

A Lesson in Uncompromising Faithfulness

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[GraceLife Church, Edmonton](#)

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Key Passage: Daniel 3

Well, if you're visiting with us this morning, we are working through the Gospel of John. And so we're working verse by verse through that wonderful gospel, we're at the end of chapter 8 and the beginning of 9, and it just seems like a nice time to take a little bit of a break and address some of the matters that are currently upon us in our present day and time.

And with that, I want to turn our attention to Daniel chapter 3. And even as you're turning there, consider that God's people have always been called to be set apart, to be set apart from sin, and to be set apart from the world and when being set apart, puts us at odds with the world, occasions for the glory of God arise.

Occasions for us to testify of His glory of His lordship over all things, and even occasions for Him to glorify Himself through divine acts of deliverance.

And as our world grows increasingly hostile to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, these instances are going to increase; they're going to increase in frequency, they're going to increase in degree, and will even increase in what it costs to remain faithful.

And to prepare us for this, I want to revisit a particular moment in history, a particular moment in biblical history, when faithfulness could have come at the cost of life itself. And again, that particular moment is Daniel chapter 3, and I want to read just the opening 12 verses. It's a long chapter, we're going to go through the entire thing, but just to sort of set the context for us a little bit, let's read the opening 12 verses of Daniel chapter 3.

It reads, "Nebuchadnezzar, the king made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent word to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurer's, the judges, the magistrates, and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up, and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then the herald loudly proclaimed: 'To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and men of every language, that

at the moment, you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar The king has set up. But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire'. Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews. They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar, the king: "O king, live forever! You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music is to fall down and worship the golden image. But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire. There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, namely Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image, which you have set up."

The Book of Daniel is an appropriate place to turn for this discussion that takes place during the Babylonian captivity. When the house of Judah the southern kingdom had been taken into exile. And as such was under unbelieving government, much as we are today. And so the book of Daniel functions to answer questions like: How are God's people to live in a foreign land? How would God preserved His people? Did His promises remain sure? Was His favorite extend to them on foreign soil? Is the God of Israel truly sovereign over the affairs of human history?

And these questions have already begun to be answered.

God favorite Daniel and his three companions to the extent that they were entered into the personal service of the king, Daniel 1:19. God also revealed to Daniel Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation with the result that Daniel was made the ruler over the whole province of Babylon, Daniel 2:48. In fact, Daniel made request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the administration of the province as well.

Clear expressions of the sovereignty of God and His favor for his covenant people. Even the king of Babylon himself declared in Daniel 2:47, "Surely your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of lords, and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery". Not the confession of a regenerate heart. But nevertheless, a startling claim for a Gentile king.

And there were going to be challenges. Hatred for the Jews was real. And their privilege and prominence would make them targets of those who resented them. And there were going to be times when the law of God would single them out, put them in conflict with the king and his edicts.

And that's exactly where we find ourselves today in Daniel 3, because not only is resentment for the Jews evident in our passage, but the king's edict is a violation of the first and second commandments, commandments against idolatry.

And so it's here that we get a lesson in uncompromising faithfulness. A less than an uncompromising faithfulness, one that should not only encourage us in the present, but should prepare us for what's ahead as

the world grows ever increasingly hostile to our very existence. You see, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego model for us how to stand even while staring death right in the face with their very life in their hands. And provide for us an example worthy of imitation.

So if you're taking notes, jot down first "The universal edict". "The Universal edict." Verse 1, "Nebuchadnezzar, the king made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits; he set it up on the plane of Dura, in the province of Babylon". This was a massive image, 90 feet high and nine feet wide.

And no comment is made about what the image actually was, what it looked like, but it likely was an image representing Nebuchadnezzar's god. It was customary at that time when a nation conquered another nation in the Babylonian kingdom was conquering many nations for that nation's god to be exalted as the god that is most powerful. And so this was a way for Nebuchadnezzar to assert his authority to demonstrate that, that Babylon was the reigning power of the day and that Babylon's god was the most powerful God in the earth.

Verse 2, "Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent word to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up". This is a vast number of individuals - basically all the government officials throughout the Babylonian Empire, which went well beyond Babylon itself to include Egypt and Assyria, and even Jerusalem, Judah. And so the number of government officials summoned to this event would have been significant.

