

# Devotion that Leads to Promotion

## DANIEL 3:26-30

Tonight, we're going to look at "Devotion that Leads to Promotion." But we can also call it "Persecution that Leads to Promotion." You know, God has a plan. The Scripture, of course, tells us this in many, many places. God has a plan to "lift us up." In fact, we're told that if we'll "*humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, He will lift us up in due time.*" And that idea of lifting is the idea of promotion. Maybe not promotion in the eyes of the world, although oftentimes it is. It will be for the three that we're studying here. Sometimes it's just promotion in His plan.

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*God's promotion is not to ease and comfort; His promotion is to more work.*

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God's reward for work well done is greater work to do. And we're going to see that that's going to happen for the faithful Hebrews that went into the fiery furnace. Of course, the Lord miraculously delivered them and that's what we're going to be able to look at tonight. I mentioned before that confidence in God gives us courage before men. I think we're all going to need that in the days ahead. We realize that we're living in an increasingly hostile world. Any one of us may well face persecution simply for trusting in the truth of God's Word. The passage in front of us is a very encouraging passage because it shows us God's ability to deliver us through those persecutions. Sometimes God delivers people out of the persecution. Sometimes He delivers them through the persecution, as in this case in Daniel chapter three. Sometimes He allows them to die in that persecution as a testimony of their faith.

### The Devotion of Mature Faith

Let's look at "The Devotion of Mature Faith" that we see here in Daniel 3:26-28.

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*“Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spoke, saying, ‘Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come here.’ And Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came from the midst of the fire.” Verse 27 says, “The satraps, administrators, governors, kings, councilors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose body the fire had no power. The hair of their head was not singed, nor were their garments affected and the smell of the fire was not on them. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, ‘Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who sent His angel and delivered his servants who trusted in Him. And they have frustrated the king’s word [that’s his word,] and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve their worship any God except their own God.’”*

**Daniel 3:26-28**

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There are a few things that we ought to notice here. He calls them “*the servants of the Most High God.*” And this is the highest commendation or compliment that anyone could have. Notice that they were in the fiery furnace, and he called him out of the furnace. He was the one who put them there. Of course, and he’s the one who called them out and realized that they had frustrated his command. Notice how their address, their address has servants, and he calls them out by their heathen names. Remember from Daniel 1:7, their Hebrew names, which all gave honor to the God of Israel, were changed to names that gave honor to the gods of Babylon. And the interesting thing is, this was an attempt at brainwashing. You know, when a name means something, and every time that name, you’re called by that name, it’s reinforcing the idea of what the name signifies. Their names that they were given in Babylon were designed to slowly inculcate into their mind the idea that they were servants of the gods of Babylon. And of course it didn’t work.

He says that they had “*trusted in the Most High God.*” “*The Most High God*” has used that as a designation 13 times in the Book of Daniel. That’s very interesting, because the only book in the Old Testament that uses it more is the Book of Psalms, which has 150 chapters. It’s used here more than any others. And interestingly, seven of those times it’s used by Nebuchadnezzar. God has gradually been working with him. So, they are here called “*the servants of the Most High God,*” and it’s interesting that the word “*to serve*” is a word that means “*to trust and serve.*” It’s a rare word it comes up down in verse 28. He talks about, “*blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who sent His angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him.*”

Usually when we talk about the word for “*faith*” in the Hebrew language, we talk about five words. There are five main words that are used in the Old Testament. But what we have here is something a little bit different. In verse 28, when it talks about them “*trusting in Him.*” The word is *rēchats*, (*rekh-ats*.) It’s used very, very rarely. This is one of the very rare passages where this word is used, and it’s a word that includes the idea of both “*trust and service.*” It means that you serve because you trust your master. You are serving in faith. He uses here the Hithpael stem, which I illustrate is the “*boomerang*” stem, because it means that you initiate the action and it comes back on you. I’ll explain that here in just a moment.

Notice in verse 27 who's walking on? The satraps, administrators, governors, kings, councilors. They're the ones that reported these three in the first place. They're the ones that will move with envy. We looked at that. They were hoping to get rid of these three. And now not only have they not gotten rid of their envy, which moves the King's arrogance (they both work together) to throw these guys in the fiery furnace has now done what? It has given incontrovertible evidence of the fact that their God is the true God. And so, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges this.

Notice too that he recognizes that it's "*their God*." In verse 28, "*they frustrated the king's word, yielded their bodies that they should not serve nor worship any God except their own God*." This is the second time that Nebuchadnezzar has acknowledged God is the God above all gods, but he still hasn't come to the point of saving faith. "*Blessed be the God who has delivered them, the God of His servants, because they trusted in Him*."

There are seven Hebrew stems. The seven Hebrew stems relate to the verbs. The verbs are the words of action, right? The hithpael stem, which is the one that's used here (of their trust in the Lord) they acted on themselves to trust the Lord. Have you ever acted on yourself to trust the Lord? Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you're wrestling over a question? You have to make a decision; you're struggling and what do you do? You go to the Word. You get into God's Word and you ask, "God, guide me." You spend time in prayer. "Give me leadership from your Holy Spirit. Let me know which way you would like me to go." Sometimes decisions look like I could go either way.

