

DANIEL: Life in the Present; Hope for Our Future

Chapter 3 (Daniel Ch. 3; 1 Peter 4:1-5, 12-14, 19)

Have you ever had an argument with your spouse or your kids, or a friend – and they completely missed the point you were making? Nebuchadnezzar missed the point of the dream which Daniel interpreted.

- The wisemen missed the point as well:

So, the wisemen, who's lives Daniel saved – by naming and interpreting the dream for Nebuchadnezzar, did they thank Daniel? Were they grateful to still have their lives? NO – they became jealous and wanted him and his friends dead. – Life is just like that, “No good deed goes unpunished”

- Nebuchadnezzar had seen the power of the One true God. He witnessed a miracle and was shaken.
- But how long did that last? Without his heart being converted, feelings come and go.
- Is your heart the same way? Don't you find your heart fickle too? Believing then wandering. Cycle!

READ Daniel chapter 3: (This story has endured 2500 years to encourage our FAITH in God)

Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, - perhaps he makes an image like that in his dream. Gold. the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits; [90' tall X 9' wide] –

*SHOW Graphic of Sam Houston Statue on I-45 = 70' tall

he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. 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. 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. ⁴ Then the herald loudly proclaimed: “To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and *men of every* language, ⁵ 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. ⁶ But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.” 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 worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

⁸ For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews. ⁹ They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: “O king, live forever! ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire. ¹² 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.** [Don't you love tattletells?] = **Suck-ups; sycophants, flatterers (work? School? Little brother or sister)**

¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king. 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? [King required political, religious, & spiritual Obedience] ¹⁵ 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?**”

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. ¹⁷ If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the [lit. any] furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸ **But 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.” – Not Rude. Not Discourteous. Just matter of fact. No argument needed – i.e. *we already know what's up...*

Notice the temperament (calmness and firmness) of their response – in the face of threat & death

- They did not insult the King (They did not call him a tyrant).
- They did not revile those who had bowed their knee to worship the statue. They did not shame others.
- Rather, with grace and firmness, they resolved to be honest and gracious in their response to the threat of death:
- They chose God! Outwardly. With Public Confession. Unashamedly. Unreservedly. **-Even though they could have rationalized that they could have bent the knee to save their lives, and in their heart NOT have worshipped.** But, they, TOGETHER, take a firm stance on their Biblical Conviction – Come what may!!

¹⁸ But *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.”

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. ***Show Graphic of angry face**

He answered ^(a)by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ Then these men were tied up in their ^(a)trousers, their ^(a)coats, their caps and their *other* clothes, [to burn slower = torture] and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire. ²² For this reason, because the king’s ^(a)command *was* ^(a)urgent and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. ²³ But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire *still* tied up.

²⁴ 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.” ²⁵ He said, “Look! I see four men loosed *and walking about* in the midst of the fire ^(a)without harm, and the appearance of the fourth **is like a son of the gods!**” Is this an Angel? Is this Jesus?

- God sent a divine messenger to intervene into this incredibly difficult moment. God’s presence, protection, and peace are apparent in the midst of the consuming fire. = NO human explanation = miracle # 3 (Veggie diet; The interpretation of the dream; and now this survival in the fire)

- Many faithful believers have been burned to death for their testimony. Why did God decide to intervene here and not at other times. Everything happens for God’s purposes, in His timing, and for His glory. **Ro.8:28**

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!**”

Interesting, that Nebuchadnezzar “suddenly” remembered the One true God of the Hebrews.

- He rightly addresses God as the MOST HIGH God.

Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came out of the midst of the fire. ²⁷ 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 ^(a)effect on ^(a)the bodies of these men nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their ^(a)trousers ^(a)damaged, **nor had the smell of fire even come upon them.** = Miracle of miracles!!

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, ^(a)violating the king’s command, **and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God.** 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.” ³⁰ Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to prosper in the province of Babylon.”

- The three Hebrews’ faith was inspiring: No guarantee of being rescued, YET – they were willing to sacrifice their life for what is true: ***Jon on mission trip to Tajikistan (No guarantee of rescue) – Are you willing to go? 2 weeks after he returned, two Americans killed by Isis.**

The three Hebrews' faith was inspiring: No guarantee of being rescued, YET – **they were willing to sacrifice their life for what is true** = No idols; No images; No False worship = Exodus 20:3-5 “You shall have no other gods before^a me. **You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything** in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,⁶ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.” – No spiritual Idols. No religious Idols. **NO Political Idols either.** Nothing above GOD!!!

- These men do not barter for their life; they do not coward in the face of adversity or imminent death. These are true Believers! **You remember the story from the 90's – the two armed thugs who barged into a Romanian underground house church? They warned whoever did not want to die for their faith to leave or be shot – many scattered; some remained. Then they said, good. Now the the false believers have left, we have come to worship with true believers.**

- These men don't plead with God to save them. They simply trust God with their lives and their future = what they cared about is keeping their testimony before God.

*There is no human explanation how they survived – and not even smelling of smoke (**If you are even near a fire today, grilling on BBQ, weeny roast, Smores around a camp fire – you wreak of smoke**) = MIRACLE

- Their incredible Faith in the goodness of God with their own life brought: deliverance, protection, reward, and GLORY to God. **How is your faith looking right now?** Faith upgrade? **What are you willing to die for?**

READ 1 Peter 4:1-5, 12-14, 19

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. ² As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. ³ For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and **detestable idolatry**. ⁴ They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you. ⁵ But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

- **Vs. 12:** Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

- **Vs. 19:** So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good. – Christ never promised us as Believers that our lives would be easy, conflict free, discrimination free, persecution free, sin free, or pain free. We are called to be faithful – even if we suffer for it.

John 15:20 “Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.”

1 Peter 2:21 “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”

APPLICATION: Faith Fully Resigned to the Will of God – True in your life?

- What if God had not rescued them? Is this story still worthy to be told? Job 13:15 “**Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him**” - **IS your faith and trust in God dependent on what He does for you?** How He rescues You?
- IF we are willing to serve the Lord and trust only when things are good, what kind of faith/commitment is that?
- What is the sacrifice that God wants in our life? Romans 12:1-2 “**Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.** ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” =**holy**
- What in your life is worth dying for? Who knows that? How do you live out that conviction?
- What in your life is worth giving up for Him? If it means dying to self (pride/comfort) – **Is He worth living for?**
- Are you ready if God decides to test your faith? What do you need to do to prepare your own heart for that?