And they were being summoned to essentially pledge their allegiance to the state; to demonstrate their willingness to submit to the king and to be submissive to the state's edicts. A submission that didn't forbid them from worshipping their own god, but require them to pay homage to the god of the state, whereby any refusal to bow down before this image and acknowledge this god would be deemed an act of defiance and hostility against the king.

Verse 3, "Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up, and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up".

Now, it should be noted that there was one person missing from this account. Would that be? Daniel? Of course, the question is - Where is Daniel at this time? Well, the end of chapter two, verse 49, Daniel is in the king's court. And this event here is taking place in Dura. And so, it's likely that Daniel was back in the king's court tending to the king's business at this time, to the extent that the king wasn't questioning Daniel's allegiance to him - Daniel was the one who was next in charge next in line to Nebuchadnezzar.

But the focus of everything here is on the three his three companions Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

Verse 4, "Then the herald loudly proclaimed: 'To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and men of every language, that at the moment, you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all

kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar The king has set up. But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire’.”

In other words: worship this image, or die.

And fear is a compelling physiological response, isn't it? It can make people do what they wouldn't otherwise do. And so here Nebuchadnezzar is employing fear, to instill fear in his subjects, to require them to do exactly what he is calling them to do. And of course, governments will, will use fear to manipulate behavior and there are legitimate ways for them to do that God given ways for them to employ fear. After all, the government doesn't bear the sword for nothing, Romans 13:4.

But this is clearly illegitimate. This is a misuse of power. It's not at all what Paul had in mind when he wrote, “For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil”. This was fear that was manipulating people to do what was unrighteous, immoral. To fall down and worship this image was an act of idolatry for all people.

So it should be obvious even as we think about this portion of Scripture that governments aren't free before God to employ fear at their own discretion. Fear must be employed in a core with the God ordained purpose of government.

Verse 7, “Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up” save three men, which we'll see in a moment.

But what I want you to see initially here is the universal nature of this edict. This edict in no way singled out the Jews, it was universal. It wasn't primarily intended to persecute the Jews, at least not on the face of it. We know that this world is Satan's world system, that under God's sovereignty, Satan is able to do what God permits of him. And so there is a rhyme and a reason for things that go beyond what is merely presented on the surface of things. But on the on the surface of it, this was not intended to single out the Jews. It was not intended to persecute them. It was a universal edict that required that all people worship this image and acknowledge the sovereignty of the state.

You say, “Well, why does that even matter?” Because some believe that so long as a governmental edict doesn't single out the church, it doesn't warrant civil disobedience. That the threshold for civil disobedience is only reached when the church is being persecuted. And as we'll see in a moment, that just isn't the case. Whether the edict is universal or not, isn't the issue. The issue is whether or not it's evil.

Now realize at that point, someone might say, “Well, James, this is a clear violation of the first and second commandments.” Exodus 20:3, “You shall have no other gods before Me”. The very next two verses, “You shall not make yourself an idol or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them...”. And so the objection is that: comparing this situation to the restrictions that are placed on churches in our present day is comparing apples to oranges.

And I thought you might say that and so I wanted to turn to Daniel chapter 6 for a moment. Because in Daniel chapter 6, we see another matter of civil disobedience, only this time, in a manner more akin to ours.

Now this takes place after the fall of the Babylonian Empire. The Medes and Persians are now reigning. And we're gonna pick it up in verse 1: "It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole kingdom, and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one)..." And by the way, Daniel is well-on in age now, 80 or 90 years old. "...these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss. Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom. Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no grounds of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him. Then these men said, "We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find it against him with regard to the law of his God."

By the way, that is a phenomenal illustration of what it is to be above reproach, free from accusation. They couldn't find anything against Daniel; he was irreproachable.

Verse 6, "Then these commissioners and satraps came by agreement to the king and spoke to him as follows: 'King Darius, live forever! All the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the high officials and the governors have consulted together, that the king should establish a statute and enforce an injunction that anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O King, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lion's den'".

Might be worth pointing out here that Daniel was not included in this. So this was a misrepresentation to the king. Yet the king in his enthusiasm for this idea granted it.