It's extremely important for us "to act on ourselves" the way these three did. They acted on themselves. They trusted in promises. Somewhere along the line, they recognized that God had made a promise.

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*"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned, nor shall a flame scorch you. I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel."*

**Isaiah 43:2-3**

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This was spoken a long time before they came along, but they would have been taught there as young men, and obviously somewhere along the line have learned this or similar passages. And when it came time for their testing, they acted on themselves. They had to utilize the resources that they were given. They had to use the things that they had been taught. They had to recall. Sometimes we must rely on the recall ministry of the Holy Spirit. I do that all the time when I'm praying that God will help me to remember things that I've learned, things that have been taught because a lot of it was decades ago. So, we'll use that recall ministry with the Holy Spirit. We use our knowledge of the Word. So sometimes God just brings the right verse to our minds or leaves us to open the Scripture in that place.

## The Promotion of the Faithful

Let's see "The Promotion of the Faithful" in Daniel 3:29-30. "Therefore, I make a decree." Now you can still see that Nebuchadnezzar is still running on his natural arrogance. He's going to make a decree now that any people, nation, language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and a medical will be cut in pieces. That's a great proclamation, isn't it? God gave man free will. God wants freewill worship. He wants freewill offering. And every person must have the freedom to say yes or to say no.

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*God wants freewill worship. He wants freewill offerings.*

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Nebuchadnezzar is now going to make laws in the wrong way. Maybe we could say the wrong kind of war. "Anyone that speaks against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will be cut in pieces. Their houses will be made an ash heap because, "there is no other God who can deliver like this." We're going to see; similar statement being made in Daniel chapter six. You know, in both cases in Daniel three and in Daniel chapter six, there is envy, which combines with arrogance, which results in persecution, which results in victory, which brings about promotion. And we see it with Daniel in the lion's den, as we see it here. But he recognizes this, "There is no other God who can deliver like this."

Little by little, God is chipping away at his lifelong commitment to the gods of Babylon, and he is beginning to realize that there can only be one true God. And it will be a wonderful thing when we see that in the next chapter. Verse 30, "Then the King promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon." We have a promotion, and the Bible assures us that God honors those who honor Him. That's stated in 1st Samuel 2:30. Sometimes this honor takes the form of more persecution. One of the highest honors that God can give to any believer is to allow them to be a test and an example of His power, their faith in Him and their love for Him, and whether they come through or not.

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*"He gives us more grace. Therefore, he says, 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore, submit to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded. Lament and more and weep.'"*

**James 4:6-10**

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Reading Hebrews chapter 11, many of those that were persecuted come through and get promoted, win victories, and overcome kingdoms. We read about all of them in the Old Testament. Many of them did not of glory. James 4:10, here we have the promise, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up." Now the interesting thing is that if we keep this in context,

he's talking to believers who have been out of line. He's talking here to believers who have strayed from the path, who have wandered far afield, as it were. You'll notice that he starts out in verse six. He says, "*He gives us more grace. Therefore, he says, 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore, submit to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded. Lament and more and weep.'*"

This is what Jesus spoke of in the sermon on the Mount. "*Blessed are those who mourn.*" Why are they mourning? They are mourning because of sin in their life. "*Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned in the mourning.*" You know, there are times when things we laugh about are things we really should weep over. I'm sure the prodigal son, as he was on his outward-bound journey, threw parties at every end that he went to. I'm sure he was having a lot of laughter, but I'm sure of when he came to himself and he came back and he looked at those places where he had squandered his wealth, squandered his father's inheritance. There was weeping. And there's a time when our laughter really needs to be turned into mourning and our joy into gloom. But here, to me, is the fascinating thing about this God is willing to promote the sinner.

God is willing to promote the one who has been in error. You know, we never wander so far afield that He is not seeking us. Jesus uses the example of that one sheep that went astray, as opposed to the 99. And what joy there is at finding the sheep and bringing it back. The joy in heaven over the sinner who repents. So "*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.*" And to each one of us tonight, no matter who we are, no matter where we are, there is more of this that needs to be done in our lives. The work of humbling is a reflex, a work. We produce the action and we receive the result. We just saw the word in Hebrew, where they acted on themselves to stand firm in their faith. We must humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. That oftentimes is a difficult thing because by nature we're proud, and pride often keeps us from being willing to see the faults and the flaws in our own lives.

"*Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up.*" So, what happens during our brief stay on this earth, it affects us now — it wounds us, hurts us. But we need to put it in perspective. And the perspective is, "I've got a mansion just over the hilltop." Jesus said, "*Let not your heart be troubled,*" neither let it be afraid, "*I am going to prepare a place for you. I go and prepare a place for you. I will come again.*" That's what we need to be looking forward to. So that's Daniel three, folks. Let's pray.

"Thank you, Father, for Your love, for Your grace and mercy. Thank you for recording for us the victorious lives of saints who have gone before us in the lives of these people should be a light shining for us in the times in which we live. They should be an example that we would desire to emulate, and they should stimulate us, like the three in the fiery furnace, to act on ourselves whenever our circumstances, to keep trusting in you. Help us be able to stand whatever the conditions may be. To this end, we commit our time together in Your Word, our fellowship together, our prayer. In Jesus name, Amen."

