willing? God is able to give you a job or a wife or a husband. But is He willing? That's the question. They did not know what God was going to do, but they did know that their God was the true God.

You know what Bible faith is? Courageous, confident faith. It is obeying God in spite of circumstances and in spite of consequences. Real Bible faith doesn't say, now Lord, if you will, then I will trust you.

You don't hand God a contract. Real Bible faith says, Lord, I will trust you though you slay me. And here they stand and they say, oh King, we don't have to have a committee meeting to discuss this.

Our Bible says, thou shalt not make any graven image and you shall not bow down. Worship the Lord your God. Him only shall you serve.

So we know it. We don't have to have a committee meeting, rediscuss it, see how it relates to the present situation. No, we have an absolute word from God.

You don't worship idols. Now we don't know what our God is going to do, but we'd rather be sinners than be sinners. And we're going to obey God.

We're going to do what God wants us to do in spite of circumstances and in spite of consequences. We started Hebrews chapter 11 in my Sunday school class today. You get to the end of that chapter, you know, and it says, and others.

After talking about being delivered from lions and delivered from armies and delivered from fire and God did this and God did that and God performed that miracle. That says, and others, others, others, others of a different kind. They were sawn apart.

They were thrown in prison. They wandered naked and without food. They were rejected.

They were slain. In Hebrews 11, you got two kinds of believers. There are those who believe in God and God delivered them.

There were those who believed just as much in God and God didn't deliver them, but both of them were honored by God. And there's a brand of theology abroad today that says, oh, if there's sickness in your home, somebody doesn't have faith. Oh, if you lose your job, somebody doesn't have faith.

Oh, if things aren't going right in your home, as far as material things are concerned, somebody doesn't have faith. That's not always true. You know, when Jesus Christ was here on earth, he walked by faith and he was poor, had no home, no pillow.

When he traveled by boat, he borrowed the boat. Confident, courageous faith says we're going to obey the Word of God if it kills us. He is able to deliver, but even if he doesn't, we're not going to bow down.

We aren't going to disobey God. That's what real faith is. Faith is not believing in spite of evidence.

That's credulity. Faith is obeying in spite of consequence. It didn't take long for Nebuchadnezzar to find out the kind of faith those people had.

Look at verse 28. God has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him. They have yielded their bodies that they might not serve nor worship any God.

Sounds like Romans 12, 1 and 2. Present your bodies a living sacrifice, which is your spiritual worship. These men said, our God, not the God, not a God, our God, a personal relationship, is able to deliver us. But if not, we're still going to trust him.

We're still going to do what's right, though we burn. I'll tell you, it's better to go into a furnace of fire, true to the Lord, than into a lake of fire because you haven't trusted the Lord. This is the kind of faith that God honors.

Abraham was packing all of his baggage one day and his neighbor said, hey, where you going? Abram, where you going? I don't know. You don't know. Vacation? No.

The God of glory appeared to me and said, get out from your family, your kindred, your nation, and go to a land I'm going to show you. Oh, where is it? I don't know. How will you know when you get there? God will tell me.

What about your business? I'm giving it up. Your family? Gonna leave them behind. Your friends? Leave them behind.

Where you going? I don't know. Abram, you're a fool. No, I'm not.

I'm going to trust and obey God if I walk off the edge of the map. Though he slay me, I'm gonna trust him. What were the names of Abraham's neighbors? We saw some of the clay tablets in the British Museum that were dug out of Ur of the Chaldees, and you could probably check out the names of some of Abram's neighbors.

Nobody knows them today. The whole world knows Abram. Courageous faith.

Moses. Moses was packing his baggage one day, got the Samsonite down from the attic and was packing everything. In came one of the servants and says, Prince Moses, what are you doing packing? Oh, you're going on an expedition.

No. Where you going? I'm going to live with the Jews. The Jews? But you're the prince.