Verse 8, "'Now, O king, established the injunction and sign the document so that it may be not be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked.' Therefore, King Darius signed the document, that is the injunction."

Now, this wasn't commanding something that God forbid, it was forbidding something that God commands, although even as I say that I'm not sure the law of Moses explicitly prescribed a certain prayer regimen - that Daniel had to pray a certain way and with a certain frequency.

And at least in theory, Daniel could have continued to pray. He could have prayed without entering into the posture of prayer. He could have prayed in the quietness of his own heart where no one would know he was praying.

Or maybe he could have concluded that, well, since God hasn't explicitly prescribed the frequency of prayer and the law of Moses, and since it's only 30 days, and since we're subject to the governing authorities, I guess we could hit pause on our prayer life.

And yet, what does he do?

Verse 10, “Now, when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open towards Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously. Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God. Then they approached and spoke before the king about the king’s injunction. ‘Did you not sign an injunction that any man who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, is to be cast into the lion’s den?’ The king replied, ‘The statement is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked.’ Then they answered and spoke before the king, ‘Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the injunction which you signed, but keeps making his petition three times a day’”.

Daniel in the face of this edict that was contradicting his practice of bowing before God in prayer steadfastly remains committed to that time of prayer before his God, giving thanks, and even putting himself in a position to receive whatever it is that would come to him. And as we know, God delivered him out of the lion’s den and gave us another example worthy of imitation.

And so whether it’s commanding something God forbids or forbidding something God commands, the edict needs to be assessed in terms of its righteousness.

Daniel continued to pray. But as far as I can tell, there is nothing that require that he continued to pray three times a day, the way he prayed, and even towards Jerusalem. There was precedent for that, according to Solomon, for example, and even David in the Psalms, but nothing that explicitly commanded him to pray as he did. Nevertheless, he remained steadfast in doing so.

You see, as we think through our own context, it’s not enough to say Romans 13 and call for submission. And if it’s wrong to forbid prayer for 30 days, it needs to be asked whether it’s right to forbid corporate worship for 10 months.

And even threaten those who simply do what they’ve been doing the entire time.

Note that the edict was universal, it was not intended to single out the Jews, it was not intended primarily to persecute the Jews to get back to Daniel chapter 3. At this point in time, it was universal, require that everyone submit to it, and yet only the Jews couldn’t because they were the ones who had been given the law of God.

And if you’re taking notes, jot down second “The under-estimating informants”. “The under-estimating informants.”

This comes out in verse 8 and following. it says, “For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews”. You know what this is? It’s the snitch line of ancient history. And it was motivated by the same thing we saw in chapter 6: the Chaldeans resented the Jews, and they resented them because they had been given positions of prominence in the Babylonian Empire. This was fueled by jealousy.

And notice the way they addressed the king. "They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar, the king: 'O king, live forever! You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music is to fall down and worship the golden image. But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire. There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, namely Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you;" - not true - "they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image, which you have set up.'" That is true.

They didn't disregard the king. These men were committed to the king's service. These were righteous men, obedient men. But they were not going to worship or serve Nebuchadnezzar as gods. They render to Caesar what is Caesar's and they render to God, what was God's. And I want you to consider something for a moment, as you try and get back into the historical setting just a little bit, putting yourself in the shoes of these three men.

What would have happened had these men not remained standing? Would the Jews throughout the Babylonian Empire had remained standing? Do you think the Jews who are now in exile who had been driven from their land for idolatry were going to remain standing? Not likely.

These men had a responsibility to stand. The people they represent, the Jews, God's covenant people they knew no doubt were weak. There may have been a believing remnant that would have been faithful but most of the Jews would have bowed down before this image in no time.

And so these men remain standing, refused to budge - a stand that required both courage and conviction.

Again, put yourself in their shoes. Would it really hurt to bow down and feign worship to this golden image? God knows their heart. God knows they know it's not real. Are they not more useful to God in the positions they're in alive than dead? Didn't the prophet Elijah for example tell Nahum to go in peace? When Nahum requested the Lord's pardon, knowing he would have to bow down and worship in the house of his master's god.

You got to put yourself in their shoes, they're looking death in the face, there is a fiery furnace that is blazing nearby. The stand they are taking is going to require their lives. There's going to be all kinds of rationalizations that flood their thinking about why they could bypass this moment of conviction, why they could cave, compromise.

