

# LESSON 14

The king was incredulous in verse 14 (“Is it true?”). How could these men do this to him after all he had done for them? In fact, the king had done a lot for them. As Goethe said, “Most men can oppose their enemies but it takes a special person to oppose his friends.” And that is yet another good reason not to get too friendly with the world.

Notice the arrogance in verse 15: “Who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?” The king seems to have forgotten what he said earlier about the God of Daniel.

**Daniel 2:47** — *The king said to Daniel, Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery.*

We have a parallel with Pharaoh’s statement to Moses in Exodus 5:2 (“Who is Jehovah that I should obey him?”). I love what McGuigan said: “You recall that Moses signed him up for a ten-lesson correspondence course!”

The king’s question in verse 15 is the central theme of this chapter: “**Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?**” Chapter 2 had the same central theme in verse 11: “And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and **there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.**”

Here in verse 15 the king asserts his own power above all gods, and we can imagine the God of Psalm 2 raising his eyebrows and emitting a slight chuckle.

Isaiah gave us a wonderfully ironic view of false idols in Isaiah 44.

**Isaiah 44:15-19** — *Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshipping it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. 16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: 17 And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshipping it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god. 18 They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. 19 And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?*

And what about modern man? Idolatry is a problem only of the past, right? Wrong!

I fear that we may be tempted to read Daniel 3, see what we likely consider the stereotypical example of idolatry (ancient people falling down before a golden image), and leave thinking that idolatry was merely an ancient problem for ancient men — not something that is still around today. But, of course, that view is completely wrong.

Not only is idolatry a modern problem, but we might say that idolatry is *the* modern problem of our age. Doesn't idolatry lie at the heart of all sin? Yes, the love of money is the root of all evil, but what is the love of money if not idolatry?

**Colossians 3:4** — *and covetousness, which is idolatry.*

The first of the ten commandments is that we not worship any other god. Is it possible to break the other nine commandments without first breaking that first one?

The second commandment is that we not make any other gods — and that may be the hardest commandment of all. Our hearts have been called “god factories.” It seems that we can turn anything into a false god — money, food, people, hobbies, entertainment, pleasure. But how can we tell when we have turned something or someone into a false idol?

The Bible answers that question. A person’s “ultimate concern” is that person’s god.

**Exodus 20:3** — *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

That first commandment is that our ultimate concern must always be God and must never be anything or anyone else, and that first commandment has always been God’s command to his people, whether under the old covenant or under the new.

A man’s god is the thing or person that he is most concerned about, thinks the most about, or affects one’s life the most. That might be a family member, it might be a hobby, it might be work, it might be money. If there is anything or anyone in our life that, when push comes to shove, we will place above God, then that thing or that person is the false god we bow down to.

These other things may be important, perhaps vitally important, but they must not be our ultimate concern. No one could argue that food is not important, but Matthew 4:4 warns us against making our daily bread into our ultimate concern. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Our families are vitally important, but Jesus warned us against making them our ultimate concern.

**Luke 14:26** — *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.*

Our own lives are important, but Luke 14:26 just warned us against making even that our ultimate concern.

God must always be our ultimate concern, and we must be prepared to flee from anything or anyone that threatens to take his place — anything or anyone that threatens to come between us and Christ. The command in 1 Corinthians 10:14 is simple and impossible to misunderstand — “flee from idolatry.” As is the command in 1 John 5.

**1 John 5:21** — *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

Idolatry is not just an ancient problem. Idolatry is our problem, and we must always be on guard against it.

### **Daniel 3:16-18**

**16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. 17 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. 18 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.**

Well, it looks like these three had a really big decision to make. Not at all! The decision had been made long ago. They knew that God had said “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image” and they had decided long ago to do what God com-

manded no matter what. After you decide to obey God no matter what, there aren't too many other things left to decide! In verse 16 they tell the king that they have no need to answer him — God will provide an answer to the question he asked in verse 15.