I'm giving it up. The wealth? I'm giving it up. You're a fool.

No, I'm not. I would rather believe and obey God than have all the treasures of Egypt. That's confident, courageous faith.

Moses said, I would rather be identified with the people of God and the reproaches of Christ than all the treasures of Egypt. And though he slay me, I'm gonna trust him. Paul had that attitude.

Paul's friend said, Paul, don't go to Jerusalem. Don't do what you're doing. Please.

Paul said, look, every place I go, the Holy Spirit tells me that bonds and afflictions are coming, but none of these things move me. Neither count I my life dear unto myself that I may finish my course and the ministry which God has given to me to proclaim the gospel of the grace of God. Though he slay me, I'll trust him.

You see, cowardly faith says, obey if it's safe. And credulous faith says, obey if it's popular. And commercial faith says, obey if it's profitable.

But confident, courageous faith says, obey if it's right. Though all the world turn against you. And that's the kind of faith that's lacking today.

My faith and your faith are not proved by the songs that we sing. No matter how sincerely we may sing them or the prayers that we pray, no matter how sincerely we may pray them, my faith and your faith are revealed by the light of the fire in the furnace. When we stand before the furnace, we see everybody bowing down and we know that we have a decision to make.

That's where faith is revealed. A crisis does not make a man. A crisis shows what a man is made of.

And these three Hebrew children were made of courageous faith. It might be good for some of us to take inventory today. Do you have any faith at all? Have you put your faith in Jesus Christ? Can you honestly say in your heart today, I know whom I have believed and I'm persuaded he's able to keep that which I've committed unto him against that day.

I've trusted him and he saved me. Can you say that? Now, if you cannot say that, your first step is to come and give your heart to Jesus Christ. Oh, but I have religion.

Religion never saved anybody, but I have moral character. I'm glad that it never saved anybody. Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your own savior? I tell you, friends, one of these days, God's going to turn the furnace on and it's going to separate the counterfeit from the true.

It's going to separate the cowardly from the courageous. It's going to separate the commercial from the confident. One of these days, society is going to be one great furnace.

The heat's going to be on. The dross is going to be burned away and people are going to find out who has real Bible faith. You say, well, pastor, I know I've trusted Christ.

I know I'm a Christian. I've been born again. Fine.

What about everyday life now? God says, here's something you shouldn't do by faith. Don't do it. Here's something we should do by faith.

Do it. Faith is not believing in spite of evidence. Faith is obeying in spite of consequence.

Do we have credulous faith? Cowardly faith? Do we have commercial faith? Do I speak to somebody right now who says, I'm angry at God. I didn't get what I wanted. Shame on you.

Some of our churches are nothing but vast playpens where the babies fight over the toys. When the Christian ought to be living like a soldier on the battlefield, facing the furnace, standing firmly against the whole crowd if necessary, it's time that we became men and women and put away childish things and moved into that area of confident, courageous faith that says, our God is able, but even if He does not, we will not disobey Him. For our faith in God does not depend upon what He does.

It depends upon what He is. And He is the true and the faithful God. And we would rather go to our graves true to Him than be promoted by men and lose God's well-done.

You and I are only as good as our faith. By the way, how good is your faith? Heavenly Father, in the ease and comfort of an affluent society, it's hard to be courageous. We drift, we sleep, we must be carried to the skies and flowery beds of ease while others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas.

O gracious God, put into our backbone the kind of fiber, the kind of material that keeps us standing straight. Put within our hearts the kind of courage that does what is right no matter what the cost may be.

Help us to have faith that works.

And I pray, Lord, that you'll convict us today. And may we stand for the Lord Jesus Christ even as He did for us. O gracious Lord, forgive us when we have so acted that you've been ashamed of us.

May we stand true no matter what the pressures may be. Deliver us from being diplomats who try to see how many people we can please. Help us to become ambassadors, faithfully representing our King of Kings to see how many people we can reach.

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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