And all of it would be rooted in self-preservation. But as we'll see, they remain courageous and convicted.

Why do I call these informants under-estimating? Because what they intend for evil God intends for - what? - good. Their jealousy and malice was going to serve the purposes of God. They hated the Jews, and they hated the Jews because they hated God, and their actions were going to result in the glory of God being radiated to the entire Earth. A glory they absolutely detested.

So these were under-estimating informants. They were about to witness uncompromising conviction, the kind of uncompromising conviction that God uses to glorify himself.

So if you're taking notes, jot down third: "The uncompromising faithful". "The uncompromising faithful."

Verse 13, "Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king". Just think about that; why they were summoned by the king? Because they rejected the edict. They would not bow. They remained standing. Summoned now by the king and being led into the king's presence to receive whatever would befall them, knowing the threat was they would be thrown into a fiery furnace. They would need to be prepared to die; resolved to lose their lives for the honor and glory of God, not in some unrighteous proud and even irreligious way. You think of, for example, Muslims and how they will commit suicide and kill others in some sort of suicide bombing at the promise of 40 virgins who await them in heaven. No, not that kind of thing here.

This is a humble yet convicted, firm and settled conviction, that we are going to honor and glorify God, come what may. No violence, no harm inflicted. We're just going to stand right here because we believe this is where God wants us to stand.

Verse 14, "Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, 'Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?'" No pause for response. "'Now, if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music to fall down and worship the image that I have made, very well. But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?'" This is your last chance - either bow down and worship the image, or die.

And that last line was a bad move. "And what God is there who can deliver you out of my hands?"

And it goes to show you how little he thought of his own god. Calvin writes this, "Why then did he worship any deity? If there was no god able to deliver them out of his hands, then in effect, he believes he's god". It's the epitome of pride.

And these were taunting words. He was taunting the God of heaven, the God of Israel, the one true and living God. He was acting like Sennacherib, king of Assyria, when he taunted God and said to the people of Jerusalem, "Do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you saying, your way will deliver us? Has anyone of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their land from my hand, that Yahweh should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?" Again, that was a bad move. Sennacherib was treating God as though he were a mute and dead idol. What happened to him by the way, and his army, that night? The angel of Yahweh slew, 185,000 soldiers. That was the end of that.

Verse 16, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king," – notice this – "'O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter.'" No deliberation. No defense. No capitulation. They are resolved. They had lawfully remained standing and they were content to entrust themselves to God.

Verse 17, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king".

Nebuchadnezzar questioned, what God could? They answered, "Our God can".

On what grounds? He is the Creator of the heavens in the earth, spoke it into existence by the power of His word. Fire is fire because He willed it and wills it to be. He has the capacity and the ability to suspend the firing properties of fire. Exhibit A, the burning bush, Exodus 3.

"But", verse 18, "even if he does not," - look at that - "even if he does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up".

In other words, even if it isn't the will of God to deliver us from this fire, even if it's His will, that we go into the fire and die, we will not worship your golden image, we are prepared to die.

Compromise is not an option.

You've got to put yourself in their shoes. This is real. This happened. These men were there before Nebuchadnezzar, the fiery furnace was in their presence, they knew they were about to go into the fire for rejecting the command and edict of the king.

You say, well, what must a person have to have this kind of result? Well, I'm by no means an expert on the subject, but I've had to give it a little more thought of late. And here's what I have so far: first, you must be born from above. You must have experienced regeneration. You must have trusted Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. You must be justified, having been effectually called to a saving knowledge of Christ. First you must be born from above.

Second, you need to know the truth. There needs to be a deep settled conviction around the truth. You must know the truth. You must believe the truth. It must be the kind of knowledge experientially that's deep and settled that would compel you to look death in the face and yet walk in the truth.

Third, there must be a commitment to the glory of God. You must be jealous for the glory of God. You must be so committed to the glory of God, that you would be willing to die that God would be glorified. You must be committed to the glory of God.

Fourth, you can't consider your life is precious to yourself. This life, this body, this mortal flesh – "let goods and kindred go". You cannot consider this life to be precious, you must deem the life to come the more precious life to live, and be willing to let this one go.