We have an incredible statement of faith in verse 17:

*Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand.*

And we have an incredible statement of courage in verse 18:

*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.*

They begin by acknowledging God's ability to save them, but they also understand the possibility that God may choose not to do so — and that would make no difference in their obedience to God's word! They believed that God **could**, but not necessarily that God **would**, spare their lives.

Some people are willing to serve God so long as God always does what they want him to do. (Which make you wonder who is serving whom?) These three were going to serve God no matter what happened.

**Job 13:15** — *Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.*

These three were miraculously saved, but many others have died as martyrs. We have spoken about the similarities between Daniel and Revelation and between ancient Babylon and Rome, which was also called Babylon. One difference is that most of the Christians persecuted by Rome were not miraculously saved from the fire or from the wild beasts, but they were martyred for the sake of Christ. In fact, Revelation 17:6 describes Rome as a “woman drunken with the blood of the saints,

and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.” The central theme of Revelation is found in Chapter 6:

**Revelation 6:9-10** — *And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*

In Daniel 3, it served God’s purpose to spare these three and show his power to Nebuchadnezzar. In Revelation, God did not physically spare those who were being persecuted. But whether spared or not, God’s people remain faithful in the face of persecution because God’s people understand that what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is permanent (2 Corinthians 4:18). Recall what Hebrews 11 tells us about Moses:

**Hebrews 11:26-27** — *Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.*

We can think of Acts 5:29, when Peter proclaimed before the high priest, “We must obey God rather than men!” We also think of Jesus’ warning:

**Matthew 10:28** — *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Where does the Christian, starting with Peter and the apostles until today, find the strength to make such a courageous stand? From Jesus.

Jesus himself was put to death for his religious claim that he was the Messiah. He is our perfect example in all things, and especially in remaining faithful unto death.

Paul also knew this when he said:

**Acts 20:24** — *But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*

What did these three stand to lose by their refusal to bow down before the image?

- They would lose their royal favor with the king.
- They would lose their high government positions.
- They would lose their new found fortunes.
- They would lose their lives.

From a worldly perspective, they were the worst sort of fools. Look at what they could gain just by bowing down! But they were wisely looking at what they would lose. They were not operating on a worldly level. They were not focused on the seen, but on the unseen.

How would we have responded? How do we respond in similar situations? Wouldn't it be easy to rationalize this all away?

- No one will see us in this big crowd.
- Everyone else is bowing down.
- Bowing down will advance our careers.
- They will kill us if we don't bow down!
- There are only three of us, and we are a long way from home. What does God really expect us to do all by ourselves?

- When in Rome, shouldn't we do as the Romans do?
- We know that the idol really isn't a god. Can't we just cross our fingers when we bow down?
- We can do so much more for God if we remain alive.
- Doesn't God want us to be happy?

However we try to rationalize it, disobedience is disobedience.

**John 14:15** — *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

If we are disobedient — whatever the excuse — then we are unloving. If we love Jesus, then we will keep his commandments. Period. There is no way to misunderstand John 14:15, and there is no way to rationalize disobedience into anything other than an unloving action directed at Jesus, who loved us and gave himself for us (Galatians 2:20).

Why was everyone so upset with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Because they refused to compromise and bow down, and the world hates those who refuse to join the crowd.

**John 15:18-19** — *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

**1 Peter 4:4** — *Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.*

People who wallow in sin aren't satisfied unless they can drag others down into the mire with them. The world wants us to go along with its fashions and its customs and its desires. It wants to make us just like everyone else. (And if we are just like everyone else, then I guess the world must have been successful.)

Romans 12:2 in the Phillips paraphrase reads “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold.” (Be not conformed to this world.) That is a daily struggle for the Christian.

The world gets very angry with people who don’t go along with its plans. In fact, the world has its own furnaces: furnaces of scorn and laughter, furnaces of criticism, furnaces of isolation, and furnaces of intimidation.

