

# A Non-Anxious Witness

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December 31, 2023

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## Introduction

Scripture is very political. Yet we often confuse *politics* for *partisanship*. Politics has to do with the organization and governance of a group of people.

Partisanship has to do with advancing the agenda of a particular political party.

Going into another national election year in the United States, which have been getting increasingly turbulent over the years, we're all going to be told by a lot of people that there is much to be afraid of, to be anxious about, and they're going to offer you solutions that will still fall short of God's ideal.

While the world screams at us to be anxious and drink the snake oil of partisanship and power, I want us to stand firm as a non-anxious witness.

## Daniel 3:8–30 NIV

At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews.

They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “May the king live forever!

Your Majesty has issued a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.”

Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are

ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?”

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace.

So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. The king’s command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, “Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?” They replied, “Certainly, Your Majesty.”

He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”

Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!” So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.

Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way.” Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

Many of us feel like we relate to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, but we act like King Nebuchadnezzar. It is good and right for Christians to engage with our politics in thoughtful, meaningful, understanding, and gentle ways. The concern is too many of us have been brought into a wrong primary allegiance.

**Our lives are not, ultimately, *about us*.**

“The American church is dangerously close to Israel, who built and worshipped other idols on their hills, all the while continually going to the Jerusalem temple. ‘Religious belief’ has not been replaced with ‘partisan belief,’ but combined with it.” – Patrick Schreiner, *Political Gospel*

“Christianity stands or falls with its revolutionary protest against violence, arbitrariness, and pride of power, and with its plea for the weak...Christendom adjusts itself far too easily to the worship of power.” – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

**What God do you serve?**

Three suggestions for the new year:

1. Stop watching your news, start reading it.
2. Cut back on, or simply remove yourself from, social media.
3. Spend time with God.

## 1 Peter 2:11–12 NIV

Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

When you live the life of a non-anxious witness, you may be killed, destroyed, lose power, not have your candidate elected, have your worldly kingdom changed or taken over, but the many kings of their kingdoms-of-self may see Jesus among you and come to praise His name.

What politician can offer you that?

## Suggested Books for further reading

*The Liturgy of Politics: Spiritual Formation for the Sake of Our Neighbor*

Kaitlyn Schiess

*Political Gospel: Public Witness in a Politically Crazy World*

Patrick Schreiner

*Scandalous Witness: A Little Political Manifesto for Christians*

Lee C. Camp

*Ballot and the Bible: How Scripture Has Been Used and Abused in American Politics and Where We Go From Here*

Kaitlyn Schiess

## Questions for Growth Groups:

1. Consider your day-to-day life. Identify any idols (political/partisan or otherwise) which you struggle to lay at the foot of the cross. Why do you think those particular idols are so compelling?
2. Can you think of a time when you've broken a relationship because of an idol? How about a time when someone broke a relationship with you for an idol? What did that look like, and how was your witnessing to God's glory in the experience? What can you learn from the memory?
3. Do you have friendships with those who have differing political views than you? Why or why not? Do you know anyone who you might be able to get to know deeper this coming year who holds a differing political opinion?