Fifth, you have to hold everything in this life with an open hand. Your family, your home, your possessions, your aspirations and ambitions, your freedoms. You've got to have them out before God with an open hand, willing to

give them up at any time. You can look back at your life right now no matter how old you are. And you can say, "God, thank you for what You've given me, for the life that I've had to this point. But going forward, my hands are open. You can have them all back whenever you want, so long as You be glorified". Everything has to be held with an open hands.

Sixth, you need to know and recall the saints of old - Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, Daniel - you have to remember the saints of old, the Hall of Faith, Hebrews 11, the Foxes Book of Martyrs, the historical figures that have died for their faith in Christ throughout the centuries. We have to remember both the biblical and historical cloud of witnesses that testify to the faithful way.

And finally, seventh, you must entrust yourself to Him who judges righteously, following the example of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth and while being reviled, He did not revile in return. While suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously. And He, Himself, bore our sins in His body on the cross so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. For by His wounds, you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, and now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

You have to be willing to entrust yourself to Him who judges righteously and bear up under any injustice for His honor and His glory.

None of us know what the future holds. But the cost of follow Christ is increasing. I'm sure you can feel it. Nearly day by day, certainly week by week. And it's time to count the cost. And to make certain we're ready before we even get to that fiery furnace; the resolve, the decision the commitment, it's all got to be settled long before the. These men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, they were resolved from the get-go, it wasn't a last minute decision, they were already there, unwilling to bow their knee and only willing to stand for God.

Now we may add to that list, it's a work in progress, but it's a good start. Seven qualities, features, that need to be there to have the kind of resolve these men had, so that we, too, someday would qualify as the uncompromising faithful.

If you're taking notes, jot down, fourth, "The unbelievable deliverance". "The unbelievable deliverance." And at this point in time, we just let the narrative do its thing.

"Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered towards Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated." Whether that's as hot as it could be, or whatever that means, it was hot. "He commanded certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in order to cast them into the furnace of blazing fire. Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps, and their other clothes, and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire. For this reason, because the king's command was urgent, the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fires slew those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego".

That signals to me that what they did was unrighteous, doesn't it? What should they have done? They should have defied the Kings order. And said, "No, king, that's an unrighteous order. I will not put him in the furnace".

Verse 23, "But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire still tied up. Then, Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he said to his high officials, 'Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?' They replied to the king, 'Certainly, O king'. He said, 'Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!'" I mean, they were in the fire walking about in no hurry to leave.

Know the thought in your mind is, well, who is this fourth one, like a son of the gods. Whenever you can ever call him an angel in verse 28. It could have been the angel of Yahweh, the pre incarnate Christ. We don't know we just know there was a fourth and he was the one providing the deliverance.

Verse 26, "Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he responded and said 'Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!' Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came out of the midst of the fire. The satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king's high officials gathered around and saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire even come upon them".

They had been delivered from the seven times hot, the seven times hotter, furnace, of fire. An unbelievable deliverance. You say, well, why did God do it here? There's no guarantee He's always going to deliver in a way like this. The three knew, even if God doesn't deliver; but why did God do it here? Out of a commitment to His glory.

So if you're taking notes, jot down, fifth, "The unstoppable glory". "The unstoppable glory."

Verse 28, "Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, 'Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God".

Just an amazing confession and yet, still something short of saving faith, given what takes place in chapter 4.

Verse 29, "Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way". It's all about God, revealing his glory. "Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to prosper in the province of Babylon".

Listen, it's always about the glory of God. And that's why God did this. He did this to display His glory, in fact, all of human history. And Daniel teaches this – it's all about the glory of God, as nations and kingdoms rise and fall,

there is going to be one kingdom that will be an everlasting kingdom, a kingdom that will that will reign under Jesus Christ. God is going to glorify Himself. Everything in this world is working toward the glory of God and the good of his people. Make no mistake about it, even when it seems like the game is over, God is in the midst of displaying His glory in the earth.

And really, that is why you want to reckon with the glory of God right here and right now.

Life's getting real, folks. And if you aren't joined to Christ, if you aren't declared righteous by God, if you have not been forgiven of your sins, cleansed of your unrighteousness, if you have not come under the conviction of your sin, recognizing that God is holy, perfect in holiness, requiring perfect holiness to enter His Heaven, then you need to reckon with that right now.