But if we are on God’s side then doesn’t that mean we won’t be persecuted and have to face such trials?

**2 Timothy 3:12** — *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

**John 15:20** — *Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.*

**Isaiah 48:10** — *Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.*

**James 1:2-4** — *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

The real question was not what men thought about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego — but what did God think about them? Of the thousands who were present at the dedication of this idol, how many do we know by name? Other than the king, just these three. In fact, their names are mentioned thirteen times in this chapter! God seems to have been very proud of them!

Were they seeking the praise of God or the praise of men? If they sought the praise of men, then they would have bowed down. Instead they sought the praise of God, and so they refused to bow down. Remember what Paul said:

**Galatians 1:10** — *For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*

As with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we also have a choice. Who are we going to follow? Man or God? Are we a servant of Christ or are we not? “If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ.”

Notice again the respect that these men continued to show to the king. This is the same sort of respect that Peter and Paul told us we must show to earthly rulers, who have all been given their power by God. They verbally acknowledge Nebuchadnezzar as king, while committing their ultimate allegiance to the King of kings.

### **Big Question #1: Why did God spare their lives?**

We are not told, but most likely it is because Babylon had defeated Judah in battle. Whenever that happened, the pagans commonly held that the victory over another nation was proof that their god was greater than the deity of the conquered foe. God wanted to dispel any such notion. In short, God was answering the question found in verse 15.

### **Big Question #2: Where was Daniel during this event?**

These events were not happening in the city of Babylon, but in the plains of Dura, a province of Babylon. Daniel 2 tells us:

**Daniel 2:49** — *Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.*

Most likely, a purpose of verse 49 is to tell us why Daniel is not involved in the events of Chapter 3. With the king and other important officials absent, someone was needed to govern in the city. Thus Daniel was unable to leave Babylon and travel to the plain of Dura for this event. This is a simple theory that seems to fit well with the available evidence.

Daniel may have been absent from Babylon as well at the time, perhaps on government business in some other part of the kingdom.

Daniel may have been ill and unable to attend the public ceremony. Compare a later event in Daniel 8.

**Daniel 8:27** — *And I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days; then I rose and went about the king's business; but I was appalled by the vision and did not understand it.*

As chief of the “wise men,” Daniel may not have been required to bow down. His loyalty to the king may have been beyond question. Presumably, Nebuchadnezzar himself did not bow down. He may have extended this privilege to others as well.

Daniel's reputation may have been such that even the Chaldeans did not dare to attack him in front of the king. That is, the Chaldeans may just not have informed the king about Daniel's refusal to bow down. Daniel 2:48 says that Nebuchadnezzar made Daniel ruler (civil governor) over the whole province of Babylon. Thus, Daniel was very powerful and the informers may have been unwilling to risk informing on him. (The lion den episode occurred much later in his life and with a different king and a different governing power.) Thus, perhaps Daniel was there and refused to bow down but the king was not told about it. Our lesson if this was the case: We shouldn't invite trouble on ourselves.

Wherever Daniel was, we know one thing for sure: Daniel did not and would never have bowed down to that false idol. How do we know that? Because we know Daniel, and we already know what kind of person he was. If Daniel had been with

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego when they stood before the king, then there would have been four people tossed into the furnace instead of only three.

Daniel's omission is additional proof of the book's authenticity.

Had the story been the invention that many have suggested; had it originated in the days of the Maccabees to nerve the faithful against Gentile oppression, it is unlikely that the chief hero would have been omitted. Reality transcends fiction, and the very "incompleteness" of this account testifies to its fidelity.

There is no psychological reason for an idealizing romancer to leave Daniel out of this exciting episode. The only way to account for this omission is that in point of fact he was not personally in attendance at this important function.

We could ask another big question — what about all of the other Jewish exiles? Did they bow down to the giant statue? It would seem that many must have, although some like Daniel may have been elsewhere, and others (unlike these three) may just not have been informed upon by the jealous Chaldeans.

