

In the Heat of the Moment

By David Wright

Although Daniel procured government posts for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, their positions failed to protect them from the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar. The Babylonian king built a golden idol and commanded all his officials to worship it (Dan. 3:1-5). When these three friends refused to obey the edict, Nebuchadnezzar threatened them with death.

Believing that the Lord would somehow rescue them, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego told the tyrannical king: “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us” (Dan. 3:17). This statement, however, was an expression of trust rather than a claim to special knowledge. For they boldly added that they would not serve other gods even if the Lord chose to let them perish in the flames (v. 18). The young Hebrew men assumed that God would deliver them, but they were willing to die for their convictions if that assumption proved incorrect.

What do we do in the heat of the moment—when encouraged to get drunk at a party, when tempted to commit adultery with a neighbor’s wife, or when urged by a coworker to embezzle a large sum of money? And what would we do if choosing to follow Christ were a capital offense? It is sometimes said that we cannot know beforehand what we would do in a given situation. For many, this is true. Since they have made no moral or spiritual commitments, their conduct is governed by convenience and desire.

But for people like Daniel’s friends, a prior decision to love the only true God dictates conduct in the heat of the moment. When Nebuchadnezzar commanded the three Hebrews to bow before his worthless idol, their response was automatic and unwavering. They said no and meant it.

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