All have seen in a fallen short of the glory of God. If you die in your sins, you will die in your sins, and you will pay an eternity of judgment for that sin.

And there's only one Savior. He is the Lord of lords, the King of kings, the one who will come and bring about the kingdom that will be an everlasting kingdom. And when he comes, it's going to be judgment for those who reject Him and salvation for those who have trusted Him. And you want to be on this side of the ledger with Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

Not when Nebuchadnezzar. Not with the Babylonian Empire, the unsuspecting, under-estimating informants. You want to be with the faithful.

God the Father sent His Son, to be the righteousness that we need to accomplish the obedience we couldn't, and to even suffer under the wrath of God that we all deserve. He died on that cross and He offered Himself up as a sacrifice for sin, to atone for sin for all who would ever believe in His name. And now the gates of heaven are wide open for any call on His name - and the promise is that if you call on His name, you will be saved. Confess Him as Lord, believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead and you will be saved.

So I urge you this day, to consider the Savior, to consider His work, to consider the goodness of God, the life that He's given you. The opportunity even now to hear of the Savior to hear of the saving gospel and to believe. Take it to heart, respond in faith, bow the knee to the one true and living God give Him honor and glory, confess Him as Lord. And have the hope of heaven laid before you. A reason to live a reason to stand.

Now you'll have to wrestle with the applicability of this historical account to our present circumstances.

Let me just say this - if you're looking for a 'bow down and worship this golden image' moment, you probably won't get it. Modern day religion is different. It's ideological. The images are taken away. Now we can still see the images coming back - go to Walmart, Canadian Tire - they're back. But there's no demand to worship the image. The world's religion is a religion of selective science. where science is the new 'Simon says'. So authorities can claim that that science says certain things when in reality, it's the science they've selected that does.

It's also the religion of 'so called science', where the notion that 'nobody times nothing equals everything' is deemed more rational. While the world suppresses what is clearly seen through the created order, rejecting God rejecting Him as creator, believing that no one times nothing resulted in everything, wonderful complexity in order. That in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, Genesis 1:1.

But not just science, there's the religion of academia, which gave us post modernism and the self-refuting assertion that there are no absolutes. A statement that can't be true since it's an absolute statement. And now we're left with its fruit. The further disintegration of the family, transgenderism, gender dysphoria, critical race theory. I don't know if you realize this, but if you're white, you're racist. Climate change. Marxism. A redefinition of hatred and tolerance where tolerance is now affirmation. We could go on.

And all of it is - what? - a futile human attempt to stamp God out of human existence. And if you want to stamp God out of human existence, what do you have to do? Stamp out God's people. And what makes our particular point in human history so unique is that this country, as well as the one south of the border, was founded on Judeo-Christian values. This isn't the kingdom of Babylon. And so the world's system around us has to systematically undo the founding principles of this nation. And that means the time to begin flexing the conviction of your spiritual muscles is near.

I don't think we're going to get a 'fall down and worship this golden image' kind of a moment. When persecution comes and the pressure is on and the fiery furnace is near, it's gonna be more subtle. It's gonna require wisdom and discernment, to be able to discern what the right stance and response is. It might be a call to bow down and worship our science. Or to bow down in worship our ideologies. But either way, we have to be like Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

We bow to One - the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and may He give us wisdom, and discernment, and discretion to know how to navigate this world that we're in. And He will. He promises. Let's pray.

Father, we just acknowledge the uniqueness of the time that we're in. We know that you have all things in Your hands, You have already fore-ordained what is to come. You know exactly what tomorrow brings. And yet we are living this out in time, without the vantage point of foreknowledge. And so, Father, we just pray that You would help us. We want to be humble, we want to be gracious - lights, in this dark world, salts, acting as a preservative. Father, we pray that You would give us wisdom, and help us, and assist us, courage, conviction, resolve, to stand where You would have us stand. That You would be glorified. Make us jealous for Your glory father. Help us to see how our personal individual lives, and even our lives corporately, make a difference to the magnification of Your glory. Not that it needs that. But only that we would be vessels through which Your glory is displayed. And so, Father, we thank You for Your Grace. We thank You for Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And it's in His name we pray. Amen.