### **Daniel 3:19-23**

**19 Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.  
20 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. 21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.**

Verse 19 literally says that “the image of his face changed.” “The one who in his pride has created an image with the purpose of assuring uniform loyalty finds his own image provoked beyond his control.” The king was furious!

Even though God delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, he still allowed them to endure the ordeal of being thrown into the fire. Why? Because it brought more glory to God to have Nebuchadnezzar and his men see those they tried to kill walking around unharmed in the flames.

We should thank God for every opportunity he gives us for his glory to be seen at work in us. We should pray that we be given opportunities to stand up and announce that we are on his side. The events here remind us of another of God's promises:

**Isaiah 43:2** — *When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm*

*you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,  
and the flame shall not consume you.*

The phrase “heated seven times more” is a common idiom and should not be understood literally. It simply means to make it as hot as possible, which is what they did.

The list of clothing in verse 21 has long been a source of trouble to translators. The Septuagint tried to make sense of the terms but reduced three words to two in the process. The liberals would have us believe that the writer of Daniel lived within 50 years of the Septuagint, yet, if so, then in just that short time somehow these words for court clothing had been completely forgotten by the translators.

Nebuchadnezzar’s absurd commands in verses 19-21 were intended to leave no room for escape. The already deadly furnace was made even hotter. (It even killed those who threw the young men in!) The young men were fully dressed, even with their hats on, so the flames would completely and quickly envelop them. They were tied up and thrown like logs into the fire so that there could be opportunity for escape.

Things look pretty bad for these three, right? Wrong! And I can say that even before reading any further in the text. Even if God had not spared their lives, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had been obedient to God — and that meant things were not looking bad for them at all! The most horrible outcome that we could imagine is not that they were cast into the fire and burned alive. The most horrible outcome would have been if they had succumbed to the pressure and bowed down to that false god. They could have saved their lives apart from God — but they would have lost their lives eternally in the process.

**Luke 17:33** — *Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.*

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are *already* doing just fine at the end of verse 23, but let’s keep reading.

**Daniel 3:24-25**

**24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. 25 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 the Son of God.**

King Nebuchadnezzar was dumbfounded! Instead of seeing three bound and burning bodies, he saw four people walking around in the flames! “I see four men loose,” he says in verse 25! What men had bound, God loosened — and isn’t it ever so!

Even today it is only through fire that we find freedom from our bonds.

**John 12:24-25** — *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*

As one author has written:

How we long for holiness without pain; sanctification without a cross, and growth without tears.

## Who was the fourth person?

The King James Version has:

*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 the Son of God.*

In other translations, the king described him as looking like “a son of the gods.” In verse 28, the king will refer to the fourth person as an “angel.”

For starters, what the King said about the fourth person was not inspired — he is just describing what he saw. We know from inspiration that the king actually made these statements, but inspiration does not vouch for the accuracy of this pagan king. Yes, whoever he saw looked like some sort of angelic or divine being, but the king was in no position to know anything more about that fourth person than what he was then witnessing. So, in short, the fact that the king calls him an angel in verse 28 does not mean that he was an angel.

The King James Version suggests the fourth person was Jesus with the translation “the Son of God,” but a better translation is “a son of the gods,” which also fits better with the king’s polytheism. The king immediately jumped to the conclusion that this fourth being was divine, which is understandable given the circumstances! We might very well end up with the same conclusion.

So who was the fourth person? I think we have two possibilities: Either he was a delivering angel (and we will see such angels later in this book), or he was a Christophany (a preincarnate appearance of Christ) as the King James translation suggests.

## The Angel of the Lord

A very interesting Bible study is to look at the appearances of the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament.

We know that Jesus is not an angel because, unlike Jesus, angels are created beings (Psalm 148). But the word “angel” just means “divine messenger,” so in that sense Jesus could be called an angel.

