



GOD OF GOLD

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In the book of Daniel, chapter three, there is this unique story of the golden image of king Nebuchadnezzar and the three Hebrew sons – Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. Although, Babylon was already full of idols, yet Nebuchadnezzar decided to set up this other one. Those who have forsaken the only true and living God will always wander aimlessly and end up with frustration. It is this frustration that drives such to multiply idols.

Nebuchadnezzar's idol was an image of gold. It had an intimidating size and posture – sixty cubits high and six cubits broad. A cubit is one and a half feet, and that means that this image of the king exceeded the ordinary stature or size of man fifteen times (ordinarily, man is only about four cubits or six feet tall). The monstrous size of an idol cannot make up for its lifelessness.

The king summoned all the captains, judges, counsellors, sheriffs, treasurers, magicians and astrologers to come to the dedication of the image he set up. It was indeed an assembly of grandees. Many of them made expensive and long journeys to achieve their foolish aim. And they came with their numerous trains of servants and attendants – a great crowd of people. We need to know that high education or social status really does not preclude anyone from idol worship. Idol worshippers are always as senseless as their dumb idols.

A proclamation was made commanding all manner of persons present to fall down prostrate before this image of gold when the signal was given. For them to do this they must renounce their faith in the true God and all do it at the same time, as a token of their communion with each other in this idolatrous service. The devil would always want us to do the same. But it

does not really matter, the number or multitude of people involved in an evil practice. Evil is evil, its wide acceptance notwithstanding. In fact, the bible warns us not to follow the multitude to do evil (Exodus 23: 2).

And truly, all the people, nations, and languages, as one man fell down and worshipped the golden image. Or who would be bold enough to defy such an order coupled with a threat? For it had already been declared that whosoever would not worship this golden image should be immediately thrown into the midst of a burning fiery furnace prepared for that purpose. Apart from the terror of the fiery furnace to frighten them, the charm of music was also there to lure them to comply. Faced with such temptation, they all yielded. What a pity!

The devil hasn't really changed much of his tactics. The world today is still being drawn either by a concert of music or driven by the fear of a fiery furnace or even propelled by a subtle combination of the two to set up and maintain false worship. Many have abandoned the true faith of the saints and champions of old to embrace sin and filthy lucre either for the fear of persecution or the temporary gain and pleasure that sin offers.

The idol today is still made of gold. Money is now the idol of our time and many of God's precious sons and servants are already lying prostrate in worship before it. When money truly becomes god, men put all their confidence in it and no longer trust or depend on the Lord of life for sustenance. ***"Money answers all things" (Ecclesiastes 10: 19)*** then becomes their favourite passage and slogan. But the bible warns,

"If riches increase, do not set your heart on them" (Psalm 62: 10).

Believers in this age need to know that the devil also, quotes scriptures (though wrongly applied). Many Preachers of our time have forsaken scriptural injunctions to cater for the poor and helpless. Our frontline seats and pews in church are now reserved exclusively for men and women decked in gold.

The Apostle James would lament and weep over this generation. For he said,

"My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man

in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, 'You sit here in a good place,' and say to the poor man, 'You stand there,' or, 'Sit here at my footstool,' have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonoured the poor man. Do not the rich men oppress you, and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called? If you really fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself, you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all' (James 2: 1-10).

It is strange in a way that the three Hebrew sons were present in this assembly when, quite likely, they knew its purpose and intent. Daniel, however was absent either because he stood so high in the king's favour that none dare complain of him for his non-compliance or simply that he was away on an official assignment. These other three Hebrew sons were present only to obey the king's orders as far as they could. They were however prepared to denounce this gross idolatry and bear public testimony of their faith. We too should do the same.

Eventually, the news reached the king that these three gentlemen did not obey his edict. Their accusers were those Chaldean magicians and astrologers who should have been executed earlier on for failing to interpret the king's dream but for Daniel's intervention. Now they pay back the Hebrews evil for good! We must not think it strange also today if we meet with such ungrateful men. They are of the same old stock with the Chaldean magicians and astrologers.

Most probably, Nebuchadnezzar had no particular design to ensnare these Hebrew sons in making the law, for then, he would have had his eyes on them and would not have needed to be informed by their enemies, who seized the opportunity to accuse them. We need to know also that the inventors of money did not mean any harm. Money is not meant to be more than it is defined – a medium of exchange. The devil and his cohorts simply capitalise on the alluring power of money to influence and trap men.

These three pious Jews were arraigned before the king for contempt. It is not surprising that it is now supposed in certain Christian circles that it is a sin to be poor. We need to know however that not all poor are slothful. Many poor Christians around the world today are poor because they have refused to compromise their faith and be corrupt. Or is it not said that ***'behind great wealth is great filth?'*** Failure to fall down and worship mammon, the god of money is no sin! The Lord Jesus Christ emphatically warns that we cannot serve God and mammon together.

The case was laid before these Hebrew sons in short to see whether the charges were true or not. The king was willing to play the music again, this time, only for their sakes, to soften them into compliance and worship the golden image. He was willing to pardon their perceived omission if they do his bidding.

However, they were not in want for an answer. They chorused in unison their resolution not to worship the golden image. They said,

“O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image, which you have set up”
(Daniel 3: 16-18).

The king couldn't just imagine nor understand their gut. The faithfulness of God's servants to Him has often been the wonder of their enemies and persecutors. They were resolved not to comply, and the king also resolved they would die if they didn't. The matter was therefore determined and decided there and then. There was a big clash! These three Hebrew sons looked with so much contempt upon death and instead trusted in the living God. By faith, they chose to suffer than to sin. They dared Nebuchadnezzar to do his worst and reasoned that God would deliver them either from death or in death.

They were right. God chose to deliver them from death. The Son of God manifested Himself and became the fourth man with them in the fiery furnace. The God who made the fire simply took from it the power to burn or hurt. He gives us the same assurance now. He says,

***“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 shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you”
(Isaiah 43: 2).***

However, this promise is only for faithful children of God like Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; Christians who will not bow down to worship money - the god of this age no matter the intimidation or threats to their lives.

In the final analysis, Christ declares that, those who want to save their lives shall lose it. It is only those who put their lives at risk for Christ’s sake that shall gain them ultimately. This, He repeated four consecutive times in the Gospels (Matthew 16: 25; Mark 8: 35; Luke 9: 24 & Luke 17: 33) for the sake of emphasis. Ultimately, the bottom line is this:

“For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” (Mark 8: 36).

The saints of old overcame the devil,

“...By the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they did not love their lives unto the death (Revelation 12: 11).

Let us emulate them.

Note: All Scriptural references from New King James version of the Bible.