Are any of the angelic appearances in the Old Testament really preincarnate appearances of Jesus? (Again, let me stress that I am not saying that Jesus is an angel — only that the word “angel” may have been used to describe Christ as a “divine messenger.”)

Who spoke to Moses from the burning bush?

**Exodus 3:2** — *And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush.*

But also note verse 4:

**Exodus 3:4** — *And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, **God called unto him out of the midst of the bush**, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.*

What did the angel of the Lord say to Hagar in Genesis 16?

**Genesis 16:10** — *And the angel of the Lord said unto her, **I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.***

And what did Hagar say in verse 13?

**Genesis 16:13** — *Have I really **seen God** and remained alive after seeing him?*

Also, recall:

**Judges 13:21-22** — *But the angel of the Lord did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the Lord. And Manoah said unto his wife, **We shall surely die, because we have seen God.***

Who stayed Abraham's hand in Genesis 22?

**Genesis 22:11-12** — *And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son **from me.***

The "me" at the end of verse 12 is the angel of the Lord in verse 11!

As I said, it is an interesting study! This fourth person could have been a preincarnate appearance of Christ. We know that Jesus was with them in any event, but perhaps he made a personal appearance. If not, then it must have been a delivering angel. The Bible does not tell us, so we can't know for sure.

### **Daniel 3:26-27**

**26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. 27 And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their**

**coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.**

Still giving commands, the king commands that the three come out of the furnace. (Apparently, Nebuchadnezzar was not too anxious for the fourth person to come out!)

We have to picture the scene. The furious king who had just had the three young man bound and tossed to a certain fiery death is now talking to them while they are walking around in the flames — and he is calling them by name and asking them to come out! Most of us, when we get too close to a flame, don't need any encouragement to move away from it — but this king is having to plead with them to come out of the furnace! Perhaps that is another clue as to whom they were talking to in there!

All of the king's illustrious visitors gather with the king and look at the men. Not only are they unharmed but there is no smell of smoke or fire about them. Only their bonds were gone. It is as if they had never been in the fire at all.

It should go without saying, but this was, of course, a miracle. Liberals go to great lengths to remove the miraculous from the Bible, but of course they cannot. Without the miraculous, Jesus would not have been raised and as Paul said, our faith would then be in vain. (This bleak result is the logical consequence of naturalism.)

The Bible begins with a miracle — “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” — and miracles recur again and again in Scripture.

True, the age of miracles has ended, but not forever — one day the world will end with a final miraculous intervention by God into the affairs of men. And once again, the faithful will be saved from the flames.

**Daniel 3:28-30**

**28 Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. 29 Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.**

What else could the king do now but acknowledge his defeat? His challenge in verse 15 (“What god will be able to rescue you?”) has been resoundingly answered by the only true and living God. As in Chapter 2, the king once again acknowledges the power of God. But as we will see in Chapter 4, this second change of heart won't last much longer than the first.

The king makes another decree in verse 29. He has the same disease that our modern legislators have — when you run out of things to say, just make a new decree!

Remember that his first decree back in verse 4 had not turned out very well. The king now once again pronounces death, but this time it is on anyone who says anything against God, “for there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way.”

Notice that the king does not renounce his polytheism, but simply says that God is the greatest god among many. He was just adding another god to his pantheon.

The author of Hebrews likely had this event in mind:

**Hebrews 11:33-34** — *Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, **Quenched the violence of fire**, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.*

Finally, the king promotes these three, which no doubt really thrilled their accusers! I am reminded of one of my favorite verses. After Jacob died, Joseph’s brothers were afraid that he might at last seek his revenge. But remember what Joseph said to them:

**Genesis 50:19-20** — *Fear not: for am I in the place of God? 20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*

We serve a God who can turn evil into good. And that should always be our goal was well. Rather than return evil for evil, we should always strive to turn that evil into something good.